

Lord Byron and Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte between the Ode and Waterloo

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Abstract

This study examines Byron's portrayals of Napoleon as illustrated in two poems, *An Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* and *Childe Harold Canto III*, particularly in *Waterloo* and *Napoleon*. The study is of two sections. The first focuses on the tarnishing of Napoleon's image as introduced in the *Ode*, a poem published a few days after Byron received the shocking news of Napoleon's abdication. The second focuses on the rehabilitation of the image as suggested in *Waterloo* and *Napoleon*, verses written almost two years after the tragic events of Waterloo Battle. Amidst the discussion, the mystical attachment of the poet to Napoleon, the rage over his abdication, and the effect of Napoleon on Byron's trends and convictions are carefully elaborated. Coincidental and psychological affinities and analogies between Byron and Napoleon, as individuals, would be highlighted too. The study concludes that the tarnishing of Napoleon's image in the *Ode* is only an eventual consequence of Byron's sudden shock and thwarted expectations in what he used to deem as a little pagod. However, after the rage vanished, Byron favorably twists the image of Napoleon and resituate him among his favorite heroes.

Keywords: Lord Byron, Napoleon Bonaparte, Waterloo, Byronic hero, Childe Harold Pilgrimage Canto III.

Introduction

No informed scholar denies the idea that Lord Byron considers Napoleon Bonaparte the spearhead of revolution against the old establishment of the decaying monarchies in Europe. Since boyhood, Byron had a bust of Napoleon on his mantle-piece and would be stung when his idol slighted by any of the boys around, despite the fact that Napoleon was the bitter enemy of his home country, Britain (Cochran, 2003). The fascination grew deeper by time till the poet identified himself with his idol. He saw himself in Napoleon, and Napoleon in him. Actually, Byron draws an image for Napoleon of his own making, though not necessarily the real Napoleon as historians deem. The magnitude of the Napoleon was inescapable (Clubbe 1997). Byron was not the only fan of Napoleon. Other artists shared, in various degrees, the same fascination. Some see Napoleon as the epitome of revolution against the tyranny in Europe. To them, Napoleon's life story stands for the capacity of genius to rise magnificently from nothing to the heights of power. They considered him a hugely successful figure. As Hobsbawm puts it (1962, 75), "Napoleon was the figure every man who broke with the traditions could identify himself with in his dreams". After the ousting of the French monarchy, every person of education, talent and enlightenment sympathized with the Revolution at all events, and showed attraction to its ideals and leaders, particularly Napoleon. Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, Robert Burns, Southey, Kant, Herder, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, Schiller, Goethe, Stendhal, Balzac, Julien Sorel, Grillparzer, Raskolnikov, Nietzsche, Beethoven are all mesmerized and fascinated by Napoleon's achievements; they value his magic power and courage, his passionate longings for greatness, and view him as the one individual capable of bringing about European unity, and the embodiment of the ideals of the French Revolution.

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Actually, they admired the republican Napoleon, inheritor of the French Revolution, yet were dismayed with the royal Napoleon, emperor and despot. Their feelings were ambivalent and fluctuate wildly over the years especially during the Jacobin dictatorship, when some lost enthusiasm and interest (Hobsbawm, 78). In comparison, Byron's fascination lasts very much longer. He takes Napoleon as his little pagod, or the beacon of the new world like Prometheus who stole the light from the Greek tyrant gods to enlighten humanity; and because of his daring spirit, he suffered the consequences.

Except for the time that immediately followed the Battle of Waterloo, and the unexpected abdication of Napoleon, Byron remained a fervent Bonapartist (Cochran, 2003). Some vacillations scarcely occur but never last and soon redirected into the mainstream of Byron's faith in Napoleon. Byron's vacillation is not unusual, though. It is common to many Romantics when discussing Napoleon. At the same time, the reasons for admiring and attacking him are remarkably close (Stock, 2006). For being mesmerized by the image he draws for Napoleon, Byron strives in his verses to turn the vices of the idol into virtue. He deems even the most exceptionally violent acts virtuous and necessary for the ultimate goal in mind, i.e. the liberation of Europe. As historical records show, Napoleon and the emperor never met, and Byron knew his limitations as he admits once while commenting upon the defeat of Napoleon, "I don't know—but I think, even I (an insect compared with this creature), have set my life on casts not a millionth part of this man's. But, after all, a crown may not be worth dying for. ... But I won't give him up even now; though all his admirers have, 'like the thanes, fallen from him'" (Journal, April 9, 1814, Letters, 1898, ii. 409). Byron's loyalty remained intact even after the ousting of Napoleon, and his fascination with Napoleon pervades his writing and demonstrates extraordinary involvement with fate of the French Emperor. More crucially, the occasional reproach of Byron to Napoleon can be taken as a quarrel between two devoted lovers (Clubbe, 1997).

Limitations of Study

This study is limited to examine the fluctuations in Byron's tones as illustrated in the *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* and the rehabilitation of Napoleon's image encountered in *Childe Harold Canto III*, particularly in the two sections *Waterloo* and *Napoleon*. The locus of the import would be the illumination of Byron's outrage over the abdication of Napoleon, the tarnishing of the idol's image in the *Ode*, and then the rehabilitation of Napoleon's image, or the twisting of Napoleon's image to fit into the overall image of Byron's favorite heroes.

Affinities between the Two

In examining the life stories of both Napoleon and Byron, one may find a set of affinities that might foster the mystical devotion of the poet to the Emperor. As cited by many, several psychological and coincidental factors make the intimacy more predictable (Clubbe 1997). Both enjoyed a sudden worldwide claim in their early manhood, afterwards suffered catastrophic ends. As Napoleon conquered most European monarchies, Byron's poetry dominated the 19th Century literary world; a poetic triumph counterbalances Napoleon's military achievements. Byron sees himself the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme (Herold 1955). Furthermore, both are paradoxical, egotistic, superstitious, energetic and somewhat self-critical. They were too ambitious and ardently willing to take risks and play for high stakes. For being overconfident or over-reaching, they compare themselves with great historical figures, Napoleon to Alexander and Byron to Diogenes and Rousseau. Both were charismatic inspiring exceptional loyalty among subordinates, as well they were physically and mentally composed and capable of great endurance. Some critics see affinities even in their private lives (Clubbe 1997). Both show some cynical aversion toward women and physical attraction for men, and suspicious of incestuous trends. Byron was fully aware of such analogies and thus could happily identify with him, and often give deaf ears to any criticism of his idol. Neither the devastation Napoleon wrought in Spain in 1809, nor the humiliating Russian campaign of 1812 had affected Byron's fascination. He remained obsessed, and his faith in Napoleon grew deeper by time. It was shaken for a time, though, particularly days after Napoleon's concession, but soon the same old obsession takes over.

Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte

Napoleon represents a great dream for Byron, but that dream came to an end in 1814, when the coalition, Britain and Borussia, defeated Napoleon, forced him to abdicate, and declined upon the tiny kingdom of Elba. The news of Napoleon's defeat and abdication left Byron confused and confounded. Between anger

and dismay, he generated hastily his *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, in which he expresses hysteric rage induced by intense displeasure over the unexpected end of his idol, and in turn the end of his universal dream, i.e. to see all the monarchies ousted and erased from the face of earth. Under the effect of the shocking events, Byron overly slights Napoleon, and doesn't hide personal disappointment in his little pagod. He condemns Napoleon for not "dying as honor dies", preferring humiliating exile over honorable death (*Letters*, 1899, iii. 73, note 3). The old heroic image of Napoleon was shattered, and replaced by the image of an *ill-minded* person with a *dark spirit* who cares for nothing but his own safety, as slaves do. At large, the poem comes out as an outcry of a disappointed soul over the betrayal of what used-to-be a grand hero.

The Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte was hastily composed under the effect of the shocking news of Napoleon's sudden abdication, a reality that Byron took as catastrophic to him personally. The failings of Napoleon are inextricably taken as his own failings. He was drastically agitated and agonized by Napoleon's offending performance, hence the distortion of the idol's image. The Ode demonstrates Byron's extraordinary involvement with the fate of the French Emperor. Before Waterloo, Napoleon used to be a human divinity and a "little pagod" to Byron (Coleridge & Prothero 2015). After Waterloo, at least in the Ode, that image is distorted and drastically tarnished. Outrageously Byron turns upon Napoleon. However, when Byron turns against Napoleon, he actually turns against himself. In his disappointing end, Napoleon's disfigures the image Byron holds for him. In vain thus, wishes Napoleon would have ended his quest for freedom honorably, not ignobly. Against all odds, Napoleon did not choose suicide and the glory of death, as tragic heroes do. He chose instead the dishonor of exile, hence the outrage and reproach mounting in the Ode.

Byron elaborates bitter realities, a humiliating defeat, capitulation, and abdication. In a few words, Byron's convictions and dreams crumbled to dust after Napoleon's abdication. The stark contrast between what Byron wished to see and what the idol did, gives natural rise to bitterness and agony. For being bitterly agonized, the irony begins even in the title of the Ode, where Byron strips Napoleon of the Imperial name he used to go by. His last name, as spelled out in the title, Buonaparte, is the Corsican name Napoleon abandoned after his first campaign of 1796-1797 in Italy. The alteration is deliberate; it indicates a huge change of tone. Napoleon is no more the hero to whom Byron was blindly devoted. He is no more above normal human failings, nor a human divinity. Napoleon proves no better than any other despot, and worse less impressive than counterparts. The shock is deeply rooted and can't be overcome soon. In the opening line, Byron addresses Napoleon, "And now thou art a nameless thing: So abject—yet alive!" After Napoleon's willing abandonment of both the title and name, he becomes merely a *nameless thing*, a low spirit who gains nothing in his fall but a dishonorable life. His fall is far worse than the fall of any fate-defier, neither "man nor fiend hath fallen so far" (Stanza 1). In other words, neither Lucifer nor fiends or men choose the humiliating fate that Napoleon accepts. Byron's expectations are terribly thwarted as he sees his idol ignobly spare his life and willingly accepts indignation.

The irony grows bitterly harsh on Napoleon in Stanza 2. Byron addresses him as, "Ill-minded man! who has grown blind", and thus becomes a traitor to his own legacy and to worshippers and die-hard followers. In surrendering, Napoleon does not only tarnish his hero-image, but also thwarts the expectations of devotees and arouse thus lasting disappointment. He could have acted like other tragic heroes in time of adversity: "Thine only gift hath been the grave/ To those that worshipped thee." Death would be less painful to Byron and followers and more honorable to Napoleon than the humiliation of exile. In Stanza 3, Byron showcases another negative impact of Napoleon's decision to abdicate and spare his life. His decision becomes a betrayal of trust, for it breaks the bond between Napoleon and his worshipers, and worse that bond cannot be restored: "That spell upon the minds of men/Breaks never to unite again." It is an unredeemable bafflement to all those who used "to adore/ Those Pagod things of sabre-sway." In Stanza 4, Byron hits further on Napoleon's offending decision to choose shameful life. Napoleon has quelled and forsaken "the earth quake-voice of victory/ The sword, the spectre, and that sway," which man seems to obey. Further, Byron adds another unfavorable attribute to Napoleon that might stand behind Napoleon's failure to act as a tragic hero does.

It is his “Dark Spirit! What must be the madness of thy memory?” Napoleon becomes a mere fiend, an extremely malignantly wicked person, not a sage. In stanza 5, Byron’s irony of Napoleon’s ignoble decision becomes more outrageous than before.

His abdication is not only a betrayal to worshippers but also to the code of knighthood. Napoleon the used-to-be the daring knight on earth turns to be a victim of ignoble fear. The dread of death alone compels Napoleon to act like a slave, that values life over honor. What matters to a slave is safety and what matters to a prince is honor: “To die a Prince—or live a slave—/ Thy choice is most ignobly brave!” Unluckily Napoleon chooses to live as a slave does, not as a knight of honor.

After surveying the failings of Napoleon, Byron measures Napoleon against other historical figures of his status, and most comparisons lead to the same conclusions Byron makes in the first stanzas, 1 to 5. Napoleon is compared first to Milo, the Greek legendary wrestler (Journal, April 8, 1814, Letters, 1898, ii. 408). Milo wedged his hands in an oak and thus entrapped and became a prey to the beasts—lion, bear, down to the dirtiest jackal—may all tear him: “He who of old would rend the oak/... Chained by the trunk he vainly broke—He fell, the forest prowlers' prey” (stanza 6). Milo fares better for he “Dreamed not of the rebound”, whereas Napoleon does. In this context, Byron undeniably refers to the Muscovite winter that defeated Napoleon and wedged his arms, and left him an easy prey to the allies. As a matter of fact, Napoleon lost more than half of his forces in his invasion to Russia. For this drastic defeat, Napoleon should have learned to curb the lust of war in his spirit, and quit at the height of his power. After Milo, Napoleon is compared to Sylla, the Roman Emperor (Journal, April 9, 1814, Letters, 1898, ii. 409). The comparison favors Sylla over Napoleon. Unlike Napoleon, Sylla revenged, and resigned in the height of his “sway, red with the slaughter of his foes,” the finest instance of glorious contempt upon record,

He dared depart in utter scorn
Of men that such a yoke had borne.
Yet left him such a doom!
His only glory was that hour
Of self-upheld abandoned power

Even the Spaniard, Charles the Fifth fares better in comparison to Napoleon. Like Sylla, the Spaniard, resigned the kingdom when he was at the very height of his power (Coleridge & Prothero, Notes.2015). When he “Had lost its quickening spell, Cast crowns for rosaries away” (Stanza 8). By contrast, only after he had lost his power did Napoleon abdicate, or actually forced to do so by the Allies. Instead, Napoleon should have picked the right moment to quit the imperial mien.

The contrast between Napoleon and others continues, and the irony of Napoleon upsurges higher. The used-to-be little pagod turns to be a man of he (stanza 9). To Byron, Napoleon falls thus far and fails to amount his counterparts only for being endowed with an evil spirit. He is essentially indifferent leaves behind worshippers grieving and bewailing his shameful fall. Indifferent he is even to the future of the revolution he represents. By sparing his own life, Napoleon in effect foreclosed for now the possibility of revolution: “If thou hadst died as honor dies, / Some new Napoleon might arise” (stanza 11). Being alive, no one will rise to carry the torch of revolution and “soar the solar height, /To set in such a starless night?” (Stanza 11). And in turn the revolution would die out.

In Stanza 14, the irony takes a form of bitter mockery trickled with unspoken pain. Byron cynically asks Napoleon to face up to the demeaning status lying in wait for him. Nothing left to Napoleon but to “haste to thee to thy sullen Isle,” and acts there as did the legend of Corinth's pedagogue. Dionysius the Younger who on being for the second time banished from Syracuse, retired to Corinth, where he is said to have opened a school for teaching boys to read (Coleridge & Prothero, Notes.2015). The cynical tone of Byron doesn’t cease here, it continues. Confounded by the indignation his ideal takes without repining, Byron questions the sanity of Napoleon. He could not think of anything that drove Napoleon to accept such a humiliating destiny, “a captive cage”, except the loss of sense. Napoleon’s sanity died out altogether once he lost power: “All sense is with thy sceptre gone” (Stanza 14).

In the concluding stanza, Byron compares Napoleon to the classical Titan, Prometheus. This culminates the series of comparisons between the fallen Napoleon and past leaders who unlike Napoleon were as heroic in adversity as in triumph. Byron reflects upon the defiance of the legendary Prometheus to the authority of Greek gods yet bravely suffers the consequences of his own action. For a noble goal, Prometheus stole the secret of fire from the Greek gods and was punished for overreaching his station.

The Prometheus-image therefore represents the brave but disastrous efforts of an arrogant creature reaching beyond the previous realms of possibility (Stock, 2006). Unlike Napoleon, “Prometheus in his fall preserv'd his pride, And if a mortal, he would have proudly died.” He stole “the fire from heaven, and withstand the shock..., the unforgiven, /His vulture and his rock! Foredoomed by God—by man accurst” (Stanza XVI). Prometheus had nobly accepted the fate to which the callings of his conscience had led him. By analogy, Napoleon fought for a noble goal, yet he did not accept his fate, and thus shamefully survived.

In a nutshell, Byron inflicts a great deal of pain on Napoleon for his unexpected decision to debase himself before enemy. After abdication, Napoleon becomes “a nameless thing/, So abject—yet alive”; his fall is far worse than the fall of any man or fiend before (Stanza I). For being “Ill-minded!” with a “Dark spirit”, Napoleon dreads the idea of death, which is the “only gift/ To those that worshipped thee” (Stanza 2); meanwhile, he frustrates the expectations of his loyal men (Stanza 4), and willingly breaks his own “spell upon the minds of men That led them to adore/ Those Pagod things of sabre-sway.” Napoleon even trespasses the code of knighthood and acts like a slave not a prince in time of adversity (Stanza 5). The shame he brought upon himself could have been avoided if he acted like others who abandoned position at the height of power. Sylla, The Spaniard Charles V, and Dionysius “dared depart in utter soon/... abandoned power” (Stanzas 6, 7, and 8). By contrast, Napoleon “Too late thou leav'st the high command/ To which thy weakness clung” (Stanza 9). Napoleon is also condemned for being a traitor to both his worshippers and revolution. Had he chosen honorable death, some new Napoleon might arise, “to carry the torch of revolution, To set in such a starless night?” (Stanza 11). Even in the last stanza Napoleon fails to match Prometheus, the architype of all fate-defiers, for favoring safety over the dread of death (Stanza 16).

Rehabilitation of Napoleon's Image

In the Ode, the image of Napoleon is unfavorably introduced. Several negative attributes are attached to the image of the used-to-be an idol to Byron. By contrast, a rehabilitation of the image soon followed in *Childe Harold Pilgrimage*, Canto III, particularly in the sections entitled *Waterloo* and *Napoleon*. As common, the Ode was published at high speed, first anonymously on April 16th 1814; and it emerged out of Byron's crisis over Napoleon's unexpected and untimely abdication (CPW 3: 265-266, 456). It was written a few days after Byron received the news about the Battle of Waterloo, and the defeat and abdication of his Little Pagod, Napoleon. His reaction to the events was outrageous; the grand image of Napoleon long imprinted in Byron's mind and heart is greatly shattered. The shock drove Byron to reproach and overly slight his hero. The case is different, however, when it comes to *Childe Harold Canto III*. This Canto was written two years after the bloody events of Waterloo, particularly after Byron's visit to the battlefield in 1816. Napoleon had already suffered the second defeat, and was already dispatched to the island of St. Helen in south Atlantic. During these years, the rage of the poet definitely declined. For this, Byron's recount came out relatively different from what is encountered in the Ode. In *Childe Harold Canto III*, both sections *Waterloo* and *Napoleon* give testimonies to a different perspective and reading of Napoleon's conduct. Byron now characterizes Napoleon in terms, that he means, also apply to himself (Stauffer. 2011). The image of a disappointing hero is favorably twisted and molded to fit in among Byron's heroes as well among the greatest in history as Alexander and Rousseau. Even cruelty of Napoleon becomes a necessity, and his ambition and daring spirit are essentials for the avenger of the oppressed nations. He is no more fiendish or insane, but a grand tragic hero, a man of middling virtue who is brought down to grief by his own fate, or if you please, by misjudgment. This spectacular change in Byron's outlook attests to the lasting obsession of the poet and the unspeakable magnitude of Napoleon (Stock 2006).

Waterloo

In this section, stanzas 17- 35, Byron intentionally shifts focus, from the conduct of Napoleon to the cost and futility of the battle itself.

He capitalizes the cost of this bloody battle and plays down the triumph of the allies over Napoleon, and leaves in the background the case of Napoleon's abdication, the source of his outrage in the *Ode*. After lamenting the political consequences of the battle and its high cost, he makes clear his belief that the defeat of the French Empire and the restoration of the detestable Bourbon monarchy is not worth the deaths of nearly 50,000 soldiers (Shaw 2014). More importantly, while condemning the costly war, Byron indirectly rehabilitates the smeared image of Napoleon. He opens this section with a direct address to the visitors of the battlefield, cautioning of the sacredness of the spot: "Stop! --- for thy tread is on an Empire dust!"

He seems dismayed by the absence of a colossal bust marking this sacred spot that contains the "sepulchred below" of thousand victims of both French and British. Ironically enough upon the ashes of victims, "King-making victory?" Resenting the high cost of the deadly war, Byron wonders, "is this all the world hath gained by thee/, Thou first and last of fields!... this place of skulls/ The grave of France!" (Stanza 17). Contrary to this, the first mention of defeated Napoleon marks a huge change in Byron's tone: "In pride of place here last the Eagle flew." Napoleon is no more ill-minded, with a dark or evil spirit as seen in the Ode, but an eagle exemplifying the pride and strength of his nation. In Stanza 18, Byron further plays down the "King-making victory" over Napoleon. He debates the question of war and bitterly mocks the celebrated yet futile triumph of the allies: "Did nations combat to make One submit? Or league to teach all kings sovereignty? What! Shall reviving Thralldom [slavery] again be?" To Byron, the war is waged only to have another nation enslaved by some power or influence. Amid the queries, Byron throws in also other specific terms for the purpose of enhancing the image of Napoleon and concurrently tarnishing the image of opponents: "Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we/ Pay the Wolf homage?" Napoleon becomes a lion, struck down by the allies only to reinstate in his place the wolf, Louis XVIII, the heir of the French ousted monarchy. Despite the grave consequences of Waterloo, this line renders admiration rather than awe. Napoleon no more dreads death, but a "Lion" who is unjustly removed by evil forces (Stanza 19). And since the gain is unworthy of the cost, there is no need for the loud festivity the allies hold "over one fallen despot." Added to this, the term *despot* can be taken as a verbal irony. The intent can be easily perceived, given the idea that Napoleon is a freedom fighter not a cruel dictator as labelled by the allies, and the unneeded war waged against Napoleon has brought nothing but more destruction and grief:

In vain fair cheeks were furrowed with hot tears
 In vain years/ Of death, depopulation, bondage, fears
 Have all been borne, and broken by the accord
 Of roused-up millions; all that most endears.
 Glory, is when the Myrtle wreathes a Sword
 Such as Harmodius drew on Athens' tyrant Lord. (Stanza 20)

The term "Glory" of triumph can be also taken as a verbal irony; it is a false one, for it is achieved through devious means, cunning and bluffing. Glory *is* accomplished only "when the myrtle wreathes a sword/ Such as Harmodius drew on Athens' tyrant lord" (Stanza 20). More possibly the line is meant to deride the feat of the allies, and may indicate if it is a matter of killing one *despot*, it could be done by assassinating the despot himself in the manner of "Harmodius drew on Athens' tyrant Lord," rather than sacrificing thousands of innocent souls to neutralize one person and reinstate in his place another. It could be ironic too for it may indicate that some insidious schemes or treason are behind the swift defeat of Napoleon. Napoleon, to Byron, cannot be overthrown but by treason, which makes *Waterloo* a dishonorable battle and the victory of allies is devoid of worth or significance, and all the sacrifices are wasted in vain.

After grave events of the battle, Byron shifts attention to a more joyous event disrupted by the war of corrupt politicians, in an attempt to further capitalize the high cost of war and its devastation on people. He starts his famous account of the Duchess of Richmond's ball in Belgium's capital, Brussel, which, supposedly, taking place at the night of war. The joyous revelry at the House of the Duchess represents a stark contrast to the skulls, graves, grief, and the

great cost paid mostly by enthusiastic young British: “There was a sound of revelry by night, ... And all went merry as a marriage bell.... But hush! A deep sound strikes like a rising knell.” The marriage bell is unexpectedly overcome by a rising knell, a solemn chime of war (Stanza 21). The “Cannon’s opening roars” put to an end to the sweet music of the festivity (Stanza 22). In other words, the call for war frustrates the innocent joy of revelries. It plucks out the happily participants of the festivity and throws them into the inferno of Waterloo. Byron then broods on instances of individual tragedies, such as the Sate Brunswick’s fated Chieftain, who joined the battle seeking revenge of his father, “And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell: He rushed into the field – and foremost fighting fell” (Stanza 22), in addition to references to Byron’s cousin who fell victim in this war.

In Stanza 23, Byron pays a moving tribute to the young volunteers who suffer the brunt of war, certainly for the purpose of capitalizing the devastation wrought by war:

Last Noon beheld them full of lusty life,
 Last Eve in Beauty’s circle proudly gay,
 And all went merry as a Marriage-bell;
 The Midnight brought the signal-sound of Strife,
 The Morn the marshalling in arms, the Day Battle’s magnificently
 Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
 Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again. (Stanza 23)

Clearly the image of youth “full of lusty life... in Beauty’s circle proudly gay,” stands in opposition to the image of youth “marshalling in arms,” and the image of “the Marriage-bell” in opposition to “the signal-sound of Strife,” the drums of war “with its voluptuous swell.” Furthermore, one may notice that the capitalization of the words Beauty, Marriage-bell and Strife is done for a purpose; it is to bring closer to mind the contrast between the joy of young volunteers before the war and the miseries they endured afterwards. Over the sudden loss of the youth, “women’s cheeks all pale.” The same women “an hour ago/ Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness’ (Stanza 24). The same women are now “Grieving, if aught inanimate ever grieves, / Over the unreturning brave--- alas!” (Stanza 27). In here, the intent is hard to discern; it is to mimic in derision the idea of war and to show the contrast between war and peace, and to highlight also the high cost people paid for Kings’ victories.

In brief, Byron’s verses in *Waterloo* Section give expression to the futility of the war waged against Napoleon compared to the high cost paid by innocent people only for the purpose of reinstating a decaying royal family. At the same time, the direct references to Napoleon mark a huge change in Byron’s attitude toward his little Pagod Napoleon. The tone is totally different from the ones ruling in the Ode. Napoleon is now an eagle, and a lion who is unjustly removed by a crooked coalition of royal families in Europe, and the defeat Napoleon suffered at Waterloo is only as a defeat for the forces of rationalism and enlightenment, and a costly victory for the forces of Europe-wide tyranny (Cochran 2003). In all accounts, Waterloo is not a victory but a calamity as Shaw (2006) describes.

Napoleon

In this section, particularly in stanzas 36 to 41, the image of Napoleon is favorably modified and then the process of rehabilitation continues. The image is twisted in a way to fit more into Byron’s favorite portrayal of a Byronic or a classical tragic hero. He turns Napoleon’s vices into virtue, and the imperfections of Napoleon are only the making of fate, not necessarily his own. Like a tragic hero, Napoleon is a flawed character tricked by the schemes of fate, then inevitably defeated. In Stanza 36, Napoleon is no more ambivalent in time of adversity, but a tireless warrior against the forces of Europe-wide tyranny. It is true that Napoleon’s spirit is antithetically mixt as Byron describes; it is also true that he is persistent in his campaign to achieve what seems to Byron a noble goal, the liberation of all Europe of corrupt monarchies. Napoleon, like the rest of Byron’s heroes, is a favorably paradoxical character, who seems “once the mightiest, another moment On little objects with like firmness fixed.” Added to this, Napoleon is “Extreme in all things!” a trait that is taken as a virtue not a vice. Extremism of Napoleon is viewed by Byron as just and moral, for it is executed for the purpose of social freedom, given Byron’s aversion to the oppressive monarchies. To Byron, extremism in the defense of liberty is not a vice, and tolerance in the pursuit of justice is not a virtue. Decisiveness, synonymous of extremism, is an essential tenet for a leader to achieve a noble goal. Byron admits, however, that extremism plays a role in the downfall of Napoleon. Had Napoleon “been betwixt/ Thy throne had still been thine, or never been” (Stanza 36). He wishes Napoleon would have learned the art of tolerance and cunning so as to attain a compromise with opponents and keep his office. But compromising is not of the liking of

Napoleon's daring spirit, that shoves forward the lust of war, and then becomes the tragic flaw of Napoleon. Ironically without daring, Napoleon would never rise to glory and meanwhile would never fall: "For Daring made thy rise as fall" (Stanza 36). As his Spenserian stanza drives to a close, Byron resorts to hyperboles to register further his fascination of Napoleon particularly in the alexandrine, or the concluding line. Though he lost at Waterloo, the drive for fighting never dies. Napoleon is still "seeking to re-assume the imperial mien /And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the Scene" (Stanza 36). Napoleon might have erred in carrying his convictions to extremes. But it is not his fault.

He is naturally impelled by a powerful daring spirit that lets him believe he can shape the world to his own purpose; because of this, he pursues and extends his goals to excessive lengths as most tragic heroes do, then inevitably falls a victim for the flaw he carries.

The same hyperbolic language is also used in Stanza 37 to express both allurement and dismay over the fate of his idol. Napoleon is both "the conqueror and captive of earth." Though captive and ironically nothing, "the earth still trembles at thee still, and thy wild name/ Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now." His name still renders fright more than before to earth and men. Meanwhile, Byron sees Napoleon a victim of flatterers, sycophants and even astounded kingdoms that have mustered Napoleon's fierceness "and deemed thee for a time what'er thou didst assert." In stanza 38, further paradoxes are employed to express Byron's failure to decipher the enigmatic trends of Napoleon whose spirit is "antithetically mixed," a reality that may stand behind what seemingly his contradictory conduct:

Oh, more or less than Man – in high or low...
 Battling with Nations – flying from the field –
 Now making Monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
 More than thy meanest soldier taught to yield.

Napoleon "could'st crush – command – rebuild an empire and deeply in Men's Spirits skilled." He doesn't lack foresight and can clearly see into men's spirits and insightfully assess their motives, but he could not govern his own "pettiest passion...nor curb the lust of war." To make the two ends meet, Byron uses Napoleon's tragic flaw as ground for a valid inference. Napoleon is a flawed hero whose rise and fall are ordained by fate not by Napoleon himself. Such inference may indicate that Napoleon is fated to suffer the consequences of what his tempted Fate has ordained, or tricked by a force out of his control. However, like a tragic hero, Napoleon heroically accepts his fate, embracing the utterly stoic idea: what is experienced is experienced by necessity thus must be endured. In other words, what is decreed by fate must be endured by necessity.

In stanza 39, the portrayal of Napoleon arouses more admiration than ever. Here Napoleon is portrayed as a grand instance of stoic personality. Stoicism basically exalts the ideals of virtue, endurance, and self-sufficiency. These fundamentals can be effortlessly traced in the portrayal of Napoleon. First, as a man of virtue, Napoleon would often abide by no human laws, but by what the laws of nature dictate and by what his own intuition and heart prescribe. Second, he bravely endures his fate, embracing the idea "that what is experienced is experienced by necessity" (Holman, 1976). Pain in life is inevitable, and thus individuals, fated to suffer, must endure bravely whatever fortune decrees, neither complaining nor asking for mercy. Third, self-sufficiency of Napoleon resides in his extreme self-control and self-independence. Napoleon holds in restraint all feelings, whether pleasurable or painful in time of adversity or triumph. As Byron portrays, Napoleon's soul bravely "endures the turning tide... With that untaught innate philosophy. /Which, be it Wisdom – Coldness – or deep Pride." In time of adversity, Napoleon stands hard by, "smiled /With a sedate and all-enduring eye," while being exposed among "the whole host of hatred ... to watch and mock thee shrinking." As a stoic warrior, he does not completely concede, rather continues fighting with the rest of the weapons left with him. He blisters his enemy with "wisdom, coldness, and deep pride," looking lukewarm in the eyes of friends and foes. His adamant defiance becomes "Gall and Wormwood to an Enemy." More possibly it is done to deflate the mockery of his enemy. He neither complains nor asks for mercy; to the contrary, "When Fortune fled her spoiled and favorite Child/ He stood unbowed beneath the ills upon him piled."

In stanza 40, the image of Napoleon is deliberately molded and shaped further to fit Byron's personal tastes and trends. It is shaped to look like another version of the Byronic hero. Like a Byronic hero, Napoleon is introduced favorably a misanthrope. A misanthrope is a man who trusts very few and suspects or even scorns the rest, a real scorners of what's on and above earth, deeming nearly the whole world beneath notices and unworthy of consideration

(See Stern, 1988; Jowett, 2004; Thorslev, 1962). Napoleon's misanthropy, however, can be understood as a congenial trait rather than a reprehensive one as commonly associated with misanthropy, especially if we know that Byron and his heroes are misanthropic, "a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection" (cited in Christiansen, 1988, P. 201). Napoleon, as portrayed here, displays general hatred, distrust or contempt of human species or human nature; he doesn't hide "habitual scorn which could contemn/Men and their thoughts." And for being overconfident, he carries his convictions to extremes, "Till they were turned unto thine overthrow." Napoleon's overthrow is underestimated though: "Tis but a worthless world to win or lose." In other words, neither losing nor winning is of much importance to manifest grief or sorrow for. In all accounts, such a twist in Byron's tone runs in cross purposes with the rage of Byron and his reproach of Napoleon for favoring humiliating exile over honorable death as delineated repeatedly in the *Ode*.

In stanza 41, Byron tones down any further criticism of Napoleon. To him, Napoleon is victimized by fate and by sycophants. He is fated to rise then fall: "If, like a tower upon a headland rock, /Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone." As indicated, it is often the fate of great men to be misunderstood and unappreciated by their fellow men. They feel rejected by the world, and so they reject the world in turn: "Such scorn of Man had helped to brave the Shock; But Men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne." Furthermore, Napoleon is no more *nothing*, or *abject*, as introduced in the *Ode*, but an ambitious leader like Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon; he continues obtrusion on the active cruelty of more trembling and suspicious tyranny, till he falls. Byron, as well, finds further excuses and explanation, in stanza 42, for Napoleon's continued obtrusion on the monarchies in Europe. A flawed person like Napoleon inevitably errs and falls down to grief. It is his daring spirit, or his tragic flaw, drives him to act, "for inactivity to quick bosoms is a Hell." His energetic spirit becomes the bane that poisons his life. It knows no rest, and keeps moving and aspiring, "Beyond the fitting medium of desire. "Once it is kindled, it is hard to quench its thirst for motion evermore. It "Preys upon high Adventure, and it loathes nothing but rest." For being imbued with a soul of fire, Napoleon cannot stop the drive mounting inside, the same drive that thrusts the continued quest of Byron himself and his heroes. Daring is like a fever at the core of his soul and it stands behind his rise and fall. Napoleon is fated like other tragic heroes to keep thrusting forward to achieve a noble goal in mind, and the lust of war is accordingly the novel of an inevitably daring spirit: "Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore the soul of fire."

In conclusion, Napoleon is portrayed in *Waterloo* and *Napoleon* sections as a tragic hero with a noble goal. But for the tragic flaw he carries, he is brought down to grief. He is favorably introduced as a tragic hero whose failings are ordained by fate, or forces he cannot control. To further elaborate, fate or misjudgment is behind the downfall of Napoleon, and his tragedy is not of his own making. It is ordained by fate that eventually "left the loftiest star." The awe-struck tone dominating Byron's verses in the *Ode* is replaced by a fiery tone that situates Napoleon among the greatest in history as clearly established in *Child Harold*, Canto III. The ill-mind, dark spirit, and fiendish inclinations that stand behind Napoleon's fall in the *Ode* are completely discarded by the poet.

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