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James Buzard

THE USES OF ROMANTICISM: BYRON AND THE VICTORIAN CONTINENTAL TOUR

What helps it now that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mocked the smart,
Through Europe to the Aetolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own?

Matthew Arnold, "Stanzas on the Grand Chartreuse"(1855)

ARNOLD'S STIRRING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LEGACY OF BYRON AND THE Romantic age were, of course, rhetorical. To the Victorian man of culture—"wandering between two worlds, one dead, / the other powerless to be born"—the great outpourings of Romantic emotional energy did not seem much help at all. But another passage, taken from a very different work of 1855, suggests that not all Victorians would have endorsed Arnold's lofty pessimism about Romanticism's lasting value. This second quotation is from a popular book by Richard Doyle, the *Punch* cartoonist and acquaintance of Thackeray, and it shows Byron performing a useful function in a Victorian context probably very remote from any that Arnold had in mind, but one that mattered to more Victorians than could have been concerned with Arnold's critical encounter with his poetic precursors. The work in question is a mildly satirical picture book about middle-class Continental tourism entitled *The Foreign Tour of Messrs. Brown, Jones, and Robinson*, and the passage is the caption to an illustration that depicts Mr. Robinson, in Venice, striking up a poetic attitude while his fellow tourists look on. The entire caption reads as follows:

Robinson (*solo*).—"I stood in Venice," etc.

Jones and Brown, having heard something like it before have walked on a little way.

Reflection made by Brown.—Why do people when repeating poetry always look unhappy? (65)

Robinson is borrowing the opening verses of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV ("I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs; / A palace and a prison on each hand . . ."), lines whose fame throughout the nineteenth century probably rivalled any in English poetry. Doyle's setting up the quotation to read like a

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line from a dramatic script, with the speaker's name followed by a parenthetical indication of how the line is to be delivered (*solo*), captures the essence of many small dramatic performances staged within nineteenth-century Continental tourism. Along with other memorable passages in Byron's work (such as that describing "the castled crag of Drachenfels," in the Rhine stanzas of *Childe Harold* Canto III), Robinson's chosen quotation belonged to an ennobling repertoire of poetical attitudes which tourists could strike in numerous places on the Continent.

When by midcentury Arnold and other Victorian literati (Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle) had renounced their own youthful Byronic enthusiasms and imitations (see Chew; Rutherford), Byron was still a presence in British culture through his peculiar influence on the habits of tourists. In spite of his vilification as the embodiment of Continental libertarianism and libertinage, Byron had managed to become, to the disgust of William Makepeace Thackeray, one of the "public gods" of Victorian England: Thackeray was particularly incensed that the tourists' handbooks of John Murray III had assisted in this apotheosis by proclaiming Byron to be "our native bard" (Thackeray 321). In order to understand both how and why Byron was so regularly sought as a guiding spirit for the nineteenth-century tour, it will first be necessary to grasp what was happening to the Continental tour as contemporary observers saw it.

I

When peace came, after many long years of war, when our island prison was opened to us, and our watery exit from it was declared practicable, it was the paramount wish of every English heart . . . to hasten to the continent, and to imitate our forefathers in their almost forgotten custom, of spending the greater part of their lives and fortunes in their carriages on the post-roads of the continent. With the brief and luckless exception of the peace of Amiens, the continent had not been open for the space of more than one-and-twenty years; a new generation had sprung up, and the whole of this . . . poured, in one vast stream, across the Pas de Calais into France. . . .

Westminster Review, Oct. 1826

In the years following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, a consensus began to emerge about the new terms on which European travel could be undertaken; the epigraph above provides one example of the common perception. To startled observers, the peace after Waterloo appeared to have released the pent-up urges in "every English heart" for travel and adventure abroad—urges which quickly came to represent, in miniature, a wide range of new aspirations for social and cultural advancement. Increased ease of access to the Continent appeared to have invited an unprecedented flood of tourists into the havens of the old Grand Tour. From the start this movement looked like a "second wave" of British invasion, an army of tourists following the lead of an

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actual army, and it called into question the motives and ideals traditionally associated with the privileged Grand Tour.

The literary and journalistic record of the years after 1815 is full of hyperbole about British tourists' deluge, invasion, or infestation of the Continent. The vision of "the English to be met with everywhere" provided the starting point for Thomas Moore's remarkable "Extract IV" in *Rhymes on the Road* (1819), which begins by asking

And is there then no earthly place
Where we can rest, in dream Elysian,
Without some cursed, round English face,
Popping up near, to break the vision? (*Poetical Works* 587)

"Go where we may, rest where we will," Moore wrote, "Eternal London haunts us still"; and he went on to joke about the likelihood of soon meeting traveling English people "among the Blacks of Carolina" or "taking tea upon the Wall of China" (587). Numerous other witnesses of the period contemplated a similar spectacle of ubiquitous Englishness abroad. In 1825, Constantine Henry Phipps, First Marquis of Normanby, saw "Jenkinsons and Tomkinsons tumb[ing] down the Alps in living avalanches" (1: 12; Churchill 56). That same year the *Westminster Review* compared "the inundation [sic] of Britons" on the Continent to "a second irruption of the Goths, pour[ing] down upon Italy" (April 1825: 359). Coleridge concluded, in "The Delinquent Travelers," that "since grim War has ceas'd its madding, / [and] Peace has set John Bull agadding," all English folk seemed on the move:

Keep moving! Steam, or Gas, or Stage,
Hold, cabin, steerage, hencoop's cage—
Tour, Journey, Voyage, Lounge, Ride, Walk,
Skim, Sketch, Excursion, Travel-talk—
For move you must! 'Tis now the rage,
The law and fashion of the Age. (444)

In 1825, the *Westminster Review* characterized the English contingent in Rome as a "curious medley" consisting of

all classes, ages, sexes, and conditions . . . assembled together; the first of our nobility with the last of our citizens . . . crossing and justling each other in every corner; talking, writing, wondering, displaying, and rhapsodizing:—lion-hunting, husband-hunting, time-killing, money-spending, view-taking, and book-making . . . English, in short, of every kind and description—high and low—wise and foolish—rich and poor—black, brown, and fair. (April 1825: 358–59)

This account gives a picture of a kind of "Vanity Fair Abroad": a compressed, "justling," heterogeneous mass of English all jockeying for position within a social system that seems scandalously freer than the domestic one. It is, of course, an exaggeration, for there was not then, nor has there ever been, any real equality of access to most of the preferred tourist attractions in Europe. Based initially on individual perception and recollection, such comments grew

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into a nearly self-perpetuating discourse, burgeoning without reference to demographic evidence. In so doing, perceptions like the above spurred the sarcasm of editorialists and the concerted efforts of travelers to exhibit independence from the practices and proclivities of the crowds of compatriots surrounding them.¹ If the favorite fields for Continental tourism had become radically open to all comers, then they would also become an open market for the appropriation and display of attributes that distinguished the single traveler from the flocks of “mere tourists.”

Such was the view taking shape about the new atmosphere of European travel when Lord Byron headed abroad in 1816, “kicking the dust of England from his heels.” Resentful of the petty obloquies that had driven him from his own country, the poet was in no mood to confront hordes of his fellow Britons on the Continent, and he frequently made his feelings known in letters written over the next few years. In 1817 Byron described Rome to his friend Thomas Moore as “pestilential with English, — a parcel of staring boobies, who go about gaping and wishing to be at once cheap and magnificent”; he remained in Venice “chiefly because it is not one of their ‘dens of thieves’ ” (qtd. in Moore, *Life* 1: 601). The tourists’ apparent omnipresence ruined many places Byron had longed to visit: he complained that other English travelers “crossed me everywhere” in Switzerland, and that “the most distant glimpse or aspect of them poisoned the whole scene” (*Life* 1: 601, 602). And like many a later resentful traveler, Byron found it natural to infer that the sheer number of English tourists he saw around him was an indication of their average imaginative capacity: he supposed that, as a member of such a noisy mob, each tourist must be deficient in the faculties necessary to properly appreciate what the tour had to offer. This passage, from his Swiss journal, is exemplary:

I remember, at Chamouni, in the very eyes of Mont Blanc, hearing [an English] woman . . . exclaim to her party, “Did you ever see any thing more rural?” as if it was Highgate, or Hampstead, or Brompton, or Hayes, — “Rural!” quotha. Rocks, pines, torrents, glaciers, clouds, and summits of eternal snows far above them — and “rural!” (*Life* 1: 541)

Both the theme of tourists’ pervasiveness across Europe and the Byronic disdain for fellow travelers were fundamental to repeated efforts, lasting throughout the nineteenth century, to establish new models of validity and authenticity for European travel — efforts to represent the valid and authentic as that which denounces, evades, or transcends “merely touristic” purposes and behavior. In an opening cultural marketplace, one needed not only the cultural benefits of the European tour, but also the appearance of attaining those benefits in a manner unlike that of the thronging “everyones” attempting the same procedure. And much more than the immediate concerns of the Continental tour was at stake. The alarm over an evidently democratizing tourism and the search for an “anti-tourism” that could thrive even in its midst impinges upon the powerful discourse in which the relationship between “Cul-

ture” and “Society” has been articulated since the days of Mill and Arnold. Temporarily removing one from domestic society, the foreign tour presents an image in high relief of culture’s position and role in modern industrial societies: the cultural is conceived of as “outside” ordinary social life, comprising a compensatory domain of autonomy and creativity to which utilitarian capitalist social arrangements pay no heed (see McCallum 11–37; Williams 49–70). The tour, like culture, permits individuals an imaginative freedom they cannot as a rule enjoy in their domestic lives; it encourages them to fashion special identities for themselves—identities which they privately and intensely possess—that are congruent with that freedom. Like culture, tourism performs this function in between well-marked boundaries: one must always return home, go back to work, resume the identity by which one is recognized among relatives, co-workers, employers. The post-Napoleonic scene of tourism thus offered an early, exemplary instance of modern cultural practice.

William Hazlitt’s *Table Talk* essay “On Going a Journey” (1822) is a classic expression of the new attitude. “The soul of a journey,” says Hazlitt, “is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; *to leave ourselves behind*, much more to get rid of others” (249–50; italics mine). As soon as he sets foot in Calais, Hazlitt “breathe[s] the air of general humanity,” and he walks “the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France” erect and satisfied; for once there he feels, as he adds in Blakean language, that “the image of man [is] not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones” (260). Hazlitt characterizes the “sensation of travelling into foreign parts” as

too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, [it] does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. (260–61)

Finally, Hazlitt arrives at a recognition that would be crucial for the way Victorian travelers—and the Victorian tourist industry itself—conceived of the foreign tour: it lets us fashion a distinct traveler’s persona for ourselves, one commensurate with the imaginary liberties and adventures of the trip. To quote Hazlitt again:

It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must “jump” all our present comforts and connexions. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. . . . The time we [spend abroad] is both delightful and in one sense instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. (261)

The claims advanced by Hazlitt were bound to become ever more popular as the century progressed and as tourism gradually became an alternative for middle- and (within much tighter financial and time constraints) lower-mid-

dle- and working-class clients. For those whose ordinary lives consisted of frustrating, routine labor, tourism would promise access to fields for fuller imaginative deployment. On this view, travel restokes the inner fires of our imaginations, offering us channels for those energies that remain bottled up during our domestic rounds. It functions ideologically to stimulate active imaginative impulses, perhaps inviting us to purge ourselves of them before returning home. Travel, in short, has become an ameliorative *vacation*, promising, as does culture, a time or imaginary space out of ordinary life in which we may be free to realize our otherwise thwarted potential. As long as the imaginative liberties of culture remain in a separate space outside our normal lives—and in foreign tourism, how could they not do so, since the tour takes us physically outside our home environment?—the structure of domestic society will remain intact.

But the common perception of the post-Napoleonic years, that the tour was in the process of being radically democratized, yielded some disturbing questions about the ability of travel and culture to perform their appropriate functions. How could travelers fully indulge their imaginative liberty when so many of their compatriots were underfoot? How could they even think of doing so when the field was occupied, ever more complacently and confidently, by tourists and, in time, by the evidence of a burgeoning tourist *industry*? Plurality of tourists and greater degrees of administrative organization—provided most prominently by Messrs. Cook, Murray, and Baedeker—seemed to imply homogeneity and crudity of experience. What would remain that was special about one tourist's tourism?

II

. . . in the crowd
 They could not deem me one of such; I stood
 Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
 Of thoughts which were not their thoughts. . . .
 Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III

Enter Byron. One often remarked aspect of Byron's public persona—its histrionic, theatrical nature—was particularly germane to the development of Victorian tourism and its attitudes. It is worth remembering, for example, that Keats had classed Byron with Bonaparte as a prime representative of the “worldly, theatrical, and pantomimical” temper of mind (233). Many focused their criticism of Byron on just this aspect of his appeal. Leigh Hunt told Lord Houghton that “there was no doubt whatever in [his] mind that Byron was all the time strutting about as on a stage” (qtd. in Chew 134–35), and Thackeray charged that “that man *never* wrote from his heart. He got up rapture and enthusiasm with an eye to the public” (321). Even Matthew Arnold's more measured response attacked the public's “theatrical Byron,” full of

“affectations and silliness”; Arnold sought to retrieve the true poet beneath all the vainglorious pomp of the “theatrical and easily criticised personage” (359–61).² By focusing so frequently on Byron’s dramatizing impulse, detractors and enthusiasts alike had made it difficult to think of the wandering poet without reference to theaters, stages, “pageants,” and so forth; theatricality became the predominant feature of Byron’s fame and a key element in the poet’s allure for Continental tourists.

In addition, there seemed to be different standards for judging Byron, depending on whether one stood inside Britain or outside it. The poet’s contribution as “national bard” was easier to gauge from abroad than from home, where moral concerns applied more stringently. The Dean of Westminster’s repeated refusal to allow a Byron memorial in the Abbey caused *Punch* to joke, in 1844, that even Byron’s graven image might be a source of “moral infection” to his countrymen (Jan.–June 1844: 206–07). On English soil John Stuart Mill had turned initially to Byron for solace in the midst of the well-known “crisis in [his] mental history,” knowing Byron’s “peculiar department . . . to be that of the intenser feelings,” but he found that “the poet’s state of mind was too like [his] own” agitated one to afford relief (88). Wordsworth was a domestic tonic; Byron’s domain, that of the intenser feelings, was felt to be *outside* England, stretching “through Europe to the Aetolian shore.”³ Byron’s impassioned persona added a deeply appealing value to the Continental tourist’s physical separation from England—the value, which Hazlitt had celebrated in “On Going a Journey,” of feeling oneself at liberty within the special realm of culture, free from ordinary social constraints.

For the tourist who could evoke it, Byron’s aura held out the promise of making Continental experience “live,” of saturating it anew with poetical evocations, pathos, and even the *frisson* of a sexual daring that was not for domestic consumption. Byron’s characteristic effect in works such as *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *Marino Faliero*, *Mazeppa*, *The Lament of Tasso*, and *Beppo* had resulted from his weaving pathetic tales from the history associated with places that Continental tourists might visit. The Byronic work revived its setting, rescuing it from familiarity and the “mere prose” of standard travel accounts. Writing in *Praeterita*, Ruskin recalled feeling struck, when a teenager in the 1830s, by Byron’s ability to capture the “living truth” of the places he visited: more than Scott, Samuel Rogers, or even Shakespeare, writes Ruskin, “Byron told me of, and reanimated for me, the real people whose feet had worn the marble I trod on” (140). *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* served this purpose too, but it went further by providing a full-dress traveling persona that could be momentarily appropriated—in the manner of Mr. Robinson in Venice—with the smallest gesture or quotation. Venice was now quintessentially Byronic; Ruskin felt that his Venice, “like Turner’s, had been chiefly created for us by Byron” (268). The Bridge of Sighs has never ceased to be a major attraction of the city

since Childe Harold spoke of standing on it—though Arthur Sketchley’s cockney heroine Mrs. Brown found that “that there Bridge of Size as they makes such a fuss about, why, it’s no size at all . . .” (133). At the Lido, travelers could take a slightly scandalous pleasure in seeing (as Clough’s *Dipsychus* described it) “the ground which Byron used to ride on, / And do I don’t know what beside on” (248). In Rome Byronic associations were almost as common: Anna Jameson visited the tomb of Cecilia Metella and acknowledged that

what this massy fabric wanted in classical fame Lord Byron has lately supplied in poetical interest. The same may be said of the Fountain of Egeria, to which he has devoted some of the most exquisite stanzas in his poem, and has certainly invested it with a charm it could not have possessed before. (177)

Other territories newly marked by Byron were the districts of the Bernese Alps, where the poet had begun *Manfred*, and the area around Lake Lemman, which he had toured with Shelley and in which he had set *The Prisoner of Chillon*. Many would remember, along with an anonymous writer in *Once A Week*, “the time when the sensitive feelings of our childhood were first moved to tears by the ‘Prisoner of Chillon’ [and] how we read it in later years with scarcely less emotion by the white castle ‘on the blue Lemman’ ” (“Home” 542).

The new Byronic associations of the Continental tour not only prompted tourists to new habits of remembrance and reference; they also gave rise to new varieties of travelers’ texts, which in time supplanted the prevailingly classicist volumes of the Grand Tour. One form probably unimaginable without Byron is the nineteenth-century poetic travel book. On his first European tour, the young Ruskin had determined to assemble all the important “events and sentiments . . . in a poetic diary in the style of Don Juan, artfully combined with that of Childe Harold,” and he evidently wrote two cantos describing the voyage through France to Chamounix (141–42). After *Childe Harold*, the best known entrant in this genre was Samuel Rogers’s *Italy* (published in 1822 but expanded in 1830 to include illustrations by Turner), which became one of the most popular books of the 1830s and ’40s; Ruskin received his copy as a sixteenth birthday present. Like Byron’s poetry (and like Mme. de Staël’s novel *Corinne* and its many prose imitators), these works were often carried as guides to the distinguishing emotions of the tour, and they frequently treated of places and appropriate responses drawn from Byronic verse and lore. In 1830 Thomas Maude rhapsodized on the shore of Lake Lemman:

And here I tread where trod the lord of song,
 ’Mid the dwarf orchard where his towering mind
 Reposed a while from the world’s fame and wrong. . . . (247)

In similar fashion, John Edmund Reade’s *Italy*, appearing in a portable edition of Reade’s *Works*, provided a brief eulogy for the reader to recall while passing before Byron’s former palace on the Grand Canal:

Mark yon grey palace,* Could we pass nor pay
 A reverential tribute to the one,
 Its tenant for the hour, a lightning ray
 That flashing passed from men? . . . (1: 32)

Even more than *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, works like Maude's and Reade's seemed intended to be used on the spot, efficiently directing their readers in the stations of the Byronic tour. The asterisk in Reade's poem refers the tourist to an entry—"The Palazzo Mocenigo"—at the bottom of the page; this would enable the reader, sitting in a gondola with both Reade's volume and a Murray in hand, to correlate the poetic tribute with the drier guide book information under the corresponding heading.

Byron's poems were also very quickly supported by numerous subsidiary texts expressly designed to help readers and tourists follow in the pilgrim's footsteps. Byron had himself supplied some stray notes for *Childe Harold*, but his friend Hobhouse gave the world a book-length guide to the poem's Italian references—a self-effacing volume entitled *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold, Containing Dissertations on the Ruins of Rome and an Essay on Italian Literature* (1818).⁴ Another work, William Brockedon and Edward and William Finden's *Illustrations of the Life and Works of Lord Byron* (1832–34), published by John Murray II, was more appropriate for use at home, where it could prime the prospective tourist's imagination with its engravings "depicting places mentioned in 'Childe Harold' and other of Byron's poems, together with portraits of himself and his associates . . . [and] quotations from his letters and diaries" (see Lambert 160). A few years later, when the Murray firm had entered the guide book business, it produced a pocket-sized *Lord Byron's Poetry* "so as to enable Travellers to carry it with their other HANDBOOKS." Promotional blurbs from *Notes & Queries* and the *Observer* graced Murray's advertisement for the portable Byron, assuring readers that the volume would "not encumber the portmanteau or carpet bag of the Tourist," and asserting that "as a companion for the traveller, nothing [could] be more valuable" (*Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy*, n.p.).

Murray's companion volumes—handbook and pocket Byron—were complementary yet wholly distinct, each presiding over its own special province of the touristic mind. Arthur B. Rowan, in Venice in the 1850s, was one who perceived this antithetical relationship, writing in his travel account that

as I mean to eschew most religiously aught of Venice which can be better read in "Murray's," or other professional books of travel,—if I borrow from Byron's words wherewith to record that "I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs," it is because I cannot otherwise or better give my own peculiar impressions of my visit to the "palace and prison on each hand." (253–54)

Rowan's aspiration, shared by many, was to forego Murray's flat touristic prose in favor of Byron's poeticality which seemed the natural voice of modern

travel. To contemporary users Murray's handbook exemplified the exhaustive rational planning that was as much an ideal of the emerging tourist industry as it was of British commercial and industrial organization generally. In contrast, Byron's poems offered the ancillary "culture of the feelings" which Mill had sought in the mental crisis occasioned by excessive utilitarianism and rationalization. The greater "agitation" Mill saw in the Byronic works made them all the more appropriate for use outside England, in tourists' temporary physical and imaginative separation, or liberation, from home. On the Continent Byron's celebrated capacity to "revivify" the well-known tourist haunts contributed to the shaping of new social aims for leisure travel in the nineteenth century, and to the shaping of new means of distinguishing genuine from spurious (i.e., "merely touristic") cultural experience. The novelty of these aims and means may be best appreciated by contrasting them with a central goal of the pre-Napoleonic Grand Tour, that prior paradigm for Continental travel with which nineteenth-century travelers habitually compared their own practices.

Among its many offices, the Grand Tour had performed the forthright ideological work of cementing the solidarity of the British ruling classes and providing them with a pseudo-historical legitimation. While English gentlemen refined their statecraft in Paris or in Amsterdam, it was in Rome that they found the richest message for their own era and class. Writers like Addison, Lord Lyttleton, and James Thomson forged a pedigree for Augustan England by imagining their nation as heir to the great but fallen Roman imperial tradition.⁵ From the perspective of the nineteenth century, this historical ideology seemed to go hand in hand with an enviable confidence in the Grand Tourist's position in domestic society, which the tour was to confirm. Little of this complacency could be mustered in the post-Napoleonic period. In light of the seemingly irresistible drive toward democratization occurring over the long haul of the century both in British society and in its cultural practices, the question became: how could foreign tourism liberate the tourist from identification with the large social movement of class following class in which tourism was playing a part? Whereas the Grand Tour had identified its participant with the world-historical destinies of his class, modern tourism would have to aid its new practitioners in an effort to transcend—in imagination, at least—the limits of class identification altogether. Adumbrating Arnold's theoretical formulations and exhortations on culture, Continental tourists would learn to aspire to a condition of self-culture above and beyond the call of class.

Toward this framing of new goals, Byron offered tourists a means of imagining and dramatizing their saving difference from the crowd of other tourists around them: one could stand "among . . . but not of" the tourists by reference to the Byronic texts and travels. Byronic citation and imitation constituted a salient case of what Erving Goffman called *role distance*, the technique of establishing a "pointed separateness between the individual and his

putative role” by denying the image of the self that is “implied in the role for all accepting performers” (108). It is worth noting Goffman’s insistence that role distance behavior does not include outright rejection of the role in question, but rather a set of actions that indicate “some measure of disaffection from, and resistance against, the role” (108). Byron furnished post-Romantic travelers with accredited anti-touristic gestures that were performable *within* tourism; it proposed a solution *in consciousness* for the symptomatic social and cultural problem of how to distinguish oneself on an acculturating mission frequently accomplished in previous years and now simultaneously attempted by “every-one” else. Where the Grand Tourist had enacted a repetitive ritual of classicism and class solidarity, his nineteenth-century counterpart, self-consciously treading the Grand Tourist’s well-beaten path in the midst of inevitable compatriots, would lay claim to an aristocracy of inner feeling, the projection of an ideology of originality and difference. Byron could make even the most familiar routes and destinations shed their carapace of clichés and take on new, powerful meanings for the sensitive anti-tourist. As G. Stillman Hillard characterized Byron’s response to Rome, the poet “move[d] over the oft-trodden field as a reaper and not a gleaner, and return[ed] with the rich harvests of a virgin soil” (2: 343). The Byronic pilgrim was to reap that rich new harvest.

Through his adoption by anti-tourists eager to partake in his revivifying, cliché-smashing capability, Byron assumed a cultural authority of a type similar to that which the sociologist Francesco Alberoni has attributed, in his studies of modern consumer capitalism, to what he calls the “*divi*,” a special group of society’s “powerless elite” made up of “all those personages who are the object of imitation, admiration and collective attachment” and who “suggest ways of behaviour and influence popular values without making decisions about them” (Burns 48). The *divi* have their essential meaning not in terms of social origins or even wealth, but with regard to their function as conduits of mass emotional investment. As Tom Burns has put it, they

take the place of the collectivity of traditional small-scale societies in that they become the collective objects of gossip. . . . Although they are few and privileged, they are not at the summit of the social system, neither do they constitute a social group or class. . . . Any person, rich or poor, can “adopt” or become identified with one or other category, or in one or other social identity, which means that they act as a kind of structural solvent; in [view] of the *divi*, the members of society become a populace, a mass. (Burns 48)

Writing in the early 1960s, Alberoni had in mind such luminaries of the mass media as Elizabeth Taylor or Elvis Presley, but in the Byron of Victorian tourism we can glimpse the origins of the same “star quality” that distinguishes the *divi* of Hollywood and the recording industry. Popular genres and practices began to sustain such a non-class of cultural authorities as soon as the middle classes began seriously vying for hegemony. Tourism’s Byron functioned as just the kind of “structural solvent” which Burns describes above: at once open to

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emulators and apparently exclusive; free of the ordinary determinants of social class and yet redolent with the ineffable quality of “class” in our modern colloquial sense of the term.

But what became of Byron once his works and life were pressed into service as a fount of acculturating sentiment that “transcended” social determinants? On the new European tour, Byron’s verses took an important place in a British repertoire of poetical passages appropriate to many of the stops on British tourists’ itineraries. Compiling his first handbooks in the late 1830s and early 1840s, John Murray III excerpted poetic descriptions by many authors, “knowing how much the perusal of [such passages] on the spot, where the works themselves are not to be procured, will enhance the interest of seeing the objects described” (*A Hand-Book for Travellers on the Continent*, n.p.). Murray gave pride of place to Byron, Southey, and Scott; but in becoming, through Murray, a medium for the transmission of tourists’ “intenser feelings,” Byron had to be deliberately revised so as to retain the pathos and passion of the original without confronting what was seen as the irrelevant political grounds underlying much of the sentiment. In classifying the rebellious poet in a British cultural pantheon alongside such loyalists as Southey and Scott, the Murray guides could draw on an established tendency to set aside Byron’s polemical or incendiary aspects, however pervasive they might seem to be. What might then remain was the appropriatable and exciting form of rebelliousness without the content of rebellion. Since Byron was so regularly seen as a theatrical figure, both Whigs and Tories were accustomed to regard his politics as “obviously insincere,” the mere histrionics of a lord who, as Hazlitt put it, “tired of what he is, by a natural perversity . . . sets up for what he is not . . . his ruling motive [being] not the love of the people, but of distinction: not of truth but of singularity” (*Spirit* 116). This habit of interpreting Byron’s political challenges in the entirely subjective terms of bad faith allowed observers to concentrate on the poet’s “pure” aesthetic or emotive features while overlooking the fact that, whatever one might decide about his deepest intentions, Byron had quite consciously strived to be, and had effectively become, an agent of change in European politics. The Tory John Murray II, founder of the *Quarterly Review*, must have employed some such reasoning as he made his fortune by publishing Byron’s poetry.

The abstracting of Byronic qualities from the specific political and historical contexts that figured in Byron’s poetry enabled travelers to adopt Byronic gestures without any consideration of what might seem to us now the insistent, inherently political character of Byron’s verse. Certainly Disraeli, in his youth among the most sycophantic of all Byron’s admirers, felt unconstrained to observe consistency with his hero in political matters, even as he literally followed the course of Byron’s travels. In 1826 Disraeli and friends had traced Childe Harold’s footsteps across Europe, stopping at Lake Lemán to

interview Byron's boatman, Maurice. In 1830 the future Prime Minister took the route of *Childe Harold* Cantos I and II to Spain, Malta, Greece, and Albania. His friend James Clay had even hired Byron's renowned servant Tita as valet, of whom Disraeli wrote rapturously, "Byron died in his arms" (qtd. in Jerman 124).⁶ Yet for all his diligent attention to the places and people known to the master, Disraeli bypassed Missolonghi (it was too exclusively known as the site of Byron's martyrdom in the Greek cause) and remained unapologetically opposed to Greek independence and Albanian insurgency. He even lamented having missed the opportunity to lend his support to the repressive Turks by volunteering as an officer in their army, later sending the hero of his novel *Contarini Fleming* to "take part in a battle on the side of the Turks in the army of the Grand Vizier as a . . . vicarious fulfilment of the urge . . . for heroic action" (Sultana 48; see also Brantlinger 146–47).⁷ Fashioning himself as a Tory Byron, the young Disraeli helped make Byron safe for consumption by travelers of all political leanings.

III

Every Englishman [abroad] carries a Murray for information, and a Byron for sentiment, and finds out by them what he is to know and feel at every step.

W. W. Story, *Roba di Roma* (1863)

Regarding Byron's politics as mere subjective political excitement, Disraeli, like many others, was able to read around the politically troubling passages in Byron's poetry, imitating his hero in spirit only. It was this legacy that Victorian tourism inherited (see Brantlinger 140–41). Sharing his father's Tory sympathies, John Murray III offered this flexible interpretation of Byronic precedent to wide traveling audiences in the handbooks. His own youthful enchantment with Byron had prepared him well for this task. As an Edinburgh student, Murray had rambled around Aberdeen in search of Byroniana for Thomas Moore's 1830 *Life* of the poet; in the early 1830s, when he had traversed the Continent in search of material for his handbooks, his letters home buzzed with the rapture of seeing places still glowing with the Byronic aura. "I went to the Lido," he writes excitedly from Venice, "to see the ground over which Byron used to ride—and to-day I had his residence on the grand canal pointed out to me" (qtd. in John Murray IV 53). But like Disraeli's, Murray's Byron is emptied of political content. After a trip to the Armenian Convent on San Lazzaro, where Father Pasquale Aucher had tutored Byron in the language of the oppressed Armenians, Murray compliments Aucher's civility during his lengthy and inquisitive visit—a civility all the more remarkable, Murray considers, since "he is I fancy very much pestered with visits from English people" (qtd. in John Murray IV 52–53). One might imagine the priest's attitude about

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the Byron-hunters who come in such numbers without bringing Byron's interest in the Armenian cause with them. Murray is not abashed at being one of these, and will not be stirred by the political issues which exercised Byron and which Aucher must take seriously. Blankly reporting that Aucher has decided to suppress Byron's preface to an *Armenian Grammar* because "it contained some very strong passages against the Sultan, the sovereign of [Aucher's] native country, who might easily have retorted on his friends and kindred for such an insult" (53), Murray exhibits none of the excitement that Byronic stimuli regularly elicit from him amidst evocative ruins or beautiful landscape.

The young Murray recognized that touristic experience involves both prose and poetry, both the prosaic work of stocking readers with facts and getting them physically to a given site with the least amount of trouble, and the poetic labor of prompting tourists' responses to the site. In his early handbooks Murray sought some balance of the two functions, with carefully excerpted passages of verse nestled amidst copious plain exposition. Though tourists could take along their own copies of "Byron for sentiment," Murray also gave them the option of lightening their portmanteaus by relying on him to supply the right passages at the proper moment. The 1839 handbook for Switzerland, for example, abounds with Byronic quotation, often entered without comment but sometimes accompanied by unobtrusive notes of factual correction. By recasting excerpts to suit his needs, Murray reinvents Byron, making the poet's stanzas read as though they were created for no other purpose than to guide the finer feelings of the tourist. Murray stalks Byron through the Alps with *Manfred*, but has no use for that work's perilous theological speculations; he tracks him around Lake Lemman with *The Prisoner of Chillon* and *Childe Harold* Canto III, freely extracting stanzas from their original political contexts. Deriding Rousseau's sentimentality about the village of Clarens in *La Nouvelle Heloise*, he quotes five stanzas of Byron's no less emotional account of the area from *Childe Harold*, preferring the latter because Byron "viewed the spot with a poet's eye, and the exquisite beauty of the surrounding scenery . . . called up all the poet's enthusiasm and inspiration" (*Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland* 206–07). But Murray disregards the crucial point of Byron's presentation of Rousseau at Clarens as a revolutionary of the spirit, the author of "those oracles which set the world in flame, / Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more" (Byron 221). At Morat, where the Swiss had repelled a ten-day Burgundian siege in 1476 and erected a pile of enemy bones which stood for over three hundred years, Murray quotes *Childe Harold's* chilling account of the "bony heap" (from Canto III stanza LXIII), but he finds no need to include any of the ensuing stanza, in which Byron drove home his liberal argument:

While Waterloo with Cannae's carnage vies,
Morat and Marathon twin names shall stand;
They were true Glory's stainless victories,

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Won by the unambitious heart and hand
 Of a proud, brotherly, and civic band,
 All unbought champions in no princely cause
 Of vice-entail'd Corruption; they no land
 Doom'd to bewail the blasphemy of laws
 Making kings' rights divine, by some Draconic clause. (Byron 218–19)

As for Chillon, Byron's treatment of the legend of Bonnivard has given the English poet, in Murray's estimation—not the imprisoned Swiss patriot—the better claim to be seen as the presiding spirit of the place. The prisoner, whom Murray dispatches as having “rendered himself obnoxious to the Duke of Savoy by his exertions to free the Genevese from the Savoyard yoke,” seems merely a pretext for the poetry. Quoting Byron extensively on the dungeons and the situation of the castle, Murray reminds the reader of the marks, literal and figurative, which the poet has left upon the site: “Byron inscribed his name on one of the pillars, but it is far more lastingly associated with the spot [by his verse]” (*Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland* 210). Then comes a pause for the appropriately gloomy reflections of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and Murray rewrites Byron by creating a hybrid stanza that extracts the general pathos of the scene from Byron's description of the prisoners' physical suffering. Here is Murray's version:

Lake Lemane lies by Chillon's walls;
 A thousand feet in depth below
 Its massy waters meet and flow;
 Thus much the fathom-line was sent
 From Chillon's snow-white battlement (? ?),
 Which round about the wave enthral:
 A double dungeon-wall and wave
 Have made—and like a living grave.
 Below the surface of the lake
 The dark vault lies wherein we lay.
 We heard it ripple night and day.
 In Chillon's dungeons deep and old
 There are seven columns massy and grey,
 Dim with a dull, imprison'd ray,
 A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
 And through the crevice and the cleft
 Of the thick wall is fallen and left,
 Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
 Like a marsh's meteor lamp. (210)

The first thing to notice about Murray's quotation is that it works backwards. Murray begins with stanza VI of *The Prisoner of Chillon* and continues quoting that passage through “We heard it ripple night and day”; then, without a typographic break, he proceeds to quote eight lines from Byron's original stanza II, beginning with “In Chillon's dungeons.” Murray is clearly interested in isolating evocative descriptive detail, not in observing the sequence of a narrative poem. Furthermore, a glance at the immediate context of these lines in Byron's

poem makes it clear that they are the only passages of their length that could have been extracted without involving Murray's reader in the story of Bonnard, his brothers, and the reasons for their imprisonment. Detached from these human implications, the castle of Chillon is remade for the tourist as a fitting subject for rather empty poetical reflections, on the one hand, or absurdly precise physical examination and measurement, on the other. The parenthetical question marks at "snow-white battlement" are Murray's way of calling attention to Byron's less than scrupulous judgment of Chillon's color; and at the end of the quoted passage, Murray abruptly returns his readers to prosaic fact by informing them, somewhat regretfully, that "Byron has exaggerated the depth of the lake, which near the castle does not exceed 280 ft." (*Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland* 209–10).

This reconstructed Byron pervades Murray's handbooks, well suited to the brief and disconnected emotive-aesthetic responses which tourists sought to display. Nineteenth-century tourism was an imagistic, not a narrative, art: it did not dwell on complexly explanatory plots of cause and effect for each of the attractions it confronted; it did not usually descend to the minutiae of history and human interaction, but remained at the level of striking scenes and atmosphere. As the Murray guides grew in authority throughout the century, their "atmospheric" Byron became the version of the poet most widely disseminated. This Byron soon seemed to be popping up everywhere on the tourist's map of Europe, and, as it did so, it appeared to be losing some of its originally liberating promise for anti-tourists. Before long, the convention of Byronic reference came to present the ironic dilemma of role-distancing behavior that has itself coalesced into a role. For some travel writers, a new mark of distinction consisted of *distancing* oneself from Byronic precedent. On the issue of physical descriptions, Murray's style of gently correcting the poet's exaggerations gave way to expressions of outraged middle-brow realism—thus, Thackeray's attack on *Childe Harold's* version of the Rhine: anyone can see the river is filthy, says Thackeray; and as for Byron's Rhenish "peasant girls with deep blue eyes," they are nothing but "brown-faced, flat-nosed, thick-lipped, dirty wenches!" (321). And one can find an article written over thirty years later still pleading the same case, speaking of the "slovenly women [who pester] the unfortunate pedestrian for groschen in return for the paltry weeds held in their dirty fingers" ("Hints" 176).

Others, on reading Byron whole, found him not quite "Byronic" enough—that is, too unlike Murray's touristic Byron of unspecific passion, altogether too intent on making political judgments which interfered with the peaceful prosecution of tourism. In Venice in the early 1840s, Frances Trollope conceded that "the first thirteen lines of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* are excellent, not only from being exquisitely poetical, but from painting the scene with extraordinary truth, as well as brightness." But she preferred, "as an

echo to the emotions inspired by the view of Venice," the distinctly apolitical lines of Monckton Milnes to "a thousand of those in which Childe Harold groans in lamentation over [the city's] decline" (2: 67). Byron had thought that the visual splendor of Austrian-ruled Venice belied its lack of an independent political identity; he thought the city shone somewhat garishly as the prize gem in an Austrian crown. But Trollope favors Milnes's defiant aestheticism, which regards all talk of Venice's decline as evidence of a deficient touristic sensibility. In the passage below (quoted by Trollope), Milnes's rhetorical questions affirm that the city's capacity to charm tourists is more than enough compensation for its lost autonomy:

Who talks of vanished glory, and dead power,
Of things that were, and are not? Is he here?
Can he take in the glory of this hour,
And call it all the decking of a bier? (2: 67)

Consistently battling the precedent of Byron's interpretation of Venice, Mrs. Trollope accepts, on Venice's behalf, the city's new destiny as a "magnificent museum of art, and a favourite resort of the curious and intellectual of all countries" (2: 122). She acknowledges that

Austria is certainly not at all likely to restore to Venice the aristocratic power of her old republic; but as long as the city is in her hands the *politically indifferent* connoisseurs may set their hearts at rest concerning her condition. (2: 107; italics in original)

Byron had seemed particularly amenable to the needs of nineteenth-century tourism because the overriding impression of his work and persona retained by Victorian travelers and writers was that of a grand subjectivity taking in all the raw materials provided by travel and transforming them into opportunities for self-staging. Literature about "an obscure person on his travels," wrote Arthur Symons in 1907, would have been ridiculous, but Byron "could write of the Alps, and fill the imagination of Europe with the mere fact of his presence there" (250). In spite of their initial anti-touristic emphasis, Byronic gestures had become as standard a touristic pursuit as any previous fashion. A number of writers expressed puzzlement, and sometimes scorn, over the production of uniform sentiment they saw carried out under the aegis of the Byronic. Suspicious travelers wondered if the cachet of freedom and rebelliousness procurable through contact with Byron might not be an illusion they were pressured to endorse. Their suspicion was heightened each time they encountered a guide or servant on the Continent who, having learned what English travelers would pay to see and hear, obligingly delivered the appropriate Byronic commentary for each expedition. At Ferrara, Frances Trollope observed that

the *cicerone* who attended us through the rooms, appeared as well acquainted with all the little circumstances connected with Parisina's unfortunate affair, as if he had been her page

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of honour at the time. I should like to know how much of what is now poured into the ears of travellers upon that subject, was bestowed upon them before the poem of Lord Byron was published. (2: 37)

A few pages later Trollope concluded that “it was very evident that the man who attended us through the castle thought that, as countryfolks of Lord Byron, the Parisina story must be the one to interest us the most; and it was upon this he dwelt” (2: 45).

In just this way had Byron’s image and reputation traveled: once the scandalous embodiment of an anti-British Continentalism, Byron had attained the station of an inescapable British stereotype, the regular stock in trade of guide books and Continental *ciceroni*. A remarkable passage from Dickens’s travel book *Pictures from Italy* provides the classic statement of this both amusing and rather troubling recognition, ringing out despite its comic intent a cautionary tone on the curious power of national stereotypes in tourism. Dickens finds the waiter in his Bolognese hotel to be

a man of one idea in connection with the English; and the subject of his harmless monomania, was Lord Byron. I made the discovery by accidentally remarking to him, at breakfast, that the matting with which the floor was covered, was very comfortable at that season, when he immediately replied that Milor Beeron had been much attached to that kind of matting. Observing, at the same moment, that I took no milk, he exclaimed with enthusiasm, that Milor Beeron had never touched it. At first, I took it for granted, in my innocence, that he had been one of the Beeron servants; but no, he said no, he was in the habit of speaking about my Lord, to English gentlemen, that was all. He knew all about him, he said. In proof of it, he connected him with every possible topic, from the Monte Pulciano wine at dinner, (which was grown on an estate he had owned,) to the big bed itself, which was the very model of his. (65–66)

The “harmless monomania” of this waiter, an entirely marginal figure in Dickens’s world, takes a suggestive turn at the anecdote’s end: in a manner that anticipates the discomfiture of many twentieth-century tourists, the little tale seems finally to speak of its author’s uneasy suspicion that he is contained within a coercive, stereotyping enterprise that will grow without his consent or control: “When I left the inn,” Dickens writes, the waiter

coupled with his final bow in the yard, a parting assurance that the road by which I was going, had been Milor Beeron’s favourite ride; and before the horse’s feet had well begun to clatter on the pavement, he ran briskly up stairs again, I dare say to tell some other Englishman in some other solitary room that the guest who had just departed, was Lord Beeron’s living image.

In a manner shared with the likes of Richard Doyle, with his absurdly Byronizing Mr. Robinson, and Arthur Sketchley, with his Mrs. Brown and her “Bridge of Size,” Dickens here deflates the pervasive Byronic aura surrounding Continental travel. By midcentury, mockery of Byron had become as much a form of role-distancing as the Byronisms of anti-tourists. Byron-mockers cast a critical light not only on the pretensions of the Byronic role but also on the whole exalted process of acculturation, for which the mechanisms of Byronic

emulation provided a synecdoche and to which the Continental tour was supposed vitally to contribute. Middle-brow humorists found themselves in an ambivalent position with regard to the necessity and methods of taking part in the new, putatively open cultural marketplace—the very openness of which was construed as an opportunity for people in the middle to better themselves. Byron's celebrated pathos and poeticity had been shaped into an instrument for the assertion of one's difference from the crowd, but what the Victorian humorists suspected was that the socially sanctioned vehicle for differentiating oneself might function as a tool for producing uniformity, providing a gratuitous sense of superiority in individual consciousness while channeling one individual after another through the same "liberating" holiday routine.

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NOTES

¹The specter of Englishness was not mainly the result of sheer numbers of tourists; in fact, the overstated reactions such as those I have quoted could easily mislead us about the size and diversity of the English traveling contingent on the Continent after 1815, a quantity and a quality which are at any rate rather difficult to calculate. Maxine Feifer writes that "150,000 British visitors per year" made Continental tours in the period after the Napoleonic Wars, but she does not give a source for this figure (164). Other estimates put the number of British travelers crossing the Channel at about 50,000 per year (Pimlott 189; Pemble 1). I would suggest that the overstatement so common in contemporary accounts of English travelers abroad is an instance of what Pierre Bourdieu calls *méconnaissance*, the "misrecognition" of objective circumstances that nonetheless has important socially and culturally constitutive consequences (1–5).

²Arnold's essay on Heine does not attempt this distinction of the two Byrons, contenting itself with finding Byron to be "except for his genius . . . an ordinary nineteenth-century Englishman, with little culture and with no ideas" (qtd. in Chew 263).

³Britain did contain a few "Byronic" associations: Newstead Abbey, the poet's ancestral home, and his tomb in nearby Hucknall Torkard Church became tourist attractions in their own right, receiving a stream of visitors throughout the century. Numerous visitors' accounts and even special guide books were published about them (for representative accounts of trips to Byron's home and grave, see "Pilgrimage" and "Home"; for information on the guide books to Newstead Abbey, see Chew 275).

⁴In the book's "Advertisement," Hobhouse puts his work at the service of Byron's readers, informing them that his notes "follow the progress of the Pilgrim and were, indeed . . . for the most part written whilst the noble author was yet employed in the composition of his poem."

⁵Nineteenth-century perspectives were apt to overlook the amount of ambivalence in many eighteenth-century accounts: several of these ponder the question as to whether England would be so thorough an heir to Rome as to follow it into ruins. Writers such as George Keate, John Dyer, and, of course, Gibbon all acknowledged "a situation of greater complexity than was involved in the chimerical, if attractive, equation of modern British with ancient Roman grandeur" (Churchill 3).

⁶Byron's former servants were sought out by many later travelers; the semi-fictional narrator of Anna Jameson's *Diary of an Ennuyée* comments that her boatman on Lake Geneva "had been in the service of Lord Byron" (33).

⁷One of Disraeli's biographers, Robert Blake, ponders the "paradox of a disciple of Byron adopting such an unByronic attitude in 1830," but the point would seem to be that Disraeli was aware of the profound irrelevance of politics to the Byronic aura (29–33).

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