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Fame, sexuality, and exile Lord Byron's influence on Oscar Wilde

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FAME, SEXUALITY, AND EXILE
LORD BYRON'S INFLUENCE ON OSCAR WILDE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts

by

Denise Tischler Millstein

May 2002

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ABSTRACT

FAME, SEXUALITY, AND EXILE

LORD BYRON'S INFLUENCE ON OSCAR WILDE

by Denise Tischler Millstein

This thesis will show the extent to which Lord Byron served as a model for Oscar Wilde both in terms of his personal life and his art. This will be accomplished by demonstrating how Wilde, like Byron, simultaneously reveals and conceals aspects of his personal life, especially his sexuality, through his art. The benefits and risks of this kind of self-presentation will also be fully discussed. Further, it will show how Byron influenced Wilde in terms of his specific literary production as seen in an extensive comparison of Byron's Manfred and Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the Romantic and Victorian periods differ vastly, each movement gave rise to a man who won fame and recognition as both a personality and a writer: Lord Byron and Oscar Wilde, arguably the most well-known celebrities of their day. Just as Byron personified the adventurous spirit of the Romantic period, Wilde embodied the political subversion of the late Victorian era. For all the differences between the Romantics and the Victorians socially, politically, and artistically, Byron and Wilde share some remarkable similarities. This is not accidental, for Wilde was well aware of Byron's fame and influence as he developed his own celebrity and wrote his works.

This thesis will show the extent to which Byron served as a model for Wilde, both in terms of his personal life and his art. This will be accomplished by demonstrating that Wilde, like Byron before him, simultaneously reveals and conceals certain aspects of his personal life, especially his sexuality, through his art. The benefits and risks of this kind of self-representation will also be fully discussed. Further, it will show how Byron influenced Wilde in terms of his specific literary production

as seen in an extensive comparison of Manfred and The Picture of Dorian Gray. Finally, this thesis will explore how the results of this imitation, while similarly ending in exile, were actually vastly different, mirroring the prevalent morality of each author's time period.

Surprisingly little has been said about the startling similarities between Byron and Wilde as personalities and authors. In fact, there has been no significant work published which delves into Byron's influence on Oscar Wilde. This thesis will begin a discussion that seems to me not only obvious, but also necessary.

Chapter One

"Birth-place in a Star Condemn'd":

Byron and Wilde's Similar Beginnings

The similarities between Byron and Wilde begin with their families, both of which stood on the fringe of English culture. Byron's mother, Catherine Gordon of Gight, was a Scottish heiress descended from Annabella Stewart, daughter of James I of Scotland. This explains why, when Byron's father, Captain John "Mad Jack" Byron married Catherine, they followed Scottish custom and he took her name. It also explains why Byron was given his mother's Scottish surname. Born in London, Byron lived in Aberdeen, Scotland during his formative years until he inherited his great-uncle's title at the age of nine and became known as a Byron. Wilde, on the other hand, came from a proudly Irish family. In fact, his mother, Lady Jane Francesca "Speranza" Wilde was a well-known Irish nationalist poet before her marriage. Wilde's father, Sir William Wilde, aside from being the first Irish doctor to specialize in the care for eyes and ears, published Irish Popular Superstitions (1852). This important text chronicled the superstitions, legends, and charms told to Sir William by his country patients. It preserved Irish

customs which would have vanished otherwise under English rule. Thus, neither Wilde nor Byron could claim a full, authentic English heritage. And though proud of their families in youth, both worked to hide their true, native legacies as they grew up. That is, both Byron and Wilde dropped their native accents and ties by the time they began college, an obvious instance in which both men controlled and manipulated their public lives. Neither wanted to seem different from other young English gentlemen of the day.

Further, both men were brought up in highly unusual families. Of special interest is the relationship each man had with his mother, for each had an unusual mother who influenced his behavior and his life. Mrs. Byron alternated between being affectionate and abusive towards her only son. It was a behavior Byron himself mirrored even early on in his disastrous marriage with Annabella Milbanke. Like his marriage, Byron's relationship with his mother was marked by a constant, often violent struggle, most commonly focused on Catherine's need to control him. They had passionate arguments, not wholly unlike the passionate outbursts more commonly found in marriage. By the time Byron went off to school at Harrow and at

Cambridge, Catherine's control was primarily exerted to prevent her son from running up the debts which had kept his father away from England through most of Byron's infancy. But Catherine could also be overly affectionate--even indulgent--towards her son. For example, although she tried to control his spending, Catherine almost always relented and gave him the funds he asked for. Byron was seen as a spoilt and indulged child at Harrow, where he acted rebelliously towards his teachers.

Likewise, Wilde's mother was a source of pride and embarrassment to him. Not only was she a published and popular Irish national poet, but she was equally well-known socially as an accomplished talker and brilliant hostess. In Dublin, when her husband was still alive, and in London after his death, she entertained the intellectual elite at her lively salons. Lady Wilde sparkled with wit and enjoyable conversation. It was a behavior Wilde proudly mimicked in public. But Lady Wilde was also a flamboyant woman who dressed, it seems, to stun rather than merely impress the public. Likewise, Wilde's style of dress was often more noted than his intelligence. For instance, Wilde's appearance in a cello-shaped cutaway coat at the opening of Grosvenor Gallery in Dublin was more memorable

than his observations on that occasion. Some early biographies have given special significance to the fact that Lady Wilde dressed Oscar as a girl in long, flowing ringlets, and lace and velvet dresses until he was nine years old. Although it was rather late to be dressing Oscar in such attire, one would be hard pressed today to give this as evidence for Wilde's homosexuality. Indeed, only a few psychologists acknowledge a direct correlation between cross-dressing and homosexuality.

Byron and Wilde had fathers who profoundly influenced their sons' choices in life. Byron's father, John Byron, was a Romantic philanderer, who courted wealthy women primarily to get his hands on their fortunes. Amelia, the Baroness of Conyers, was a wealthy, married woman with three children when she met and fell in love with Captain John. They were married only a month before Augusta Leigh's birth. By all accounts, they had a stormy and passionate life together. And yet only a year after Amelia's death in childbirth with Augusta, John captured the heart of the wealthy but unsophisticated Catherine Gordon of Gight, married her, and quickly spent her 17,000 pound inheritance. He left her and the young Byron because of his heavy debts and turned to a life of debauchery in

Paris. He died when Byron was only three years old. Both Byron and his half-sister Augusta were left with a strangely Romantic conception of their father, whom they saw not as he really was--a gambler and womanizer--but as an individual who refused to be held accountable to social pressures and responsibilities. It is also rumored that John Byron had a long-standing affair with his sister, Frances Leigh, which may have influenced Byron's later relationship with his half-sister.

Like his father, Byron spent his youth in the pursuit of women, whom he impregnated and abandoned. Byron had four children; his first was a son, born to a Newstead Abbey servant named Lucy. Although it has never been conclusively proven, Byron also probably fathered a daughter, Medora, with his half-sister Augusta. His only legitimate child was a daughter, Ada, with his wife Annabella. And finally, he sired another daughter, Allegra, with Claire Claremont, Mary Shelley's step-sister. Although Byron provided financially for all his children, he refused to be encumbered by them. It is well-known, by Byron's own admission, that he did not particularly like children, and he only lived with any of his own for a short time. Byron may have learned absentee fatherhood from his

own irresponsible father.

Wilde's father also had a profound affect on his son's life. Sir William, in his younger days, sired three illegitimate children, one boy and two girls, with an as yet unidentified woman. When Wilde was a child, all of Sir William's children--illegitimate and legitimate alike--went on holiday together. By all accounts, however, following his philandering youth, Sir William remained faithful after marriage. And yet while Wilde was still in school, his father was accused of raping a young female patient, Mary Travers. The case was brought to trial, not through state prosecution, for the crime was committed years before the charges were revealed, but by the charge of libel. Travers sued Lady Wilde for remarks she made in a letter addressed to Travers' father. The result of this public scandal and trial was that Sir William was fined one farthing for his indiscretion. That is, because women could not be held responsible for their own actions, their husbands were made to do so on their account. Lady Wilde was found to have committed libel in her epistolary remarks, and thus the rape charge against Sir William was effectively upheld. But the most important result of Sir William's trial was that it instilled in Oscar the notion

that even if one was guilty of libel (or worse), all charges of impropriety were to be defended publicly. Coincidentally, another libel trial was to have even more profound effects on Wilde. That is, in suing Queensberry for libel in calling him a "Somdomite [sic]," Wilde's true identity as a homosexual was revealed and he was later imprisoned for two years for homosexuality (Belford 249).

But perhaps the most significant thing Byron and Wilde have in common concerning their family life is that both married women wholly unsuitable to them. Shortly after New Year's Day 1815, Byron and Annabella Milbanke were married in her family's home in Seaham. Annabella, nicknamed The Princess of Parallelograms by Byron for her inclination towards science and mathematics, was an attractive young woman when she met Byron. From drawings of her at the time, it is easy to understand why Byron was attracted to her round cheeks and feminine figure. And yet, in terms of her suitability as Byron's wife, Annabella had perhaps the very opposite personality to what was required. By all accounts, Annabella was logical, even-tempered, pious, and almost without humor. Her husband, on the other hand, was emotional, had radical and swift mood changes, often at little provocation. At his best, despite a deeply Calvin-

istic upbringing, Byron was religiously skeptical. And beyond all else, Byron loved laughter and life to an extent not often appreciated due to the melancholy hero-figure he bequeathed us. Their marriage, if it had succeeded, would have done so in the face of huge obstacles.

Perhaps the main reason the Byron marriage failed was the fact that Byron's heart was already engaged elsewhere. In fact, it can be argued that Byron married for the very reason that his heart already belonged to his half-sister Augusta. If Medora was Byron's daughter, he would already have had a child from his brief affair with Augusta before he married. Whatever the case, Byron's affair with Augusta is well-documented in his own letters, especially those to Lady Melbourne, Lady Caroline Lamb's mother-in-law. Their relationship began as Byron courted the already married and volatile Lamb. It was through Lamb that Annabella for the first time heard confirmation of innuendoes of Byron's incest with Augusta.

By all accounts, Byron and Annabella had a disastrous marriage. He was more often than not drunk on white brandy, took large doses of laudanum daily, flaunted his affairs with actresses at Drury Lane, and was facing certain financial ruin. As a result, Byron and Annabella

fought regularly. He was verbally abusive and threatened her with physical violence even when she was pregnant. However, his abusive treatment of Annabella was not so much fueled by the marriage per se, but by his enduring and tortuous feelings for Augusta. The situation must have been unbearable to Byron, especially when Augusta shared their home at St. James Place. It is in this light that one can come to understand Byron's horrifying and unforgivable behavior towards his wife. He was living with the woman he loved but could not marry while also living with a wife who prevented completion of his desires.

Wilde's marriage, while not nearly as outwardly stormy, was equally unsatisfying to him. His wife, Constance Lloyd, was also quite different from her husband. While Wilde was talkative, witty, worldly-wise, and gregarious, Constance was a quiet woman. This is not to say that she was unaccomplished, for she was beautiful, refined, highly intelligent, and talented in her own right, much like Annabella Milbanke. Constance had studied painting and music and had enough Italian to read Dante in the original. But unlike Wilde, who was not socially concerned, Constance was a woman who believed in social reform and, as Barbara Belford says, "her sympathies were

not with fashionable society," (126) conquered by her husband, but with the less fortunate.

Despite all these differences however, Wilde and Constance had a remarkably congenial marriage--at least until the birth of their two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan. Constance became intensely maternal; she much preferred sedate evenings at home in front of the fire with her husband and children to the trivial and mundane dinner parties where her husband's wit and eloquence shined. Besides becoming increasingly bored with a comfortable life at home, Wilde was also unprepared for the changes childbirth and motherhood would have on Constance physically. Both her pregnancies had been difficult and they left Constance not only bed-ridden for several months, but they also both necessarily negatively affected her graceful and lithe body. Wilde soon found himself no longer attracted to her physically.

Regenia Gagnier explains why Wilde was no longer attracted to his wife. According to Gagnier, women's "function as producers of children has wrenched from women the possibility of so-called nonpurposive, that is merely pleasurable passion." Having children became the purpose of sex to Victorian women like Constance. Sex was not an

allowable expression of passion for the sake of passion. "Sex for sex's sake" was "entirely consistent with Wilde's view of art for art's sake" (Gagnier 40). But women like Constance had sex for the state--to populate the state with the next generation. Gagnier claims that Wilde lost interest in his wife when their sex life was no longer aesthetically pleasing but had an all too real purpose.

However, there was perhaps another, more important, reason why Wilde turned his attention away from Constance. That is, at the time, Wilde was just coming to understand his own sexual preferences. Unlike Byron, who enjoyed the same-sex unions which made Harrow school and Byron infamous, Wilde's education at Portora Royal School in Ireland was devoid of such experimentation. It was not until he took the young Robert "Robbie" Baldwin Ross into his home with Constance on Tite Street that Wilde, now in his early thirties, began to feel and act upon an overwhelming attraction to men. It was probably in 1887 that Wilde began his affair with Ross, his first homosexual relationship, which began in the house he shared with his wife. More were to follow. Like classical Greek homosexual relationships which consisted of an older man taking a youth into his protection and bed, Wilde was to have

several younger lovers. Wilde was always in the position of the protector in all his homosexual relationships. It was the same for Byron.

The Byron marriage and the Wilde marriage were both set on the course to separation by the similar causes. That is, both men engaged in "deviant" sexuality and brought the object of that sexuality (Augusta and another man) into their households. This caused a breakdown of restraint in Wilde's case and a kind of mental breakdown in Byron's. The result was the same. Both Annabella and Constance sought legal separation from their husbands, though neither ever filed formally for divorce. Because the reasons for this varied slightly, the details surrounding both separations will be addressed individually.

The aura of mystery that surrounded the Byron separation still clings to it today. At the time, it was an enormous controversy and ultimately, public speculation forced Byron into exile. When Annabella filed charges against her husband, she refused to supply details--instead the charges are filled with blanks. But this is not to suggest that Byron was unaware of them. For even today they seem to scream incest and homosexuality.

Annabella first heard about Byron's involvement with his half-sister from himself. When Augusta lived with them, he made it painfully obvious that he preferred Augusta's company to hers, but he also let fall dark hints about their relationship before marriage. As briefly mentioned earlier, Annabella's speculation was confirmed by Lady Caroline Lamb, Byron's notorious former lover. And later, it was re-confirmed by Augusta herself, who sincerely befriended Annabella while at St. James Place. The reasons behind Augusta's confession to Annabella about her affair with Byron are many. But perhaps the most significant is that through her piety, Annabella revealed herself as someone who could still save Augusta's immortal soul, even though she had failed to save her husband's. But first Annabella required that Augusta make a full confession. Under intense pressure, Augusta finally agreed.

While charges of incest were taken very seriously during the period and called for social ostracism, the state punishment for such indiscretions was relatively slight. According to Louis Crompton, "offenders were liable to only feel 'the feeble coercion of the spiritual [i.e., ecclesiastical] court'" (223). By 1813,

imprisonment was limited to only six months (Crompton 224). Conviction of homosexuality, by contrast, brought a virtual death warrant. In England during the Regency, those convicted of homosexuality were often publicly executed by hanging. According to Crompton, during Byron's lifetime, several homosexuals were executed in England every year. But even if not sentenced to execution, a convicted homosexual was still essentially consigned to death, at the pillory. This barbaric punishment saw the accused homosexual chained before the public, who were then allowed to, in a stately and organized fashion, pelt the accused with stones, offal, fruit, or anything else at hand. More often than not, this resulted in death.

Annabella first suspected Byron of homosexuality, due to mysterious hints from Byron himself. According to Crompton, who examined Annabella's extensive notes to be used if Byron ever sought custody of Ada, on January 3, 1816, Byron confessed, "*I have not done an act that would bring me under the power of the Law--at least on this side of the water*" (221). Here Byron seems to be admitting, at least partially, to having committed sodomy while on his grand tour of the east. Perhaps he had in mind his Greek lovers Eustathios Georgiou and Nicolo Giraud or any of his

nameless conquests while in Turkey. In any event, to Crompton, this confession demonstrates Byron's "need to confess and to conceal" (218) aspects of his "deviant" sexuality to his wife.

Annabella's suspicions were again confirmed by Lady Caroline Lamb, when she recounted a fuller confession whispered to her after her relationship with Byron concluded. For reasons known only to himself, Byron admitted "that from his boyhood he had been in the practice of unnatural crime--that Rushton was one of those whom he had corrupted--by whom he had been attended as a page." Annabella continues, "he mentioned 3 schoolfellows whom he had thus perverted" (Crompton 199). These schoolfellows most probably include George Delawarr, Clare Dorset, and William Harness. Byron may have also thought of his Cambridge friend, John Edlestone.

Due to the severity of the punishment for homosexuality, Annabella's final (and perhaps only) act of charity towards Byron was to refuse formally to level these charges. And yet, as mentioned before, the indication that she perhaps knew of these acts was enough to send Byron into exile. Rumor tried and convicted Byron in the court of public opinion. In fact, only a few days after Byron

signed the legal separation from Annabella, he left for the continent. He never returned.

Wilde, on the other hand, did not fare so well. However, this was due more to his own folly than any act of revenge on Constance's side. After his liaison with Robbie Ross, Wilde had several other lovers. Most significantly, these men include John Gray, who bares an uncanny resemblance to Dorian Gray and his name, and the notorious Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas. Wilde's troubles began with his affair with Bosie. The young aristocrat was wealthy and enjoyed flaunting his sexual preference in a most unrestrained and reckless pursuit of pleasure. He was slight, effeminate, and beautiful, but his wealth and prestige had also left him spoilt and selfish. Bosie's father, John Sholto Douglas, the ninth Marquess of Queensberry, on the other hand, was an almost stereotypical heterosexual male. He enjoyed pugilism, hunting, fishing, and other manly activities. He was certainly not interested in art or literature and was basically unrefined and perhaps even somewhat deficient mentally. His son's relationship with Wilde filled him with both revulsion and fear. This is because his oldest son, also homosexual, committed suicide after his affair was revealed.

Queensberry feared Bosie would have a similar fate.

Bosie is widely regarded as the most enduring love of Wilde's life. Had Wilde's love for Bosie been less significant, he might have been able to walk away from him. But Bosie was Wilde's muse. He wrote five plays during their relationship. The period of their affair was Wilde's most productive. Wilde admitted as much after his release from prison. He wrote to Bosie, "I feel that my only hope of again doing beautiful work in art is being with you" (Belford 285).

But Queensberry sought to make Bosie's affair with Wilde as difficult as possible. For example, he appeared with an angry mob at St. James's Theatre at the opening night of Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest. Luckily for Wilde, the police were called in to keep the peace and the mob was turned away. Although a direct confrontation was avoided on this occasion, the Marquess continued to harass Wilde at every opportunity. Most significantly, on February 28, 1895, he left a note for Wilde at the Albemarle Club on Dover Street in London. In the note, Queensberry called Wilde a "Somdomite [sic]" (Belford 249).

Wilde was urged by friends and family alike to ignore the note and leave for Paris, even his usual lawyer advised

him to do nothing. However, Wilde had learned from his parents that such insults were not to be nonchalantly brushed aside, but fought publicly. Wilde used another solicitor to file libel charges against Queensberry, and the Marquess retaliated with a plea of justification, citing thirteen "acts of gross indecency" by Wilde (Belford 251). Wilde did not admit his homosexuality to Constance, even as late as Queensberry's justification. The libel trial ended with the exoneration of the Marquess of Queensberry. Wilde was essentially found guilty of sodomy. After the reading of the verdict, Wilde returned to his rooms at the Cadogan Hotel, proceeded to get drunk, and awaited for his arrest for the charge of homosexuality, despite the pleas of his friends for his flight from London to Paris. Meanwhile, Robbie Ross was given the unpleasant task of telling the news to Constance, who could not attend the trial due to a back injury. Constance now learned about her husband's double life.

Another trial was held on April 26, 1895. Wilde was charged with gross indecency. Under the 1885 Labouchre Amendment, conviction for sodomy no longer resulted in execution or the pillory, but a maximum sentence of two years in prison. Wilde was sentenced and spent his two

years in Pentonville Prison, Wandsworth Prison, and Reading Prison, from which he was finally released in 1897.

As a result of Wilde's conviction, Constance fled England for Switzerland, then Germany, and finally Italy. She took Cyril and Vyvyan with her. Wilde never saw his children again. She changed her last name to Holland (it was the name of her great-great grandfather) and Vyvyan dropped the middle name, Oscar. When Wilde began his sentence, he was confident that a reconciliation between himself and Constance was possible. If for no other reason, he wanted to stay in contact with her because he was devastated at the thought of losing his sons. And yet, to Constance, reconciliation was never really an option. However, as time went on, divorce became an even more difficult option to consider. This is because Constance "might be asked to produce new evidence of her husband's infidelities" (Belford 271). To save herself, her children, and even Wilde from the pain of another trial, she decided on a legal separation, much like Annabella Milbanke.

Byron's and Wilde's families, wives, sexuality, and legal separations are a part of a broader pattern of parallels and echoes in their careers. In the following

chapter, another important aspect of their lives will be addressed, their celebrity. This is of the utmost importance because both Byron's and Wilde's concept of their own fame also fed into their works.

Chapter Two

"It's Extraordinary How Soon One Gets Known":

The Effects of Fame on Byron and Wilde

When Childe Harold's Pilgrimage appeared in March of 1812, Byron went from being a relative unknown to the darling of London drawing rooms. Byron was literally inundated with fan mail. He received countless letters and invitations to dinner parties and to easy affairs from both men and women. The traffic in front of his St. James Place home crawled with numerous messengers and with carriages filled with those eager for a glimpse of the young literary lion. The extent of Byron's quick fame after the publication of Childe Harold is difficult to appreciate by today's standards, when celebrity is so common. But the unquenchable, almost universal public thirst and longing for Byron was unique during his own time period. The phenomenon became known as "Byromania," a term coined by his wife which still endures today.

Because Childe Harold was such a literary success, and because Byron's fans hungered for him so greatly, they naturally turned to the figure of Harold to find out more about Byron. Byron was a confessional writer, as his fans surmised. Peter W. Graham has gone so far as to say that

"Rousseau's stated objective in his Confessions might [. . .] have been Byron's for Childe Harold and other poems: [. . .] ['I'm going to show my peers a man in all the truth of his nature; and that man will be me']" (25). The character of Harold is deep, sentimental, lonely, tortured, truthful, and yet proud, noble, and worthy of being saved from his own self-imposed isolation. In many ways Harold really is a thin veil for Byron as he liked to think of himself.

Interestingly, Byron appealed to both men and women in part because his character presented a challenge to fans. For instance, many thought that Byron's mysterious past and true personality were too deep to be revealed in drawing rooms, so they sought, with a burning desire, the deep and lonely man they found in his poetry. However, in many ways, Harold is very different from Byron. For instance, Byron was lame and Harold is not. And yet, strangely enough Byron's lameness was a large part of why he seemed to play the aloof Harold when in public. Yet, Byron was not so much playing aloof at parties as much as he was vain and sensitive and reluctant for people to notice his lameness, which would have been obvious with his every movement. Further, Harold is such a super-serious character that even trying to picture him smiling is

difficult. However, as we know from reading his lively and witty letters, Byron himself was a remarkably amusing man. He enjoyed exchanging funny stories, puns, and bawdy jokes.

Byron's adoring public ignored these differences, however, and stubbornly insisted in drawing a direct correlation between Harold and Byron. Later, after the publication of the Oriental tales, Byron again found that his fans took him to be the real Conrad, Giaour, and Lara, even though they were very different characters from Harold. The same can be said for Byron's sorcerer, Manfred.

Wilde actively sought fame early on, without much thought as to how he would obtain it. This is seen in a quip Wilde made soon after finishing school. A friend, William Welsford "Bouncer" Ward asked Wilde what he wanted to do with his life. "'God knows!' he replied. 'I won't be a dried-up Oxford don, anyhow. I'll be a poet, a writer, a dramatist. Somehow or other I'll be famous, and if not famous, I'll be notorious'" (Belford 51). As another friend, Andr Gide remarked, Wilde's "success was so sure that it seemed as if it preceded Wilde and that he merely had come forward after it" (182).

Wilde actively courted success in many avenues, though

all involved some genre of writing. And yet, it can be argued that Wilde won recognition as a writer even before he had written any significant work. As Michael Patrick Gillespie has noted, "Wilde acquired an artistic reputation well before he produced any work of genuine merit" (8). For instance, his first collection of poetry, Poems, fell flat, despite his brilliant marketing strategy. That is, Wilde needed recognition for his work, but could not get it published, so he published it himself, a common enough avenue for any struggling poet. Even Byron self-published his first volume of poetry. However, unlike other poets who allowed positive public opinion to demand other editions of their work, Wilde arranged for four editions (of 250 each) to be released the same year as the first edition, 1881. He further arranged for another edition to be released in 1882. In this way, Wilde created an artificial demand for his work. But his poetry did not live up to such demands. In fact, it only succeeded in gaining him negative notoriety. But to Wilde, even negative publicity was still publicity.

The first genre in which Wilde successfully wrote was the critical review. That is, for the Grosvenor Gallery opening on May 1, 1877, the same opening which saw him in

his infamous cello-shaped cutaway coat, he wrote a review of James Whistler's exposition. The review, which appeared in the Dublin University Magazine, was highly critical of Whistler. Not unlike Byron's satirical piece "English Bards and Scottish Reviewers," which mercilessly chided the literati of his day, Wilde's uncanny wit and daring at insulting Whistler's art was so sublime that it garnered him much of the recognition he sought.

But most commonly, biographers claim that Wilde's extensive fame began with his highly successful tour of America. The original tour was planned to last four months, but was extended to ten. He delivered over 140 lectures in only 260 days in 1882. The purpose of this lecture tour which ranged from the stylish New England coast to the silver mines of California, was two-fold. Wilde toured to promote his personal philosophy of art, aestheticism, which he did not invent but which he followed, and also to promote the operetta Patience, then appearing in New York. Patience contains a portrait of an aesthete, or as Gillespie points out, a specific parody of Wilde; "parodies of Wilde and his artistic opinions appeared in [. . .] the Gilbert and Sullivan production Patience" (8).

In America, Wilde appeared before both highly educated and unrefined audiences alike, preaching the belief in art solely for the sake of art. At this time in Wilde's life, he made himself a living *objet d'art*. He appeared in velvet and lace, short black britches, silken stockings, and shiny buckled shoes. He carried either a bundle of lilies or sunflowers with him wherever he went. Although it is difficult to imagine Wilde dressed in this fashion winning a crowd of uneducated miners in the West, his wit and humor sparkled and he gained admirers wherever he lectured. He delivered his aesthetic speeches brilliantly, it made little difference to him if he addressed audiences of twelve or twelve hundred. The news of his success in America crossed the Atlantic in a flood and increased the desire for him in England, which his review of Whistler had whetted. Lady Wilde wrote to her son, "You are still the talk of London--the cabmen ask me if I am anything to Oscar Wilde--the milkman has bought your picture" (Belford 106).

It was in this aura of fame that Wilde published The Picture of Dorian Gray in 1891. Although the novel caused many public outcries of indecency, it secured Wilde's literary reputation and cemented his fame in England. For as before, any publicity, whether positive or negative was

regarded by Wilde as success. And the public seemed to agree, for Wilde, soon took the drawing rooms of London by storm, like Byron before him. Although he was by this time a married man, he received daily invitations to dinner parties which led him to play the role of a bachelor. As Belford has said,

initially marriage had limited Wilde's social life.

He was no longer the extra man and invitations arrived for two, but when Constance was confined to bed while pregnant and then a mother [. . .] Wilde accepted for himself. As his reputation grew, hostesses depended on him to animate their table. A married man, he lived a bachelor's life. (195)

But fame came at a hefty price for both Byron and Wilde. That is, their extensive fame became, to both men, a struggle to maintain stable ideas of themselves while being inundated with public conceptions of who they were. As Byron's career progressed, as Ghislaine McDayter points out, "physical appetite in others, particularly in women, came increasingly to signify for him the threat of his own consumption, both personal and poetic." Byron's adoring fans were so fixated on him, in fact, that "the poet came increasingly to regard them as insatiable beings who fed

upon his literary corpus to satisfy their taste for the Byronic" (McDayter 43) and his sense of being victimized by them increased. "I have been more ravished myself than anyone since the Trojan war," Byron wrote 29 October 1819 (SLJ 223).

The vampire metaphor applied by McDayter is possibly the best model for explaining Byron's response to Byromania. As McDayter says, Byron felt a strong "sense of victimization by his readers [. . .] described in the Byronic terms of vampire and victim" (44). Just as the public "fed" on Byron's description of Harold, Byron himself sought from his audience more and more raw material to shape and create more characters like the one the public adored. That is, Byron's fans sought finished characters in Byron's work that they could then attribute to Byron himself. While at the same time, Byron, as an artist, sought from his fans an image of himself that he could use in his fiction. Byron was both the victim of a vampiric audience who "fed" on his artistic creations and also the vampire who "fed" on his audience. Likewise, his audience was vampiric in nature and also a victim of a vampiric poet. It is in this way that characters like Conrad, Lara, and Manfred, even though they are very different from

Harold, were identified by Byron's fans as Byron himself.

For example, while Byron's fans saw him as Harold, the sensitive, lonely, and world-weary soul, they also cast him in the roles of Conrad and Lara, who are villains and cut-throats. In fact, Conrad is a marauding pirate and Lara actually wages a blood-thirsty war on the competing lords of his region. While in Childe Harold, the crimes of Harold are merely suggested, in "The Giaour" the crimes of the protagonist are clear. "The Giaour" offers a villain, a murderer in no uncertain terms, as a hero. By his own admission, Manfred is again an unreformed criminal. And yet Byron's fans still connected the poet to his characters. As Byron pointed out in a letter to a friend, "he told me an odd report, --that I am the actual Conrad, the veritable corsair, and that part of my travels are supposed to have passed in [. . .] [piracy?] (BLJ 3: 250).

Like McDyater, Peter W. Graham sees Byron as the perfect example of a poet absorbed in and responding to his own myth in specifically poetical terms. Graham cites a lengthy catalogue through which Byron kept track of comparisons of himself to other famous characters to prove this. Byron writes, "I have seen myself compared personally or poetically" with "Rousseau--Goethe-- [. . .]

Satan--Shakespeare--Buonaparte--[. . .] to Milton--to Pope--
-to Dryden--To Burns--to Savage--to Chatterton [. . .]"
(Graham 24). The list when complete contains the names of
over 40 individuals. Graham maintains that this list shows
"how fascinated [Byron] is by the making of his own myth"
(24).

But there is an important distinction to be made
between Graham and McDayter. To Graham, Byron used his
understanding of his own myth to offer a blend of his true
character and his literary characters. In this way, Byron
found an "indefinitely sustainable poetic vehicle for self-
expression through a volatile blend of concealment and
confession, a delightfully mystifying tissue of apparent
sincerity, blatant falsehood, and every nuance between"
(32). This mode of myth-making both exposes and conceals
the creative expression of an artist as a direct reflection
of the artist himself. "Byron's preferred mode of myth-
making: the truth in masquerade" (Graham 29) can be seen in
many of his works. It is in this way that Byron's reaction
to his fame most fully influenced Wilde's later success.

Wilde's mode of myth-making was also based on
revealing and concealing aspects of his personal life. But
most commonly this was done by telling obvious lies. As

Belford points out, "Wilde frequently lied about himself. To advance his myth-making, he encouraged his friends to lie also. As a result his life became a tangle of beautiful lies: it was exactly what he wanted--to be a mystery in plain sight" (43). One reason for this may be that unlike Byron, who was not able to control the falsehoods and truths about himself in public, Wilde felt he had more control over his image if he could circulate lies, or at least confuse the truth with them. Evidence of this is demonstrated in a story recalled by W. B. Yeats. Yeats once remarked to Wilde, "I envy those men who become mythological while still living." Wilde replied, "'I think a man should invent his own myth'" (Belford 4). It was in this way that Wilde made his own life a partial fiction.

But Wilde also changed his artistic and personal appearance when he found his own myth no longer suited him. For example, when he no longer felt himself the quintessential aesthetic, he changed his appearance dramatically. As Belford says,

Wilde had shown America that an Irishman could talk like an Englishman and be well-educated and well-dressed. He had earned his celebrity, but being an aesthetic curiosity had wearied him. The new Oscar

would be a dandy [. . .] and aristocrat of the dinner table. (105)

This image was based on Byron. Belford observes, "on his arrival, The New York Times noted his new look: long trousers, cutaway velvet coat, patent-leather boots, and a Byronic collar with a scarf and diamond pin" (119). After a meeting with Wilde, Edgar Degas reported to his friend, Walter Sickert that "Wilde had 'the look of someone playing Lor' Byron in a suburban theatre'" (Belford 118). Wilde to some extent co-opted Byron's physical appearance. His elephantine gait may also have recalled Byron's lame walk.

But more than this, Wilde's letters are also full of either direct quotes or paraphrases of Byron's works. For example, on 13 February 1886, Wilde writes to Violet Fane, "I hate our sunless, loveless winter [. . .]. However, some little swallows-flight of song may come to me... [sic] The Oxford theatre opens tomorrow and I am going to see our 'young barbarians all at play'" (186). "There were his young barbarians all at / play" is a line found in Byron's Childe Harold, canto 4, stanza cxli. Again, in a letter to More Adey, Wilde on 26 April 1900, some fourteen years later, writes, "Naples was evil and luxurious. Rome is the city of the soul" (826). This phrase is from Childe

Harold, canto 4, stanza lxxviii. The line runs, "Oh, Rome! My Country! City of the Soul!" Wilde's letters also report him winning a bet, correctly citing Arnold as the creator of the phrase "the beautiful, ineffectual angel." It appears in Arnold's "Essay on Byron." Wilde writes, "Of course we have won our bet. The phrase on Shelley is in Arnold's preface to Byron: but Mellor won't pay me!" (786).

As these examples show, Wilde was well aware of Byron's public image and literary works, as were many Victorians. But more than this, in Wilde's long, essay-like letter De Profundis addressed to Bosie from Reading Prison, Wilde makes a direct comparison between himself and Byron. Wilde writes

I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age. I had realised this myself at the very dawn of my manhood, and had forced my age to realise it afterwards. Few men hold such a position in their own lifetime and have it so acknowledged. It is usually discerned [. . .] by the historian, or the critic, long after both the man and his age have passed away. With me it was different. I felt it myself, and made others feel it. Byron was a symbolic figure, but his relations were to the passion of his

age and its weariness of passion. Mine were to something more noble, more permanent, of more vital issue, of larger scope. (57)

While Wilde admits that both he and Byron have a symbolic relationship with their particular ages and that to some extent they are similar figures, he feels that Byron merely expressed the passions and the weariness of passion of his age. Wilde says that his representation of his age was larger in scope. A few lines following, Wilde explains. "I awoke the imagination of my century [. . .]," he says. But he finished the line with "so that it created myth and legend around me" (58). It is in this way that even Wilde reluctantly admits the similarities between himself and Byron. That is, although Wilde claims he is not like Byron because he inspired his generation to build myths to him (and presumably Byron did not), the simple fact that he is still discussing Byron in this fashion demonstrates that the myths the public made about Byron were enduring.

But Wilde also modeled his literary creations on Byron's ability to simultaneously reveal and conceal aspects of his personal life in his art. For example, Wilde observed, "to arrive at what one really believes, one must speak through lips different from one's own. To know

the truth one must imagine myriads of falsehoods" (Belford 45). It is through the lips of his fictional characters, then that Wilde finds he can, by imagination, arrive at a logical conviction of what he truly thinks. The implication is that by providing fictional characters with aspects of his own personality, he could come to understand his own nature. Further, Wilde also stated that "'the true artist is known by the use he makes of what he annexes, and he annexes everything'" (Belford 86). In this observation, Wilde admits to borrowing significantly from all avenues of life, even his own, presumably. The extent to which Wilde borrows aspects of his personal life and uses them in his art, in imitation of Byron, will be addressed in the following chapter through a comparison of Byron's Manfred and Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Chapter Three

"The Only Way to Get Rid of Temptation is to Yield to It":

A Comparison of Manfred and The Picture of Dorian Gray

Manfred and The Picture of Dorian Gray, like Byron and Wilde themselves, have much in common, especially their Byronic heroes. Manfred and Dorian share the same characteristics and their stories explore the same consequences of those attributes through the same basic plot structure, though this is not readily apparent.

There are two main attributes of the Byronic hero. First, as Peter Thorslev points out, the Byronic hero is a "magnanimous man" (186). He is an ordinary mortal so that we can see ourselves in him, but he is also idealized; his ideality lies chiefly in his rebelliousness. This trait is related to Satanism "as a form of rebellion" (189). Thorslev explains that in the Byronic hero there has "always been an alliance between aggressive humanism, self-reliance, and Satanism" (189). Manfred and Dorian are both aggressive humanists and very self-reliant. They can also be seen as Satanic figures. M. K. Newton offers a sharper definition of their rebelliousness. To Newton, the Byronic hero, like Satan himself, "refuses to recognize any external source of authority that claims to be superior to

the self [. . .] like Byron's Manfred" (28). Newton continues, "Byron was clearly on the side" of his characters "in their defiant assertion of will and their refusal to submit to either human or divine authority, even in the face of death" (29). For Manfred never does relent in his aggressive self-reliance, even when a dark spirit comes to take him to Hell. And Dorian ultimately destroys himself.

As both Newton and Thorslev say, Byronic heroes are "activated by a very self-conscious pride" (Thorslev 187). They are intensely personal beings, "even egocentric," (188) and have a deep inner concern with their own emotional states which sometimes becomes a "morbid self-analysis" (189). While, as Kenneth Wommack says "goodness manifests itself during the *healthy* pursuit of self-awareness and self-knowledge" (171), both Manfred and Dorian are not engaged in this healthy pursuit. Instead, they are intensely self-interested and morbidly self-conscious. As Geoffrey H. Hartman points out, quoting from Wordsworth, this is a passion that "murders to dissect" (47). As seekers of self-knowledge, they are necessarily egocentric, even to the point of narcissism. Manfred and Dorian are both vain and have pride to a fault. Manfred

has an inflated ego because he can manipulate and control the sprits and forces of this world and the next. Dorian's ego is enlarged and encouraged by his beauty and consuming vanity.

Although their self-absorption stems from different sources, it can be argued that Manfred's and Dorian's narcissism participates in a template followed by most Byronic heroes. First each man projects an aspect of himself onto another. This other becomes identified by the hero as a part of himself, and thus he comes to see himself as a divided consciousness, or a divided or split self. But narcissism has other consequences in the Byronic hero template as well. Proud Byronic heroes like Manfred and Dorian imagine themselves beyond the reach of conventional morality, and therefore explore taboos, both moral and sexual. This exploration leads to the corruption of the heroes and their representational selves. This corruption ultimately leads to feelings of excessive guilt and remorse in Byronic heroes for the perversion of their split selves, the projection of themselves by which they understand themselves. The pattern of the narcissistic Byronic hero almost always ends in the death of the hero, as a statement of the power of the self, however divided. Both Manfred

and Dorian die through their own force of will and therefore achieve something like victory in death. Let us see how each text explores the consequences of Byronic narcissism.

As briefly mentioned, narcissism leads to a kind of psychic split in both Manfred and Dorian Gray. This is because narcissists focus their attention on themselves to such a degree that they see themselves in everything and everyone around them, including inanimate objects. Manfred does this by projecting a part of himself on to Astarte, and Dorian does it by projecting an aspect of himself on to his portrait.

Manfred's other self is the mysterious Astarte, a woman with whom he has had a forbidden love affair. Their affair is taboo because Manfred is related by blood to Astarte. If we take clues from Byron's life, Astarte is probably modeled on his half-sister Augusta. However, in the text of Manfred, according to Frederick Garber "the specifics [of their relationship are] never in doubt though never unequivocally put" (243). They have committed some kind of incest, whatever their actual relation, and as such their exact relationship is somewhat insignificant. It is enough to know that Astarte is a close enough relation to

Manfred to look exactly like him. "Manfred tells the Witch of the Alps that Astarte was exactly like him in lineaments: 'her eyes, / Her hair, her features, all to the very tone / Even of her voice, they said were like to mine' (2.2.105-107)" (Garber 243). Astarte was also like him in her mental composition. "She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings, / The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind / to comprehend the universe" (2.2.109-111).

However, as Garber points out, this passage also "carefully spells out difference." Astarte is not Manfred's precise counterpart "but a tenderer version, the lineaments the same 'but softened all, and tempered into beauty,' her powers ('pity, and smiles, and tears') gentler than his own. The tenderness she had, he had only for her. The humility she had, he never had" (Garber 243-244). Manfred clearly sees Astarte as a kinder, gentler version of himself. Thus Manfred claims, 'Her faults were mine-- her virtues were her own--' (2.2.116)

But Manfred and Astarte's incest is narcissistic. Garber explains that

to commit incest means that one keeps within the family. But Manfred and Astarte carry the narrowing even further, taking it to its finest point, for

theirs is *narcissistic* incest; a sort that reduces its smallest reach the distance one needs to go to get outside of the self. If what one reaches for is the exactest cast of oneself, then one has hardly to reach at all. (Garber 245)

In loving Astarte, Manfred, in effect, falls in love with himself--or at least the representation of himself he finds in her. But Loren Glass goes one step further. Glass claims that "Astarte is 'ultimately a projection of [Manfred's] own mind.' For in the dialectic of narcissism, the other is always simply a reflection of the self" (Glass 213).

This same kind of projecting occurs in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray and for fundamentally the same reason, narcissism. When Dorian surveys Basil Hallward's painting of him for the first time, he fully recognizes his own beauty as it is represented in the portrait. Wilde writes,

when he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he has recognised himself for the first time [. . .]. The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. (27)

Dorian finds himself all but in love with his own image, due to its beauty and perfection. He even blushes like a lover when he beholds it. As Nancy Jane Tyson points out, this is because "the narcissist's curse is not merely that he loves himself too much but that he can only love himself" (111). The same is true for Manfred, who falls in love with Astarte in part because she is a projection of himself. And for as long as Dorian's picture remains unsullied, Dorian "finds himself unable to distinguish between himself and the picture, describing it as 'part of myself' and 'the real Dorian.'" (Wommack 175). As Ed Cohen observes, Basil's "'magical mirror'" turns "Dorian into a 'spectator of [his] own life,' thus creating a divided consciousness that initiates the remaining action in the novel" (82). The same kind of psychic split that occurs in Manfred also occurs in Dorian. And it is the splitting of the self which pushes the plot in both works.

However, what is different about Manfred and Dorian Gray is that Dorian's soul manages to move from his own body into the portrait. That is, Basil's immortal and beautiful painting coupled with Lord Henry's cynical reminder that Dorian had best enjoy his youth and beauty while he has it (because he will eventually age and grow

ugly), prompts Dorian to wish it were the other way around.

Dorian says

I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young [. . .]. If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that--for that--I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that! (27-8)

Although Wilde offers no explanation for why it occurs, it is from this moment that the picture ages while Dorian remains young. From this point on, as Tyson observes, the painting becomes "a fragmented part of his identity rather than a mere dulpicate" (Tyson 110). Like Manfred and Astarte, Dorian's split self is a manifestation of his narcissism, not merely a duplicate of himself, but an image onto which he projects himself. As we shall see, the painting's idealized image changes as Dorian's concept of himself changes. The same thing happens in Manfred.

Beyond Manfred's incestuous relationship with Astarte, which will be addressed more completely later, Manfred's narcissism leads him into the exploration of moral taboos and crimes. In Manfred, Byron both reveals and conceals

certain aspects of Manfred's story, especially events in his past. While Byron wants readers to understand that Manfred has committed some nameless sins (beyond incest), he stubbornly refuses to explain them. However, he weaves enough clues into the text that speculation about these crimes is possible. There are two main categories of sin that Manfred commits besides incest with Astarte: sins against man and sins against God.

Concerning the first category, Manfred is probably a murderer, like the heroes found in Byron's Oriental tales. And in this drama, Manfred all but admits that he has committed murder. For example, when the Chamois Hunter offers him wine after his failed suicide attempt, Manfred exclaims, "there's blood upon the brim! / Will it then never--never sink into the earth?" (II.i.21-22). This incident is not unlike Lady Macbeth's manifestation of guilt in the invisible blood on her hands which will not wash clean. Moreover, when Manfred is with the Witch of the Alps in Act II, he admits, "I have shed blood but not hers," meaning Astarte (II.ii.119). When he initially summons the Witch she acknowledges his criminal nature, addressing him, "Son of Earth! / I know thee, and the powers which give thee power; / I know thee for a man of

many thoughts, / And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both" (II.ii. 33-36). The details, though sketchy at best, certainly seem to point to murder, a sin against man.

Another kind of crime Manfred commits is sinning against God. An example of this is that Manfred possesses certain forbidden knowledge, not unlike Prometheus. As the Abbot says in Act III, "'Tis said thou holdest converse with the things / Which are forbidden to the search of men" (III.i.35-36). Moreover, Manfred is able to summon the seven natural spirits and the Witch of the Alps. This forbidden knowledge is further seen in Manfred's ability to visit evil spirits like Arimanes on his own plane. The extent of his knowledge is evidenced in his strength. That is, Manfred is strong enough to coerce Arimanes into raising the dead. He forces Arimanes to bring forth Astarte from beyond the grave. Such acts of necromancy and witchcraft are strictly forbidden in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is not clear whether Manfred indulged in such acts while Astarte was alive, but the odds are, he did, for it seems as if she engaged in those acts with him. Manfred often shut himself up in his tower while Astarte was alive. Although none of his dependents knows exactly what his studies are because they were not allowed into his

inner chamber, they suspect the worst. In the discussion between Manuel and Herman, Manuel recalls that Astarte was the only person Manfred allowed into his inner chamber, to presumably study forbidden knowledge with him. He says, "Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,-- / How occupied, we know not, but with him / The sole companion of his wandering / And watchings-- her, [. . .] the Lady Astarte" (III.iii.41-47). In addition to this, it should be pointed out that all along Manfred has rejected the conventional Christianity that the Abbot represents. Instead, Manfred favors his own pagan practices. All in all, Manfred's sins, though left somewhat sketchy by Byron, clearly extend beyond his incestuous affair with Astarte.

Dorian also rejects conventional morality, feeling that he is beyond such social constraints. For instance, it is his narcissism which causes him to reject the actress Sybil Vane after she falls in love with him but loses her talent. His cruelty to her results in Sybil's suicide and causes the first negative changes in Dorian's portrait. Wilde says, "in the dim light [. . .] the face appeared to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth" (87). With this change, Dorian realizes that

his wish has been granted. He also comes to understand that the unpleasant consequences of his crimes will not be reflected in his own appearance, but in the painting. With this revelation, Dorian decides that he can wholly devote himself to the pursuit of pleasure and sin with no consequences to himself. It is the painting which suffers the ramifications of his actions. From this point on, Dorian dedicates his life to seeking out new and extreme experiences, regardless of their moral status.

Dorian's pursuit of forbidden pleasure is encouraged by both Basil's and Lord Henry's adulation. The morally defunct yellow book, probably J. K. Huysman's A Rebours (1884), also encourages Dorian to seek all the forbidden pleasures available in Victorian England. Unlike Manfred's mysterious crimes, Dorian's are more obvious, but not necessarily any more public than Manfred's, as Joseph Bristow points out. Bristow writes, "Dorian learns that what he takes pleasure in is not permitted in public"; therefore, "his delights are consigned to secrecy" (61). Under cover of night, Dorian stalks the ugly under-belly of London, prowling the docks and the "low dens in the distant parts of Whitechapel" (136), brawling with foreign sailors and consorting with thieves and coiners. Dorian is also

implicated in "a scandal involving the suicide of a
"wretched boy in the guards;" the disappearance of Sir
Henry Ashton, who fled England in disgrace; and the
diminished reputation of the young Duke of Perth and the
son of Lord Kent" (Wommack 176).

Although Dorian at first believes that he cannot be
harmd by his behavior because the painting alone holds the
record of his misdeeds, he soon learns that he is mistaken.
Dorian's activities become the subject of gossip and rumor.
Wilde writes, "he was very nearly black-balled at a West
End club of which his birth and social position fully
entitled him to become a member" (135-6). Wilde's
description of Dorian's ruined reputation is strikingly
similar to Byron's own public disgrace years earlier.
Wilde writes, "women who had wildly adored him, and for his
sake had braved all social censure and set convention at
defiance were seen to grow pallid with shame or horror if
Dorian Gray entered the room" (136).

Wilde relates Dorian's other sins in a more direct
manner. For instance, Dorian experiments with and becomes
addicted to opium. He frequents opium dens along the docks
and disappears for weeks at a time, which only fuels the
rumors about him in public. Wilde describes Dorian's

addiction thus, "there were opium-dens, where one could buy oblivion [. . .] where the memory of old sins could be destroyed. [. . .] [Dorian] had often tried it, and would try it again now" (176). Dorian's opium addiction gives him good cause to crawl the docks late into the night. In fact, when Dorian finds that he has plenty of opium, but no pipe, he travels down to the docks and stumbles upon Vane's brother, who has vowed to avenge Sybil's death. By almost unbelievable chance, James Vane meets his end in a hunting accident the following night, after he has pursued Dorian to a friend's home.

All of these crimes manifest themselves in Dorian's portrait. But the worst of Dorian's sins is yet to come. That is, like Manfred before him, Dorian becomes a murderer, though on some level he is already guilty of the murder of Sybil. On the eve of his thirty-eighth birthday, Dorian meets Basil at his home. Basil has come to hear the disavowal of the rumors that surround Dorian. Instead, Dorian takes him into the attic and shows him the ruined painting. Basil is horrified by the abject state of Dorian's soul as reflected in the painting. In order to safeguard his secret and to be rid of Basil's annoying moralizing, Dorian stabs him to death. Wilde writes,

"[Dorian] rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabbing again and again" (151). As a result of this crime, the painting begins to bleed.

To cover Basil's murder, Dorian commits another crime, blackmail. As Bristow point out, "Dorian threatens to expose the young scientist, Alan Campbell, for untold crimes if Campbell refuses to get rid of Hallward's body" (61). Dorian says, "Alan, you are scientific. You know about chemistry [. . .]. What you have to do is to destroy the thing that is upstairs [. . .]. [. . .] you must change him [. . .] into a handful of ashes that I may scatter in the air" (161). Initially, Campbell refuses to help him. Dorian then "wrote something [. . .] and pushed it across the table." Campbell reads it and "his face became ghastly pale [. . .]. A horrible sense of sickness came over him." Dorian seals the blackmail deal saying "it is impossible for you to refuse me now. I tried to spare you" (163). Campbell then by means of acid, slowly destroys Basil's body. Nancy Tyson indicates exactly how disturbing this cover-up is: "the antiseptic disposal of Basil's body by chemical means, leaving only 'a horrible smell of nitric acid' is arguably, though it happens

offstage, the most appalling thing in the novel" (117).

Campbell commits suicide after helping Dorian.

Perhaps the most significant thing that Manfred and Dorian have in common in terms of their exploration of moral crimes is sexual in nature. That is, both men engage in "deviant" sexuality. Manfred has committed incest with Astarte. Daniel M. McVeigh points out, Astarte "is not specified to be his sister, but incest is implied, in a rhetorical ellipsis stretching out towards the unspeakable" (611). McVeigh is discussing the third act in Manfred in which Byron "refers to the incest theme with a boldness that is staggering" (Gunn 201). Byron describes Astarte as

the sole companion of his wanderings

And watchings--her; whom of all earthly things

That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,--

As he, indeed by blood was bound to do,

the Lady Astarte, his--

Hush! who comes here? (III.iii.43-47)

In typical fashion, just as Byron is about to reveal how they are related, he is interrupted by the entrance of the Abbot. Revealing and concealing as well as taunting the audience with dark hints of criminality is a game Byron often plays with his readers.

But there are also earlier tantalizing hints to be found in the text. The most important of these clues can be found in Act II when Manfred discusses his familial relationships with the Chamois Hunter. Referring to the wine on the brim of his cup as blood, Manfred exclaims, "'tis blood--my blood! the pure warm stream / Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours / When we were in our youth, and had one heart, / And loved each other as we should not love" (II.i.24-27 *my italics*). Several significant aspects of Manfred and Astarte's relationship are revealed in this strange confession. For example, Manfred explains that his love for Astarte was not merely one-sided. She actively returned his affection. Thus, Manfred feels that Astarte's blood is on his hands. They shared an affection for one another that is forbidden. They both knowingly become guilty of the crime of incest. But only one of them is actually capable of handling the shame. This explains Manfred's mysterious claim that Astarte's "faults were mine,-- her virtues were her own" (II.ii.116). She could share in the crime of incest because she shared that fault with Manfred. But her virtue was her own because, unlike Manfred, she was ultimately unable to continue the relationship. Her virtue would not

allow her to continue to commit incest, although at some point it was surely weak enough for her to try it.

In this confession, we also learn that their relationship was rather long-lasting. Manfred, who is now in his mid-life, had a relationship with Astarte that began in their youth and ended only in her death years later. Most significantly, Manfred seems to admit to a certain physical relationship with Astarte. "We loved each other as we should not love," Manfred says. This statement could be seen as denoting the physical act of love, intercourse, rather than mere feelings of affection. For while familial love (affection) is not forbidden, acting on that love, in a physical manner (committing incest) with "his nearest relation . . . in the world by the ties of blood and affection" (Glass 218) is.

Blood is of the utmost importance to any analysis of Manfred because it recurs as a motif anticipating Astarte's death. Blood is important to Manfred because it is "what gives Manfred's life continuity and coherence" due to the fact that it represents "the perpetuation of familial identity" (Glass 216). That is, Manfred commits incest with Astarte partly to reaffirm his own ancestry. The blood he shares with Astarte is the same blood that "ran in

the veins of [their] fathers." And yet it is that blood which is shed. Therefore, blood becomes, according to Glass, "the link between the consummation of incestuous love and the violent act which destroyed that love." As Glass says, "it is the shedding of blood that causes a rupture" (216) between Manfred and Astarte. Manfred admits to the Witch of the Alps, "I have shed / Blood, but not hers--and yet her blood was shed; / I saw--and could not staunch it" (II.ii.119-121). At this point, Glass admits to a dilemma. The mystery, left unsolved in the play, is how was Astarte's blood shed if not by Manfred? For although he says he did not murder Astarte, he does admit that "I loved her, and destroyed her" (II.ii.117).

I would suggest that quite possibly Astarte's blood is on Manfred's hands only figuratively. That is, it is manifest on his hands through his own feelings of guilt, like Lady Macbeth's. Further, Astarte's blood could have been shed through suicide, an option not often mentioned in scholarship, due to the necessity of going outside the text to discuss it. However, it seems quite possible that the impetus of her suicide is already hinted at in the text. It was Astarte's excessive feelings of guilt for having committed incest with Manfred that prompted her suicide.

Manfred says he destroyed Astarte, "Not with my hand, but with my heart--which broke her heart-- / It gazed on mine, and withered" (II.ii.118-119). But Byron also provides at least one hint about Astarte's having committed suicide. For instance, when Manfred has Arimanes summon Astarte, Manfred calls her "One without a tomb" (II.iv.82). Suicides were not buried in marked graves in sacred ground.

Ultimately, it is Manfred's love for Astarte and their committing incest that destroys her. Manfred's embrace, his love itself, becomes a fatal embrace. As Manfred explains to the Chamois Hunter, "my injuries came down on those who loved me-- / On those whom I best loved / [. . .] But my embrace was fatal" (II.i.84-88). As we shall see, Manfred's embrace is, in the end, also fatal to Manfred himself. This template is also followed in The Picture of Dorian Gray. Before investigating how Wilde's novel follows this same pattern, it is first necessary to point out why Dorian experiences such guilt. In part, this is due to Dorian's own experiences with "deviant" sexuality. However, unlike Manfred, Dorian has probably committed homosexual acts.

Ed Cohen begins his explication of The Picture of Dorian Gray with a challenge to scholars. He claims that

"critical reflection has never directly addressed the question of how Wilde's 'obviously' homoerotic text signifies its 'deviant' concerns while never explicitly violating the dominant norms for heterosexuality" (75). Claude J. Summers attempts to answer this accusation. He states that "Wilde purposely leaves the exact nature of the sins of Dorian Gray mysterious and vague, suggested but not defined." In this way, Wilde mirrors Byron's story-telling in Manfred. But Summers continues to say that in Dorian Gray Wilde is "characteristically playing hide-and-seek with his readers, he alternatively exposes and conceals the homosexual dimension of the novel" (45). In other words, according to Summers, Wilde does drop hints in the text about Dorian's "deviant" sexuality, just as Byron previously wove clues about Manfred's incest with Astarte into his drama.

However, it can be argued that Wilde's clues about Dorian's sexuality are more obvious than Byron's about Manfred and Astarte. For example, Dorian's name itself of "suggestive of Greek homosexuality, since it was Dorian tribesmen who allegedly introduced homosexuality into Greece as part of their military regimen" (Summers 45). Also, as Bristow point out, J. K. Huysman's A Rebours, the

yellow-wrapped book that encourages Dorian to seek out a decadent and sinful life, "itself contain[s] a homosexual incident" (61). But more than this, Wilde repeatedly describes Dorian's adventures in Whitechapel as involving other men. Again Bristow mentions that Dorian's relations with foreign sailors implies homosexuality. Bristow writes, "Dorian's secret relations with 'foreign sailors' cross [. . .] barriers to disclose (but, importantly, not name) homosexuality. One transgression, therefore, implies another. The fact that Dorian mixes with these men suggests that he keeps their company for other than 'brawling'" (Bristow 53).

Moreover, as Kenneth Wommack indicates, all the scandals in which Dorian is somehow, though not explicitly, involved focus on the certain ruin of other men. Specifically, Wommack mentions Sir Henry Ashton's flight from England in disgrace and the Duke of Perth and Lord Kent's son, both of whom suffered diminished reputations (176). Although it is quite possible to counter that Ashton, Perth, and Kent may not have been involved with Dorian sexually, these rumors, coupled with Dorian's name, his brawling with sailors, and the blackmail of Alan Campbell, certainly allow for speculation about Dorian's

sexual preferences, despite the fact that his only named lover in the novel is female. Cohen also answers his own accusation about how homosexuality becomes an "obvious" topic in an outwardly heterosexual novel. Dorian's homosexuality enters the text in the same way in which Manfred's incest enters Byron's play. That is, by discussing Manfred's split self, Astarte, Byron entertains a discussion of incest. Likewise, it is through Dorian's split self, the painting, that Wilde manages to discuss homosexuality without naming it explicitly.

Cohen argues persuasively that Dorian is "to some extent born of the conjunction between Basil's visual embodiment of his erotic desire for Dorian and Lord Henry's verbal sublimation" of the same desire (76). In other words, Dorian's painting itself is the surface on which both Basil and Lord Henry project and record their desire for Dorian. To some degree, it is necessary to add that Dorian also acknowledges his same-sex desire through his relationship with his own portrait. We will return to this point at the close of this discussion.

Since Basil Hallward is the artist who records his desire for Dorian in his painting, his relationship with Dorian must be addressed. And when looking into how Basil

describes his feelings for Dorian, the homosexual undercurrent of his emotional response to Dorian is rather obvious. Basil says that on first meeting Dorian

I turned half-way around [. . .]. When our eyes met I felt I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating, that if I allowed it to do so it would absorb my whole nature, my very art itself [. . .]. Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows. (9-10)

Basil's emotional and physical response to Dorian is homoerotic in nature. However, due to the punishment for homosexuality in Wilde's time, Wilde is unable to explore its consequences fully.

Instead, Wilde has Basil displace his erotic feelings for Dorian from the actual man to the painting of him. Cohen says that Basil is the painter who "seeks to create a spatialized frame that synthetically mirrors his emotional and erotic reality" (78). It is in this way that the painting records the "symbolic displacement of the erotic

onto the aesthetic" (Cohen 77). Bristow, who quotes passages of Cohen, puts it succinctly. He states that Basil's desire for Dorian "can only exist as a representation, as art" if Basil and Wilde himself were to be safe from the law that prosecuted homosexuality. Basil himself confirms this observation by admitting that the painting can never be exhibited (56). If it were to be exhibited publicly, Basil would be at risk for being charged with homosexuality. Basil says

I worshipped you [. . .]. I determined to paint a wonderful portrait of you [. . .]. [. . .] as I worked at it, every flake and film of colour seemed to me to reveal my secret. I grew afraid that others would know of my idolatry. (110-111)

As Summers adds, "Basil is reluctant to exhibit the picture of Dorian because 'I have put too much of myself in it,' indicates [. . .] his fear of the world's contempt should it guess his secret" love (46).

As Cohen demonstrates, Basil is not the only older man enamored of Dorian. Lord Henry also feels a homosexual attraction to the beautiful young man. In fact, Cohen says that Lord Henry actually seduces Dorian away from Basil. In Basil's studio, the conflict between Basil and Lord

Henry for Dorian's affection "plays itself out as a seduction." Lord Henry does this by introducing Dorian to a new order of desire, sexual decadence. Cohen maintains that Lord Henry's words "provide Dorian with new vistas on the moral prejudices of their era" (79). Lord Henry's seduction of Dorian is seen in a new expression on Dorian's face, which Basil records. Thus, the painting becomes an image of both Basil's and Lord Henry's male homoerotic desire for Dorian. Summers adds an interesting dimension to Cohen's observations in terms of Henry's interest in Dorian. To Summers, Lord Henry's seduction of Dorian is accomplished in part because he is "too timid to explore" his own homosexual nature himself (49). In other words, Lord Henry hopes to encourage Dorian's homosexuality so that he can live "vicariously through Dorian [. . .] because he," like Basil, "dares not act on what he feels" (50). It is in this way that Wilde discusses the "possibilities for male same-sex eroticism without explicitly voicing them" (Cohen 81).

Earlier, I mentioned that Dorian also acknowledges his same-sex desire through his interactions with his portrait. Cohen explains how this is possible. He writes that in order "to maintain his identity as the object of another

man's desire, [Dorian] prays to exchange the temporality of his existence for the stasis of an erotically charged visual representation" (81). Dorian recognizes that his painting represents Basil and Lord Henry's sexual desire for him and he wants the painting to stand in his place, and he in it, so that he embodies the representation of male desire. Further, through Wilde's hints, we see Dorian experiment more directly with being a same-sex icon of desire. He probably does engage in homosexual acts.

Thus, Dorian engages in "deviant" sexuality, similar to Astarte and Manfred. And as we shall see, just as Astarte was not suited to continue to commit incest with Manfred, Dorian is soon no longer able to maintain his homosexuality. Dorian, like Astarte, also eventually becomes overwhelmed by his feelings of guilt for committing his sexual crimes. But Dorian is also like Manfred. Like Manfred, he ultimately seeks forgetfulness for the perversion of his split self due to the guilt associated with destroying it.

Manfred aligns himself with an evil star, which probably finds its origin in his cursed family lineage. In order to raise the seven natural spirits, Manfred calls upon the strength of this family curse. He says, "by a

power, / Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell, / Which
had its birth-place in a star condemn'd [. . .] I do compel
ye to my will" (I.i.42-49). When the spirits of air,
mountain, ocean, earth, wind, night, and the star of his
own destiny appear before him, Manfred tells them that he
wants "not the satisfaction of ambition or of pleasure but
simple 'forgetfulness'" (Gunn 199). Manfred says he seeks
"Forgetfulness---- [. . .] / Of that which is within me; /
[. . .] Oblivion, self-oblivion" (I.i.136-144). But the
spirits reply that "the thing / Mortals call death hath
nought to do with us" (I.i.162-3). Thus begins Manfred's
pilgrimage to find a force that can help him achieve
forgetfulness.

Being self-reliant, Manfred next turns to himself and
attempts to commit suicide, believing that it will end his
torturing feelings of guilt. But the Chamois Hunter
interrupts him and prevents it. Manfred, in a fit of grief
and guilty despair, offers the Chamois Hunter only dim
hints as to why he has contemplated suicide. The
perversion of and subsequent death of his other self, has
caused him such guilt that he longs for release from it.
The simple Hunter, who does not understand him, is
powerless to help.

Manfred next contacts the Witch of the Alps and asks for her to help him find forgetfulness. The Witch claims that she can help Manfred, but there is a price for her assistance. The Witch says Manfred would have to "swear obedience to my will, and do / My bidding" (II.ii.154-56). But Manfred defiantly refuses replying, "Be a slave / Of those who served me--Never!" (II.ii.158-59). Next, Manfred seeks Arimanes, the most powerful natural spirit. He is the spirit to which all the other spirits bow. And when forced by Manfred, Arimanes does grant part of Manfred's wishes, summoning the shadow or spirit of Astarte from the grave. Astarte's image tells Manfred that he will die the following day: "to-morrow ends thine earthly ills" (II.iv.152). However, she will not answer any of his questions and refuses to say whether Manfred has received forgiveness from her or if his death will provide him the forgetfulness of his past crimes and current guilt. Many critics have speculated about Manfred's need for forgetfulness and when denied that, his quest for forgiveness. But few have focused on his guilt for perverting his other self, Astarte, the sole reason why he seeks both forgetfulness and forgiveness in the first place.

Mervyn Nicholson, however, offers a very useful analysis of Manfred's guilt as it is associated with his other self. To Nicholson, Manfred seeks release from his guilt in order to be "freed from the past" which then would "allow authenticating acting in the present moment" (333). Nicholson claims that Manfred is "facing the wrong direction, looking back at the guilt of the past; he must turn around and face forward" if his life is to continue moving forward. Nicholson says that Manfred's "past guilt is identified with the lost-love figure Astarte whom he believes he destroyed and whose forgiveness is all he can think about" (333-334). In effect, Manfred is trapped by "his own guilt and doubt" about destroying Astarte. It has made him "unable to move in time [. . .] paralyzed by grief, guilt, or obsessive memory" (Nicholson 335).

I find that Astarte is more important to Manfred than Nicholson's analysis allows. She is more than a mere lover ruined by his love. She is the very image of himself. In fact, she is a projection by which Manfred understands his own being. Thus, Manfred has destroyed and perverted himself by ruining her. It is the realization of this perversion that causes the guilt that paralyses him. Manfred is stuck in limbo world of "life in death without

the peace of actual death" (Nicholson 335). All of this actually takes place before the play begins. The play only sees Manfred finally trying to escape from this ineffectual life. Nicholson also claims that it is "when the Astarte phantom at last says 'Farewell,' she is actually helping him. She is signaling dissolution of his paralysis" (Nicholson 343). This then allows Manfred to take authenticating action. I would add that Astarte's farewell is important because it is only then that Manfred is at last assured of death, which he has previously thought impossible. In a way, Manfred's death is the only authenticating action he can take. And yet, he does not know if death will grant him release, forgetfulness, or forgiveness.

It is at this crucial time that the Abbot becomes a significant character in the drama. The Abbot arrives just in time to tempt Manfred into conventional confession, in an effort to save his soul. He claims that it is not too late to achieve the forgiveness of Heaven. The Abbot says, "there is still time / For penitence and pity: reconcile thee / With the true church, and through the church to heaven" (III.i.48-51). But Manfred, in an assertion of defiance, rejects the Abbot's help. Manfred replies,

"whate'er / I may have been, or am, doth rest between /
Heaven and myself.-- / I shall not choose a mortal / To be
my mediator" (III.i.52-55). Indeed, whatever his crimes,
and despite the tempting offer from the Abbot, Manfred
refuses to be unfaithful to his own moral code. He remains
true to his nature, despite the fact that death may or may
not offer him release.

Manfred's final act of self will is best seen in the
last moments of his life. As McVeigh puts it, "in the end
Manfred does [. . .] enjoy a certain triumph. He does so
by remaining true to himself, however blighted his nature"
(McVeigh 609). And indeed, when the "dusk of awful figure"
comes to Manfred "unbidden" (III.iv.61-72), to convey him
to Hell, Manfred stays true to his belief that nothing, not
even death, is stronger than the self. He does this by
denying that the dark spirit is more powerful than himself.
Manfred says

I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine,
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!
[. . .]
I knew, and know my hour has come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee:

Away! I'll die as I have lived--alone. (III.iv.85-90)
In this way, Manfred rejects the customary way into death,
as he has all along rejected ordinary existence. He
exclaims triumphantly

Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am I thy prey--
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter. --Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of death is on me--but not yours!

(III.iv.137-141)

Although we do not know if Manfred is reunited with his
split self in death, he has moved beyond his paralysis and
has once again taken control over his destiny. As McVeigh
insists, it is in this way that "Manfred's death is self-
redemptive" (610).

Dorian and Manfred share some remarkable character-
istics as they grapple with their guilt and achieve their
deaths. For instance, Dorian, like Manfred, also suffers
from a cursed star in the form of blighted family ancestry.
Wilde alludes to this in Chapter 11 as Dorian recalls the
morally tainted ancestors whose blood runs in his veins.
But more than this, like Manfred, Dorian also seeks
forgetfulness for the perversion of his split self, the

painting. To Tyson, this explains why Dorian "embarks on a rigorous, empty pursuit of beauty and pleasure." He does it "for the sake of forgetfulness" (Tyson 109). Dorian seeks escape from the perversion of the painting that represents his soul, which he has poisoned. Dorian is caught in a self-perpetuating loop of guilt that, like Manfred's, will not allow him to make any positive steps forward, out of the past.

It is only after Dorian jilts Sybil Vane that the portrait alters for the first time. And as Tyson points out, "in the course of the first revelation scene, burdened with an overwhelming sense of guilt, Dorian attempts to transfer moral responsibility for this and future actions to his image on the wall" (Tyson 106). This occurs. But when Dorian sees this reflected in the painting, he realizes that he can never forget his actions however much he tries, because they will always manifest themselves in the image staring back at him. This in turn only fuels him to commit more crimes so that "the burden of guilt Dorian thought he had shed is still with him" (Tyson 107). The painting, instead of ridding him of guilt, only encourages it. As Tyson indicates, "the picture offers him only cruel recrimination. In his mind he tortures himself by

imagining the aging figure gradually taking on the aspect of his detested grandfather" (108). Tyson even goes so far as to suggest the heft of the painting itself reveals the huge burden of it on Dorian's conscience (104). In short, Dorian "lives in private agony" (Tyson 108), caught in a cycle of guilt and crime all tied to the decaying image of his split self. Like Manfred, Dorian too is unable to move forward until he experiences a break in his guilt.

Ironically, it is a good deed or at least the resisting of a bad one that finally breaks Dorian out of the cycle of guilt. In not corrupting Hetty Merton, Dorian accomplishes his first good deed since the painting began to change. After resisting the temptation to ruin Hetty, Dorian wonders if his good deed will be reflected in the painting. Wilde writes, "perhaps, if his life became pure, he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from the face. Perhaps the signs of evil had already gone away." But instead of reflecting his good deed, the painting's eyes show "a look of cunning, and in the mouth the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite" (211). Dorian realizes that it was only "through vanity that he spared her. In hypocrisy he had worn the mask of goodness." Dorian at this point realizes that he will never break free

of his guilt. Also similar to Manfred, Dorian is tempted to confess his sins in order to restore the painting and his soul. Wilde says, "it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement. There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins." But Dorian only toys with the idea of confession. Wilde asks, "was he really going to confess? Never" (212). Like Manfred, Dorian remains faithful to his nature, however blighted it may be.

Finally, Dorian realizes that in order to break free from his guilt, he must destroy the painting, the object perpetuating it. Dorian decides to "kill the past" because "when that was dead he would be free. [. . .] he would be at peace" (212). Thus he plunges the knife that killed Basil into the heart of the painting. It is only "by attempting to eradicate the picture that serves as a record of his unethical life, Dorian succeeds in destroying himself" (Wommack 179). Again, like Manfred, Dorian dies by his own action, by his own force of will. He stabs the painting but instead of killing it, he destroys himself. When his body is found, it bares the image of his perverted soul while the painting is restored to its pristine condition. This liberates "Dorian in death from the

consciousness divided" within him (Cohen 83). Unlike Manfred, who is never sure if his death will grant him the peace of forgetfulness and an end to his guilt, Dorian has probably achieved true forgetfulness and release from guilt in death. This is because Dorian ultimately reunites with his split self and heals his ruined soul, whereas in Manfred, the reunion with Astarte, Manfred's other self, is never discussed.

This chapter has delineated the remarkable similarities between Manfred and The Picture of Dorian Gray. Both texts contain an image of a narcissistic Byronic hero who creates a psychic split self that becomes corrupted by moral and sexual crimes. These crimes lead the narcissist into feelings of such excessive guilt that he seeks death as a release. But besides offering strikingly similar heroes and plots, Manfred and The Picture of Dorian Gray are told in the same manner. Chapter Four will investigate how both Byron and Wilde tell their stories through a blend of confession and concealment that includes aspects of their personal lives.

Chapter Four

Causing "A Pucker":

Manfred and The Picture of Dorian Gray

Beyond sharing similar characters and plot structures, Manfred and The Picture of Dorian Gray also share the same story-telling technique. This is because both Byron and Wilde were interested in offering portraits of themselves in their work. Specifically, both writers were interested in the simultaneous confession and concealment of their "deviant" sexuality. This was not merely coincidental, as this chapter will demonstrate, for Wilde purposely emulated both Byron's story-telling technique and the motivation behind it in The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Byron began Manfred in Switzerland in September 1816, and completed it in Venice in February 1817. Since Byron was already in exile when Manfred came out, he did not get to read the reviews immediately. So, as James Soderholm points out, "after Manfred was published, Byron wrote to Augusta wondering if the work had caused 'a pucker'" (193). It had. To the public, Manfred's characters appeared obviously drawn from life. Astarte was generally accepted to be Augusta, while Manfred, like Harold and the heroes of the Oriental tales, was taken to be Byron himself, a

position still adopted by contemporary criticism:

Manfred is superior to other mortals and alienated from them; he is pursued by the unrelenting Furies of a private guilt [. . .]. He is yet defiant of powers and structures outside of himself [. . .]. In all this, Manfred bares some similarity to Byron himself. In addition, his destructive and apparently incestuous love for the beautiful Astarte suggests the poet's liaison with Augusta Leigh. In short, his credentials as an autobiographical hero seem impeachable. (McVeigh 603)

Another reason Manfred caused a 'pucker' is tied to the timing of its release. It came out just after Byron's separation from Annabella. The legal separation paper filed by Annabella refused to detail the causes of the separation, but intimated that they were either incest or sodomy, or both. As a result of the separation, Byron's public, which had adored him, turned on him, reviled him, and demonized him. In fact, it can be argued that public outcry against him, as much as charges for which he could be publicly tried, forced Byron to leave England. Therefore, the public was all the more stunned at Byron's daring in Manfred, which seemed to admit his incest with

Augusta. The reviews of Manfred were particularly brutal. One outraged reviewer for The Day and New Times on 23 June 1817 wrote

Manfred [sic] has exiled himself from society, and what is to be the ground of our compassion for the exile? Simply the commission of one of the most revolting crimes. He has committed incest! Lord Byron, has coloured *Manfred* into his own personal features. (Gunn 205)

But Byron's drama also outraged his estranged wife and frightened his half-sister. In a strange irony, after Byron left England, these two women became friends. It was in the guise of friendship that Annabella wrote to Augusta offering her advice about how to handle the scandal attached to Manfred. Lady Byron writes, "you can only speak of *Manfred* . . . with the most decided expressions of disapprobation. He practically gives you away, and implies you were guilty *after marriage*" (Gunn 205). Augusta followed her advice. Her letters to Byron after the publication of Manfred became increasingly detached. Soon Byron grew tired of writing at all and their relationship dissolved into a precarious friendship.

Wilde's novel caused a similar pucker in the press of

his day for a remarkably similar reason, Wilde's admission of "deviant" sexuality. The Picture of Dorian Gray was first published in Lippincott's Magazine in July 1890. An expanded and revised edition was published as a book in June 1891. One of its first reviews, published in the St. James Gazette, read "'not being curious in ordure, and not wishing to offend the nostrils of decent persons, we do not propose to analyse 'The Picture of Dorian Gray': that would be to advertise the development of an esoteric prurience'" (Gillespie 22). Kenneth Wommack provides two other scandalous reviews. First, the 30 June 1890 edition of the Daily Chronicle "described the novel as 'unclean' and a 'poisonous book' with 'odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction.'" Second, a 5 July 1890 notice in the Scots Observer, "complained about the novel's 'false' morality, 'for it is not made sufficiently clear that the writer does not prefer a course of unnatural iniquity to a life of cleanliness, health, and sanity'" (Wommack 169).

Wilde countered these claims in two paradoxical ways. First, he offered an aesthetic excuse. He claimed that morality had naught to do with art. Art existed for its own sake. This belief is found in the Preface to the novel version of The Picture of Dorian Gray. Wilde writes,

"there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (xi). Wilde excuses artists from the pedestrian reinforcement of prevailing morality in works of art. Yet the second way Wilde countered claims of indecency and immorality directed at the novel was by insisting that The Picture of Dorian Gray's moral was too clear. Wommack says that "Wilde swiftly replied to the growing horde of critics, arguing, rather ironically, that The Picture of Dorian Gray was in fact too moral: 'All excess, as well as all renunciation,' Wilde soberly concluded, 'brings its own punishment'" (169).

Regenia Gagnier argues that Wilde's public attacked the novel for aesthetic reasons as well as for its immoral sexual flavor. She writes, "the London press was uniformly hostile to Wilde; and frequently its hostility was directed toward art, education, and 'idleness' as well as towards homosexuality" (29). And yet the homosexual subtext of the novel, though outwardly not obvious, was not missed by critics. It is for this reason that parts of the novel were cited in Wilde's public trials for gross indecency. Thus Wilde's public was just as shocked by his novel and its confession of homosexuality as Byron's public had been

of his admission of incest in Manfred. In this way, we see the public responding to Byron and Wilde's preferred mode of story-telling, "the truth in masquerade" as Graham says.

James Soderholm has called Byron's need to divulge aspects of his personal life in his art while simultaneously obscuring those facts "Byronic Confession." He points out that "Byron's habit of appearing at once transparent and oblique" is seen "especially in works such as Manfred, his most sinuous confession" (Soderholm 185). What Byron divulges, in his mode of disguise and disclosure, is his incestuous love for Augusta, as his contemporaries surmised. Thus to Soderholm, "Astarte becomes the repository of innuendo, a code name [. . .] that allows Byron laboriously to tell certain truths about himself, but to tell them slant, to elaborate a game of disguise and disclosure" (188). That is, Byron's artistic endeavor clearly allows him to reveal himself and his crimes, to confess them to his public in the most shocking way without necessarily putting himself at risk. This is especially true for Manfred because Byron was already safely in exile on the continent when the drama was published.

There is another important aspect to Byronic

confession in Manfred as well. In Byron's form of confession, "in the very act of apologizing for his misdeeds he commits another [. . .] misdeed by exploiting [. . .] and *publicizing*" it (188). In other words, Byron is a kind of "exhibitionist who oddly combines the confession with the art of violating one's own privacy" (Soderholm 192). Perhaps this was done as a direct response to Byromania, for McDayter maintains that while Byron felt victimized by his fame, he also encouraged it by tantalizing the public with hints about his immoral life. He had seemingly disclosed the immoral aspects of his life, especially his sexuality, in his work and dared his audience to apply those findings back to his own life. This feedback loop between Byron and his audience may also explain why Manfred contains a split self at all. In the act of writing, Byron the poet, creates his own split self in the text. Byron uses the character of Manfred as his own other self to reveal his own "deviant" sexuality.

And fundamentally, the same can be said of Wilde, who both engages in Byronic confession and the creation of a split self in his novel. Richard Pine demonstrates this trait in his analysis of The Picture of Dorian Gray. Pine insists there seem to be

three Oscar Wildes, corresponding to those in Dorian Gray: firstly, the artist contemplating, reproducing, and dominated by, the creature of beauty--as Wilde conceived himself; secondly, the hedonist, acknowledging neither right nor wrong in his pursuit and propagation of pleasure--thus the world saw Wilde; thirdly, the thing of beauty itself. (141)

Pine is investigating a quote made by Wilde after the publication of the novel. In a letter to Ralph Payne, Wilde once wrote, "I am so glad you like that strange coloured book of mine: it contains much of me in it. Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry is what the world thinks me: Dorian is what I would like to be--in other ages perhaps" (Gillespie 11). Thus Wilde imitates Byron by using his characters as a mirror of himself. Further, Wilde uses the relationship between Basil, Lord Henry, and Dorian in order to disclose and disguise his identity as a homosexual. Like Byron, Wilde displays his own "deviant" sexuality in his text without specifically naming it.

As Summers says, the result of this is that "modern gay fiction may trace its beginnings to Wilde because of his role as a symbolic figure who exemplified a way of being homosexual at a pivotal moment in the emergence of gay

consciousness." For this reason, Wilde "ultimately functioned as Saint Oscar, the homosexual martyr" (Summers 29). Wilde's exemplary homosexuality garnered him sainthood in later generations, not wholly unlike the Byromania Byron experienced in his own lifetime.

The remainder of this chapter will argue that Wilde's literary modeling of Byron did not occur by mere coincidence. Rather, I will suggest that Wilde was fully aware of Byron as he responded to his own fame and wrote his works. This will be shown by investigating how Wilde directly responds to Byron's literary and public reception in The Picture of Dorian Gray. Although I disagree with much of Andrew Elfenbein's analysis, his brief investigation of the modeling of Wilde on Byron warrants a close examination.

Elfenbein begins by acknowledging that Wilde responded not only to Byron's works but also to Byron's public reception (Byron 231). He establishes this by citing how Wilde's "early writing participated in the canonization of Byron." As Elfenbein points out, in Wilde's poem, "Ravenna," which won him the Newdigate prize, "Byron appears as a Great English Author." Wilde writes of Byron, "'And England, too, shall glory in her son, / Her warrior-

poet, first in song and fight' (IX:8)" (Elfenbein, *Byron* 231). Moreover, Elfenbein also finds that this poem directly responds to Byron's public perception. In particular, Elfenbein focuses on the growing awareness of Byron's bisexuality in the later Victorian era. Elfenbein writes, "evidence for Wilde's association of Byron with homosexuality is abundant. As early as "Ravenna," his reference to 'Slander's venom'd spite' having crawled 'like a snake across his [Byron's] perfect name' (IX:9) reveals his knowledge of the rumors spread about Byron" (Elfenbein, *Byron* 237).

But more significantly, Elfenbein further believes that The Picture of Dorian Gray itself also "participated in a less publicized aspect of Byron's reception, the growing association between him and homosexuality" (*Byron* 237). Elfenbein shows this by investigating how secrets in the novel recall Byron's own habit of exposing private secrets publicly. Elfenbein writes, "the secret behind Byron's separation was supposed to have been everything from adultery to sodomy" (*Byron* 242). As we have seen, Byron indeed publicly exposed and concealed these kinds of sexual secrets in his work. For instance, Manfred reveals the secret of Byron and Augusta's incest. The disclosing

of secrets also plays a dominate role in Wilde's novel. Dorian has secrets of his own; his hideously perverted painting and his experimentation with homosexuality. Elfenbein focuses primarily on Dorian's same-sex relationships. He writes, the "excess of secrecy, far more than actual relations between men, distinguishes homosexual character in *Dorian Gray*. It invents the homosexual as a man with too many secrets." Elfenbein further relates how this shows evidence of Wilde's modeling himself on Byron. He claims that Dorian's homosexuality "draws on Byron's precedent as the figure who [. . .] define[s] the association between homosexuality and a plethora of secrets" (Elfenbein, *Byron* 242). For Byron attempts to keep his own "deviant" sexuality secretive while at the same time leaving hints of it exposed.

Elfenbein also shows how Wilde's character Dorian resembles Byron himself in other ways. He writes

Byron's relevance to *Dorian Gray* is most vivid once Dorian has begun to earn the plurality of secrets in his picture. Suddenly, he resembles Byron, especially when Wilde puts him "at his great house in Nottinghamshire, entertaining the fashionable young men of his own rank who were his chief companions, and

astounding the country by the wanton luxury and gorgeous splendour of his mode of life" (157). The use of Nottinghamshire, the location of Byron's Newstead Abbey, looks like a direct bow to Byron as portrayed in Victorian biographies. (Elfenbein, *Byron* 242-43)

I would add that Dorian also takes on aspects of Byron after rumors begin to circulate about him in public. This is best witnessed in women's reactions to Dorian once his reputation begins to suffer. Women who had once adored him grew pale at the mere sight of him. This mimics Byron's own experience with Regency women after news of his separation became public.

However, it is important to note that Elfenbein further maintains that Wilde's novel does not "merely write an echo of Byron's career into Dorian's character"; it goes even farther. It takes the secrecy surrounding the homosexuality to such lengths that it becomes inaccessible and unspeakable. Indeed, it is never specifically mentioned in the novel. Elfenbein concludes that "Dorian is the first homosexual in fiction precisely because his secret cannot be revealed" (*Byron* 244). It is at this point that I disagree with Elfenbein. This is because Dorian's

homosexuality is not inaccessible; Wilde reveals enough in the text that Dorian's homosexuality can certainly be surmized. Suspicion arises from the significance of Dorian's name, his activities with foreign sailors, his involvement in the ruin of certain young men, his desire to maintain Basil and Lord Henry's homosexual desire for him, and Dorian's knowledge of Alan Campbell's private shame. We know Wilde's public did not miss these tantalizing hints because accusations of indecency were leveled against Wilde in the press when the book came out.

In any case, as Elfenbein maintains, we can see Wilde clearly responding to Byron's literary and public reception in The Picture of Dorian Gray. This occurs in two ways. First we see Wilde directly addressing and co-opting parts of Byron's public reception in the novel. Second, we also see Wilde modeling Byron's story-telling technique. Wilde employs Byronic confession--'the truth in masquerade'--in the novel. This is most obviously accomplished by revealing and concealing aspects of his personal life, especially his sexuality in his work. And like Byron, Wilde pushed this mode to its greatest extreme. Wilde's outrageous confessions, like Byron's, eventually led to his downfall and exile. The following chapter will examine the

negative impact of "the truth in masquerade," by
investigating Wilde and Byron's exiles.

Chapter Five

"There's Not a Joy the World Can Give Like

That It Takes Away": Byron and Wilde in Exile

Byron sailed for Ostend on 25 April 1816. But was his going into exile a free or forced decision? Thomas Moore, in his 1830 biography of Byron, mentions "certain 'rumors' and declared that 'such an outcry was now raised against Lord Byron as, in no case of private life, perhaps, was ever before witnessed.'" Byron's exile, as Louis Crompton adds "had not even the dignity of appearing voluntary, as the excommunicating voice of society left him no other resource" (227). But in many ways, Byron's exile from England and his ostracization from British culture offered him many positives, not readily apparent. For instance, Byron got to participate in the grand tour of Europe, which the Napoleonic wars had made impossible in the first decade of the 1800s. As Elma Dangerfield says, "the tradition of the Grand Tour could be resumed [. . .]. The gates of the Continent were again opened to the traveler, who was no longer endangering his life [. . .] by venturing on a perilous journey through hostile countries" (7).

Secondly, it was due to his exile that Byron first settled in Diodati, Switzerland, where he befriended

several literary figures who were to heavily influence his future writings. Among them were the Shelleys, 'Monk' Lewis, and Madame de Staël. Byron's relationship with the Shelleys, especially Percy, is well documented in Charles E. Robinson's Shelley and Byron: The Snake and the Eagle Wreathed in Fight. In it, Robinson discusses Shelley's influence on Byron as seen in the many works he completed while in Switzerland, especially the third canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Also fairly well established is "Monk" Lewis's translation and reading of Goethe's Faustus to Byron, which probably influenced aspects of Manfred, though Byron denied the influence. Byron claimed "it was the Staubbach and the Yungfrau [sic], and *something else*, much more than Faustus, that made me write Manfred" (Dangerfield 79).

Though Byron's friends offered him some relief, he did not manage to avoid public outcry against him while on the Continent, as Dangerfield explains. She records the thoughts of Lord Glenbervie, a Scottish visitor in Diodati, who wrote in his *Diary* that "Byron was 'cut off by everybody'--meaning no doubt that the other English visitors who had descended in droves in Geneva that summer [. . .] either ignored or harassed him" (Dangerfield 27).

Byron similarly acknowledged in a letter to Thomas Medwin:

Gossips made my stay a nightmare . . . There is no story so absurd that they did not invent it at my cost. I was watched by glasses on the opposite side of the lake [. . .]. I was waylaid in my evening dress--I was accused of corrupting all the grisettes.

(Dangerfield 27-28)

Rumors of his liaison with Claire Claremont, did nothing to assuage the public belief that he continued to explore unconventional morality while in exile. And wild rumors of supposed incestuous orgies were furthered when Claremont became pregnant.

By the time Byron left Switzerland, he had worked through much of his initial response to finding himself in exile. Byron purged his pain, as he always did, through an almost unprecedented level of creativity. As Dangerfield points out, "he had suffered--but written--so much (the third canto of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *A Fragment*, *Churchill's Grave*, *Darkness*, *Monody on Sheridan*, *Prometheus*, and the first two acts of *Manfred*)."

Looking back at his experience in Switzerland, Byron, in an 1821 letter from Italy, exclaimed to Murray, "How I wrote then!" (Dangerfield 81).

After a few tawdry affairs and some aimless travel, Byron eventually settled in Italy. His life, by the time he was thirty-one, "subsided into quasi-domesticity" with the twenty year old Teresa Guiccioli. Although she was married, Byron maintained his most enduring relationship with Teresa, becoming her Anglo *cavalier servente*. It was while with Teresa that Byron began Don Juan, "that poem that ensures his fame down through the ages," as Graham says (28). Don Juan is a long, witty, satiric, and adventurous mock-epic. And in it, we can see Byron responding directly to his status as an exile. Byron uses the voice of the sardonic narrator of Don Juan to attack the English. As Crompton observes, just "as English morality had mobilized a whole society against him, so Byron's hatred extended to his nation generally" (235). This is best seen in Canto IX of Don Juan wherein Juan ventures to England. Among the decidedly vapid social systems the narrator attacks are English politics, religion, taxes, the weather of England, and the coldness of high-born English women. Byron's friends in England enjoyed the jovial flavor of Don Juan. But Teresa was grossly unimpressed. It was due to her outrage against the poem that Byron temporarily stopped working on it. But

Byron was not one to calmly sit on his hands and do nothing.

Instead, Byron turned his attention to the politics of his adopted home. It was through Teresa that Byron befriended her father, Count Ruggero Gamba, and her brother Pietro who were "deeply involved in the struggle for Italian freedom." Crompton explains Byron's involvement. He writes, "after the Gambas were exiled after the failure of the Carbonari revolt of 1821, Byron followed them to Pisa and Genoa where he was briefly reunited with Shelley." But it was not until after Shelley's death that Edward John Trelawny urged Byron to help the Greeks in their war against the Turks for independence. As Crompton notes, "Byron accepted the challenge as an opportunity to give meaning to a life become dull and empty" (313). Byron became a financial backer of the Greek fight for independence. But Byron was not satisfied with merely supplying funds for the revolution; he wanted to take an active role in the fight. Thus, he embarked for Greece.

Once away from his mundane but comfortable life with Teresa, it was not long until Byron was again engaging in "deviant" sexuality. As Crompton indicates

Byron was incapable of living without intimate

personal ties of some sort. In earlier days, he had written that his heart always alighted 'on the nearest perch.' Now he was to repeat the pattern of his boyhood and see patronage blossoming into love. (315)

In other words, Byron's last relationship mirrors his first ones at Harrow in its homosexual nature. The aging Byron soon fell in love with the young and beautiful but vain and greedy Lukas Chalandrutsanos. It is quite clear that while Lukas enjoyed the gifts he received from Byron, he did not return his feelings of affection. And yet, "it was Lukas who was to be the center of Byron's emotional life during his last months in Greece," the final few months of his life, it turned out (Crompton 315). It was in the presence of the apathetic Lukas that Byron suffered two epileptic-type fits, then succumbed to fever and died in Missolonghi, Greece.

Unlike Byron and the debate surrounding his decision to enter into exile, Wilde entertained no other possibility. This is because he had been convicted in a public trial, and not merely in the court of public opinion. There was no doubt as to his guilt. So when he was released from Reading Prison, Wilde went immediately to Dieppe, France. Also unlike Byron, who eventually found

some inclusion in exile, Wilde suffered far more. Wilde even went so far as to change his name to reduce the scandal he caused. He traveled under the *nom de guerre* Monsieur Sebastian Melmoth. The symbolism of the name may have been more inspired than Wilde realized. As Belford points out, Wilde choose "Sebastian for the patron saint of the plague, and Melmoth from his great-uncle's book Melmoth the Wanderer." Melmoth was written by Charles Robert Maturin, who was by marriage an uncle to Wilde's mother. Belford adds, "Wilde saw himself not as the Sebastian with too many arrows but as the Sebastian who cheated death, as he had in prison" (Belford 278). "The Melmoth Wilde identified with roams the earth looking for someone so eager to get away from worldly tortures that he will sell his soul to the Devil in order to rid himself of earthly miseries" (Belford 278-79). But there may also be a Byron connection to the choosing of this name. For as Edouard Roditi observes, "Wilde surely knew that Baudelaire had praised Melmoth [. . .] and he was proud of the high esteem in which two of his favorite authors, Byron and Balzac, had held his mother's uncle" (47). Wilde was also surely aware that Byron once jokingly called his uncle Maturin "a bit of a coxcomb" (Roditi 48).

Wilde first lived in exile in Dieppe. Belford sets the scene nicely.

Wilde arrived in Dieppe with an 800 pound collection from friends to set up a new life. He could count on 150 pounds a year from Constance, and beyond that he was dependent on Ross. Once a lover and then a friend, Ross became Wilde's financial adviser and banker. (279)

But Constance put a stipulation on Wilde's stipend. Wilde had to stay away from his homosexual friends, especially Bosie. Wilde's financial security seemed to compensate somewhat for the response Wilde received from English tourists, in many ways just as extreme as public response to Byron in Switzerland. Like Byron, Wilde tried to ignore it. As Belford says, "everybody met everybody else, morning, noon, and night. Ignoring the disdain of the English who recognized him, Wilde went to his favorite haunts" (Belford 279). Wilde, in exile, tried to enjoy himself while he "waited for friends to make a 'pilgrimage to the sinner'" (Belford 282).

But neither his flamboyant lifestyle nor his financial security could completely compensate for the person Wilde deeply missed. That is, Wilde could not stay away from

Bosie, despite his agreement with Constance. They began a correspondence and soon after arranged to meet. Their meeting re-ignited their sexual relationship. As a result, Wilde forfeited his annual stipend from Constance. They traveled aimlessly for some time and eventually Wilde and Bosie settled in Paris. Wilde's lost stipend meant little to him at the time because Bosie had inherited his father's large estate while Wilde was in prison. But their living together did not last long. As Belford intimates, Bosie could not adjust to Wilde's exile status. She writes, "the society he had had with Wilde was lost forever because Wilde's position was no longer that of a married, successful playwright." Belford adds

Bosie felt the same as Dorian had when he reproached Sybil: "I loved you because you were marvellous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art." Without her art, she was "nothing." (288)

Similarly, Wilde became nothing to Bosie when he stopped writing. That is, beyond the publication of "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," Wilde wrote and published almost nothing while in exile. Unlike Byron, who went on to his most

significant works while in exile, Wilde stopped writing completely. Instead, he made his life his genius. As Wilde once said, "I put all my talent into my art; all of my genius into my life."

The genius of Wilde's life is the way he managed to live it, engaging openly in the behavior which had sent him to prison. As Belford says,

he could not be arrested for soliciting in Paris, but he would be talked about. That was fine: Wilde needed to be talked about. "A patriot put in prison for loving his country loves his country," he said, "and a poet in prison for loving boys loves boys." Every day in Paris, he wanted to be in love with a beautiful boy. (293)

But his flamboyance came at a price. Without income, Wilde lived on the kindness of friends. Yet Wilde was endangering these friends by openly engaging in homosexuality. His friends back in England were still at risk of sharing in Wilde's public shame by maintaining an acquaintance with a convicted homosexual. Ultimately this resulted in his isolation from financial favor. Thus, in his final years, Wilde was reduced to living on the little money he could beg, until his death in Paris of meningitis.

As we have seen, Byron and Wilde, besides living with the prying eyes of a fickle public and writing works that are remarkably similar, were forced into exile for similar reasons. As Elfenbein says, "both were hounded from British society because of sexual misconduct, although Byron at least avoided the spectacle of Wilde's trials" (Byron 237). Both Byron and Wilde were expelled from England for private "deviant" sexuality that became public knowledge. In part, this was due to the relationship each writer maintained with his audience through a style of writing that both disclosed and disguised. And both writers' works hinted at a deviancy that eventually became public fact. This was to be expected, though. It was a risk both writers took, because in the end, both were guilty of what they revealed in their works. But more than this, living in exile provided both Byron and Wilde the opportunity to live their own lives. That is, in exile, they both more openly maintained their unconventional sexuality. Byron claimed an illegitimate child with Claire Claremont, had many lovers, including the married Teresa Guiccioli, then reverted to homosexuality in his final months. Likewise, Wilde became the new "homosexual", a man living a publicly gay lifestyle, ignoring his fear of

recrimination, which was rather slight in France.

But their exiles were also very different. I would argue that this is due predominantly to the prevalent philosophies of their time periods. While Byron went on to write some of his best works in exile, Wilde, beyond "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," wrote nothing. Further, while Byron went on to finance the Greek War for Independence, Wilde became a recluse, a broken version of himself. Although both Byron and Wilde were guilty of sexual immorality, Byron was allowed a position in Victorian culture as a hero, while Wilde was relegated to suffer persecution. Why should this be so? Elfenbein argues that Victorians looked back at the Regency and Byron, who was symbolic of the age, with contempt for their moral emptiness but also with envy. He writes, Victorians adored the Regency's "glittering elegance" but abhorred its "moral emptiness." Victorians were attracted to the Regency for two reasons; first, they believed that the purity of the upper class was stronger during Byron's time. This is because the aristocracy had not yet merged with the middle-class, as it had by the Victorian era. Second, as Linda Colley says, the Regency prided itself on military achievement, a trait glorified by Victorians. Colley argues

"aristocrats during and immediately after the Napoleonic wars" took great care "to identify themselves with military achievement, on the battlefield and with the cult of civilian heroism at home" (Elfenbein, *Silver-Fork* 78). I would suggest that these two images merge in Byron. Not only did Byron come from the purer Regency aristocracy, but he also martyred himself in the fight for Greek independence. Both these aspects of Byron's image fed into Victorian approval of him.

Wilde, on the other hand, shared Byron's deviancy but he did not share in the two attributes that saved Byron's image. Wilde had neither a noble family line nor any military record. Wilde partook of the immoral, sexual decadence of Byron's time, but did not possess any heroism with which to balance it. Wilde was relegated to suffer during the Victorian era, while Byron's image prevailed. Although Wilde failed to live his ideal life, he did manage to defy his society by his lifestyle in exile. Thus, it can be said that both Byron and Wilde, like their heroes Manfred and Dorian Gray, managed to reclaim their lives and, in the end, openly defy their publics, which had both loved them and spurned them.

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