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Paul Douglass

San Jose State University, paul.douglass@sjsu.edu

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Paradise Decomposed: Byron's Decadence and Wordsworthian Nature in *Childe Harold* III and IV

PAUL DOUGLASS

Venice's 'evident decay' might repulse others, but Byron said he had been 'familiar with ruins too long to dislike desolation'.¹ The Italian city's crumbling architecture, mildewed walls and dangerous passageways harmonised not only with recollections of his ancestral Newstead Abbey, but with the 'Orient' that had captivated and liberated him on his journey with his friend John Cam Hobhouse in 1810–11. That trip had inspired *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I and II, *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *Parisina* and *The Siege of Corinth*. In a letter to Thomas Moore of 17 November 1816, Byron presents Venice, the current source of his inspiration, as an amalgam: a paradisaal 'greenest island' that is also a decadent city,² only one step in thought away from the lawless Eastern regions that had provided scope for the indulgence of his homosexual passions. Thus, Byron consciously locates the keenest pangs of the ardour that fed his imagination in what is decadent, desolate, buried and ruined. As Dame Rose Macaulay once observed, there is 'no end to the disinterment of ruined antiquity in Asia Minor, for more, no doubt, is under the ground than above it'.³ And more is under the psyche than can be observed on its surface, for, as many have noted, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* III and IV touch (paradoxically?) several times upon Wordsworthian nature, as if it might after all prove important as a creative source.⁴ It is a strange and interesting moment in Byron's career, and one in which Wordsworth certainly played a part, but, ultimately, only a minor one.

Byron generally focused on Wordsworth as an object of satire, but he also learned from the older poet. In the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, one finds the occasional Wordsworthian note: 'Oh! there is sweetness in the mountain air, / And life, that bloated ease can never hope to share' (*CHP* I, 30). Alan Rawes has argued that such borrowing is superficial compared to the deeper engagement Byron had with Wordsworthian 'procedures' and 'the Greater Romantic Lyric'.⁵ Overt Wordsworthian touches in *Childe Harold* I and II do indeed seem more like grace-notes lost in a thundering fugue of war, bloodshed and political and amorous treachery. Byron's engagement with Wordsworthian ideas about nature seems transient and superficial. Wherever he travels, from Portugal to Spain or Greece, what Byron looks for and finds is abundant historical evidence that 'keen Vengeance' has been at work (*CHP* I, 87). He explores battlefields from Talavera to Marathon. The Parthenon's 'broken arch, its ruined wall, / Its chambers desolate, and portals foul' make an apt counterpart

to a skull, that 'dome of Thought' and 'palace of the Soul' which seems to peer at him 'through each lack-lustre, eyeless hole' (*CHP* II, 6).

Admittedly, in his 1812 incarnation, Harold temporarily escapes 'to hold / Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores unroll'd' (*CHP* II, 25), and later pauses to remark that 'Dear Nature is the kindest mother still' (*CHP* II, 37). At such moments, as Rawes notes, it seems Byron is truly 'toying with, or "meditating upon", an idea of escaping into transcendent communion with nature that is very close to the Wordsworth paradigm'.⁶ But if Nature is the 'kindest mother', Harold still admits that he always 'lov'd her best in wrath' (*CHP* II, 37). Harold also takes pleasure in the barbarity of Albanian music 'half s[u]ng, half scream'd' (*CHP* II, 72) and other ironic or macabre moments connoting life's ephemerality. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* end with the theme of time, and the loss of his friends and mother: 'Roll on vain days! full reckless may ye flow / Since time hath reft whate'er my soul enjoy'd, / And with the ills of Eld mine earlier years alloy'd' (*CHP* II, 98).⁷

Newer ills sped Byron across the channel a short four years later, and within days of his departure in April 1816 he began to write the continuation of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. That November, on the day after Byron composed his 'greenest island' letter to Moore, the third canto of *Childe Harold* was published in London. In its opening stanzas, Byron depicted himself as 'the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind', who had 'grown aged in this world of woe' (*CHP* III, 3, 5). He had suspected that his 'springs of life were poison'd', now he knew 'Tis too late!' (*CHP* III, 7). With this understanding came (he claimed) a strange peace of mind. The 'very knowledge that he lived in vain', that hope was gone, sent Byron's imagination forth 'with less of gloom' (*CHP* III, 16). He imagined himself with perhaps a trace of uncharacteristic self-pity as a fallen, broken man, who 'brokenly live[s] on' (*CHP* III, 32) – like Venice, with her 'palaces [...] crumbling to the shore' (*CHP* IV, 3), which would become a leitmotif of the fourth and final canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. He was writing the continuation of Harold's journeys as a form of personal renewal, a kind of therapy. He longed for rejuvenation and wrote (he said) in order to 'create, and in creating live / A being more intense' (*CHP* III, 6). He struggled to think less upon himself and instead to focus on Ada, the 'sole daughter of my house and heart' (*CHP* III, 1), but could not resist throwing barbs at his wife. 'Time', he admitted, 'who changes all, had altered him' (*CHP* III, 8), and not for the better, for he had thought 'Too long and darkly' (*CHP* III, 7). And yet he quickly found that,

There is a very life in our despair,
Vitality of poison, – a quick root
Which feeds these deadly branches; for it were
As nothing did we die; but Life will suit
Itself to Sorrow's most detested fruit.

(*CHP* III, 34)

He discovered a mirror of this despair in the usual places: 'Harold stands upon this place of skulls, / The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo!' where Napoleon, hero

of Byron's youth, had met defeat and exile (*CHP* III, 18). Harold journeys down the Rhine, once again finding both consolation and inspiration in decay, a response to natural surroundings that amalgamates his love for 'Maternal Nature' with his preference for the symbols of spoliation, namely those 'chiefless castles breathing stern farewells / From grey but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells' (*CHP* III, 46). Again he conflates the human 'dome of thought' with ruins:

And there they stand, as stands a lofty mind,
Worn but unstooping to the baser crowd,
All tenantless, save to the crannying wind,
Or holding dark communion with the cloud.
(*CHP* III, 47)

Byron/Harold finds the castle ruins stir familiar sentiments of loss and nostalgia, with elegiac thoughts upon his own youth:

There was a day when they were young and proud,
Banners on high and battles pass'd below;
But they who fought are in a bloody shroud,
And those which waved are shredless dust ere now,
And the bleak battlements shall bear no future blow.
(*CHP* III, 47)

Byron had been mourning the loss of his childhood for several years. In 1813 he had written: 'I shall soon be six-and-twenty. Is there anything in the future that can possibly console us for not being always *twenty-five*?'⁸ And upon arriving in Geneva to meet the Shelleys in May 1816, Byron had put down his age in the register of the Hotel Angleterre as 100.⁹ Acceptance of his own decay came hard, of course.

Charles Robinson eloquently and early stated what all acknowledge: that Percy Shelley took every opportunity to 'dose' Byron with Wordsworth, and that this had an impact upon the writing of *Childe Harold* III.¹⁰ The immediate result was some stanzas of that poem not only borrowing Wordsworthian language (chiefly from 'Tintern Abbey'), but seeming to express a Wordsworthian perspective:

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in Nature
[...]
Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my Soul, as I of them?
(*CHP* III, 72–75)

Such Wordsworthian sentiments entering upon '[t]he Spirit of each spot' (*CHP* III, 74) support Rawes's recent re-assertion of the idea that *Childe Harold* III engages with Wordsworthian 'modes of procedure'.¹¹ But, as Rawes notes, these sentiments are

also immediately qualified, for in the very next stanza Byron insists: 'But this is not my theme; and I return / To that which is immediate' (*CHP* III, 76). Nevertheless, turning from the intangible to the immediate, from the metaphysical to the physical, he would still not completely abandon the Wordsworthian imagery and diction upon which Shelley had apparently dwelt. In the third canto, but also the fourth, of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* one finds its traces, for – as Robinson argued – Byron had learned from Shelley's metaphysical challenge that he could at times overleap the 'immediate' to seize a more 'cosmic vision'.¹² Wordsworth's (and Shelley's) presence is obvious in other places in *Childe Harold* III – for example, in stanzas 86 to 90, treating the Jura mountain range: 'Precipitously steep; and drawing near / There breathes a living fragrance from the shore / Of flowers yet fresh from childhood; on the ear / Drops the light drop of the suspended oar'. Byron/Harold also speaks of a 'floating whisper on the hill' and love 'infusing' itself 'Deep into Nature's breast' so that 'we stand in thoughts too deep'. At such moments, he says, 'stirs the feeling infinite, so felt / In solitude' (*CHP* III, 86–90). The verbatim echo of Wordsworth's 'Intimations of Immortality' ode ('thoughts too deep') starkly illustrates Byron's debt – or at least his close attention to Wordsworth's exploration of nature and experience.¹³

As before, however, the echo of Wordsworth is quickly countered. To grasp the cosmic aspect of existence Byron habitually turned not to the awe-inspiring forms of Nature, but to what Robert Gleckner aptly calls 'the repetitive ruination of paradise' – that is, the gradual erosion and destruction of the world and everything in it.¹⁴ Thus, from 'floating whisper[s]' and calm solitude, Byron turns immediately to his favourites – 'night, / And storm, and darkness' – and longs to be a 'portion of the tempest' (*CHP* III, 92–93). Here we also glimpse Shelley as the intermediary who had started the dialogue over Wordsworth's achievements. To Shelley's '[l]ight, life and rapture' of eternity,¹⁵ Byron opposed the 'mad disquietude' of 'Darkness', a poem written around the same time as the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. 'Darkness' is a cosmic vision of devolution and apocalypse, a nightmare of the last stage of earth's decay. Byron here imagines forests and cities being set on fire to harvest the last bit of heat, people who die 'of their mutual hideousness' (67), and a planet that is 'a lump of death' (72). For Byron, the wind and ocean are elemental to thought, and he attempts through their imagery to fathom the unimaginable end of Time, when 'rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still [...] / the waves were dead; the tides were in their grave' (73–78). 'Darkness' erases Nature.

Even after his most Wordsworthian moment in *Childe Harold* III (in stanzas 86–90, as discussed above), Byron cannot help describing the river Rhone as cleaving its way 'between / Heights which appear as lovers who have parted / In hate, whose mining depths so intervene, / That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted' (*CHP* III, 94). And in returning to the direct address to his daughter Ada, at the end of *Childe Harold* III, Byron cannot evade mixed emotions, calling her 'The child of love, – though born in bitterness, / And nurtured in convulsion, – of the sire / These were the elements, – and thine no less' (*CHP* III, 118). Byron was in conflict with the senti-

ments he found he could partly share with Wordsworth.

More than six months elapsed between the publication of the third canto of *Childe Harold* and Byron's beginning the composition of the fourth. Perhaps it was partly to complete the dialogue with Shelley over the problem of time and eternity, decay and permanence, that Byron was motivated to write this last and longest of the cantos. Certainly he must have desired to complete a journey begun with Harold five years before, in order to resolve for himself the deeper sources of the creativity that fed his poetic output and made life liveable.

Childe Harold IV begins, famously, in Venice, and, at first, Byron sounds almost like Shelley contemplating the duality of Venice's character and the ephemerality of its foundation:

The beings of the mind are not of clay;
Essentially immortal, they create
And multiply in us a brighter ray
And more beloved existence: that which Fate
Prohibits to dull life, in this our state
Of mortal bondage, by these spirits supplied
First exiles, then replaces what we hate;
Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,
And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.
(*CHP* IV, 5)

But Byron lives as man and poet in the immediate. Such 'beings of the mind' are actually a 'refuge of our youth and age, / The first from Hope, the last from Vacancy', and whether he 'saw or dreamed of such' does not matter: 'let them go – / They came like truth, and disappeared like dreams'. He can dream of anything and everything, but 'waking Reason deems / Such over-weening phantasies unsound, / And other voices speak, and other sights surround' (*CHP* IV, 6–7). The reality of Venice is his rock, not its abstract qualities: 'There are some feelings Time can not benumb' (*CHP* IV, 19).

Andrew Rutherford argued that we can best understand the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* as 'a long meditation on Time's works, defeats, and victories'.¹⁶ I agree with Rawes that this need not mean that the whole poem becomes one 'vast lament' over the defeat of the mortal human by Time – only that Byron prefers to 'meditate among decay, and stand / A ruin amidst ruins' in order to rejuvenate his poetic powers (*CHP* IV, 25).¹⁷ Exploring the places where Petrarch and Cicero once lived, he finds aesthetic delight in a landscape 'unite[d] / In ruin':

For Time hath not rebuilt them, but uprear'd
Barbaric dwellings on their shattered site
[...]
The Roman saw these tombs in his own age,
These sepulchres of cities, which excite
Sad wonder.

(*CHP* IV, 44–45)

And from Venice, Rome, Canova and Ravenna, Byron generalises to Italy herself: 'thy decay / Is still impregnate with divinity, / Which gilds it with revivifying ray' (*CHP* IV, 55).

It is no accident that destruction lurks in Byron's perceptions of Italy's landscape. War is never far from his thoughts, and everywhere he goes in Italy and Greece he imagines how warring nations consumed by hate have sacrificed their young.¹⁸ He pictures the rivers of Carthage swollen with the gore of the legions of soldiers now dead, 'Like to a forest fell'd by mountain winds', so that Nature's frenzy and the 'storm of battle' become one (*CHP* IV, 62–63). And even when he passes through Rieti and hears the Velino River's 'roar of waters' cascading 'from the headlong height', he pictures

the abyss;
The hell of waters! where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture; while the sweat
Of their great agony, wrung out from this
Their Phlegethon, curls round rocks of jet
That gird the gulf around, in pitiless horror set.
(*CHP* IV, 69)¹⁹

What seems to move Byron most about Italy in general, and Venice and Rome in particular, is that it is the 'Lone mother of dead empires', to whom the 'orphans of the heart must turn' in their misery (*CHP* IV, 78).

Again and again Byron finds his inspiration in 'broken thrones and temples' (*CHP* IV, 78). Brokenness becomes thematised in his 'broken narrative', as Stuart Curran says, though it is more properly understood as an 'interlaced structure' that evokes the Romances of Ariosto and Spenser.²⁰ Byron's protagonist is more and more confronted by the forces of history, and the fourth canto is supported by the dense scholarly apparatus assembled by John Cam Hobhouse supplying 'historical illustrations' and an exposition of Roman ruins and Italian literature.²¹ Stimulated by these tottered tombs, thrones and temples, Byron's muse conjures not just faded glory, but contemporary failure – a vision of human devolution:

And thus they plod in sluggish misery,
Rotting from sire to son, and age to age
[...]
Bleed gladiator-like, and still engage
Within the same arena where they see
Their fellows fall before, like leaves of the same tree.
(*CHP* IV, 94)

Consistent with the overt political agenda of Hobhouse's notes, and, perhaps, in keeping a certain faith with Shelley, Byron finds a political radicalism in the remnants of fallen nations. It is not, however, the progressive liberal mantra that radicals such as Shelley had imbibed from Volney.²² For Byron, as Anne Janowitz says, the fall of the Roman republic of antiquity is echoed in the demise of the Italian republic of twenty

years before.²³ It also reverberates in the raucous noise of crowds in London taverns celebrating what amounted to the betrayal of Italy at the Congress of Vienna, as Byron noted in his dedication of canto IV to Hobhouse.²⁴ With *Habeas Corpus* suspended at home, Byron foresaw not so much revolution as history repeating itself:

First Freedom, and then Glory – when that fails,
Wealth, vice, corruption, – barbarism at last.
And History, with all her volumes vast,
Hath but *one* page.

(*CHP* IV, 108)

Stephen Cheeke has argued that whenever Byron makes generalisations about history, he tends to offer such 'Gibbonesque' visions of 'repetition, fatalism, and patterns of decline' in words that appropriate the 'language and emotion of religion'.²⁵ Certainly this diction and its subject seem to contrast starkly with those of Wordsworth, as though the older poet had ceased to matter for Byron as he finished off *Childe Harold* and created his new 'hero', Don Juan.

Thus, it seems strange that, within the chiaroscuro of *Child Harold* IV, there continue to appear glimpses of Wordsworth's Elysian vision of nature. Here I disagree with Rawes's claim that in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* Byron 'replaced the Wordsworthian idealism' he had explored in *Childe Harold* III and that Wordsworth's influence essentially disappears in canto IV.²⁶ Byron acknowledges in the first few stanzas of the fourth canto that beauty remains around him and that 'Nature doth not die' (*CHP* IV, 3). And he later turns with pleasure to observe flowers such as the 'deep blue' violet, which, 'Kiss'd by the breath of heaven, seems coloured by its skies' (*CHP* IV, 117). But we should not forget that the transcendence of such moments is always contextualised as a fantasy, and that Byron is always reminding us that our dreams are tainted by our human nature – that the celestial heart is always locked in struggle with the personal, for how can even the greatest art

impart
The purity of heaven to earthly joys,
Expel the venom and not blunt the dart –
The dull satiety which all destroys –
And root from out the soul the deadly weed which cloy?

(*CHP* IV, 119)

Byron's understanding of the affections is that they 'run to waste', and that their waters foster 'weeds of dark luxuriance [...] / Rank at the core' (*CHP* IV, 120). These flowers' fragrance is 'agony'; the gum of their trees is 'poison' (*CHP* IV, 120). We seek in vain the 'celestial fruit forbidden to our wants', and spoil our Paradise anew in each incarnation of human life (*CHP* IV, 120): 'Of its own beauty is the mind diseased', and what we dream of, as children, is 'the unreach'd Paradise of our despair' (*CHP* IV, 122).

Though Byron had been swayed by Shelley, and though he had touched upon the language and sentiment of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' and 'Ode: Intimations of

Immortality', and though Wordsworth's influence does not disappear from *Childe Harold IV*, Byron nevertheless returned to his conviction that 'life is a false nature', a nature strewn 'with heart-aches ever new' (*CHP IV*, 126). Philip Shaw has astutely pointed out that a major source of Byron's difference from Wordsworth lies in his 'consciousness of Original Sin'.²⁷ For Byron, 'Nature' cannot offer redemption, much as he might wish it did: 'And thus I am absorbed and this is life' writes Byron, but immediately defines that life as a region of 'agony and strife, / Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast' (*CHP III*, 73). Thus, Byron sees faith in Nature as 'a base abandonment of reason', a resignation of 'Our right of thought' (*CHP IV*, 126–27). Jerome McGann writes that Byron seemed to intuit that a 'Wordsworthian program of sincerity' ultimately exposes itself as a 'program of bad faith', in which stubborn or inconvenient facts are glossed over and ignored.²⁸ Byron seems to make fact his foundation, and he implies that a desire to stop thinking motivated Wordsworth's worship of Nature.

Pointedly, then, Byron returns, in the conclusion to *Childe Harold IV*, not to Nature, but to what Janowitz calls the 'suprahuman principle' of Time:²⁹

beautifier of the dead,
Adorner of ruin, comforter
And only healer when the heart hath bled
[...]
Time, the avenger! unto thee I lift
My hands, and eyes, and heart, and crave a gift.
(*CHP IV*, 130)

His lengthy invocation to Time promises (as it pleads) that 'there is that within me which shall tire / Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire' (*CHP IV*, 137). He then turns for a last look at the ruins of imperial Rome, 'A ruin – yet what a ruin!', for its wreckage has furnished the raw materials for other 'Walls, palaces, half-cities'. Again he finds the remains of the imperial city like an 'enormous skeleton' (*CHP IV*, 143). It is ruin on a human scale; it is *productive* ruin. He dismisses Harold, 'the pilgrim of my song', whose 'shadow fades away into Destruction's mass' (*CHP IV*, 165).

And yet, weirdly, Byron seems to return to a Wordsworthian mode at the end of Canto IV when he writes that 'There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, / There is a rapture in the lonely shore' (*CHP IV*, 178), and that 'I love not Man the less but Nature more' (*CHP IV*, 178) for the periods of communion with her that remind him of what he feels but cannot express. But it is a short interlude succeeded by an image of the ocean's awesome power, and a conviction that 'Man marks the earth with ruin', and sinks like a drop of rain 'into thy depths with bubbling groan, / Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown' (*CHP IV*, 178). For Byron, as Dame Rose Macaulay has written, the 'human race is, and always has been, ruin-minded', finding weird beauty in 'the dark and violent forces, physical and spiritual, of which ruin is one symbol'.³⁰

Though in *Childe Harold III* and *IV* Byron comes closer than at any other point in his career to embracing Wordsworthian sentiments and Shelleyan ideals, he ends in

making Wordsworth a station of his dialectical process of renewal and growth, and returns to the imagery most convivial to his temperament and world view. The restless Ocean rolls in again, with tide and current. That Deep, upon whose 'azure brow' Time seemingly 'writes no wrinkle', enraptures as it sobers Byron's muse: 'Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now', Byron says of the ocean in the last stanzas of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (CHP IV, 182). Here, in the sea, 'Dark-heaving; – boundless, endless, and sublime', Byron locates the 'image of Eternity – the Throne / Of the Invisible' (CHP IV, 183). Byron wishes 'to be / Borne, like [the sea's] bubbles, onward' (CHP IV, 184), for he considers himself a child of the sea, 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear',³¹ but with this difference from Wordsworth's expression in *The Prelude*: Byron's fate was to be drawn ineluctably to life's suffering, pain and ruin. Jane Stabler has argued effectively that Wordsworth 'provided Byron with the poetic knowledge of people living with (not dying of) broken hearts', and that 'both poets depict human suffering as a form of decay which sets in early'.³² The major difference between the two poets' conceptions of suffering, however, is that Byron, in contrast to Wordsworth, embraces such suffering as a foundational artistic principle.

For Byron, the ocean's creative power is murky and monstrous: '[E]ven from out thy slime / The monsters of the deep are made' (CHP IV, 183). Janowitz has shrewdly connected Byron's embrace of the ocean in the conclusion to *Childe Harold* IV with Freud's 'oceanic feeling'. She points out that Freud detected a 'mystified understanding' of the oceanic feeling in the responses of European tourists to Roman ruins, and asserts that while Byron cannot be accused of a 'misunderstanding', he has nonetheless opted for 'affect over intellect', and sought a 'retreat' from history.³³ But the conclusion of *Childe Harold* IV is no retreat from history. It is a recognition of the power of facts and artefacts, an embrace of those tidal forces – creative and destructive – Byron saw at work in history and himself.³⁴

In the first canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Harold began his journey at Lisbon and the 'ruined splendour' of Cintra (CHP I, 22). With the conclusion of the fourth canto, despite a recognition of the power of Wordsworthian nature and Shelleyan idealism, he re-affirms the different locus of his own imaginative powers. His creative mind is stirred by the contemplation of ruination – his own and others. To finish the story of Harold, he casts his gaze once more upon the work of time's terrible touch. 'Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?', he asks in the last few stanzas. '[T]heir decay / Has dried up realms to deserts' (CHP IV, 182). Equally, he has gazed upon the internal struggle of the creative mind: 'Of its own beauty is the mind diseased' (CHP IV, 122). Thus it is in the decay of states and cities, and in the danger and perversity of human nature, and not Wordsworthian nature, that Byron found what he named to Moore – without apparent irony – 'the greenest island of my imagination'.

San José State University

- 1 Letter to Thomas Moore, 17 November 1816, *BLJ*, 5, p. 129.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Dame Rose Macaulay, *Roloff Beny Interprets in Photographs Pleasure of Ruins*, text selected and edited by Constance Babington Smith (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964; repr. 1977), p. 62.
- 4 See Michael G. Cooke, 'Byron and Wordsworth: the Complementarity of a Rock and the Sea', in Charles E. Robinson (ed.), *Lord Byron and His Contemporaries* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982), pp. 19–42; Charles E. Robinson, *Shelley and Byron: the Snake and Eagle Wreathed in Fight* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Stephen Cheeke, *Byron and Place: History, Translation, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Alan Rawes, *Byron's Poetic Experimentation: Childe Harold, the Tales, and the Quest for Comedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Jerome J. McGann, 'Byron and Wordsworth' (University of Nottingham: School of English Studies, 1999), repr. in *Byron and Romanticism*, ed. James Soderholm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 173–201; Philip Shaw, 'Wordsworth or Byron?', *The Byron Journal*, 31 (2003), pp. 38–50; Jane Stabler, 'Transition in Byron and Wordsworth', *Essays in Criticism*, 50:4 (2000), pp. 306–28; Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967).
- 5 Rawes, *Byron's Poetic Experimentation*, p. 20.
- 6 Ibid., p. 21.
- 7 'Eld', according to the *OED*, means 'old-time', 'archaic' or, in a clever pun, 'poet'.
- 8 Journal entry, November 1813, *BLJ*, 3, p. 229.
- 9 In this light, Stephen Cheeke seems not entirely correct when he assigns nostalgia an importance primarily in Byron's 'later writings' (*Byron and Place*, p. 158).
- 10 See Robinson, *Shelley and Byron*, pp. 14–40. The term 'dose' is Byron's, of course. See Ernest Lowell (ed.), *Thomas Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 194. Philip Shaw believes that Shelley's 'dose' of Wordsworth came in the form of intense discussion of 'Tintern Abbey'. See 'Wordsworth or Byron?', pp. 40–42.
- 11 Rawes, *Byron's Poetic Experimentation*, p. 20.
- 12 Robinson, *Shelley and Byron*, p. 27.
- 13 Obviously, I disagree with Cheeke's view that Byron's mode here is 'far from Wordsworthian' (see *Byron and Place*, p. 76). Alan Rawes's reading of *CHP* III seems far more compelling (see *Byron's Poetic Experimentation*, pp. 50–79).
- 14 Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, p. 251.
- 15 Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab*, line 595, quoted from *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, corrected by G. M. Matthews (London: Oxford University Press, 1979).
- 16 Andrew Rutherford, *Byron: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), p. 97.
- 17 Rawes, *Byron's Poetic Experimentation*, p. 122.
- 18 As Stuart Curran says, 'Wherever the pilgrimage leads, there is the clash of armies' (*Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 153).
- 19 Phlegethon: one of the five principal rivers in the realm of Hades – the river that flows with fire that burns but does not consume (J. E. Zimmerman, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 206).
- 20 Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, pp. 151–52.
- 21 Hobhouse's notes to *Childe Harold* IV were expanded and complemented by Foscolo's advice

- and help in *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold: containing dissertations on the ruins of Rome; and an essay on Italian literature* (London: John Murray, 1818).
- 22 Volney had instigated a fashion of reading ruins as evidence of the ultimate demise of tyranny. See Constantine Francis Chassebeuf de Volney, *Volney's Ruins: Or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires*, trans. Count Daru (Boston: Josiah P. Mendum, 1869).
 - 23 Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 42.
 - 24 See *CPW*, II, p. 124. The Congress of Vienna resulted in Austria and the Habsburgs taking most of Northern and North-Central Italy, the Pope being restored to his Papal States and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia seizing control of the Republic of Genoa.
 - 25 Cheeke tends to merge Byron's obsession with ruins into a general fascination with 'place', though, as he says, 'some spots speak louder than others' (*Byron and Place*, pp. 10, 22).
 - 26 *Byron's Poetic Experimentation*, pp. 135, 138.
 - 27 Shaw, 'Wordsworth or Byron?', p. 43. Shaw offers a wonderful elucidation of the complicated relationship of the two poets as craftsmen and seekers after revelation.
 - 28 McGann, *Byron and Wordsworth*, p. 43.
 - 29 Janowitz, *England's Ruins*, p. 47.
 - 30 Macaulay, *Roloff Beny Interprets in Photographs Pleasure of Ruins*, p. 236.
 - 31 In the first book of *The Prelude* Wordsworth famously says he 'grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear' (lines 301–02).
 - 32 'Transition in Byron and Wordsworth', p. 318.
 - 33 Janowitz, *England's Ruins*, pp. 39, 49. Sigmund Freud first formulated the idea of the 'oceanic feeling' in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilization and its Discontents*), first published in English in 1930 by the Hogarth Press.
 - 34 I am indebted here to Vincent Newey's excellent essay, 'Authoring the Self: *Childe Harold* III and IV', in Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey (eds), *Byron and the Limits of Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), pp. 148–90.