A CRITICAL STUDY OF BYRON'S CAIN

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical study of Lord Byron's poetic drama, *Cain*. Most critics in the past have seen the work as a personal statement of religious skepticism on the part of Lord Byron, and hence as an out-and-out attack on traditional, Christian doctrine. With this preconception in mind, they have concerned themselves with pointing out attitudes and ideas in the play which may be said to be antithetical to the Christian world view, and they have then assessed the play simply in these terms. It is the contention of this paper that this presupposition has led the critics away from the realm of meaning intended by Lord Byron, and that a proper understanding of the play can only arise from a full, critical study of the central issue with which this "metaphysical" drama is concerned. The method followed is to analyse the differences in form, structure and argument between two accounts of this story - that found in the Bible, and Byron's poetic drama - on the assumption that such radical changes as we shall note are essential to the conveyance of Byron's peculiar meaning, and that a study of them must reveal the proper coherence and unity of Byron's work. We shall see that *Cain* is not a mere recounting of this story, but rather that it is a reconceptualization of the predicament facing Adam and Eve and the first family, structured so as to focus upon the human situation, so that in the work Byron is not concerned with religious values, but with human values; not concerned to advance or refute traditional, religious concepts, but to reveal his insights into the common, human predicament.
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INTRODUCTION

The story of Adam and Eve, and of their sons, Cain and Abel, first appears in the book of Genesis in the Bible, and it is essentially a religious myth, that is to say a story "presenting supernatural episodes as a means of interpreting natural events in an effort to make concrete and particular a special perception of man or a cosmic view." The story in Genesis accepts a God-ordained universe, it accepts the Fall from Grace and occurs in a post-lapsarian world. It purports to explain a) how death came into the world for the first time, b) how man became a murderer of his own kind, c) why man moved away from the Garden of Eden and became a wanderer over the face of the earth, and d) how man, having moved away from God, could become the inventor of such "evils" as cities, metals and weapons. In other words it attempts to explain in large part the Christian concept of man, his relationship to God, to Nature and to his fellow men. The main point is that this myth has its place in the Christian doctrine, and to take such a story as the basis of a work is necessarily to take all of the religious context too. Hence, a reader approaching the poetic drama, Cain, resembles to some extent a Greek citizen approaching the drama that formed a part of the religious celebrations in ancient Greece, in that both are well

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acquainted with the main plot of the story to be acted out; for the story is a part of their cultural background, so that the origin and the outcome are already established as "matters of fact," and the prime interest lies in the manner in which the playwright manipulates his materials so as to show how this situation came about, and in the insights that he reveals into human nature in accomplishing this end. For instance, in the drama *Cain*, whatever else Byron does by way of explanation as to the murder of Abel, he must bring this crime to its consummation, and he must show Cain's exile into the land of Nod, and it must be such a Cain as can go on to become the inventor of cities, metals and weapons. In other words he must be a man whose sense of reality is firmly rooted in the empirical world. This, and the essential incidents in the plot of this myth, are the "givens" with which the playwright must work when dealing with a story that has such a long and respected tradition behind it.

When confronted with Lord Byron's *Cain*, most critics have been quick to point out the theological implications of this tale, and to assume that such a man as Lord Byron would only take such a myth in order to use it as the basis for an out-and-out attack on traditional Christian doctrine. They have substantiated their claim by pointing out traces of Zoroastrianism, or Manicheism, or nineteenth century scientific theories that may be found in the play and which are said to "intrude" into the Christian world view of
this Biblical story, and they have then proceeded to assess the play's value simply in these terms. For instance, Chapter 6 of Professor Samuel Chew's book, *Byron in England: His Fame and After-fame*, is devoted to a comprehensive survey of the reception of Cain by the public and critics, and it is interesting to note that the overall response is one of shock and dismay, for with very few exceptions, the reviews and criticisms of this drama are concerned to berate Lord Byron for his blasphemy, heresy, and lack of morality in creating such a work. This chapter tells of many savage attacks on Lord Byron, both in prose and in poetry, and of the few critics who try to defend him and to point out the real merits of the play itself. The main burden of the criticism is based upon the premise that the author's intention was to give utterance to his own skepticism and to attack the very foundations of Christian doctrine. It deplores the fact that one so educated, and so prominent in the eyes of the public, should mislead lesser minds who, it is contended, are easily influenced by so eminent a person as Lord Byron, so that his sin is said to be compounded in his refusal to recognize the responsibility that is his by virtue of his privileged position.

On the whole, critics have continued to see the work in this light, and to approach the play as being a personal statement.

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of religious opinion. For instance, in 1919, Stopford Brooke attempted a defence of Cain on the grounds that while the work does appear to attack the theocentric view of the universe, the author's actual intention was to attack that particular concept of God that we find in the drama; for this God is a God of fear and of vengeance, rather than the Christian concept of the God of love. But once again the assumption is made that the work is concerned primarily with Christian doctrine. This is also the assumption of John Drinkwater when he claims that in Cain: "The spiritual instruction fails and we are conscious of a child boldly declaiming an argument that it does not understand." Later critics were more concerned to link the "skepticism" and the "heresy" to specific events and periods in Byron's life, as we see from André Maurois's Byron, in which he says:

But of all his dramas, Cain was the most revelatory. From childhood he had been haunted by this theme of the First Predestinate, the man damned by God before the crime. Cain was an attempt to transpose into dramatic form the impassioned protest against the existence of evil in a divine creation....it was the cry of Byron himself, his brow branded, as he believed, with the mark of Cain, and condemned like Cain to wander over the face of the earth. He too had slain a brother - the earlier Byron.

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5 André Maurois, Byron (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1930), pp. 447-449.
So too, Hoxie N. Fairchild is convinced that *Cain* is mere biographical outpouring:

*Cain*'s importance as a clue to Byron's thought will vary with our belief in his repeated protestations that the utterances of Cain and Lucifer are merely the appropriate speeches of dramatic characters. If these disclaimers are to be credited, the work is the most astonishing piece of unintentional self-revelation on record. Consciously or unconsciously (but need we hesitate to choose the former adverb?), *Cain* is a faithful reflection of Byron's spiritual predicament...He knew that his real theme was man's hopeless defiance against God, and he shrank from that knowledge.\(^6\)

As we move away from biographical criticism and turn instead to those who are concerned with the poetry itself, we note a continuing interest in *Cain* as a statement of criticism levelled against the Christian concept of the universe, as found, for instance, in Andrew Rutherford's *Byron: A Critical Study*, in which he declares:

In *Cain*, Byron's next "metaphysical drama," he draws on Old Testament events and 18th Century philosophy, but the effect of this explicit treatment of such issues is to bring us face-to-face with his poverty of religious ideas. He had no talent for this kind of thinking—his opinions were confused and contradictory, and his conversations with Dr. Kennedy show how far he was from having worked out any real critique of Christianity.\(^7\)

This interest in the play's "religious theme" is also evident in Peter L. Thorslev's book, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes*, in

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which he is concerned to trace the origin and development of the
"Byronic Hero," for when considering the drama he says:

My point is not to discuss Cain as theology, primarily, but as a drama - although as a drama of metaphysical rebellion. The parallel here with Paradise Lost seems to me particularly apt. As a theological dissertation Milton's poem is also "dead" to the modern reader (though it still was not a century ago); we no longer read it for its theme - the justification of "God's ways to man." Still, Paradise Lost remains a great poem. The same can be said, I believe, of Byron's Cain.  

Here the parallel is drawn between Paradise Lost and Cain, in-as-much as both works are seen to be "theological dissertations," and this is the most explicit statement of the basic assumption made by these and by most critics of the poetic drama. All are impressed with the source and the context of this myth, and with this in mind, they approach the work as being a Christian, theological dissertation, looking for, and finding, elements in the play that support this conception of the work. And yet many seem conscious at the same time of elements that jar--as for instance the "intrusion" of nineteenth century scientific theories--so that they are forced to conclude that Byron "had no head" for this sort of argumentation, or that he was attempting, unsuccessfully, to blend together elements from quite disparate fields of knowledge, or merely that his thinking was "confused and contradictory" on these matters. But it is the contention of this paper that critics have been overly impressed with the

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religious context of this myth, and that accordingly, in their approach to the poetic drama, *Cain*, they have been so concerned to substantiate their preconception of this play as a statement on traditional, Christian doctrine, that they have in fact been led away to a realm of meaning that is quite distinct from that intended by Byron. Perhaps the most extreme example of the type of criticism that is concerned to detect elements from external sources, rather than to determine the manner in which these elements are fused together within the work, is to be found in Robert F. Gleckner's recent book, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, in which he considers *Cain*, and concludes that:

> It is probably true, as M.K. Joseph has summed it up, that *Cain* is the combined product of 'Byron's early Calvinism...blended with Lucretian atomism, and Fontenelle's plurality of worlds [Entretien sur la pluralité des mondes]; with the deism of the Essay on Man and the cosmology of Night Thoughts; with the pre-Adamites of Vathek and with Buffon's giants and 'organic degeneration;' with the spontaneous generation of Erasmus Darwin; and finally with the catastrophism of Cuvier.\(^9\)

> But of course, it is not merely that Byron uses such elements that should be our concern but how he uses them, for if we are to gain some idea of the significance of this work, then we must come to grips with the central issue with which this "metaphysical" drama is concerned, and this is only possible if such definition and

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classification gives way to a full, critical study of the play, and of the assumptions underlying its form, structure and argument. Only then can we begin to assess the significance of the total work to the author, and to ourselves today. This paper is therefore an attempt to accomplish the first step in such an analysis; that is to say, to arrive at an understanding of the central issue of the drama. Our method will be to analyse the differences that we find in form, structure and argument between the Biblical story and Byron's poetic drama, on the assumption that such a study will indicate the over-riding purpose for such radical changes as we shall note between the two accounts of this tale. Though both works deal with a common subject - the murder of Abel by his brother, Cain - it is obvious that the changes in form and content which are essential to the conveyance of Byron's peculiar meaning, have altered the degree and emphasis of those various elements that are common to the two accounts, and a study of such changes must reveal the proper coherence and unity of Byron's work. In the following chapters we will therefore consider firstly the form of Cain, then secondly we will study the "natural world" and the "social world" of this work, and finally we will investigate the play's argument by considering Cain as an heroic figure.
CHAPTER I

THE FORM OF CAIN

We find the story of Cain and Abel in the fourth chapter of Genesis, and we note that it is narrated from the third person, objective point of view, whereby the narrator remains outside the characters and reports their speech and actions, so that the thoughts and feelings involved are merely suggested by the action and the dialogue. Here, for instance, is the account of Cain's reaction when the Lord rejects his offering:

4 ...And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
5 But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect.
And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.\(10\)

And here is the rather scanty account of the incidents immediately preceeding the murder:

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.\(11\)

The account of the incidents leading up to the murder of Abel, and culminating in the expulsion of Cain is very short, and because the narrator adopts the objective point of view, the reader too is "dis-

\(10\) The Holy Bible, The "Book of Genesis," verses 4 and 5.

\(11\) Ibid., verse 8.
tanced" from the human situation, and as a result, the major emphasis
in this chapter falls upon the enumeration of the generations that
descended from Adam and Cain to people the earth. This narrative
account of the first murder is apparently meant to inform and instruct,
but the recitation of these events is so chronological in its
arrangement of details that our interest is carried ever forward to
succeeding generations, and is not allowed to dwell upon the import
of the incidental events.

But Cain is a drama, and although Byron has stated that it
was not written for the stage, and so should correctly be called a
"closet drama," it is, none-the-less, a dramatic work. In other
words, Byron has presented this incident and the events surrounding
it in another medium, so that it is revealed or "distanced" in an
entirely new mode of presentation - the dramatic mode. Speaking of
the drama, Francis Fergusson has said that:

The process of becoming acquainted with a play is like that
of becoming acquainted with a person. It is an empirical and inductive
process; it starts with the observable facts; but it instinctively
aims at a grasp of the very life of the machine which is both deeper
and, oddly enough, more immediate than the surface appearances offer.
We seek to grasp the quality of a man's life, by an imaginative effort,
through his appearances, his words, and his deeds.12

Poetic drama demands of the reader just such an imaginative synthesis,

for we are meant to "see" the settings before us, to "watch" the action, to "hear" the dialogue and to "feel" the emotions generated, so that we are drawn into sympathy, and even into empathy, with the characters on stage. In this way our response will be the full response - both intellectual and emotional - of an audience to the drama, so that a full understanding of the play may emerge through the appearances, the words and the deeds. It is here that the "very life of the machine" lies, and not in the "surface appearances" which have given so many critics a field day.

It may be objected that Cain was not meant to be acted, but was written for the "mental theater," but the characteristics of our response to the drama, outlined above, are still largely appropriate to our mental performance of this work, for Byron intended that our reading be as full and dramatic a rendition of the work as is possible. For instance, we note that Byron shows his main character in a variety of situations, so that we see him reacting to changed circumstances, thus revealing him "in depth," and allowing him to emerge as a realistic and dynamic character; we observe the use of argument to reveal attitudes of mind and to explain the motivation for the conflict; and we notice the presence of characters who adopt several, conflicting points of view, thus making evident the terrible tensions that are so essential a part of this drama, but most importantly, we see that Byron is at great pains to "set the scene"
for the reader by having the characters describe their surroundings in considerable detail. This last point is perhaps best illustrated by considering the changing scene in the second Act, in the dramatic movement away from earth and out into the depths of space, where the breath-taking vista first afforded Cain is described by him as follows:

Oh, thou beautiful
And unimaginable ether! and
Ye multiplying masses of increased
And still increasing lights! what are ye? what
Is this blue wilderness of interminable
Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden?
Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye
Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
Through an ærial universe of endless
Expansion - at which my soul aches to think -
Intoxicated with eternity?13

Yet this is but one aspect of the trip into space, for Cain and Lucifer move on to visit Hades, and we note that as the journey proceeds, Cain is continually describing the changing scene before him:

Cain. How the lights recede!
Where fly we?
Lucifer. To the world of phantoms, which
Are beings past, and shadows still to come.
Cain. But it grows dark, and dark - the stars are gone!
Lucifer. And yet thou seest.
Cain. 'Tis a fearful light!
No sun, no moon, no lights innumerable.
The very blue of the empurpled night

13 Byron, Poetical Works (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), Act II, scene i, ll. 98-109. All further references are from this edition.
Fades to a dreary twilight, yet I see
Huge dusky masses; but unlike the worlds
We were approaching, which begirt with light,
Seem'd full of life even when their atmosphere
Of light gave way, and show'd them taking shapes
Unequal, of deep valleys and vast mountains;
And some emitting sparks, and some displaying
Enormous liquid plains, and some begirt
With luminous belts, and floating moons, which took,
Like them, the features of fair earth: - instead,
All here seems dark and dreadful. (II, i, 173-190)

And again, later:

How silent and how vast are these dim worlds!
For they seem more than one, and yet more peopled
Than the huge brilliant luminous orbs which swung
So thickly in the upper air, that I
Had deem'd them rather the bright populace
Of some all unimaginable Heaven,
Than things to be inhabited themselves,
But that on drawing near them I beheld
Their swelling into palpable immensity
Of matter, which seem'd made for life to dwell on,
Rather than life itself. But here, all is
So shadowy, and so full of twilight, that
It speaks of a day past. (II, ii, 1-13)

Finally, they arrive in Hades, and once again Cain describes aloud
the scene that lies before them:

What are these mighty phantoms which I see
Floating around me? - They wear not the form
Of the intelligences I have seen
Round our regretted and unenter'd Eden,
Nor wear the form of man as I have view'd it
In Adam's and in Abel's, and in mine,
Nor in my sister-bride's, nor in my children's:
And yet they have an aspect, which, though not
Of men nor angels, looks like something which,
If not the last, rose higher than the first,
Haughty, and High, and beautiful, and full
Of seeming strength, but of inexplicable shape; for I never saw such. They bear not the wing of seraph, nor the face of man, nor form of mightiest brute, not aught that is now breathing; mighty yet and beautiful as the most beautiful and mighty which live, and yet so unlike them, that I scarce can call them living. (II, ii, 44-62)

Hence, in this way, Byron gives the reader a very real sense of the visual dimension of this drama.

In order to accomplish this dramatization, Byron has had to "flesh out" the scant details found in the Biblical account, and at the same time he has had to take into account the conventions of the drama, with its emphasis on character, action and plot. However, we can appreciate that the dramatic mode is in fact a more complex mode than that of narrative prose, for the drama has more dimensions through which to articulate its issues. For instance, setting can be used to create mood, to delineate character or even to provide motivation; action can establish character and animate conflicts; dialogue can reveal motivations and, through the means of the soliloquy, even disclose attitudes of mind. In fact, the shift in perspective brought about by the dramatization of a work is a shift to a more ironic point of view, since the audience's perception is enlarged in their simultaneous appreciation of the multiple dimensions of the drama, and their viewpoint is therefore made more omniscient. At the same time, the audience is more completely involved in the
work by seeing the conflict from an enlarged perspective, for they are made aware of the several, conflicting points of view involved in the issue, all of which comment upon the central conflict. Thus the audience, viewing the action from yet another point of view, must themselves arrive at a conclusion concerning the significance of the action on stage.

This new medium, then, provides the author with a new paradigm - a new means of structuring the truths that underlie this human situation, and it provides the audience with a new point of view from which to see this first family - the dramatic point of view. The dramatization has turned a verbal statement into a visual spectacle, with a consequent shift in perspective and emphasis, so that Byron is able to reveal the situation in an entirely new light. We recall the remark made by Goethe, after Byron's Death, to the effect that Byron should have lived "to execute his vocation...to dramatize the Old Testament,"\(^\text{14}\) by which he surely meant that Byron should have reconceived the subject matter of the Biblical stories and present them in the dramatic mode; for Cain is not a mere recounting of the Biblical story, but is rather a reconceptualization of the predicament facing Adam and Eve and their family, and of the events that culminate in the murder of Abel. In this drama, we see anew this first family, as they make their way in their new world,

just outside the walls of the forbidden Paradise. In the process of dramatizing this story, alterations had to be made, and the nature of these changes and additions is totally dependent upon the author's insight, that is to say, they have been necessary in order to fashion this basic story so that it will convey those underlying truth concerning the human situation, as seen by Lord Byron.

In view of the above, our method now will be to investigate the nature of the changes made by Lord Byron in the process of dramatizing the story of Cain and Abel. We will first consider the alterations to the structure, by studying the "natural world" and the "social world" of each work. This will enable us to assess the implications that lie behind the changes, which, together with our study of the play's argument, will allow us to come to grips with the author's intended meaning.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURAL WORLD OF CAIN

In the previous Chapter, we saw that in the book of Genesis, the account of the murder of Abel is very short and terse, and lacking in any details as to setting, situation, characterization or motivation. Perhaps the most significant changes, therefore, are those concerned with the natural world of Adam and Eve and their children, that is to say with the scenery "erected" within the play, against which we view the action, and out of which stems much of the motivation. We have already noted that Byron is at pains to provide a visual aspect to the play, and we will now consider the several settings that are the backdrop to the dramatic action.

Basic to the total situation which the play attempts to articulate is the fact that the abode of this first family is situated immediately outside the walls surrounding the Garden of Eden. As the play opens, we learn from the stage directions that the action takes place in "The Land without Paradise,"15 and this is only the first of many references made throughout the entire play to the physical presence of the Garden of Eden. The cherubim-

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15 Byron, Works, p. 521.
guarded walls around Paradise dominate the horizon of this play, for even in Act II, when Cain and Lucifer are journeying through space, the reader is continually reminded of their presence, for Cain is constantly referring to them, either by way of a comparison, or of contrast to the scene before him. The Kingdom of God is manifested continuously and directly, then, to the characters in the drama.

But the land outside Eden is also depicted for us, and is shown to be very beautiful, as we learn from Cain when he enumerates for Lucifer those things of beauty that he finds around him:

All the stars of heaven,
The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb
Which looks like a spirit, or a spirit's world -
The hues of twilight - the sun's gorgeous coming -
His setting indescribable, which fills
My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold
Him sink, and feel my heart float softly with him
Along that western paradise of clouds,
The forest shade, the green bough, the bird's voice -
The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,
And mingles with the song of cherubim,
As the day closes over Eden's walls. (II, ii 255-266)

So too, Adah finds much beauty in their natural world, which she describes in an attempt to explain her instinctive response to Lucifer:

...but thou seemst
Like an ethereal night, where long white clouds
Streak the deep purple, and unnumbered stars
Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault
With things that look as if they would be suns;
So beautiful, unnumber'd and endearing,
Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to them,
They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost thou. (I, i, 506-513)
Further references are made to this natural setting, indicating the wildlife to be found there - the fruits, the animals, the trees, the rivers - so that this land is pictured for us in many of its aspects.

Another essential aspect of the natural world of Cain are those settings which occur in the second Act, and we have already noted the way in which Cain meticulously describes the changing scene before him, thus giving the reader a vivid sense of the grandeur and wonder of these spatial settings. And on his return to earth, Cain continues to delineate the scene before him, for the very sentimental family group consisting of Cain, Adah and the sleeping Enoch is pictured for us through his description of the bower and of the sleeping Enoch within, and this scene is further detailed for us through Adah's depiction of the babe's waking moments:

_Soft! he wakes. Sweet Enoch!_ [She goes to the child.] Oh, Cain! look on him; see how full of life, Of strength, of bloom, of beauty, and of joy, How like to me - how like to thee, when gentle, For then we are all alike; is't not so, Cain? Mother, and sire, and son, our features are Reflected in each other; as they are In the clear waters, when they are gentle, and When thou art gentle. Love us, then, my Cain! And love thyself for our sakes, for we love thee. Look! how he laughs and stretches out his arms, And opens wide his blue eyes upon thine, To hail his father; while his little form Flutters as wing'd with joy. (III, i, 139-152)

Finally, we come to the climax of the play, which occurs in
the great, sacrificial altar scene, and we observe that even this setting has been visually prepared for us, for in the conversations preceding the sacrifice we learn of the composition of these two, crude altars, and of their differing heights, and we are even given a glimpse of Cain's aspect, which is discovered for us by Abel, and which stresses his obvious agitation and frustration:

Thine eyes are flashing with unnatural light -
Thy cheek is flush'd with an unnatural hue -
Thy words are fraught with an unnatural sound -
What may this mean? (III, i, 185-188)

But, most importantly, from Cain's extreme reaction to the sight of Abel's gore-strewn alter, arises a vivid and memorable picture of the setting of this highly dramatic and highly emotional scene. Once again we "see" this setting through Cain's eyes, for he describes the actions in considerable detail, as we observe from the following:

If thou lov'st blood, the shepherd's shrine, which smokes On my right hand, hath shed it for thy service In the first of his flock, whose limbs now reek In sanguinary incense to thy skies; Or if the sweet and blooming fruits of earth, And milder seasons, which the unstain'd turf I spread them on now offers in the face Of the broad sun which ripen'd them, may seem Good to thee, inasmuch as they have not Suffer'd in limb or life, and rather form A sample of thy works, than supplication To look on ours! If a shrine without victim, And alter without gore, may win thy favour, Look on it! ...Thy burnt flesh-off'ring prospers better; see How heaven licks up the flames, when thick with blood! (III, i, 255-285)
Once the murder has been committed, it remains for Byron to prepare the last tragic scene, and this he does by again using the dialogue to erect the setting, as we see from Cain's monologue:

Where am I? alone! Where's Abel? where
Cain? Can it be that I am he? My brother,
Awake! - why liest thou so on the green earth?
'Tis not the hour of slumber; - why so pale?
What hast thou! - thou wert full of life this morn!
...His eyes are open! then he is not dead!
Death is like sleep; and sleep shuts down our lids.
His lips, too, are apart; why then he breathes;
And yet I feel it not. - His heart! - his heart!
Let me see, doth it beat? methinks -------No! - no!
This is a vision, else I am become
The native of another and worse world.
The earth swims round me: - what is this? - 'tis wet;
[Put his hand to his brow, and then looks at it.]
And yet there are no dews! 'Tis blood - my blood -
My brother's and my own! and shed by me! (III, i, 322-346)

From this point on, the setting remains unchanged, and it plays a minor part in the scene, for the focus of attention is now concentrated on the various characters' reactions to the act of murder; but it must by now be obvious that Byron is at great pains to give the reader a very real sense of the setting in which the characters find themselves, and that this effect is realized almost exclusively through the dialogue, wherein characters describe for each other, or merely aloud for themselves, the physical surrounding in which they find themselves, the actions that are going on around them, and the appearance of the other characters in the scene. In this play, Cain is a very self-conscious character, and since we
"see" this drama primarily through his eyes, his constant, detailed descriptions provide a very real visual dimension for us. We note that few stage directions are necessary to help the reader visualize the action "on stage," but that none-the-less, a careful and imaginative reading of this play cannot help but provide the necessary visual dimension.

Hence, we can see from the above that Byron has created a new "world" for this drama, a world at once more comprehensive and more complex than is found in Genesis, and a world that is not nearly so remote from us as is the "Land without Paradise" of the Biblical myth. In the world of Cain we can see elements which correspond to those we find around us - the rivers, the plants, the fruits, the insects, the animals, the natural phenomena of sunsets, clouds and stars - and though not scaled like our own, all are recognizable. So too are those scientific details concerning the planetary system, such as the prospect of earth with its moon, or the archeological details of previous life-forms. One of the main effects of these changes, then, has been to create a high degree of empirical reality in this fictional world. In an article entitled "Literature and Myth," Northrop Frye discusses the social function of myths:

The content of a myth relates it to specific social functions. Seen as content, it becomes at once obvious that myths are not stories told just for fun: they are stories told to explain certain features in the society to which they belong....Such myths can hardly be understood, in this context, apart from the cultural pattern of the societies that produced them, and they form the main body of what might be called, and in later religion is called,
revelation, the understanding of its traditions, its customs, its situation in the world, which a society accepts as primary data. 16

In other words, there is a relationship between the "world" of the myth and the empirical and experiential "world" which it purports to "explain," and while these bonds are at best tenuous, they must, never-the-less, exist. Hence, by infusing such a high degree of empirical reality into the natural world of Cain, Byron has strengthened and emphasized the parallels that the reader must see between our own experiential world and the empirical world of the first family.

But, by far the most important effect has been to create a high degree of what we might call "philosophical reality," that is to say, verisimilitude in delineating Cain's relationship to the universe of this play. In an article entitled "Byronic Drama," Patricia M. Ball considers Byron's plays as a whole, and of them she says:

The phrase 'Byronic Drama' is not merely an alternative way of saying 'plays by Byron'. His work is based on his own theories, and its character cannot adequately be summarised by any of the usual labels, such as 'Shakesperian', 'Romantic', or even 'Classical' drama, although it is from classical principles that he builds his own. What then are the marks of Byronic drama? A factual and preferably historical plot is one of the most important. Fiction to Byron was synonymous with lying....This concern for truth, which never subsides into uninspired slavery to facts - it stems

from his belief in the high and free office of the poet, not from the opposite idea - is at the center of his opinions of the technique of play-making. All his dealings with the drama are remarkably single-minded, and wholly consistent; theory and plays alike reflect each other, and neither exists solely to vindicate the other.... That is, the words are at the service of the action and the point of the play does not rest on the comments or verbal poetry spoken by the characters.... Clarity, and fidelity to the given situation, are the first articles in his creed of technique. This does not rule out the long speech, nor yet the soliloquy; for, while action is to hold the stage, it is self-conscious action, belonging to the dual planes of situation and spiritual experience. Nevertheless, the key to Byron's plays - as also to his poetry - lies in the scene, in what happens, and how. His characters group around this nucleus and are animated by it; the action is not contrived for the indulging of character display. 17

We had already noted the "self-conscious" action of the principal figure, Cain, and now we have observed that Byron is at pains to give his reader a sense of the visual dimension of the setting throughout the length of the play. In this particular play, the setting is of tremendous importance to the creation of the "scene," or what Dr. Ball calls the "situation," for indeed the action in this drama does spring naturally and necessarily from the scene, as we will see now, when we consider the import of the various settings in the play. For instance, the action of the play occurs in "The Land without Paradise," and there is terrible irony in the dual meanings of "without" as used in this phrase. Very early in the play we are made aware of the juxtaposition of the world of Cain and "our native and forbidden Paradise" (I, i, 276), and of the awful sense of loss

and injustice that this constant contrast evokes in Cain himself;
"And this is Life! - Toil! and wherefore should I toil? - because/
My father could not keep his place in Eden" (I, i, 65-66). Shortly
after this remark, Cain sees Lucifer approaching, and in his mono-
logue he again reveals his acute awareness of the proximity of
Eden:

Why should I fear him more than other spirits,
Whom I see daily wave their firey swords
Before the gates round which I linger oft,
In twilight's hour, to catch a glimpse of those
Gardens which are my just inheritance,
Ere the night closes o'er the inhibited walls
And the immortal tress which overtop
The cherubim-defended battlements? (I, i, 83-90)

Adah too is very aware of the contrast between their present pre-
dicament and the innocent bliss of their parents, prior to the fall:

Oh, my mother! thou
Hast pluck'd a fruit more fatal to thine off-spring
Than to thyself; thou at the least hast pass'd
Thy youth in Paradise, in innocent
And happy intercourse with happy spirits:
But we, thy children, ignorant of Eden,
Are girt about by demons, who assume
The words of God, and tempt us with our own
Dissatisfied and curious thoughts - as thou
Wert work'd on by the snake, in thy most flush'd
And heedless, harmless wantonness of bliss. (I, i, 392-402)

Similarly, Adam and Eve are conscious of the terrible difference in
their situations inside and outside those walls, though of course
their attitude to this fact of life differs from that of Cain and
Adah, as we see from Zillah's prayer, for she is of like mind to
her parents:

Oh, God! who loving, making, blessing all,
Yet didst permit the serpent to creep in,
And drive my father forth from Paradise,
Keep us from further evil: - Hail! all hail!

(I, i, 18-21)

But perhaps this attitude is best summed up in Eve's address to Cain:

My boy! thou speakest as I spoke, in sin,
Before thy birth: let me not see renew'd
My misery in thine. I have repented.
Let me not see my offspring fall into
The snares beyond the walls of Paradise,
Which e'en in Paradise destroy'd his parents,
Content thee with what is. Had we been so,
Thou now hadst been contented. - Oh, my son!

(I, i, 39-46)

In these examples, and in the many other references throughout the play to the physical setting of this drama, we are continually reminded of the fact that this family live within sight of Paradise, and that this setting is a constant reminder to them of their Fall from Grace, and of what otherwise might have been their lot in life.

We have seen that both Cain and Adah are conscious of their environment, and that they respond feelingly to it, for they find beauty all around them; but even here lies a source of pain and sorrow for Cain, for against this present beauty he must weigh his overwhelming awareness of the mutability of life and of the inevitability of death:
...he contents him
With making us the nothing which we are;
And after flattering dust with glimpses of
Eden and immortality, resolves
It back to dust again. (III, i, 70-74)

Though Cain is thrilled with the sights he sees on his trip through space, and is over-awed with the knowledge he has gained, all merely serves to reveal to him the limitations placed upon mankind:

Lucifer. And now I will convey thee to thy world,
Where thou shalt multiply the race of Adam,
Eat, drink, toil, tremble, laugh, weep, sleep and die.

Cain. And to what end have I beheld these things
Which thou hast shown me?

Lucifer. Didst thou not require
Knowledge? And have I not, in what I show'd,
Taught thee to know thyself?

Cain. Alas! I seem nothing.

Lucifer. And this should be the human sum
Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness;
Bequeath that science to thy children, and
'Twill spare them many tortures. (II, ii, 414-424)

And on his return to earth, Cain shows that his trip into space has indeed taught him this lesson; "...but now I feel/ My littleness again. Well said the spirit,/ That I was nothing!" (III, i, 67-69). We observed the very sentimental family scene that occurs immediately upon Cain's return to earth, and the terrible irony that springs out of this scene, so filled with images of love and life, is the suffering and death that Cain and Adah must bequeath to their son, and to their son's sons, until the very end of time, for of course Cain has just returned from a journey that has confirmed this indictment:
Sleep on,
And smile, thou little, young inheritor
Of a world scarce less young: sleep on, and smile!
Thine are the hours and days when both are cheering
And innocent! thou hast not pluck'd the fruit -
Thou know'st not thou art naked! Must the time
Come thou shalt be amerced for sins unknown,
Which were not thine or mine? But now sleep on!
...He must dream -
Of what? Of Paradise? - Ay! dream of it,
My disinherited boy! 'Tis but a dream;
For never more thyself, thy sons, nor fathers,
Shall walk in that forbidden place of joy! (III, i, 18-34)

Approaching the climax of the play, we have the sacrificial scene,
so vividly described for us by Cain, who is completely repulsed by
the disgusting sight of Abel's bloody altar, and horrified and en­
raged by the fact that an omniscient God, one supposedly all-
powerful and all-good, should demand such a fatal and sacrilegious
offering:

Abel [opposing him]. Thou shalt not:-
Add not impious works to impious
Words! let that alter stand - 'tis hallo'd now
By the immortal pleasure of Jehovah,
In his acceptance of the victims.

Cain. *His!*
His pleasure! what was his high pleasure in
The fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood,
To the pain of the bleating mothers, which
Still yearn for their dead offspring? or the pangs
Of the sad ignorant victims underneath
Thy pious knife? Give way! this bloody record
Shall not stand in the sun, to shame creation!

(III, i, 294-304)

Finally, when the murder has been committed, and Abel lies cold and
bloody on the earth, Cain stands dazed before the body, and the
irony in this scene is adequately described in the following:

Zillah. ...Father! - Eve! -
    Adah! - come hither! Death is in the world!
    [exit Zillah, calling on her Parents, &c.]
Cain [solus]. And who hath brought him there? - I - who abhor
    The name of Death so deeply, that the thought
    Empoison'd all my life, before I knew
    His aspect - I have led him here, and given
    My brother to his cold and still embrace,
    As if he would not have asserted his
    Inexorable claim without my aid. (III, i, 369-377)

From this point on the setting plays a minor part in the scene, for the motivations now arise out of the characters' reactions to the act of murder, but in the foregoing analysis we have seen that the various settings used in the play are essential in starting the characters into action, for the scene does animate the character, and the source of this animation is the terrible irony that lies in the scene when viewed from Cain's vantage point. The consciousness which informs this drama is undoubtably that of Cain, and for Cain, as for all men, a sense of being is rooted in one's own experience of existence. There are three, simultaneous aspects in which each of us finds his being in the world; the first is the environment, the second the world of our fellow man and the third is the world of our relation to ourselves. We will consider the second and third aspects in later chapters, but for now we will discuss only Cain's experience of the environment or natural world that he finds around him - that is to say the "out there" which is given to him.

We have seen that the proximity of Eden evokes in Cain a
terrible tension and frustration, for there; constantly in front of him, is the denied Paradise! Similarly, our knowledge that Cain responds genuinely and feelingly to the natural beauty around him serves to greatly increase our awareness of the horror and anxiety he feels in the knowledge of mutability and death. The most spectacular scenes occur in the flight through space, when Cain's descriptions of the surroundings are most detailed, so that the ecstasy and exhilaration that he feels is seen to be in keeping with the adventure of the journey, the grandeur of the settings and the wonder of his new-found knowledge, but all of this leads only to the agonizing realization of his own, inevitable limitations! This same, terrible knowledge is set over against the deep love and affection that is evidenced in the sentimental family scene with Cain, Adah and Enoch, and serves to increase our appreciation of Cain's despair and despondency. Finally, in the sacrificial scene, replete with images of gore and death, Cain and Abel both address themselves to the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good Creator, who shows favour to Abel, the supplicant whose denial of his own, essential human dignity, seems to Cain to make a travesty of the creation itself. In this way, Byron has exploited the irony inherent in the situation surrounding the Biblical account of the Creation and the Fall from Grace, though his unique contribution is in making Cain aware of the ironies of his predicament, that is to say of the contrasts between
the innocent bliss of the Garden of Eden and the miserable toil of the "Land without Paradise," between the joy of life and the terror of death, between Cain's desire for knowledge and his hatred of the truth confirmed by his search, between Cain's compassionate concern for all life-forms, and the utter denial of the value of the creation by such as Abel. Byron has adopted the ironic mode in constructing this drama, whereby he has written a work in which life is shown "exactly as it is found" by Cain, hence revealing the incongruities that he finds in life; the ironic gaps to which he cannot adjust or adapt himself.

In this chapter, then, we have seen the way Byron has manipulated the settings in order to reveal Cain's isolation - his lack of relatedness to the perceived world of this drama, and in the next chapter we will investigate the changes he has made in the social world of Cain and Abel, whereby he has infused a high degree of psychological realism into the characterization, and thus enhanced our appreciation of Cain's sense of alienation.
CHAPTER 3
THE SOCIAL WORLD OF CAIN

We find no real sense of a community in the Biblical account of the events surrounding the murder of Abel, and of course Byron points out in his Preface that no mention is made in the Bible of the wives of Cain and Abel, and in fact it is only after Cain has left for the land of Nod that we find mention of his having a wife at all. But Byron has created a genuine community in Cain, living in their new-found world, close by the Garden of Eden, a community bound together by family ties and, for all save Cain, by a "community of values" established and maintained by the word of God. All here can see, manifested before them, the Kingdom of God, both in their new-made world and, more importantly, in the forbidden Paradise, with its walls and guardian cherubim. Most of this family recognizes the dominion of God, and are content to abide by His hierarchical system of values. This allows them to structure their lives and to orientate themselves in their daily affairs, by putting a meaning and a purpose into their existence - the proper worship of the Lord God, the glorification of His works and the peopling of His earth. In order to create this community, Byron has had to make changes to the original story, both in the number of participants, and in the personalities of those involved in the main conflict, and in this Chapter we will investigate the nature of these changes and endeavor
to assess the implications underlying them.

The most obvious, and the most important changes made are those we find in the nature of the main character whose name Byron took as the title of his work, for in this play Cain is an intelligent, sensitive man, with an independent spirit, though at the same time we observe that he is a loving father and husband, a compassionate Patriarch and, in the first Act at least, a tolerant and understanding son and brother. Cain is no longer the moody, petulant character that we find in the Bible, but a more complex, more believable character altogether. Byron reveals his concept of Cain in a variety of ways. Firstly, Cain is shown in relationship to the "historical" situation which gave rise to mankind, that is to say in this play Cain, and hence the reader too, is very much aware of the facts of the Creation and of the Fall from Grace. This was made apparent in the preceding chapter, in which we discussed the import of the various settings in the play, especially as they contribute to the motivation of the protagonist, Cain. His reactions to the facts of life which have been determined by his "historical" situation - the denial of man's "rightful" heritage, the suffering and toil of Man's daily lot, the delusory nature of the knowledge so dearly-bought and, most importantly, the inevitability of death - these reactions are all important in defining the play's main conflict because they are vital to our understanding of Cain's character. But it is not merely that he reacts to these facts - the other characters react to
them too - but how he reacts that delineates his character for us, for the "deterministic events of the past take their significance from how we use them in the present and the future." Thus, by showing Cain as being conscious of his predicament, as being critical of a system that is so "arbitrary" in its assignment of value, as rebelling against the "injustice" of his situation, and as seeking out the very source of his own discontentment, Byron is showing us a character who cannot or will not commit himself to the present and the future, and is giving Cain a philosophical and psychological depth that is not to be found in the Biblical story.

But secondly, Byron has complicated the situation for Cain by placing him in a social setting, thus forcing him to act, not in isolation, but in a situation in which he feels accountable to more than just his own sense of what is right. One very important aspect of Cain's social situation is the fact that he is a husband and a father, and that his marriage and his fatherhood are of great importance to him. The reader cannot help but feel sympathetic towards such a sincere and devoted husband and wife, and when to this we add Cain's very deep concern over the suffering and death that he and Adah must bequeath to their heirs, we must admit that Byron has made Cain a humane and compassionate character of admirable stature:

My little Enoch! and his lisping 'sister!'  
Could I but deem them happy, I would half  
Forget ----- but it can never be forgotten  
Through thrice a thousand generations! never  
Shall men love the rememberance of the man  
Who sow'd the seed of evil and mankind  
In the same hour! They plucked the tree of science  
And sin — and, not content with their own sorrow,  
Begot me — thee — and all the few that are,  
And all the unnumber'd and innumerable  
Multitudes, millions, myriads, which may be,  
To inherit agonies accumulated  
By ages! — and I must be the sire of such things!  
Thy beauty and thy love — my love and joy,  
The rapturous moment and the placid hour,  
All we love in our children and each other,  
But lead them and ourselves through many years  
Of sin and pain -- or few, but still of sorrow,  
Intercheck'd with an instant of brief pleasure,  
To Death ---- the unknown!  (I, i, 434-453)

Our respect for Cain is further enhanced by our appreciation of the tolerance and understanding that he shows towards the rest of the family. We note, for instance, that though he can find no value in devotion to the God of his father, none-the-less he is prepared to make the gesture involved in a sacrifice in order to appease his wife and his brother Abel:

Cain. But I must retire till the earth — for I had promised —  
Lucifer. What?  
Cain. To cull some first fruits.  
Lucifer. Why?  
Cain. To offer up with Abel on an alter.  
Lucifer. Said'st thou not  
Thou ne'er hadst bent to him who made thee?  
Cain. Yes—  
But Abel's earnest prayer has wrought upon me.  
The offering is more his than mine — and  
Adah———  
Lucifer. Why dost thou hesitate?
Cain.

She is my sister,
Born on the same day, of the same womb; and
She wrung from me, with tears, this promise; and
Rather than see her weep, I would, methinks,
Bear all --- and worship aught. (I, i, 320-331)

However, Cain's patience is sorely tried in the third Act, with the result that he loses his temper, and this reminds us that Cain is a dynamic, "round" character who changes as a result of his experiences during the play, for the external actions and attitudes do modify his personality. But Cain is the only character who so changes, for the remainder are static or "flat" characters whose dominant traits are used by Byron to compare or contrast with Cain, and so to reveal his character in greater depth. For instance, in this play Adam, Eve, Abel, and Zillah are representatives of religious orthodoxy and submissiveness to divine sanction, and as such, they form a foil to Cain, standing in contrast to him and thereby serving to define his stand all the more fully. This can be seen in the tone of the morning prayers with which the play opens, for these are offered up with extreme severity, or even more pertinent is the sycophantic manner in which Abel makes his prayer of propitiation to God, a prayer so terribly self-denying as to strike the reader as being disingenuous, insincere and hypocritical, thus forcing the reader to feel antipathetic towards Abel, and a little incredulous.

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of a God who would favour such a servile, demeaning attitude of mind:

Abel [kneeling].

Oh, God!
Who made us, and who breathed the breath of life
Within our nostrils, who hath blessed us,
And spared, despite our father's sin, to make
His children all lost, as they might have been,
Had not thy justice been so temper'd with
The mercy which is thy delight, as to
Afford a pardon like a Paradise,
Compared with our great crimes: - Sole Lord of light,
Of good, and glory, and eternity!
Without whom all were evil, and with whom
Nothing can err, except to some good end
Of thine omnipotent benevolence ———
Inscrutable, but still to be fulfill'd——
Accept from out thy humble first of shepherd's
First of the first-born flocks -- an offering,
In itself nothing --- as what offering can be
Aught unto thee? -- but yet accept it for
The thanksgiving of him who spreads it in
The face of thy high heaven, bowing his own
Even to the dust, of which he is, in honour
Of thee, and of thy name, for evermore!

(III, i, 223-244)

The contrast between this and Cain's forthright, dignified, if somewhat haughty prayer which immediately follows, is such as to bring into sharp focus those antipathetical attitudes of mind in these two men which lead inevitably to the play's crisis - the theocentric, self-abnegating fanaticism of Abel and the compassionate humanism of Cain.

In the same way, Byron uses Adah as a foil to Cain, though here the contrast is not concerned with the theocentric as opposed to the anthropocentric view of the universe, but rather with the essential masculine and feminine habits of mind, that is to say, the opposition here is between Cain's critical, analytical turn of mind as compared
with Adah's consolidating, synthesizing habit of mind. We have already seen that Adah is very conscious of her environment, and that she responds deeply to the world around her. We note too that she alone asks God's help so that she may find for Him, the same love that she naturally feels for His "beauteous beings:"

God, the Eternal! Parent of all things! Who didst create these best and beauteous beings, To be beloved, more than all, save thee ---- Let me love thee and them: - All hail! all hail! (I, i, 14-17)

From her conversations with Lucifer we learn that like Cain, she too has learnt to think for herself, for she shows an independent spirit that has not been entirely suppressed in submission to the God of her father, and she is able to hold her own in the "parry and thrust" with Lucifer:

Lucifer. ...If I were not that which I have said, Could I stand here? His angels are within Your vision.

Adah. So they were when the fair serpent Spoke with our mother first. (I, i, 550-553)

However, she does have a different turn of mind, for she places great value upon human love and affection, and upon the company of others of her kind:

Adah. Alone I could not, Nor would be happy; but with those around I think I could be so, despite of death, Which, as I know it not, I dread not, though It seems an awful shadow ------ if I may Judge from what I have heard.
Lucifer. 'And thou couldst not
   Alone, thou say'st, be happy?
Adah. Alone! Oh, my God!
   Who could be happy and alone, or good?
To me my solitude seems sin; unless
When I think how soon I shall see my brother,
His brother, and our children, and our parents.
   (I, i, 462-474)

We note in the initial exchange following Adah's entrance in Act I, that Byron stresses her domestic nature, for she is concerned that Cain has not joined the family in their "hour of rest and joy," and her pleasure has been lessened by his absence. She points out that she has herself completed Cain's task, by gathering the fruits for the family repast, and on being made aware of Lucifer's presence, she is quick to act the hostess, and welcome him as their guest. In the final scene, Adah shows her selflessness and her devotion to her duty as a wife and a mother:

   Cain! thou hast heard, we must go forth. I am ready,
   So shall our children be. I will bear Enoch,
   And you his sister. Ere the sun declines
   Let us depart, nor walk the wilderness
   Under the cloud of night. (III, i, 546-551)

In this she also shows herself to be of a practical nature, quick in deciding where her duty lies and sensible of the practicalities of their new situation. It is she too who speaks out to the Angel on Cain's behalf concerning the weight of his punishment, and once this question has been resolved she immediately turns her attention to the business of preparing themselves for their new predicament:
He's gone, let us go forth;
I hear our little Enoch cry within
Our bower.
...I will not leave thee lonely with the dead;
Let us depart together.  (III, i, 518-528)

From this we can see that Adah is more socially inclined than is Cain,
so that her over-riding concern with the everyday affairs of family
life enables her to ignore those unpleasent aspects of life that so
burden Cain.  Adah has a very deep love for her husband and children
and, more than this, the capacity to sacrifice her own safety and
security for Cain, without heed or question, in his time of greatest
need.  In this, she is not only essential to our full appreciation of
the nature of Cain, but is also instrumental in carrying Byron's
theme, as we will see in the next chapter.

Finally we come to what is the most significant addition to
the *dramatis personae*, which is the inclusion of Lucifer, who plays.
a considerable part in the drama.  However, he remains a "flat"
character throughout the play - independent, strong-willed in his
efforts to confound Cain, clever and subtle in making out "his case,"
as Byron puts it, with a wealth of knowledge concerning future events
that is appropriate to his power and position - but animated by a
single ambition, sure of his purpose, certain of his strength, neither
wracked with doubts nor worried about uncertainties, unmoved, unbending
and incompassionate.  He comes to Cain in the guise of a "comrade in
adversity," and as such he articulates for him the doubts that he has
entertained concerning his earthly existence - the purpose and meaning of life as explained by his father, as opposed to his own thoughts and feelings arising from his personal encounter with the world; "Thou speak'st to me of things which long have swum/ In visions through my thought: I never could/ Reconcile what I saw with what I heard" (I, i, 164-166). By sympathizing with Cain in his frustration, and by appealing to his need for an "explanation" as to the origin and purpose of life, Lucifer is able to elicit his attention in order to further confound and confuse him. In his discussions with Lucifer, Cain reveals himself to be an astute, intelligent man who is not overawed by the power and prestige of his companion, but who can reason well and argue convincingly:

- Cain. But dost thou not love something like thyself?
  Lucifer. And dost thou love thyself?
  Cain. Yes, but love more
    What makes my feelings more endurable,
    And is more than myself, because I love it.
  Lucifer. Thou lovest it because 'tis beautiful,
    As was the apple in thy mother's eye;
    And when it ceases to be so, thy love
    Will cease, like any other appetite.
  Cain. Cease to be beautiful! how can that be?
  Lucifer. With time.
  Cain. But time has pass'd, and hitherto
    Even Adam and my mother both are fair:
    Not fair like Adah and the seraphim ------
    But very fair.
  Lucifer. All that must pass away
    In them and her.
  Cain. I'm sorry for it; but
    Cannot conceive my love for her the less:
    And when her beauty disappears, methinks
    He who creates all beauty will lose more
    Than me in seeing perish such a work.
Lucifer. I pity thee who lovest what must perish.
Cain. And I thee who lov'st nothing. (II, ii, 319-338)

In this drama, Lucifer is not concerned to win Cain over to his side - to enrol him as one of his own Satanic school - but rather to gain his confidence for the express purpose of revealing "mortal nature's nothingness." We shall see later that he uses considerable skill in arguing to this end - shifting his position several times, contradicting previous statements and appealing to emotion - so that Lucifer serves an essential function in the play, though it does not arise solely out of his rebelliousness against God, which he uses as a means of expressing sympathetic indentification with Cain, but more importantly out of his capacity to discover Cain to himself. In this he can most certainly be seen as a "Lucifer," or bearer of light.

In the above we have considered those changes and additions that Byron has made in order to create the social world of his poetic drama, Cain, particularly as they contribute to establishing the character, and defining the ethical position, of the protagonist, Cain. Basically, these changes have accomplished two ends, they have first created a community of characters against whom we can observe Cain, and so compare and contrast him in deed and word, that he emerges for us as a dynamic, believable and sympathetic character; and secondly, they have created a community of values, within which Cain is forced to act according to his own conscience, thus expressing, and making more profound, the predicament in which Cain finds himself. We have
noted that the majority of the characters in the play are static, and that they change little if at all as a result of the action of the drama, so that their essential posture serves to highlight their alien attitudes and habits of mind when they are compared to the central figure, Cain, and their very immobility counterpoints Cain's frantic search for the purpose and meaning of life.

If we consider now the second aspect in which we find our being in the world, that is to say the world of our fellow man, we shall in fact be concerned with the social, or inter-personal world, in which "the categories of 'adjustment' and 'adaptation' are not accurate or even helpful: the term 'relationship' is the right category." However, Dr. May points out that "The essence of the relationship is that in the encounter both persons are changed. Relationship always involves a mutual awareness, and this already is the process of being mutually affected by the encounter." We have already observed in the above analysis that there exists between Cain and the more devout members of this first family, a radical difference of opinion concerning the meaning of life, and that this is reflected through the play, in the attitudes and actions of each

20Ibid., p. 6
21Loc. cit.
faction. Perhaps this is best illustrated by considering the character Abel. We have already seen that his essential posture is that of a theocentric, self-abnegating fanaticism. As the play opens, he is hard at prayers with the rest of the family, and though he plays a minor part in Act I, his contribution, and the comments that Cain makes in discussing him with Lucifer, show him to be a devout follower of the God of Adam. This is further emphasized in Act III, when he earnestly enjoins Cain to participate in his "pious ministry," and most extremely of course, in the tone and tenor of his prayer of propitiation. We cannot help but note, in the activities preceding the sacrifice, that Abel is tremendously conscious of the fact that Cain is his elder brother, a habit of mind that is quite in keeping with Abel's hierarchical system of values, but which is quite foreign to Cain. For instance, Abel is insistant that the ritual of the sacrifice by conducted in the proper manner, paying due heed to the established routines:

Cain. It means ---------- I pray thee, leave me.
Abel. Not till we have pray'd and sacrificed together.
Cain. Abel, I pray thee, sacrifice alone ----
        Jehovah loves thee well.
Abel. Both well, I hope.
Cain. But thee the better: I care not for that;
        Thou art fitter for his worship than I am;
        Rever him, then ------ but let it be alone ----
        At least, without me.
Abel. Brother, I should ill
        Deserve the name of our great father's son,
        If, as my elder, I revered thee not,
And in the worship of our God, call'd not
On thee to join me, and precede me in
Our priesthood --- 'tis thy place

Cain. But I have ne'er

Abel. Asserted it.

The more my grief; I pray thee
To do so now: thy soul seems labouring in
Some strong delusion; it will calm thee.

Cain. ...If it must be so ------- well, then,
What shall I do?

Abel. Choose one of those two alters.

Cain. Choose for me: they are to me so much turf
And stone.

Abel. Choose thou!

Cain. I have chosen.

Abel. 'Tis the highest,
And suits thee, as the elder. Now prepare
Thine offerings.
...My brother, as the elder, offer first
Thy prayer and thanksgiving with sacrifice.

Cain. No ----- I am new to this; lead thou the way,
And I will follow ----- as I may. (III, i, 188-222)

In his orthodoxy, Abel is set over against Cain, who cannot subscribe
to an imposed system of values; in his unflinching fanaticism, Abel
contrasts radically with Cain, whose personal doubts drive him to
search for a meaningful system of values by which to orientate him-
self; in his extreme denial of the essential dignity of mankind,
Abel personifies all that would take away from Cain the one supreme
value that he finally finds as vital to his own existance - the
compassion of one human being for another. It is quite obvious that
there is no possibility of 'mutual awareness" or of either faction
being "mutually affected" in the inter-personal world of this drama,
so that in the creation of the social world of Cain, Byron has in-
fused a high degree of psychological realism, both in delineating his central character, Cain, and in revealing the meaning of the other members of the group, as experienced by the protagonist, and in this he has profoundly deepened the philosophical reality of Cain's position.

Having considered some of the implications arising out of the natural and social worlds of Byron's reconceptualization of this Biblical story, we will now turn our attention to the play's argument, by considering Cain as an heroic figure, and this will be the burden of our next Chapter.
It is difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion as to the motivation that drives the Biblical Cain to murder his brother Abel, for as we have already seen, the account is short and terse, and lacking in any specific details as to characterization; but it has long been assumed that Cain's actions stem out of the jealousy he feels when Abel's sacrifice is accepted, and his rejected by the Lord God. The account states only that Cain was "very wroth" when the Lord did not respect his offering, and that he showed his feelings in his outward manner, causing the Lord to question him as to the cause of his anger, and to chastize him for feeling angry when he should in fact be feeling guilty for the sin that lies at his door. Cain is unable to recognise this sin, however, and instead of feeling that the blame lies with himself, he places it elsewhere, external to himself, and seemingly in a jealous rage, hits out at his brother Abel.

If we now consider Byron's Cain, we observe that he is at great pains to establish the motivation for the catastrophe that occurs in this drama, and that Cain's motives here are much more complex than the mere jealousy that we find in the Biblical account. Certainly Cain slays his brother in a fit of anger, and it is apparent that one of the things that contributes to his extreme
agitation is his unwillingness to recognise any guilt on his part for the sins of his parents, though it is eminently apparent to him that blame has been so apportioned that he cannot avoid bearing the responsibility for their transgressions. But when we have stated these two, slight similarities, we have exhausted the study of areas of agreement between these two accounts; for Byron's Cain is a vital, complex man, alive in a world of doubt and suffering, and a proper study of this Cain must start by considering the source of his doubt and the cause of his suffering. Accordingly, in this chapter we will study Cain as the protagonist in this play, at odds with the established system of values, and engaged in a struggle to discover the origin and meaning of life, in order to confirm his own sense of values, so that he may be reconciled to the facts of existence as he finds them in his encounter with the world.

Byron's Cain is set off from the social order of this play from the very start, for the play opens as the family are at their morning prayers, and it is quickly made evident that Cain is not a party to these orisons, and that his self-exclusion is not a mere whim, but is seated in a profound doubt as to the beneficence of God. The tenor of the family prayers is such as to attribute to God the power and the knowledge due to the Creator, and at the same time to recount the details of the Fall in a way that reflects harshly on themselves, thus leaving God the virtue of being all-good, to boot:
Zillah. Oh, God! who loving, making, blessing all,
Yet didst permit the serpent to creep in,
And drive my father forth from Paradise,
Keep us from further evil: -- Hail! all hail!
(I, i, 18-21)

But Cain cannot accept this rationalization, for it goes against all
sense and reason for him, and it ignores the facts:

Why did he yield to the serpent and the woman? or,
Yielding, why suffer? What was there in this?
The tree was planted, and why not for him?
If not, why place him near it, where it grew,
The fairest in the centre? They have but
One answer to all questions, 'Twas his will,
And he is good.' How know I that? Because
He is all-powerful, must all-good, too follow?
I judge but by the fruits -- and they are bitter ---
Which I must feed on for a fault not mine. (I, i, 69-79)

Cain reserves the right to use the knowledge of good and evil, so
dearly bought, and in his judgement, "knowledge is good,/ And life is
good; and how can both be evil?" (I, i, 37-38). That Cain is
socially alienated is quite apparent, for though the members of this
first society are bound together by family ties and by their common
plight, these bonds serve only to unite Cain to the rest of the
family for the sake of mutual convenience, for of his relatives he
says:

... My father is
Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind
Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk
Of an eternal curse; my brother is
A watching shepherd boy, who offers up
The firstlings of the flock to him who bids
The earth yield nothing to us without sweat;
My sister Zillah sings an earlier hymn
Than the birds' matins; and my Adah, my
Own and beloved, she, too, understands not
The mind which overwhelms me. (I, i, 176-186)

But neither here nor elsewhere in the play does Cain insist upon the
other members of the family participating in his opposition to God,
for he does not expect them to be of like mind to himself, but rather
it is he who is prepared to recognize their belief, and even to make
the gesture of a sacrifice to their God, in order to placate them.
In this he shows great tolerance and understanding, certainly more
than is reciprocated on their part. Cain is deeply disturbed by the
knowledge that man must die; that life must cease, and all beauty and
love be ended in the grave:

Thoughts unspeakable
Crowd in my breast to burning, when I hear
Of this almighty Death, who is, it seems,
Inevitable.
...Ah! I thought it was a being: who could do
Such evil things to beings save a being? (I, i, 253-262)

To demand that all things die, is an evil act as far as Cain is con-
cerned, an act "denounced against us,/ Both them who sinn'd and sinn'd
not, as an ill" (I, i, 283-284), and this arbitrary inclusion of
guilty and guiltless is inexplicable and unforgivable in Cain's eyes.
The sense of justice is very strong in Cain, and he insists in judging
for himself, and for this reason he cannot subscribe to the values
of his father, and so he is set over against these devout followers
of God.
But Cain is forced to find some other source of value by which to orientate himself in life, and so, prior to the opening of this play, he has set himself to oppose the God-ordained system of values, and herein lies his only anchor-point in life, for his psychic energies are dissipated in his opposition to the "injustice" of his predicament, so that his life is centered in the recognition of God, in the same way that it is for Adam, but whereas Adam identifies with God, Cain identifies in opposition to Him. Both men need to see the forbidden Paradise - Adam as a reminder of God's Grace and his own shortcoming, Cain as a reminder of God's injustice and his own integrity. If we need proof of the importance of Paradise to Cain we need only note that he is constantly referring to it throughout the play and in such a way as to point up the fact that he has been unjustly denied his place there. That this Garden of Eden acts as a center for Cain is obvious, for when first he is whirlèd into space by Lucifer, he looks around for his conventional center of reference:

Can it be?
Yon small blue circle, swinging in far ether,
With an inferior circlet near it still,
Which look like that which lit our earthly night?
Is this our Paradise? Where are its walls,
And they who guard them? (II, ii, 28-33)

And on their next stage of the journey he is still concerned to locate that which forms a focal point in his own life:
Lucifer. Away, then!
Cain. But the lights fade from me fast,
    And some till now grew larger as we approach'd,
    And wore the look of worlds.
Lucifer. And such they are.
Cain. And Edens in them?
Lucifer. It may be.
       (II, i, 167-169)

Once in Hades, and seeing the phantoms of past ages, he asks:

What are these mighty phantoms which I see
Floating around me? - They wear not the form
Of the intelligences I have seen
Round our regretted and unenter'd Eden. (II, ii, 44-47)

And later:

And those enormous creatures,
Phantoms inferior in intelligence
(At least so seeming) to the things we have pass'd,
Resembling somewhat the wild habitants
Of the deep woods of earth, the hugest which
Roar nightly in the forest, but ten-fold
In magnitude and terror; taller than
The cherub-guarded walls of Eden, with
Eyes flashing like the fiery swords which fence them,
And tusks projecting like the trees stripp'd of
Their bark and branches -- what are they?
       (II, ii, 132-142)

Lucifer is of course aware of Cain's suffering, and wishing
to ally himself with Cain for his own ulterior motives, he immediately
denies the one injustice which Cain considers the most terrible of
all - the finality of death, for he refers to man's "immortal part."
Having gained Cain's sympathetic attention, Lucifer then expresses
his own opposition to the God of Adam:
Lucifer. They say -- what they must sing and say, on pain
Of being that which I am - and thou art -
Of spirits and of men.

Cain. And what is that?
Lucifer. Souls who dare use their immortality --
Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in
His everlasting face, and tell him that
His evil is not good! If he has made,
As he saith -- which I know not, nor believe --
But, if he made us -- he cannot unmake:
We are immortal! nay, he'd have us so,
That he may torture:-let him! He is great --
But, in his greatness, is no happier than
We in our conflict: Goodness would not make
Evil; and what else hath he made? But let him
Sit on his vast and solitary throne,
Creating worlds, to make eternity
Less burthensome to his immense existence
And unparticipated solitude;
Let him crowd orb on orb: he is alone
Indefinite, indissolable tyrant;
Could he but crush himself, 'twere the best boon
He ever granted: but let him reign on,
And multiply himself in misery!
Spirits and Men, at least we sympathize---
And, suffering in concert, make our pangs
Innumerable more endurable,
By the unbounded sympathy of all
With all! But He! so wretched in his height,
So restless in his wretchedness, must still
Create, and re-create-------

(I, i, 134-163)

This speech is an excellent example of persuasive argument, in which
we see Lucifer using all of his cunning; for first of all he casts
doubts upon the powers claimed by the Creator, then accepting those
same powers, he argues that they are more limiting for God than for
his creation, thus at once revealing the insurmountable gulf that
must separate Creator and creation, and at the same time finding con-
solation in the very fact that God, in his extreme isolation is cert-
aingly no happier than man. Hence, here lies not only a source of con-
solution for man, but the very basis of a sympathetic comradship
between man and Lucifer, and so on, apparently appealing to reason
in his concise argument, but more truly concerned to play upon Cain's
emotions. In this speech, Lucifer articulates for Cain what he has
only felt to date, so that in fact Lucifer is hereby giving Cain the
concepts necessary for him to be able to recognize his own position,
and from this point on Cain can formulate for himself, objectively,
what has up to now been mere subjective experience:

Thou speak'st to me of things which long have swum
In visions through my thought: I never could
Reconcile what I saw with what I heard.
My father and my mother talk to me
Of serpents, and of fruits and trees: I see
The gates of what they call their Paradise
Guarded by fiery-sworded cherubim,
Which shut them out and me: I feel the weight
Of daily toil, and constant thought: I look
Around a world where I seem nothing, with
Thoughts which arise within me, as if they
Could master all things --- But I thought alone
This misery was mine: (I, i, 194-176)

Hence, Lucifer is here expressing Cain's own sense of values, and
describing the reality of Cain's situation as he has understood it up
to this time. Having identified the common cause that must unite
them, Lucifer proceeds to flatter Cain, by telling him that in his
opposition to God, and in his compassionate concern over the fate
of mankind, he is indeed fit for the companionship of such as Lucifer.
He then tempts Cain, by revealing his knowledge of past events and of
future possibilities:
Cain. Would they had snatch'd both
The fruits, or neither!
Lucifer. One is yours already,
The other may be still.
Cain. How so?
Lucifer. By being
Yourselves, in your resistance. Nothing can
Quench the mind, if the mind will be itself
And centre of surrounding things -- 'tis made
To sway. (I, i, 208-213)

But he proceeds to disparage the knowledge so far gained by Cain, by
pointing to his unreasonable fear of death:

Cain. ...Alas! I scarcely know what it is,
And yet I fear it -- fear I know not what!
Lucifer. And I, who know all things, fear nothing; see
What is true knowledge. (I, i, 295-298)

It is agreed that Lucifer will teach Cain all, on condition that Cain
become a follower of Lucifer. Cain would prefer to remain uncommitted,
but once again he learns that he has no choice in the matter, for not
having bowed down to God makes him a worshipper of Lucifer. But in
view of the promise made by Lucifer, even this seems acceptable, for
he replies, "Let me but/ Be taught the mystery of my being" (I, i, 319),
and in this hope, he is prepared to follow Lucifer.

At this point, Adah enters the scene, and on learning of
Cain's intended departure, she becomes very concerned. In the exchange
with Lucifer that follows his refusal to include her in the journey,
she is seen to be an astute woman, quick to point out the weaknesses
in Lucifer's arguments, and a real threat to his power over Cain.
However, Lucifer very quickly clouds the issue and reaffirms his superior
knowledge, for he quite gratuitously raises the question of incest, which disturbs Adah considerably. In the argument that follows, Lucifer again shows his skill, for in speaking out against God, he does so in terms that force Adah to recognize her own "dissatisfied and curious thoughts," so that she feels drawn to Lucifer with a "pleasing fear." When she points out his complete lack of love, Lucifer turns this vice into a virtue by opposing love and knowledge, and by equating love with ignorance and fear with knowledge. He implies that love is only possible in a state of ignorance, and he points out that Adam has already made his choice, for "His worship is but fear," so that in this context, if Cain chooses love he is going back on his parents' original choice of knowledge at the price of fear. Cain rises to this bait, declaring that as far as Adah is concerned, no choice is necessary, for his love for her was born with him, but that he can love nothing else, certainly not his parents, for they "sow'd the seed of evil and mankind/ In the same hour" (I, 1, 439-440), and out of all the terrible suffering that must ensue, not even the promise of the tree of knowledge can be salvaged:

Methinks the tree of knowledge
Hath not fulfill'd its promise: - if they sinn'd
At least they ought to have known all things that are
Of knowledge -- and the mystery of death.
What do they know? -- that they are miserable.
What need of snakes and fruits to teach us that? (I, 1, 453-458)
Adah insists that in spite of this, she could be happy with Cain, but he will now have nothing to do with a happiness that is founded on ignorance. The question of human sympathy is then raised, and Adah declares that she could neither be happy nor good alone, but that with the companionship of others of her kind, she could be so. Lucifer quickly turns this to his own advantage by pointing out that God is supremely alone, and though Adah insists that he has the company of his creation, and that his joy arises from making them happy in turn, when Lucifer asks her, she can only agree that she is not herself happy, as should be the case. Having now rooted his argument in empirical experience of the world, Lucifer states that living things cannot find happiness in submission to the Maker because of the conditions of their very existence, and only in resisting His authority, in maintaining one's integrity, can any happiness be found in life. He declares that such resistance is in fact natural, and springs from man's intuitive sense of right:

Lucifer. ...there is
   A wisdom in the spirit, which directs
To right, as in the dim blue air the eye
   Of you, young mortals, lights at once upon
The star which watches, welcoming the morn.

Adah. It is a beautiful star; I love it for
   Its beauty. (I, i, 488-493)

Here he is on safe ground, of course, for he well knows that both Adah and Cain respond deeply and sympathetically to the natural beauty
around them, and Adah's reply merely confirms this for him. It is but a short step now to ask why Adah does not worship these things of beauty which she can see, and which she has a natural love for, rather than a God who remains invisible, inscrutable and unsympathetic. But Adah is following the teachings of her father, and replies that Adam has beheld God himself, and Lucifer does not pursue this line of argument any further. Adah likens the sublimity that she feels when confronting the beauties of this world, to the feeling that she now has when facing Lucifer, for he seems so unhappy, in spite of his beauty and nobility, and the sight of him brings tears to her eyes. She offers to weep for him in his unhappiness, if only he will not make them unhappy in turn, but Lucifer coldly spurns this offer of sympathy. At this point the argumentation has ceased, and Cain declares his intention of following Lucifer. It remains for Lucifer to reassert his knowledge and power, and this he does by explaining that all things are divided between him and God, so that each has his own realm. Passing reference is made to Christ, as the only other mortal form who will enter Lucifer's domain and return, as will Cain, and then Lucifer calls upon Cain for the last time:

Lucifer. Cain! thou hast heard.
If thou dost long for knowledge, I can satiate
That thirst; nor ask thee to partake of fruits
Which shall deprive thee of a single good
The conqueror has left thee. Follow me.

Cain. Spirit, I have said it.

[Exeunt Lucifer and Cain.]

Adah. [follows exclaiming]. Cain! my brother! Cain!

(I, i, 553-559)
Our analysis of Act I has been so detailed because it is in this Act that the basis for Cain's isolation is established, and in order to fully understand his intellectual position, it is necessary to consider his relationship to the rest of the family, to their God-ordained hierarchy of values, to his wife, Adah, to his companion in adversity, Lucifer, and most importantly, to himself - that is to say his concept of himself and his place in the scheme of things.

Prior to the opening of the play, Cain has found that he is unable to participate in the design of the "structure of meaningful relationships" which constitutes the world of this first family, for it gives rise to terrible discrepancies which Cain can neither accept nor resolve, and so he has set himself to oppose the theocentric system of values. But such an opposition is not itself sufficiently positive to be able to provide the dynamic that Cain requires, for it does not allow him to express identity with the world he inhabits. For this reason he is anxious to follow Lucifer, the only one who has confirmed his own sense of values and, what is more important, who promises to give him the knowledge necessary to achieve a positive commitment - a commitment to the mystery of life itself. In this, Cain is turning to the realm of the mind for a vision of an absolute source of value, so that he may find the world of experience to be totally undefining, and therefore devoid of all meaning. This will enable Cain to "transcend" the limitations imposed upon him by his mortal condition by

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22 Ibid., p. 5.
allowing him to accept suffering and death as pertaining only to his mortal nature, and therefore powerless to affect his "immortal part."

At this point we must note that in the Preface, Byron reminds his reader that in the books of Moses, there is no mention whatsoever of a future state, that is to say, of a life after death, so that for this first family, submission to the will of God holds out no promise of achieving another, more desirable state in which the cares and worries of this world are laid aside. Hence, as far as this play is concerned, submission to God cannot ever be a means of transcending one's mortal condition, for all life ends in the grave, when dust is resolved back to dust, and both body and soul cease to exist. This fact helps to explain 1) why Cain cannot accept a God who imposes such a fatal limitation upon man, and 2) why it is that Lucifer is able to seduce Cain into following him, for his implication that there is a future state gives him a tremendous advantage, for Cain grasps at the hope of a life beyond life that will "explain" and hence make bearable, the iniquities of the human condition. This craving after some absolute source of value is quite evident from the text itself, for in two quite significant places, Cain expresses the death-wish:

Cain. Were I quite earth,
That were no evil: would I ne'er had been
Aught else but dust!  
Lucifer. That is a grovelling wish,
Less than thy father's, for he wish'd to know.  
    (I, i, 287-290)
Here the discussion has been concerned with death - Cain's fear of it and his lack of knowledge concerning the nature of it - and his yearning here is for complete oblivion, or in other words he desires to abandon the human condition and to be merged with absolute nothingness. Later he says:

Lucifer. Thy human mind hath scarcely grasp to gather
The little I have shown thee into calm
And clear thought; and thou wouldst go on aspiring
To the great double mysteries! the two principles!
And gaze upon them on their secret thrones!
Dust! limit thy ambition; for to see
Either of these would be for thee to perish!
Cain. And let me perish, so I see them!
Lucifer. There
The son of her who snatch'd the apple spake!
(II, ii, 401-409)

Here Cain expresses the wish to die in the attainment of absolute knowledge, again a yearning after an Absolute in which to lose oneself - a positive commitment to some intellectual and moral certainty that will make possible the "transcendence" of one's human condition.

But to return to a chronological study of Cain's intellectual position, initially, as the play opens, Cain is socially alienated because he cannot subscribe to the values of the rest of this family, and his alienation is evidenced in his self-assertion - his determination to resist the imposition of values by God, and his insistence on his own right and ability to judge good and evil. With the arrival of Lucifer, however, Cain finds someone who articulates for him his essential opposition to the established system of values, who thus confirms his own sense of order and meaning, and who shows promise of revealing the very mystery of life itself, which possibility appeals
to Cain as a more positive and regenerative source of value. Up to this point, Cain has been adamant in his refusal to recognize the God-ordained system of values, but he has not tried to convert any of the family to his own position, and in fact he has shown considerable tolerance towards them. His wife, Adah, whilst she admits to entertaining fears and doubts as the beneficence of her father's God, and while she finds it necessary to ask His help in finding love for Him, does not fully understand why Cain is so deeply disturbed. She has accepted the God of her father without question, and her occasional doubts and fears do not cause her much concern, for her life is centered in her family and in the day-to-day affairs of this first society. She is not unintelligent, but things of the mind - questions concerning God's justice, death, good and evil - are of minor importance in her life. Her husband and her children are her commitment, and she finds here a quite sufficient means of defining reality. Adah's "world" is the social world of this play, and her instinctual responses to her husband, her children and her relatives are her source of motivation. While these remain, she can, she is sure, create a Paradise on earth. In this capacity she represents the essential feminine role and the corresponding habit of mind, and it is therefore natural that she should be the one to raise the question of human sympathy, and to express the belief that man can create his own paradise, founded on mutual affection and respect. But Cain needs more than sympathy in his extreme position, he needs someone to empathize with him, not sympathize with him, for sympathy is only
sentimental identification, and it arouses pity, which is destructive to the ego, while in empathizing we participate in the other person's world, and we feel with him the fear that he feels in his confrontation with reality, so that we confirm his values and we substantiate his commitment, and hence we build up the ego. This, of course, is what Lucifer means by "suffering in concert," the one consolation by which Spirits and men may "Make our pangs/ Innumerable more endurable,/ By the unbounded sympathy of all/ With all!" (I, i, 158-161).

But as we have already noted, in the second Act Cain refers constantly to the forbidden Eden, showing that he makes no sudden change in commitment, but rather that he wavers, uncertain of the efficacy of his new-found knowledge, for of course Lucifer has no intention of aiding Cain, but is only concerned to confound and confuse him. For instance, he attempts to confuse both Cain and Adah with the question of "truth," for when they claim that the serpent was false, he is quick to refute this, as we see in the following conversation with Adah:

Cain. A god.
Adah. So did the serpent, and it lied.
Lucifer. Thou errest, Adah! --- was not the tree that Of knowledge?
Adah. Ay --- to our eternal sorrow.
Lucifer. And yet that grief is knowledge -- so he lied not: And if he did betray you, 'twas with truth; And truth in its own essence cannot be But good. (I, i, 347-353)
But to claim that this "truth" is good is patently foolish, and Adah is equally quick to so state. Lucifer had earlier stated that he tempts none but with the truth, and that "we who see the truth, must speak it," so that he is claiming that truth is a thing to be desired as and of itself, and this is also implied in his reply to Cain, concerning the knowledge he has gained in his journey:

Cain. And wherefore didst thou
Lead me here only to inform me this?
Lucifer. Was not thy quest for knowledge?
Cain. Yes; as being
The road to happiness.
Lucifer. If truth be so,
Thou hast it. (II, ii, 227-231)

In this, Lucifer is surely revealing that man's new-found power of assigning value, and hence of determining what is "true" and what "false," is to be seriously suspected as being the key to happiness and self-sufficiency. But he also questions Cain's ability to recognize beauty, and when Cain insists that in Adah lies a beauty that surpasses all the beauties of Nature, he replies that "'Tis fair as frail mortality,/ In the first dawn and bloom of young creation,/ And earliest embraces of earth's parents,/ Can make its offspring; still it is delusion" (II, ii, 269-272). But this same beauty is the basis of Cain's love, so that love, too, is degraded, and likened to mere appetite; "Thou lovest it, because 'tis beautiful,/ As was the apple in thy mother's eye;/ And when it ceases to be so, thy love/ Will cease, like any other appetite" (II, ii, 323-326).
But perhaps Lucifer's intention is best seen in his arguments as to what constitutes "evil," surely the one area in which fallen man can feel most secure in exercising his own judgement, for in this he is already a demi-god:

Lucifer: I would have made ye Gods; and even He who thrust ye forth, so thrust ye Because 'ye should not eat the fruits of life, And become gods as we.' Were those his words?

Cain. They were, as I have heard from those who heard them In thunder. (I, i, 199-204)

But Cain is not secure in his assessment of value, for it has alienated him from the remainder of the family, and at the same time it has not helped in any way to reconcile him to the terrible disparity between what he feels and what he sees and is told. Lucifer points out those aspects of life that cause Cain suffering and fear, and he concurs in regarding these as "evil." Since, however, these are essentially a part of life, they are the responsibility of the Maker, God, so that God is in fact the creator of "evil," and hence cannot be all-good, for "Goodness would not make Evil." But having comforted Cain by siding with him on this matter, Lucifer then goes on to thoroughly confuse the issue. Firstly, he reiterates the fact that in Cain's world, God decides what is good and what evil:

Lucifer. Believe--and sink not! doubt--and perish! thus Would run the edict of the other God, Who names me demon to his angels; they Echo the sound to miserable things, Which, knowing nought beyond their shallow senses, Worship the word which strikes their ear, and deem Evil and Good what is proclaimed to them In their abasement. (II, i, 5-12)
But then he declares that Cain is himself sinful and evil, and that this will continue to be the case for all mankind:

Lucifer. First-born of the first man!
Thy present state of sin, and thou art evil ---
Of sorrow, and thou sufferest---are both Eden
In all its innocence compared to what
Thou shortly may'st be; and that state again,
In its redoubled wretchedness, a Paradise
To what thy sons' sons' sons, accumulating
In generations like to dust (which they
In fact but add to), shall endure and do.

(II, ii, 219-227)

Then he states that evil is an essential part of all things, and that it cannot be avoided:

Lucifer. ...But ignorance of evil does not save
From evil; it must roll on the same,
A part of all things.

Cain. Not of all things. No:
I'll not believe it--for I thirst for good.

Lucifer. And who and what doth not? Who covets evil
For its own bitter sake?--None--nothing! 'tis
The leaven of all life, and lifelessness.

(II, ii, 235-241)

But he later changes his position once more, declaring that the basis of all moral values lies, not in an absolute standard of good or of evil, but in the peculiar viewpoint of the judge; "He as a conqueror will call the conquer'd/ Evil; but what will be the good he gives?/
Were I the victor, his works would be deemed/ The only evil ones"

(II, ii, 443-446). He has earlier demonstrated this by referring to the sin of incest, for as Lucifer points out, in the future, circumstances will cause what are now innocent and natural acts to be regarded as
evil, so that what is now a source of love will then be regarded with loathing. But once more he changes his position, and declares that an absolute standard is available, for "Evil and good are things in their own essence,/ And not made good or evil by the giver" (II, ii, 452-453). Finally, his last exhortation on this subject, is for Cain to apply the pragmatic test; "Judge/ Not by words, though of spirits, but the fruits/ Of your existence, such as it must be" (II, ii, 456-458). In this he throws the onus back onto Cain, having denied him the solace of an absolute standard to substantiate his own moral choices.

Thus, Lucifer, far from providing Cain with the knowledge of a transcendent source of value, forces him to recognize as inevitable the freedom of choice which is his, and at the same time, the responsibility for the assignment of value, which must also remain his alone, whether he is concerned with Truth, or Goodness or Beauty or whatever. Now Cain is not only socially alienated, but also metaphysically isolated, for he has been thrown back upon himself, and denied any objective grounds upon which to structure his own worldview, for if there is to be any value in the world, if he is to have any sense of identity at all, he can only bring these about by asserting himself, and assuming the responsibility for this self-realization.

This, of course, is the terrible lesson of the third Act, which opens when Cain, convinced of "mortal nature's nothingness," has returned to earth. He first encounters his own wife and child, and
for the first time in the play, the child is described for us, so that the whole incident stresses the human love and affection in this family group. We note that Cain is now more than ever distressed by the thought of the suffering and death in store for them, and for their heirs and descendants, and that he is filled with the injustice of this sentence, imposed upon all mankind. He is quite disturbed to hear that he has only been away for two hours, for it has seemed like so much more to him, and this deliniates the subjective nature of time:

The mind then hath capacity of time,  
And measures it by that which it beholds,  
Pleasing or painful; little or almighty.  
I had beheld the immemorial works  
Of endless beings; skirr'd extinguish'd worlds;  
And, gazing on eternity, methought  
I had borrow'd more by a few drops of ages  
From its immensity: but now I feel  
My littleness again. Well said the spirit,  
That I'was nothing! (III, i, 60-69)

This is just one more example of the subjective nature of all values, for the nature of human experiences can radically affect a person's experience of time, and this serves to frustrate Cain once more. He is still sick at heart, and unable to reconcile himself to the human condition, and so he reasserts his opposition to God. At this point Abel enters the scene, and completely oblivious to the fact that Cain is so profoundly disturbed, and with great determination he persuades Cain to offer up a sacrifice to the Creator. We have already noted the terrible self-denial on the part of Abel and the
straightforward, dignified self-assertion on the part of Cain as these two brothers offer up their sacrifice to the Lord God. In making this gesture, Cain is merely appeasing his brother so that his reaction to the whirlwind is quite understandable. He places no importance in this sacrifice, and in his prayer he expresses his opinion of a God who would demand such an offering, and he states his expectations concerning the outcome of making a sacrifice to just such a God:

If a shrine without victim,  
And altar without gore, may win thy favour,  
Look on it! and for him who dresseth it,  
He is--such as thou mad'st him; and seeks nothing  
Which must be won by kneeling: if he's evil,  
Strike him! thou art omnipotent, and may'st--  
For what can he oppose? If he be good,  
Strike him, or spare him, as thou wilt! since all  
Rests upon thee; and good and evil seem  
To have no power themselves, save in thy will;  
And whether that be good or ill I know not,  
Not being omnipotent, nor fit to judge  
Omnipotence, but merely to endure  
Its mandate; which thus far I have endured. (III, i, 266-271)

When his offering is rejected, therefore, he is not at all disturbed, and is content to let things remain as they are:

Abel. Thy fruits are scatter'd on the earth,  
Cain. From earth they came, to earth let them return;  
Their seed will bear fresh fruit there ere the summer;  
Thy burnt flesh-off'ring prospers better; see  
How heaven licks up the flames, when thick with blood! (III, i, 281-285)
But all through this ritual, Cain has been becoming more and more upset by the sight of the blood-sacrifice, as we saw earlier, and now, urged against his will to make another offering before it is "too late," and fully conscious of the suffering and pain that such a fatal sacrifice implies, Cain can no longer contain his anger at a God who would demand such an offering of man, for it is an affront to mankind in that it denies creation's worth, and man's essential human dignity:

Abel [opposing him]. I love God far more
Than life.
Cain [striking him with a brand, on the temples, which he snatches from the alter].
Then take thy life unto thy God,
Since he loves lives.

(III, i, 315-316)

And so Cain, determined to assert his own values in the face of this intolerable denial of man's worth, strikes out at Abel, who has now become the personification of all that would threaten Cain's own integrity - all that he now has left to form the center of his own "world."

Once the murder has been consummated, Cain is shown to be shocked and horrified at his own deed, and his concern for Abel is very evident:

I--who abhor
The name of Death so deeply, that the thought
Empoison'd all my life, before I knew
His aspect--I have led him here, and given
My brother to his cold and still embrace,
As if he would not have asserted his
In exorable claim without my aid.
I am awake at last—a dreary dream
Had madden'd me;—but he shall ne'er awake!

(III, i, 371-379)

We hear no word from Cain, following this speech, for some eighty lines, during which time the full import of his act is made perfectly clear to him, as is the fact that he alone must bear the full responsibility for the death of Abel. Adam accepts this calamity as the will of God, to be borne in such a way as to show their faithful submission to His "holy will," but Eve sees this act as the direct responsibility of Cain, as her rebellion in the Garden of Eden was accomplished in spite of God's decree concerning the tree of knowledge, and so she places the blame squarely on Cain's shoulders. She does not call down the wrath of God, but hopes that "like us" Cain will be driven forth, and will suffer for his action. We cannot help but note that Adam's first remarks on discovering the death of Abel, place the blame on Eve once more; "Woman, behold the serpent's work, and thine," so that in her curse, Eve is also expressing her own sense of guilt as the originator of this whole situation. The nature of her curse is such that the misfortunes that she wishes on Cain are in a large part those which God bestowed on her and Adam. For instance, the fact of being driven forth into a wilderness, the wish that his children may in turn blame him for their predicament, the suffering and toil that must be undergone in an effort to wrestle sustenance from the earth,
and finally the terrible sense of responsibility that Cain must now bear for bringing death into the world for the first time - all of these have their counterpart in the curse heaped upon Adam and Eve. Though Adam attributes all things to God, Eve here recognizes in Cain's action, the freedom of will which she exercised in her rebellion against the will of God.

But Eve's curse also emphasizes the fact that Cain can no longer look for human companionship in Eve, Adam or Zillah, for now his alienation is to be enforced by physical isolation, and the severance between Cain and these members of the family is now complete. It is at this point that Adah rises to her full stature and decides to remain with Cain, although we note that this complete commitment to Cain is made in spite of the crime he has committed, for she says that this is a matter between Cain and the great God, and she will not sit in judgement on him. But here Adah is avoiding the issue, and refusing to consider the question of responsibility, and this is in keeping with our earlier remarks concerning her avoidance of all intellectual concerns. She thinks of herself in terms of her duties - her duty to her husband, her duty to her children, her duty to her parents and her duty to her God, and this would seem to represent her order of priorities too. Of course this "duty" is not devoid of love, for Adah fulfills herself in loving and caring for those who love her and who need her, and this enables her to find a purpose and a meaning in life.
But before we discuss the marking of Cain, we must note several radical changes that have been made that effect the significance of the mark, firstly to the religious community and secondly to Cain. For instance, it is an Angel of the Lord who carries out this commission, and not God Himself, as in the Bible, and this detailing of a subsidiary to mark Cain, implies that this is not a significant "failure" in the eyes of the Lord, for the loss of Cain from this "flock" does not demand a personal intervention by God. The mark serves to further set Cain off from this religious community, of course, and the reason for the observance of this separation is again fear - fear of the Lord's sevenfold vengeance. But the mark is a sign to both sides of the gulf that must always separate them, and this is surely re-emphasized by the Angel's speech to Cain concerning his habitual sternness:

Angel. Stern hast thou been and stubborn from the womb,
As the ground thou must henceforth till; but he
Thou slew' st was gentle as the flocks he tended.

(III, i, 503-505)

The comparison of Abel's gentility to that of the "flocks he tended" is striking, for by this point in the play we know quite well what is meant by "gentle" as used in this speech, for we have witnessed this "gentle" man as he offers up a sacrifice to God, and we have had a vivid view of his altar, strewn with the dead bodies of his "gentle" flock! Finally, we observe that when Cain asks that Abel be restored to life, and that he be allowed to die in his place, the Angel asks, "Who shall heal murder," and we surely cannot help but add, "If not
God, then who indeed!" Cain is summarily dismissed after this prevarication, but the effect of the changes is to reveal the utter separation between Cain and this rigid, stern, theocentric community.

Further changes involve Cain's reply to the Angel's question as to the whereabouts of Abel, for he does not at first deny that he has this information, as does Cain in the Bible, but he immediately replies, "Am I then my brother's keeper?" In other words, there is no attempt to avoid blame, but rather an immediate acceptance on Cain's part. The inclusion in this reply, of the word "then" has turned it from a question of fact to a mere rhetorical question, requiring no answer, for of course, Cain has by this time fully accepted the responsibility for his act. Byron has also put the speech concerning the punishment being more than Cain can bear, into Adah's mouth, and this accomplishes two ends; it allows Cain to express the death-wish again, and so reveal his very real grief, and it provides an opportunity for the threat of even greater horrors in the possibility of parricide. But of course, the force of this curse is immediately undermined, and it is shown to be an idle threat, raised by the Angel to be immediately denied by the placing of the mark. The total effect of these changes, then, is to reveal Cain's continuing alienation with respect to the God-ordained system of values, and to play down the participation of God in the final scene, so that the emphasis in this final Act may fall on the human reactions to this catastrophe.

Having received the mark, and been denied his wish to die in
his brother's stead, Cain is forced to accept his responsibility for this crime, and it is obvious that he does accept the blame, for he now tries to rationalize his actions, firstly by relating them to his mother's state of mind when she bore him, and secondly by stating that he is not totally responsible for his own actions, not being his own creator. It is apparent by now that Cain is full of grief and woe, and that he fully recognizes his own guilt:

Cain. I think thou wilt forgive him, whom his God
Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul.

(III, i, 532-533)

In this speech, at this point in the play, Cain expresses his own recognition of his dual nature, and of the paradox that must always plague mankind - man's bounded mortal nature and his free untrammeled spirit. He expresses here his consciousness of man's total experience of the world, both in the deterministic aspects of existence that are given him by "his God," and in the continuous process of self-realization which gives rise to "his own soul." Now, as he leaves the stage, he expresses his remorse, and we see that finally Cain has become committed to mankind, and has accepted the universal human situation. As Lucifer has stated earlier, grief is knowledge, for it brings awareness of loss and of suffering, and in turn it shows an abandonment of self-interest on the part of the remorseful. Cain obviously suffers pangs of conscience, and he does try to form some sort of self-defence,
and this reveals to us his sense of the attachment to the human community, and his awareness of the bonds that unite men in their common predicament.

In the above, we have followed the changing intellectual positions adopted by Cain as a means of defining reality and of giving life a meaning and a purpose. Initially, Cain is deeply disturbed by the facts of death and mutability, and he can neither accept nor resolve the suffering that these facts impose upon mankind. He is very conscious of the fact that these conditions need not have been man's lot, and this only makes matters worse for him, for he feels that he is being denied immortality by an unjust God. He cannot - and will not - subject himself to the authority of such an "evil" tyrant, and so he finds solace in opposing His dictates, and though this is rather cold comfort, it does afford him a means of self-expression and hence of self-assertion, so that his opposition serves as a center around which he can structure his own "world," and thus give life some meaning. But under Lucifer's influence, Cain seeks to attain a more transcendent source of value by which to orientate himself, believing that here lies the means of overcoming his mortal limitations. However, this quest for an absolute ends in disappointment in his trip out into space with Lucifer, for on this journey, he literally and figuratively "sees" life from a new perspective, and this new knowledge brings an awareness of mortal man's "littleness" when viewed
against the whole sweep of the creation. Lucifer first of all gives Cain a sense of the immensity of the physical universe, and so makes clear the inferiority of the earth when seen as merely one of a "mass of most innumerable lights," and in fact Cain himself compares earth to the sparkle of a fire-fly or of a fire-worm. In this way, Cain can see his own problem in a new perspective, for if his own planet is diminished in his new view of the universe, how much more so is his own problem then?

But Lucifer also provides Cain with an awareness of the "sweep of time," for he is shown beings from previous ages, and he learns that his world is merely a degenerated form of a previous, more glorious earth. We note, too, that Lucifer is at pains to mention the future, for he repeatedly refers to the generations that will descend from Cain, and he states that Cain's suffering is as nothing compared with theirs. Hence, Cain begins to develop an historical consciousness too, and in the light of this knowledge his own predicament takes on a new significance, for the problem which until now has filled his whole life, and consumed most of his psychic energies, must be reassessed in comparison with the concerns of immortality and eternity. Hence, when Cain says, upon returning to earth, that he can feel his own littleness, we must realize that this enlarged perspective which has been thrust upon him, is both sudden and shattering, for in two short hours, man and his predicament have been
reduced to near insignificance when seen in reference to the immensity of space and time.

But at the same time, this has in no way resolved the terrible problems that plague Cain, for these remain as real as ever for him, only now the possibility of ever resolving them is seen to be nil, while at the same time it has become quite evident that no succour can ever again be obtained in mere opposition to the Creator. Hence, bereft of all hope of ever overcoming his human limitations, and stripped of all supporting metaphysics, Cain is cast back upon his own resources, and forced to accept the conditions of his mortal nature. His one and only consolation now lies in his own integrity, and in the essential dignity of all mankind. Hence his final commitment is to the human community, for he is thrown back upon his compassion for all men, who must suffer and learn as he has, that there is no escape in this world, for man is both "creature and creator,"\(^{23}\) both "fatefully free and freely fate."\(^{24}\) It is with this in mind that Cain makes his prayer to God, for here we seem him prideful and independent, glorying in his humanity:

> Look on it! and for him who dresseth it,
> He is—such as thou mad'st him; and seeks nothing
> Which must be won by kneeling: If he's evil,
> Strike him! thou art omnipotent, and may'st—
> For what can he oppose? If he be good,

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\(^{24}\) Loc. cit.
Strike him, or spare him, as thou wilt! since all 
Rests upon thee; and good and evil seem 
To have no power themselves, save in thy will; 
And whether that be good or ill I know not, 
Not being omnipotent, nor fit to judge 
Omnipotence, but merely to endure 
Its mandate; which thus far I have endured. (III, i, 268-279)

The dynamic of this prayer is pride, pride in his ability to "endure," and it sustains him in his belief in his own freedom, his own innocence and his own worth. The sequence of events which follows this is stained with the blood of innocent creatures, slaughtered to appease their very Maker, and this terrible desecration enrages Cain. Abel's final, utter self-abnegation would even deny Cain his human pride, and this is more than Cain can stand, and this is why Cain strikes out at his brother. It is not mere jealousy, as in the Biblical account, but rather the final stroke in a series of experiences that have sundered Cain from the "world" he knew. The shock of the realization that he has killed his own brother deflates his pride, and leaves him distraught and anchorless, for in this act he has learnt of man's innate weakness - his inability to completely control himself by his reason, for Cain strikes out at Abel in anger, when his emotions have overcome the reins of reason, and this is surely made evident in the painful way in which he slowly realizes the import of his actions:

Cain [after a moment's stupefaction]. My hand! 'tis all red, and with------
What?
Cain? Can it be that I am he?
(III, i, 321-323)
Here then the "One good gift" which the apple gave has completely failed Cain, for man is not "animal rationale;" but rather "animal rationis capax" as Swift pointed out, so that the one and only consolation that Lucifer would allow mankind has been shown to be suspect too - like man's mortal nature itself, the faculty of reason is both a facilitating and a limiting attribute, and if man is to face the reality of his condition, this fact must be accepted, with all that it implies. Faced with the horror of his crime against mankind - both in the murder of his own brother and in the destruction of the forefather of what would have been a "gentle race" - Cain abandons all attempts to assert himself, and reverts to remorse and self-pity, for it is in self-pity that Cain leaves the stage:

    Adah. Peace be with him!
    Cain. But with me!--------- (III, i, 562)

    Our study of Cain as an heroic figure has revealed that in this play, the protagonist struggles to orientate himself in life, and that in so doing his attitude to the determinate aspects of the universe and of his own nature changes, from an instinctual resistance at the play's opening, to a rational opposition in Act I, to an enlightened acceptance in Act III. There is a change on his part, too, from an adamant insistence upon the validity of self-assertion in the opening, to an abandonment of all attempts at self-projection in the close; from the claim, in the opening, of the essential dignity of
mankind, to the retreat, in the closing scene, into remorse and self-pity. Our hero leaves the stage, not upright and sure of himself, but bowed and uncertain, wracked with anguish and steeped in guilt.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing analysis we have considered the form, the structure and the argument of Byron's poetic drama, *Cain*, in an attempt to arrive at an understanding of the central issue with which this "metaphysical" drama is concerned. We have noted that this story is a traditional, religious myth, and in discussing myths, Northrop Frye has said:

...myths are a part of the corpus of stories that every society has in its earlier phases of development. They are similar in form to other stories, some of which may be distinguished as legends or folk-tales, but are regarded as having in their content an element of peculiar and central importance. The question arises: how are we to respond to this importance? One obvious answer is: by believing what the myth says; by attaching its content to the rest of our experience. This is the answer primarily insisted on in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and for centuries the notion persists that, for example, if the Bible says a great fish swallowed Jonah, there are special rewards for the reader who can swallow both... But such efforts soon perish through their inherent fatuity. From here the response to the myth takes one of two directions. Either the myth represents something which is true in spite of the story, or it is a story to be responded to as a story. We call the first type of response allegorical, and the second archetypal. They are not mutually exclusive: they are distinguishable, but they coexist, and help each other to develop. The allegorical response is a semi-poetic one: it shifts the basis, as Aristotle says the poet does in comparison with the historian, from what was true, or did happen, to the kind of thing that is true, or does happen.... Now just as the allegorical interpretation of myth is semi-poetic, so the poetic recreation of it is semi-conceptual. The poet tries to make his traditional story imaginatively credible, and he also interprets it incidently. His primary task, however, is not to interpret but to represent; he transfers an ancient tale from the past to the present, from something inherited to something that confronts the reader immediately; from (if the myth is Canonical) the particular event in the past, the truth of
which is believed, to the universal event, the significance of which is comprehended.  

There are several points in this passage that throw light upon our overall study of Cain. For instance, we have noted that the change in form to that of a drama has allowed the playwright new dimensions in which to articulate his meaning, for such a radical change in mode demands a considerable number of alterations and additions, which the playwright may fashion to carry his own peculiar meaning. Such a re-conceptualization also demands a new, fresh approach by the audience, and the dramatic form provides this too, for the reader's expectations, based upon his knowledge of the traditional account of this story, are initially confounded, so that they may then be structured anew. Hence, both of these factors - the increased complexity of the dramatic mode and the audience's more omniscient point of view - contribute considerably to delineating the conflict in this drama so that it is seen to be eminently human in its origin and outcome, thus unquestionably making this drama "imaginatively credible." We have also seen how Byron has used his materials to create a substantial, identifiable "world" for this play, together with a believable, tangible first family, so that in this he has been successful in transferring this story "from the past to the present, from something inherited to something that confronts the reader immediately." It remains now for us to identify the "truth" with which Byron is dealing, and which Northrop Frye claims is embedded in a universal event, "the significance

25 Frye, pp. 34-35.
of which is comprehended."

As the title of this work indicates, and as our study has revealed, this drama is Cain's, for he is our protagonist and our narrative point of view for most of this work. We have discussed the empirical, the psychological and the philosophic realism that Byron has infused into this drama, all of which contributes immensely to our appreciation of the situation in which these first of humankind find themselves, but most especially to our understanding of the social alienation and the metaphysical isolation of the main figure, Cain. Our study of Cain as an heroic figure has revealed his struggle to orientate himself in his world, and has shown us the various intellectual and moral stances that he adopts as the play progresses. If, then, Cain is the protagonist, what or who is the antagonist, with whom he comes into conflict, and against whom he struggles? It must by now be quite clear that this Cain struggles against his own mortal nature, that is to say, he refuses to accept man's fallen and helpless state. We have noted that the advent of death is the most terrible indictment pronounced against man as far as Cain is concerned, and that he declares this to be an "evil" act on the part of the Creator. But of course death is not "evil," but rather the natural attribute of all life, and the denial of death becomes also a loss of life, for in not facing the fact of death we evade a large segment of the reality of human experience. But not mere biological life is the ultimate value for man, as Cain senses:
Cain. I live,
But live to die; and, living, see no thing
To make death hateful, save an innate clinging,
A loathsome, and yet all invincible
Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I
Despise myself, yet cannot overcome--------
And so I live. (I, i, 109-115)

For man is distinguished in that he can make some values more important than life itself, and so Abel can say, "I love God far more than life."

But Cain cannot accept this transcendent value, for herein lies the source of his dilemma, in the deterministic aspects of existence. And so he struggles to overcome his limitations, and as a result of this he acquires an increased awareness of the universe he inhabits which also brings a growing awareness of himself as a part of this process, of his own identity, and a heightened appreciation of himself as a human being. In this, Cain can be seen as an awakening sensibility, acquiring new dimensions of consciousness, and thus finally realizing that the human condition "embraces fate and freedom, determinism and choice, the requirements of social morality and the responsibility of the individual person."26 Cain exercises his freedom and makes his choice in hitting out at Abel, and the necessity of having to bear the responsibility for this act brings an awareness of man's full nature, and this is a further deepening of consciousness for Cain. He accepts the responsibility for this action, and he accepts man's fallen and helpless state, or his mortal nature. Having so suffered, Cain can now fully know the world he is in, so that in the future he can move from mere self-interest towards self-

26 May, p. 25.
realization, maturity and integration. Hence, the "universal event" with which this "metaphysical" drama is concerned is man's need to find his place as human in the universe, so that the central issue of the play is man confronting his own reality. We cannot fail to note the obvious parallels that are drawn between Christ and Abel, for in his dying moments Abel says: "Oh, God! receive they servant, and/ Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what/ He did" (III, i, 318-320). This, and Abel's concern in his last moments for his wife, Zillah, foreshadows the last words and concern of Christ, as recorded in the Bible, and these anachronisms are not accidental, but are meant to expand the play's meaning, for in as much as Abel has contributed to Cain's self-realization, he has of course acted as a redeemer, for he has "redeemed" Cain from himself, by setting him free from his own misconceptions of himself and his place in the world.

If we now bear in mind the truth with which Byron is dealing in this play - man's dual nature, and his need to face the reality of the human condition - we can briefly reassess the claims of previous critics that Byron's intention in writing Cain was to make an out-and-out attack on traditional Christian doctrine. We must note, first of all, that the religious community that exists at the start of the play is extant at the close, and that though they have lost one of their most devout members, this loss has in fact only served to unite them even more firmly in their submission to God, for here has been immanent
proof of the evil of mankind and of the folly of non-conformity. The death of Abel has confirmed God's curse and at the same time has provided this community with a further burden to shoulder, and hence a further means of showing their ready acceptance of God's holy will. We have remarked upon the allusions that are made to Christ, and of course in his final moments, Abel too identifies completely with his God. For such a selfless follower of the Lord, death in defence of His "hallow'd altar" is surely a perfect consummation to a life of complete devotion, and we observe that at this time, Abel is completely invulnerable to all other concerns and influences, and hence that he is completely realized in his commitment to God. Hence, the religious community remains, stronger than ever in its faith, and united even more firmly by this new catastrophe.

But Cain, Adah and their children leave "Eastward from Eden," towards the land of Nod, sharing their burden between them, and though Cain leaves the stage in self-pity, he has none-the-less achieved an enlarged perception of the universe and of man's place in it, so that in the future he will be able to put this knowledge to use, for by fully recognizing the limitations of the human condition, Cain can exercise his free will within those limitations, instead of constantly pitting himself against them. To know one's limitations is to be free, and in this drama, Cain has tested out the limits of his own mortal nature. We can see, then, that Cain is just such a one as can move on to a vital, engaged standpoint in life, and just such a one as
could become the inventor of cities, metals and weapons. Recalling our earlier comparison of Byron to the ancient Greek playwrights, we see that he has in fact observed the "historical" continuity of the cultural myth with which he is dealing, while manipulating his materials so as to reveal his acute insights into the human condition.

We are left, then, with a reconceptualization of a religious myth which has been fashioned so as to make the total world of this drama more immediate, more recognizable and more credible, and in which the argument has been restructured to focus upon the human situation, that is to say, the actions and attitudes of this first family as they address themselves to the problem of orientating themselves in their new world. In this, Byron shows himself to be, first and foremost, a humanist, concerned with human values, not concerned to put forward one concept of man at the expense of another, but sincere in his concern to reveal both the possibilities and the limitations of human nature. It is this view that informs Cain, and all of his poetry and plays. To pick out certain aspects of the work, and to show them to be "blasphemous" or "heretical" is to miss the point of the play as a whole, and to do a discredit to Byron's total concept of man, which takes in both his strengths and his weaknesses. Byron is concerned to reveal the world in which he finds himself, not to judge it.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


