

As Nature Intended– Byron’s Vital Spirit

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“...psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another.” (Carl Jung)

“This world is indeed a living being endowed with a soul and intelligence.” (Plato)

ABSTRACT: To what extent was Byron affected by the elements of nature? Did wind, rain, or even substance such as volcanic ash, influence his poetry? Contrary to popular belief, while Byron’s poems are sympathetic vis-à-vis nature, it is this paper’s contention that they were written regardless of the poet’s thoughts on climate change. In other words, the Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) has no effect on his perception of nature, and there is no reciprocal mood between the weather and his poetry. Even the infamous and much written about weather patterns of 1816 did not alter his love of nature that he considered a source of joy, inspiration and power.

KEYWORDS: *animism, eco-criticism, Lord Byron, Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, Seasonal Affective Disorder, pathetic fallacy, sublime*

I. INTRODUCTION

I intend to study the interrelationship between Byron and nature throughout his spiritual journey in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* Canto III, a typical Romantic poem written between May and June in 1816, where the poet portrays a static philosophy on nature applicable to other works he produced in the summer of 1816. Byron’s perception of nature is in no way related to the uncharacteristic weather conditions that Switzerland and Europe experienced during that “long-lost” summer. Accordingly, Barry Commoner’s first law of ecology, “Everything is connected to everything else,” (11) which invariably points to the undeniable fact proposed by Cheryll Glotfelty in his definition of the term “eco-criticism,” “that literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic order, but rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, and ideas interact” (qtd. in Branch 7) does not apply to Byron’s perception of nature and its climate as reflected in *Childe Harold*. Moreover, John Ruskin’s “pathetic fallacy,” which accuses some Romantic poets of projecting a whimsical mood on the elements of nature, is not applicable to Byron’s case either. Furthermore, in “’Twas Nature Gnaw’d Them to This Resolution’: Byron’s Poetry and Mimetic Desire,” Ian Dennis says that Byron “rejected anthropomorphic nature and natural supernaturalism” (130); on the contrary, this paper argues that Byron connects with the soul of nature by endowing it with animistic characteristics. Consequently, the theory of animism or animistic imagination, a conjecture that endows nature with animate characteristics—as endorsed by the English anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor—is much more in keeping with Byron’s poetry, as it provides his poetry its chief ingredient, its fundamental spirit.

The rapport between Romantic poets and Mother Nature remains a complex endeavor, especially when poets tend to modify their outlook on nature throughout their career. In *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the forefather of American transcendentalism, suggests that “[n]ature always wears the colors of the spirit” (12); however, Byron challenges such an outlook because he himself never projects his despondency on nature or indeed on climate change. In fact, Byron finds nothing repulsive in the natural world. “I can see/ Nothing to loathe in nature”¹ (LXXII) he proclaims in *Childe Harold*, Canto III, a work which explicitly concerns itself with the interrelationship between Byron and the natural world. As far as nature is concerned, Byron’s outlook never vacillates regardless of his mood or of climatic change. Byron appears to seek refuge in nature, unearthing

¹ *All quotations from Byron’s poems follow the text of *The Poetical Works*. London: Humphrey Milford, 1930. Sometimes parentheses include the canto and stanza.

from it joy, inspiration and power and ascribing a consistent mood to the natural environment that has an immense effect on his creative sensitivity.

Eco-critics usually highlight four zones that a poet reflects in nature poems. In the first zone, eco-poets tackle “the wilderness;” in the second, they refer to “the scenic sublime;” in the third, they reflect “the countryside;” and in the fourth, they mention “the domestic picturesque” (Barry 254). This paper’s eco-critical reading of the third canto of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* focuses on Byron’s reflection of nature’s invincibility and transcendence and his connection with a pristine and unspoiled wilderness—void of human existence or exterior natural environment—in contrast to projecting an internal psychological disposition towards the natural world, thus highlighting Byron’s dynamic theory of nature’s animism and the concept of the sublime.

II. NATURE: A SOURCE OF JOY

Similar to other Romantic poets, Byron celebrates organic nature, blending it with an elemental spirit of joy. In Byron’s case, nature, a joy provider, bestows bliss to man’s soul; that is why the poet pursues ecstasy in the wild. The passion of searching for nature’s beauty is the source of the poet’s pleasure; such beauty does not express tediousness; on the contrary, it articulates contentment. This transcendentalist’s notion of pleasure attained by beholding nature’s beauty, which enchants and embraces the poet, is adopted in all of Byron’s poetical works.

The eminent Byron scholar and author, Ernest J. Lovell, observes after studying the relationship between Byron and nature that “[t]he summer and fall of 1816 represent the turning point in Byron’s quest for peace amid the beauties of nature” (175). Nature’s charm—whether in its peaceful or violent mood—is what elicits joy in Byron, whose admiration of nature is consistent. His poetic imagination provides pleasure and serenity in any natural landscape. In the third canto of *Childe Harold*, Byron displays how man achieves delight by appreciating the loveliness of nature:

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb, – (XCVIII)

Nature’s beauty enchants Byron’s senses; he is immensely sensitive to the charms of its sublime, natural scenery. Such stimulating scenes elevate his thoughts:

The river nobly foams and flows,
The charm of this enchanted ground,
And all its thousand turns disclose
Some fresher beauty varying round:
The haughtiest breast its wish might bound
Through life to dwell delighted here;
Nor could on earth a spot be found
To nature and to me so dear,
Could thy dear eyes in following mine
Still sweeten more these banks of Rhine! (CHP III, LV)

Nature’s supreme beauty gratifies Byron because it is heavenly, a testimony of an immortal work of art: “There Harold gazes on a work divine,/A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,/ Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,” (CHP III, XLVI). In another instance, Byron praises enduring and idyllic beauty:

... mountains; where the god
Is a pervading life and light, - so shown
Not on those summits solely, nor alone
In the still cave and forest; o'er the flower
His eye is sparkling, and his breath hath blown, (CHP III, C)

Joy and peace result from awe, from strong emotions delivered by any wild spectacle from nature. This involves the notion of the sublime—a non-traditional reception of nature—that will be discussed further in this paper. Receptive to melody in nature, Byron enjoys listening to nature’s internal melodious voice; he is delighted by such music and rhythm:

It is the hush of night...
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
... on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more; (CHP III, LXXXVI)

He is an evening reveller, who makes
 His life an infancy, and sings his fill;
 At intervals, some bird from out the brakes
 Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
 There seems a floating whisper on the hill, (*CHP III, LXXXVII*)

There is such a variety of music in nature, according to Byron; even the roar of thunder is music to his ears as he evokes the pathos of the notorious summer weather of 1816 in his depiction of the Duchess of Richmond's ball, on the eve of the battle of Waterloo:

There was a sound of revelry by night,...
 A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
 Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
 Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
 And all went merry as a marriage bell;
 But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell! (*CHP III, XXI*)

Did ye not hear it? - No; 'twas but the wind
 Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
 On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;...
 But, hark! - that heavy sound breaks in once more,
 As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
 And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!
 Arm! Arm! it is - it is - the cannon's opening roar! (*CHP III, XXII*)

Byron is alluding here to the thunderstorms witnessed on June 13, 1816. He notes, "I have seen among the Acroceraunian mountains of Chimari several more terrible, but none more beautiful" (qtd. in Cochran 34). Even amidst such loud and disjointed forms of a turbulent nature, Byron envisages the harmonious symphony that natural manifestations merrily engage in.

In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Irish orator and philosopher, Edmund Burke, describes how intense noise can delight and scare the body and spirit stating, "excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror . . . [sound] awak[ens] great and awful sensation[s] in the mind" (part II, section XVII). Hence, thunder elicits enchantment in Byron, making him sense a musical sensation that echoes Burke's "excessive loudness" that leads to sublimity.

Nature elicits vehement congenial emotions and becomes Byron's true companion whom he considers an ideal comforting loyal companion; consequently, Byron is happy to find genuine company in nature: "But one thing want these banks of Rhine, -/ Thy gentle hand to clasp in mine!" (*CHP III, LV, 2*), as he befriends natural manifestations, perfectly comprehending their stunts and vitality:

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
 Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;...
 The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
 Were unto him companionship; they spake
 A mutual language.... (*CHP III, XIII*)

At the start of Canto III, Harold or Byron's persona—while in the sea—greet the ocean, and his greeting is reciprocated. The sea seemingly knows Harold extremely well, and Harold trusts it wholeheartedly:

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
 And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
 That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!
 Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead! (*CHP III, II*)

Totally surrendering to the power of the ocean, Harold feels delight, peace, safety and comfort in this natural setting:

Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,...
 Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
 Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam to sail
 Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail. (*CHP III, II*)

Harold or Byron compares himself to a weed floating on water moving in a particular direction—the waves propel this image forward—the poet has utter confidence in the way nature or the waves dictate his journey.

Nature is an effective substitute for humans. For this reason, Byron paid serious attention to nature and sought a secure, relaxed environment to replace the family warmth abandoned in England. He nostalgically looks for the vanished joy, and nature serves as an excellent substitute.

The poet willfully constructs a unique image of a humanized nature: the metaphor of the serene Lake Leman, which is Lake Geneva nursing the forceful Rhone River, is a feminist symbol par excellence that illustrates how loving, generous, welcoming and caring nature is:

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake; - (*CHP III, LXXI*)

Nature grants Byron a powerful feeling; he appreciates its company and considers it a spiritual refuge, a promised land and a steadfast companion. Thus, he befriends the oceans, stars, mountains, caves, rivers, storms, deserts and lakes ever faithful to humankind. In fact, Byron seemingly betrays humankind by settling on nature as superior companionship.

III. NATURE: A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

In a series of letters from the 17th to the 29th of September, 1816, written to his half-sister Augusta, Byron describes in detail his Alpine experiences, as he and John Hobhouse travel from Mont Blanc to Lake Geneva. Byron is ecstatic with the surrounding scenery as he realizes all he ever heard, or imagined, of a pastoral existence. "I have lately reepeople my mind with Nature... I am a lover of Nature—and an Admirer of Beauty" (qtd. in Marchand vol. 5, 99, 104) Byron wrote to Augusta in September, 1816. In depicting pastoral life, Byron expresses to Augusta how delighted he feels in communing with nature, as he contemplates nature's ideal beauty—this beauty which ignites the poet's imagination and presents him with the ideal inspirational resource to create. Byron is a poet with great sensitivity towards nature's articulation and music. By connecting with the spirit of nature, he transforms the real into the ideal or imaginary; thus, nature inspires him in the process of creativity.

In the third canto of *Childe Harold*, the peaceful, pristine and splendid nature stretched around Harold or Byron, so thrills the poet's emotions, that they assume a metaphysical perspective. Looking upwards from the Alps—considered the midpoint between heaven and earth—Byron's imagination produces a glorious poetic revelation as the white Alps engender an awe-inspiring, supernatural image:

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led. (*CHP III, XLV*)

Sublimity, the outcome of Byron's imagination, is abundant in Byron's mountain images:

... Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls,
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche - the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below. (*CHP III, LXII*)

Mountains become a source of inspiration for Byron because their immortality is monumental compared to the frailty of man. An epitome of natural revelation, the mountain becomes the inspirational catalyst that carries Byron's soul on its metaphysical journey upwards to witness nature's sublimity.

Similarly, the stars are inspirational symbols to Harold: "... he could watch the stars,/ Till he had peopled them with beings bright" (*CHP III, XIV*). Byron befriends the stars, as they exercise their mystical,

remarkable power to the extent that the poet has difficulty verbalizing his experience. Similar to the way stars are considered sublime symbols, lightening also exercises fabulous power on the poet, causing a “voiceless thought” that prevents Byron from revealing his exact impressions: “... I would speak;/ But as it is, I live and die unheard;/ With a most voiceless thought,” (*CHP* III, XCVII). Nature’s inhabitants, such as the Alps or “the palaces of Nature,” the storms, the stars, thunder and lightning, are a source of joy and fear at the same time. Viewing the sublime, Byron achieves spiritual and metaphysical joy. Delight is “metaphysical” because Byron is incapable of expressing himself at times– it is difficult (if not impossible) to clarify sublime visions:

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me, - could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe - into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword. (*CHP* III, XCVII)

IV. NATURE: A SOURCE OF POWER

In his literary criticism of Romantic nature poets, John Ruskin, the leading English art critic of the Victorian era, coined the term “pathetic fallacy,” a poetic device to signify that poets project their feelings on the external natural environment. In *Modern Painters* Ruskin explains, “All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the ‘pathetic fallacy’ ” (148). He adds that this fallacy is the poet’s weakness because “it is always the sign of a morbid state of mind” (158). According to Ruskin, the poet’s over-charged feelings and mood lead him to inflict his false impression on his environment; this fallacy being that the poet is revealing his state of mind, rather than external nature. In this sense, the weather reflects the mood of the poet (Barry 262). Consequently, the poet attributes human characteristics to inanimate natural objects, resulting in these abstract emotions being expressed in an enhanced manner. And so, nature, according to Ruskin, becomes an outlet for an individual’s moods– a mirror of man’s emotions.

However, this is not the case in Byron; his nature poetry does not reflect his emotions on nature and nor does he allow nature, no matter how violent, to negatively disturb his feelings. For Byron, the natural world is a stable entity that endows him with joy and inspiration while simultaneously displaying its significant power. In this sense, Byron’s vital spirit is more attuned to Edward Burnett Tylor’s “doctrine of universal vitality,” a theory on animism which infers upon nature human qualities.

Tylor, who was recognized as the foremost English anthropologist and founder of cultural anthropology, introduced the term “Animate Nature” (168) which signifies providing animate, emotional or human characteristics to inanimate, unemotional or inhuman objects. Animism reveals the interrelationship between humans and nature. Tylor notes that “Animism, starting as a philosophy of human life, extended and expanded itself till it became a philosophy of nature at large” (169). One feature of animism, to Tylor, is “[t]he similar nature of soul or other spirit” (101). In other words, the theory of animism entails that the physical world possesses a surviving spirit, which is the essence of nature’s existence. Thus, nature and man become alike; they are alive. If other poets depict nature as a spiritual entity, Byron surpasses them by depicting nature as a living being.

Natural elements are humanized in Tylor’s dynamic animistic theory in which: “sun and stars, trees and rivers, winds and clouds, become personal animate creatures leading lives conformed to humans or animal analogies” (Praet 2). Similarly, nature to Byron becomes alive and human, in a way that is more powerful than that of humans. He readily agrees that nature exhibits emotions. In this sense, Byron shares similar views with anthropologists who regard nature as a living, biological entity. Therefore, as a poet of nature par excellence, Byron is not affected by turbulent weather, and so, he has never projected his negative mood on nature; subsequently, he has never committed the “pathetic fallacy” since his mood and that of nature have always synchronized.

By personifying nature, Byron seems to share the view of Emerson. In his essay titled “The Poet,” Emerson praises the imaginative power of the poet who can create novel perceptions of his natural surrounding: “The poet, by an ulterior intellectual perception, gives them [symbols] a power which makes their old use forgotten, and puts eyes, and a tongue, into every dumb and inanimate object” (qtd. in Leitch 627). This modern concept of animism was later shared by modernist critics and poets such as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

The art of humanizing the natural environment is the outcome of Byron’s inspiration, as he injects nature with a breathing, vibrant spirit. Nature with Byron is not a Romantic mirage; it has a soul, a soul that makes it independent of humanity’s whimsical attitudes and contradictory feelings. Byron’s creativity gives birth to nature’s soul. Nature’s creative life and lively spirit inspires Byron to understand its voiceless language;

thus, nature ignites Byron's creative imagination and communicates with his soul. Eventually, he discovers within himself the secret of creation and creativity. In the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he clearly reveals the secret of his creative imagination as the main ingredient in his theory of animism:

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought! (VI)

Byron activates his imagination, perceptions, intuition and vision to create or envision a new life born from his experience with the surrounding natural world. Therefore, he proudly merges with his creation and experiences a new life, in a supposedly isolated natural setting, absent from a civilized society: "Proud though in desolation; which could find/ A life within itself, to breathe without mankind" (*CHP* III, XII).

Byron's animistic creative fancy elevates this exquisite phenomenon "a life within itself" by enhancing its appearance, making it more real like, vivid and dynamic. Undoubtedly, this creative aspect adds greatly to his ability to write engaging powerful poetry about nature.

The strength and power of nature is manifest in Burke's aesthetic theory of the sublime. The two dominant emotions elicited from the grandeur of natural forces are fear and awe; these are the primary sources of the sublime according to Burke:

WHATEVER is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (part I, section VII)

The power causing awe and terror simultaneously inspires Byron to further awareness of what exists beyond metaphysical nature—the same power that inspires the poet to create.

Canto three of *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* is set in pristine nature, an uncivilized zone that stands in stark contrast with culture. It is obvious that Byron meticulously scrutinized the uncivilized natural world and the outcome was "imaginative creativity." Nature, as witnessed by Byron, becomes a powerful entity and an embodiment of living souls. A question poses itself: why does Byron animate nature?

To begin with, Byron personifies nature as an acknowledgment of her uncontrolled power, so he celebrates nature's power by uncovering her internal soul in order to animate it. In his theory of the sublime, Byron demonstrates the superiority of nature over man, a sovereign entity, independent of man, through humanizing nature. These strong emotions of awe and fear are a reassertion of Burke's aesthetic theory of the sublime. Byron is immensely appreciative of such uncontrollable natural manifestations such as destructive storms. For example, he once wrote, "I had the fortune... to sail from Meillerie... to St. Gingo during a lake storm, which added to the magnificence of all around, although occasionally accompanied by danger to the boat, which was small and overloaded" (qtd. in Cochran 36). Even in her destructive aspects, nature does not affect his mood. Although Nature is the "kindest mother," Harold still admits that he always "loved her best in wrath" (*CHP* II, XXXVII).

On November 10, 1809, Byron, in a letter addressed to his mother, reported he was on a Turkish ship involved in a tempest, about to drown due to an error by the captain and crew. Despite the horror that the wailing people on board experienced, Byron—cool as a breeze—contemplated the natural surrounding as if no danger existed, enjoying a fierce natural spectacle as if it were a gorgeous scene. Most likely, he surrendered to a power attempting to recharge its natural energy through wind and waves. The movement here is from the outer natural environment to Byron's inner psyche. Undisturbed or distressed by the raging turmoil, Byron expressed wonderment concerning such a patently authoritative cosmic force. He further describes the situation coolly:

... the Greeks called on all the Saints, the Mussulmen on Alla, the Captain burst into tears and ran below deck telling us to call on God, the sails were split, the mainyard shivered, the wind blowing fresh, the night setting in, and all our chance was to make ..."a watery grave." I did what I could to console Fletcher but finding him incorrigible, wrapped myself up in my Albanian capote... and lay down on deck to wait the worst. I have learnt to philosophize on my travels, and if I had not, complaint was useless. (qtd. in Marchand, vol. 1, 229)

Byron is clearly indifferent to nature's harshness and cruelty; he considers it a normal phenomenon. By admitting its power, he employs strident figures of speech to illustrate that nature is not merely equal to man; it is also more robust. This incident reminds the reader of *Childe Harold* Canto III that opens with the waves and ends with the image of an unbounded ocean. The waves and the sea are essential symbols of motion and

indispensable for the course of pilgrimage in nature to take place. This pilgrimage in the womb of nature is the ultimate goal of Harold and Byron, as highlighted in Canto III. Furthermore, at the end of canto IV, Byron expresses his fondness for the ocean and reveals that angry waves—that others fear—are to him “a pleasing fear:”

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy...
I wantone'd with thy breakers - they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror - 'twas a pleasing fear, (CLXXXIV)

Some scholars misinterpret Byron's relationship with nature and accuse him of committing the pathetic fallacy. For example, Margaret Soper in *A Study of the Pathetic Fallacy as It Appears in the Poetry of Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley* says that “Byron is apparently sometimes guilty of projecting his mood upon nature” (39). Soper continues, “Byron sought the natural world only in her rugged and virile forms” because these “scenes ... brought ... a stormy relief to his pent-up feelings” (40). This paper rejects this notion since Byron confers upon nature animistic characteristics; the mood such qualities convey are neither directly connected to the poet's disposition nor to the weather.

Never does Byron associate nature with evil; he actually believes evil is engendered by man. Apparently, he loathes nothing in nature. As mentioned previously in canto II of *Childe Harold*, Harold confesses he loves nature in spite of its capricious mood, and he loves her most when she is forceful. To Byron, nature is “[w]ild but not rude” (*CHP* III, LIX). Nature is feminized and Byron considers her a loving mother. The poet creates a sublime, animistic image of nature's existence: maternal and feminine, constructive and destructive:

Dear Nature is the kindest mother still,
Though always changing, in her aspect mild;
From her bare bosom let me take my fill,
Her never-wean'd, though not her favour'd child.
Oh! she is fairest in her features wild,
Where nothing polish'd dares pollute her path: (*CHP* II, XXXVII)

Through animism, the poet provides nature with human characteristics. Nature is treated as a human being, possessing a spirit and a mind of its own. She not only possesses a physical presence but also an emotional existence. The female wilderness assumes the role of a mother, a personified sanctuary for a tormented Byronic hero; it is an enchanted and friendly environment. By animating Mother Nature and highlighting her feminine qualities, Byron seeks to emphasize an intimate relationship between humanity and the natural world so that humans are attached to this powerful animated natural domain. Untamed aspects of nature such as avalanches, storms and thunder are but natural wonders to Byron. He loves his Mother Nature mostly in her wrath or “features wild” and in her destructive power; consequently, fierce weather never troubles the poet's mood. Thus, his nature imagery is neither reflexive nor circular. In the above stanza, Byron's feminization of nature is an indication that he is exceptionally attached to the female presence. Could this maternal personification be a substitute for his love for his half-sister, Augusta, or his infant daughter Ada, the two females he is most attached to in his life? Alternatively, is Byron hinting at the female symbol of fertility akin to nature's life cycle?

Nature's supremacy serves as a sense of inspiration to Byron. For instance, the unreachable stars—whose splendor is utterly abstract—are emblematic of the sublime; they embody power, beauty, mystery and life:

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires, - 'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That ... power, life, have named themselves a star. (*CHP* III, LXXXVIII)

Thus, a far-fetched image of a star is concretized by Byron who endows it with life and power, hence portraying an improved optimistic and mightier version of nature, an enticing image that enchants and provokes readers to accept its mystifying, spiritual elements.

Second, in order to encounter the sublime, Byron animates nature; this is another testimony of nature's power. Byron strives to reach the sublime in Canto III of *Childe Harold* as he addresses the “night.” Byron versifies:

...Oh night,

And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
 Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
 Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
 From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
 Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
 But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
 And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
 Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud! (XCII)

...

And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
 And now again 't is black, - and now, the glee
 Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
 As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth. (XCIII)

These exotic symbols provide a novel dimension of understanding nature. By challenging the reader's imagination to participate in nature's undomesticated being, Byron's creativity permits the reader to intermingle with the harmonious activities in the poem and interpret its verse. As Byron attributes life to every minute detail in nature, these mute natural manifestations, that are ostensibly not alive in the poem itself, engage in various activities, as if conscious of every single action executed. Since animism promotes a metaphysical truth about the nonliving, which is animated due to the poet's active imagination, readers have no choice but to accept all the fabricated images of a living nature.

Such creative imagery is neither an extension of Byron's mood nor a portrayal of Byron's stormy temper or reflection on the climate that summer. These vivid images and animistic characteristics of the storm, darkness, thunder, rain, hills, mountains and earthquake serve as a recognition of the power of nature whose abstract images are further solidified via animation. Natural elements exchange roles with humans, making humans less important by stressing the notion of an immortal, self-renewing nature. Animism elicits different ideas and thoughts for readers who become aware of the importance of the nonliving. In this way, humans experience nature differently, recognizing nature's significance to their existence and survival. By animating the external environment, Byron turns out to be an environmentalist who, through creating a dynamic presence and meaning to nature, strengthens the bond between it and humans, thus making the latter indirectly respect nature.

While simultaneously portraying a nature conscious of all its activities, Byron wishes man to be scrupulous while reacting to Mother Nature. The poet encourages the reader to revolutionize his attitude regarding the natural world. Through physically interacting with it, a person is able to transform his attitude towards nature, eventually perceiving and treating her differently. Hence, readers become active not only in interpreting poetry but also in reacting to a living entity, an indispensable natural world worthy of respect and preservation.

Strident noise produced by a mighty nature—whether from the thunder or tempest—is a wake-up, urgent call for Byron to fuse with nature and share its muscle with her:

And this is in the night: - Most glorious night!
 Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
 A sharer in thy fierce and far delight, -
 A portion of the tempest and of thee!
 How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea, (CHP III, XCIII)

The powerful storm carries Byron to a new realm, to a metaphysical world. The human blends with the natural world when Byron becomes one with nature, sharing his spirit with the mysterious surrounding environment. In fact, he evinces enormous fervor for nature's destructive side; he delights in partaking of its metaphorical power; he begs the thunderstorm to divide its influence in order to mingle in its impressive allure. Ultimately, Byron completely surrenders to nature: "And thus I am absorb'd, and this is life:" (CHP III, LXXIII). To be literally and intellectually absorbed in nature, Byron wishes to blend with destructive forces he considers indispensable for perfecting the natural cycle and joins nature's celebration in maintaining the natural order. The power of natural destructive forces is constructive; it is essential to the sustenance and permanence of nature's existence. Byron continues:

...shall I not
 Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
 The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
 Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot? (CHP III, LXXIV)

Greatly appreciative of the spirit of "mountains, waves, and skies," Byron integrates into the natural setting, sharing its numerous features. He sacrifices his identity and merges with the cosmos, using his impetuous

imagination to acquire a universal vision of the planet. He is assigned the similar metaphysical task of fusing with nature's soul in order to achieve an enhanced understanding of the world:

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion?... (CHP III LXXV)

The poet recognizes the spirit of nature and feels loftily elevated from the world. He roams freely bestriding his imagination, transcending his senses.

In his poem, "The Island," Byron questions rhetorically the concept of nature's animism; his animistic philosophy crystallizes and seemingly dives into the womb of nature—stars, mountains, caves, seas—immersing himself entirely in its concept:

Live not the stars and mountains? Are the waves
Without a spirit? Are the dropping caves
Without a feeling in their silent tears?
No, no;-they woo and clasp us to their spheres,
Dissolve this clog and clod of clay before
Its hour, and merge our soul in the great shore. (II, XVI)

The authority of nature cannot be compared to that of man since that would minimize man's existence; however, it is generally acknowledged that nature's sublimity is a much greater power. Accordingly, Byron, using the absolute freedom of the Romantic, chooses to merge with the sublimity of nature. He willingly releases his subjectivity and individuality to dissolve into otherness. Harold wonders: "What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,/ Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,/ Invisible but gazing..." (CHP III, VI). Byron is a nonentity when merging with nature; he loses his identity to merge with a supernatural force, an offspring of his creativity. By achieving this, Byron acquires a new identity dedicating his soul to nature.

A third stimulus (other than admiring nature's power and craving to attain the sublime) that drives Byron to personify nature is that it is bustling with life, which is also an indication of power. Byron's poetic creativity provides animated life to nature, which he perceived as being abundant with animating spirits. In Canto III of *Childe Harold*, the poet relates animism to the natural world so creatively that the reader feels surrounded by voices and entrapped in the hustle and bustle of a busy living world:

All heaven and earth are still - though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep: -
All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
All is concenter'd in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence. (LXXXXIX)

The poet animates nature, describing it as "a life intense"—a setting representing universal harmony of rhythms, picturing a bond between earth (materialism) and heaven (spirituality), nature and God and nature and man. He envisages that whoever sincerely appreciates nature is able to see beyond it—it transcends the material and attains the spiritual—thus acquiring a unified vision of the divine creation.

Finally, Byron personifies nature because he understands its language; thus, he naturally communicates with it by responding to its language, music and voice. His sensitivity allows the reader to perceive it in the same manner he does. By doing so, the real world is closed and a world of fantasy is opened. The spirit of nature solely reveals itself to poets possessing acute compassion towards it. Byron hears the harmonious voices of nature whispering into his sensitive soul. His creative activity permits mountains to speak, and various elements of nature initiate a dialogue, creating a divine, festive harmony. At this stage, the poet and nature exchange roles; hence, silent nature speaks while his thoughts are mute. Nature is inhibited by personified beings that start a blissful and harmonious conversation in a heavenly, pure natural community. Thus, nature produces an uplifting pastoral mood, making it a source of happiness to Byron who, in turn, feels harmony towards it. As Byron deciphers the message of a silent spirit, he comprehends a natural environment that employs an implicit language. Consequently, he hears nature's voice through her creatures and plants, and through his vivid description, his readers hear and understand nature's language. Experiencing transcendent harmony with nature, Byron feels that nature communicates with him. As a result, nature becomes a lovely sight endowed with a supernatural power, the power to speak:

... 'tis lone,

And wonderful, and deep, and hath a sound,
 And sense, and sight of sweetness; here the Rhone
 Hath spread himself a couch, the Alps have rear'd a throne. (*CHP* III, CIV)

The poet uses his aesthetic technique to picture an enchanted world— a world that engages its beholders. Not only living organisms but also inorganic, lifeless matter come alive: the Rhone river is compared to a royal couch on which the Alps, the king of mountains, sits and rests. In this poetic image, Byron displays the five senses to animate and describe the majestic elements of a powerful, articulate nature. While meditating in nature, Byron learns the language of his host. The Byronic hero, Manfred, admits towards the end of the play written in 1816-1817:

I linger yet with Nature, for the Night
 Hath been to me a more familiar face
 Than that of man; and in her starry shade
 Of dim and solitary loveliness,
 I learn'd the language of another world. (III, iv)

Like Manfred, Harold also understands nature's unuttered thoughts; he too enjoys her company, her language, her solitary loveliness: "The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,/ Were unto him companionship; they spake/ A mutual language" (*CHP* III, XIII). Amazingly, the natural world portrays life in an extremely realistic manner. Byron creates an authentic natural world his readers have faith in. What is seemingly an unnatural physical surrounding becomes through the spiritual animistic philosophy completely natural, thus inviting readers to believe that animated nature, a living supernatural entity, is part of the real world, not a fantasy anymore. Live natural entities markedly confirm that human beings constitute a minor role in the surrounding natural physical environment. Humans are not as numerous as other natural objects endowed with life. Byron reveals that lifeless natural objects not only have a soul or spirit but also are endowed with consciousness enabling them to communicate. With his dexterous pen, Byron portrays a humanized natural community, a vibrant, realistic and livelier version of nature.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper reveals the unique understanding between Byron and nature, particularly in Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in which Byron makes a significant contribution in his portrayal of nature, principally when applying Sir Edward Tylor's anthropological theory on animism to his poetry. Byron never creates a negative impression of nature; he displays no interest in the "pathetic devise" because his whimsical moods are never reflected on the physical environment.

Elements of nature—caves, sea, tempest, rain, thunder, lightning and other natural features—do not illustrate Byron's tempestuous mental status; they are simply indicative of powerful natural elements. Such rudiments are natural disturbances that perfect the cycles of nature. The mysterious and dark side of external nature always sparks his creative imagination. Only a truly imaginative power such as Byron's could animate nature in such a significant fashion. With his creativity, thunder jumps, clouds and mountains engage in dialogue, rain dances and hills laugh. He adeptly and fait accompli establishes that man is dependent on nature and illustrates in his poems its mythical, joyous, humanized and consuming dimensions. These motifs are extensively consistent—not only in the four cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*—but also in the majority of his flamboyant oeuvre.

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