

Typological Revisions of The Sack of Rome in Byron's *The Deformed Transformed*

Joshua D. Gonsalves
American University of Beirut

The Deformed Transformed, written in January and February 1822, is a fragment of a play. The incompleteness of the drama perhaps testifies to Byron's inability to make sense of one of the worst war crimes in pre-modern history, the Sack of Rome in 1527, an event which serves as a centerpiece for the dramatic action. This unprocessed historical topos is rendered even more indigestible by the Biblical and mythical-historical Greco-Roman sackages it typologically references. The trauma communicated by the Sack of Rome foregrounds, I argue, a Greco-Roman genealogy of war that can only, according to Byron's genealogical sketch of his geopolitical surround, be surmounted by a theology of Catholic Love that must first be disassociated from a Biblical history of divinely sanctioned urban plunder and military destruction. A Catholic theory of redemptive love will emerge as Byron's solution to the irredeemably finite geopolitical space his secularization of sacred and historical typology reveals by means of his densely allusive mise-en-scène of the Sack of Rome in *The Deformed Transformed*.

Before exploring the Greco-Roman genealogy of Romantic era geopolitics crystallized and critiqued by Byron's staging of the Sack of Rome in *The Deformed Transformed*, I will situate the geopolitical mood circa 1822. In *Romantic Moods, Paranoia, Trauma and Melancholy, 1790-1840* Thomas Pfau defines the 1790s by a paranoia shared by reactionaries and revolutionaries in regard to each other. From 1800 to 1815 Romantic writers attempted to recover from the trauma of revolutionary terror and to reconstruct the repressive and Napoleonic ruination it produced. The post-Napoleonic years are therefore experienced as a melancholy loss of revolution, social agitation and open-ended political possibilities, as well as a disillusioned resignation to the status quo. Byron is, according to Pfau, "genuinely representative of the depressive mood of post-Napoleonic Europe," a melancholy that he contrasts to Keats's inability to believe in this eminently literary mood (332).

Keats resists the class position of melancholy, since it promises a literary value that he cannot possess but only aspire to. Keats's monumental figures—i.e.; Thea in *Hyperion: A Fragment*, "a Goddess of the infant world; / By her in stature the tall Amazon / Had stood a pigmy's height"—stand just beyond the reach of middling class desire, which must settle for irony instead:

One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain: [...]
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenor and deep organ tone:
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents; O how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods! (*Hyperion*, 1. 42-3, 47-51).

Byron undoes Keats's arrested desire to identify with Thea's statuesque presence marked by the hypothetical "as if" in advance, since, unlike Keats, his Lordship is neither "feeble," nor "frail," when it is a matter of being able to live his life as if it were literature, as Keats himself admitted: "Lord Byron cuts a figure—but he is not figurative" (*Letters*, 2:67).

Lord Byron "cuts a figure" in a salon, across his oeuvre, or along a Mediterranean shoreline. Keats's self-conscious excess of reflective thought prevents him, on the other hand, from experiencing figurative choices as figures of experience. He cannot

have relish in the fairy power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink. ("When I have fears that I may cease to be," 12-14).

The last line of Book One of *Hyperion* upholds this reading of Keats by “plung[ing] all noiseless into the deep night” (*Hyperion*, 1.357). *Hyperion* fragmentarily trails off into *The Fall of Hyperion*, which slips, in turn, into the fragmentary *The Fall of Hyperion*, creating a circular dead-end of desire or the bad infinity of irony (see de Man 16-17).

Byron’s literary figures are different. They “gai[n] as we give / The life we image,” to cite *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, yet this “we” is illusory (3. 48-9). Byron’s readers (“we”) remain trapped in the middling class positions bequeathed to them by a problematic transitional moment in British history, in-between an eighteenth-century society of ranks and a nineteenth-century class system (in regard to the debate concerning this transition, see Wahrman 14-15). Romantic striving is thus class striving, a desire for social mobility paralyzed in place from the get go. For Byron, in contrast, Romantic desire is vicarious desire emplaced by a relatively solid social position. His aristocratic stance is being demonized and exorcized, aped and sanitized by the British bourgeoisie over the course of the nineteenth-century, yet a function of this role is to be over the top. Byron fulfills this scapegoat function, ending up a celebrity, an exile, the melancholy hero of Missolonghi. If history stereotypes Byron, he is able to live the life he images in the here and now by rewriting sacred and pagan history via vicarious figures such as Prometheus (1816), Cain (1821) and other monumental dramatis personae: Faliero (1821), Sardanapalus (1821), Werner, or Arnold in the fragment-poem *The Deformed Transformed* (both written in the winter of 1821-2 and published late in 1822 and in 1824, respectively).

This is not to say that Byron vicariously uses history to escape history. By insisting on the geopolitical context of his dramatic heroes Byron critiques what Blake called the “general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the sword” (“Preface” to *Milton*, 95). Critics of *The Deformed Transformed* agree that Byron refuses war culture through what Simon Bainbridge calls a “powerful critique of masculine physical force” (17). Imke Heuer concurs, for she also reads the play as a dismantling of the male hero, or of the Achilles-figure that Arnold assumes in order to partake in the Sack of Rome. The play instances, as she writes, a “question[ing]” of both “the concept of heroism and war as a ‘heroic’ endeavor” (7).

Why does Arnold demand proof of his manhood in this way? His answer to the Stranger’s question—“But come, pronounce / Where shall we now be errant?”—suggests that he wants to be a romance hero or an “errant” knight “Where the World / Is thickest, that I may behold it in / Its workings” (1.1. 492-5). They set forth for “Rome” as a type of “Sodom,” “where there is,” in the words of the Stranger, “War / And Woman in activity” (510, 503, 495-6). Before moving on to the role biblical and historical typology play, I pause over this alliterative association between War and Women, since it draws attention to a Byronic linkage between blood and lust. Byron exposes, as Daniel Watkins stresses, both the sexualization of war and the militarization of desire to “radical critique” (27). Arnold’s description of the warpath he has followed as part of the imperial army of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles the Fifth (Charles the First of Spain; hereafter known as Charles) confirms this critique: “Through scenes of blood and lust, till I am here” (1.2 20). This sexualization of war is resisted by a Roman woman Arnold saves from rape, but who resists being reduced to his prize. Arnold falls in love with this resistant heroine, Olimpia, yet at this point the fragment ends.

Love is Byron’s solution to the dominance of war culture in *The Deformed Transformed*. Love must, as I will argue, be freed from rape narratives such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which link sexuality to violence, yet it also calls for interpretation in terms of the Catholicism articulated by both Byron’s existential choices in early 1822 and by the play’s action, diction and dramatic topoi. The transcendental temptation encoded by this tradition is legible in Byron’s casting of the Stranger as Mephistopheles in relation to Arnold’s Faustus. In Goethe’s *Faust*, the hero’s sexual and imperial crimes are forgiven. He escapes the hellish punishment he and Don Juan traditionally receive. Byron cannot reiterate Goethe’s orthodox salvation of the imperial war criminal Faust, since this *deus ex machina* would cripple his critique of war. Byron’s *Don Juan* reminds us that he declines to either save or damn his hero on a transcendental level. Juan is not destined to hell, but to death by guillotine under the auspices of a secular Reign of Terror (or to the “hell” of “an unhappy marriage”; see BLJ VIII 78). In order to trace Byron’s attempt to save Love from both the sexualization of violence and traditional transcendentalization, I will first show how Byron employs biblical and historical typology in the play to distance himself from theology. These secularized typological themes will lead me to ask how Byron’s revision of history relates to his post-

Napoleonic present. Is it possible that he undercuts redemptive readings of the Sack of Rome while holding onto love as a redemptive possibility? Olimpia's relationship to Arnold's Achilles will be seen to complicate redemption through her typological embodiment of two women loved by Achilles at the time of the Sack of Troy: Polyxena and Penthisilia. This alliterative option will reveal the difficulty of desiring, loving and living an erotic existence outside the Greco-Latin coffin of war culture.

The Sack of Rome in 1527 resulted from warfare between Charles and Francis I of France. Charles's courtly education impelled him to interpret his struggle with Francis in an anachronistic heroic mode by challenging the French king to settle their differences in a "single combat" (Maltby 36). Control of Italy was essential to legitimating his Holy Empire, which he did by being crowned by the Pope in Bologna in 1530. Italy was also crucial as a gateway to the Mediterranean, a site for his struggles with the Ottoman Empire, and for connecting his Germanic and Spanish domains. In 1527 Charles, Duke of Bourbon (hereafter known as Bourbon), a French turncoat, marched into Italy to destroy the alliance between Francis and Pope Clement the Seventh on Charles's behalf. Financing multiple wars was always a problem for Charles (Wilson 49-56), and Bourbon was unable to pay his troops, who were allured, as a result, by the lucrative prospect of sacking Rome. When Bourbon died besieging Rome, leaderless troops went on a rampage. The Sack of Rome was traumatic for Catholicism, especially since the Reformation read it as a confirmation that Rome *was* Sodom, Babylon or a den of the "Anti-Christ" destined to supersession by the Lutherans, many of whom took sacrilegious pleasure in sacking Rome as "Lutheran Soldier[s]" in Charles's army (*The Deformed Transformed* 2.3. 5, 7). Yet the fall of Rome was also interpreted by Catholicism as a warning and not as an apocalypse, as André Chastel explicates in *The Sack of Rome, 1527* (49-90)—that is, as a trial by fire from which what would eventually be known as the Counter-Reformation would emerge victorious against its blasphemous enemies. Both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation mediate the Sack, in other words, through an optic of typology.

The Sack was further interpreted as a repetition of the Gallic assault on Republican Rome in 387 BC, Titus's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and Alaric's invasion of the Imperial City in 410 AD. Byron's historical revisionism also employs these types. A chorus of Spirits, for instance, exhorts the Romans to defend their city: "Yield not to these stranger Neros! / Though the son who slew his mother / Shed Rome's blood, he was your brother: / 'Twas the Roman curbed the Roman. / Brennus was a baffled foeman" (2.1 106-10). The chorus's use of Brennus, the Gaul leader of Republican Rome's Sack, to convince the Romans of their heritage is ironized by an appeal to the matricide Nero as a "brother," since Byron envisions the Sack as both matricidal and fratricidal: "And Italy's lances / Are couched at their mother" according to the song of Charles's soldiers, some of whom were Italian (1.2 163-4). This matricide is, however, a genealogical continuation of Roman history, which, like Judeo-Christian history, is represented as fratricidal on the double model of Byron's Biblical *Cain* and the pagan myth that Romulus, the founder of Rome, killed his brother Remus. "I saw," the Stranger recounts, "Your Romulus slay [...] his own twin, quickborn of the same womb [:] Rome's earliest cement / Was brother's blood" (1.2 80-1, 83-4). World history is, he concludes, an endless war perpetuated by "the great robber sons of fratricide," "which" "[h]ave made" "the Ocean and the Earth" "their never-ceasing scene of slaughter" (87-9).

The Gallic desecration of Rome appears not as an aberration by a "foeman," but as one more scene in a fratricidal and matricidal history of homicide. This indistinction between foe and friend is deepened when the imperial soldiers refer to themselves as "Black Bands" who "came over the Alps and their snow; / With Bourbon, the rover" (1.2 122-4). Black Bands allude to *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere*, a condottiere who led his troops against both the Holy Roman Empire and the Pope, as well as to the indiscriminate, internecine warfare of the Thirty Years War referenced by a play Byron wrote in the months of December 1821 and January 1822, *Werner; or The Inheritance*:

[...] the black bands who lay waste Lusatia,
The mountains of Bohemia and Silesia,
Since the last years of war had dwindled into
A kind of general *condottiero* system
Of bandit warfare; each troop with its chief,
And all against mankind (2.1.124-9).

The distinction between for and against is swallowed in both plays by scenes of bloodlust involving all against all. The continuation of the soldier's previously cited song confirms this indistinction of matricide and fratricide amidst "never-ceasing" scenes of "slaughter": "And Italy's lances / Are couched at their mother; / But our leader from France is, / Who warred with his brother" (1.2 163-6)—a fratricidal allusion to Bourbon's betrayal of his allegiance to Francis I.

The type of Alaric emphasizes that matricidal and fratricidal "Black bands" are worse than the foreign enemies that Imperial Rome confronted: "Alaric was a gentle foeman, / Matched with Bourbon's black banditti!" (2.1. 64-5). The Spirit chorus is speaking. It is proffering a spiritual reading of Alaric's sack as proof of papal Rome's eventual resurrection from barbarian or Lutheran desecration by black bands, bandits and banditti in anticipation of a transcendental redemption. Alaric's Sack was read in its own time by pagans as proof that Christianity was leading the Empire into ruin, a reading that was violently countered by Orosius's seven-volume *History against the Pagans*. Bourbon revises this bifurcated tradition by arguing that both readings are trumped by Rome's triumph as a center of power without peer, the possession of which he hopes will sacralize his siege:

[...] and the Caesars
But yielded to the Alarics, the Alarics
Unto the pontiffs. Roman, Goth, or priest,
Still the world's masters! Civilized, barbarian,
Or saintly, still the walls of Romulus
Have been the circus of an Empire. Well!
'Twas *their* turn—now 'tis ours; and let us hope
That we will fight as well, and rule much better (1.2 277-84)

Bourbon fails to see his own fratricidal tendencies. He fails to realize that "the walls of Romulus" are "cement[ed]" with "brother's blood" (1.2 83-4). His "hope" that his "rule" will be "much better" than this inveterate violence is defrocked by the Stranger's Byronic articulation of what Paul West calls the "Spoiler's Art": "No doubt, the camp's the school of civil rights" (1.2 285). Byron mockingly spoils the revolutionary *idée reçue* that warfare can better "civil" society or improve human "rights". Alaric extends this critique of warfare as auto-destructive. The Goth was, after all, a legitimate Roman general who sacked Rome in a failed attempt to gain concessions from the Emperor at Ravenna (Kulikowski 170-7), just as Charles's sack of Rome put pressure on Clement the Seventh in the interest of obtaining legitimation from the Papal Roman See. It might also be recalled that countless Gothic invaders of Rome were Christians, yet these invasions eventually eviscerated the Christian Empire. Both religion and empire nurse the seeds of their own destruction, since if spiritual Rome survived the Goths, it did so only to be hacked apart by their inheritors, the German Reformers.

Spiritual Rome was never, however, transcendental, according to the "everlasting sneer[s]" of the Stranger (1.2. 117). Papal Rome must therefore pay the secular price for the violations exerted by its pagan precursor. The Stranger voices the theme of revenge at the heart of typological discourse when he evokes Imperial Rome's destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Titus in 70 AD in order to comment on the Pope's comic flight from the Imperial army:

Ha! right nobly battled!
Now, priest! now, soldier: the two great professions,
Together by the ears and hearts! I have not
Seen a more comic pantomime since Titus
Took Jewry. But the Romans had the best then;
Now they must take their turn (2.3. 29-34).

Papal Rome must foot the bill for Imperial Rome, since they both express the same desire for world mastery, as Bourbon's secular reasoning insists: "Roman, Goth, or priest, / Still the world's masters! / Civilized, barbarian, / Or saintly".

Typology is placed in crisis by the play's oscillation between biblical and secular-historical modes. This sense of crisis is exacerbated when a dying Lutheran curses Rome according to a typical Reformation typological discourse that nevertheless voices a Counter-Reformation interpretation of "proud Babylo[n]": "The Harlot of the Seven Hills / Hath changed her scarlet raiment for sackcloth / And ashes" (2.3. 25-8).

Byron associates the “scarlet raiment” of Catholic Rome with worldly “cardinal[s]” or “old red shanks” “stained” with the “self-same purple” hue of both blood and the imperial color of the Roman emperors—that is, with the bloodletting of a corrupt empire (2.2. 5, 6, 10, 11). The “Lutheran Soldier” is serving a different Holy Roman Empire, yet this does not prevent his espousal of a Counter-Reformation reading that Catholic Rome has learned from its bloody desecration by donning the ascetic sackcloth of reform (2.3. 7).

A Byronic note to the text exacerbates this crisis in typology by commentating lines from the spiritual chorus in the spirit of revenge: “Ye who weep o’er Carthage burning, / Weep not—*strike!* For Rome is mourning!” (2.1. 55-6). “Scipio, the second Africanus, is,” Byron notes, “said to have repeated a verse of Homer and wept o’er the burning of Carthage. He had better have granted it a capitulation” (39). Byron’s point is that Homer inspires destruction and hypocritical tears. So too, the matricidal Homerophile Nero is said to have lamented over Troy’s burning, the sack of all typological sacks, while Rome burned in 64 AD (a blaze he might even have instigated; see Champlin 182-200). Byron’s opposition to this Homeric hardness of heart summons a sympathy for Carthage which reactivates the typological thematic of historical revenge—namely, spiritual Rome must suffer for secular Roman crimes against Carthage, among others. Charles’s stereotyping as Scipio after his conquest of Tunis in 1535 intimates that this spirit of revenge will always haunt history (Horn 322).

Carthage was also a historical type for seaborne empires such as Venice and Britain, yet if Venice’s fall in 1797 was interpreted as a warning to Britain, in the post-Napoleonic period this admonition has lost its sting. Unlike Charles, capitalist Britain in 1822 has no problem funding imperial warfare and has defeated the French threat Charles could not master. British society remains threatened by the Catholic-Protestant division that undermined Charles’s empire and that Byron spoke against in the name of emancipation in 1812, but not seriously and not for long (Catholic emancipation was initiated by the Catholic Relief Act of 1829). *The Deformed Transformed* shows all empires to sing the same song, yet Byron is powerless against this chorus. Hence his post-Napoleonic depression (“despair, ennui, uncertainty and disillusionment”), even as his “deeply redemptive spirit” finds itself transformed through mania and the intense identifications with Arnold that this manic mood enables (Redfield-Jamieson 190). Byron’s manic-depression empowers him to become a self-“redeeming Son” (2.3. 69) or a secular version of Christ that does not ironize this sacred figure out of existence, given that this line is “[o]ne of the few positive references to the Redemption in all of B[Byron]’s writing” (Cochran 50).

If Arnold is a Catholic *tout court*, Byron is a secular or post-Catholic Catholic in 1822, yet what does a reflexive Catholicism signify for Byron at this time: “What with incense, pictures, statues, altars, shrines, relics, and the real presence, confession, absolution,—there is something sensible to grasp at. Besides, it leaves no possibility of doubt” (March 8, 1822; BLJ IX 123). Catholicism informs Byron’s life, letters and drama in 1822, as another letter, dated March 4, reinforces:

I am no enemy to religion, but the contrary. As a proof, I am educating my natural daughter a strict Catholic in a convent of Romagna; for I think people can never have *enough* of religion, if they are to have any. I incline, myself, very much to the Catholic doctrines; but if I am to write a drama, I must make my characters speak as I conceive them likely to argue (119).

Critics note how Byron’s Catholicism inflects his politics. Nigel Leask underlines his “subversiv[e]” sympathy with the modern Greeks and the “Catholic Irish” as common sufferers under Turkish and British empires, respectively (110), while Joshua Wilner connects Byron’s post-Catholicism to his libertine embodiment of “aristocratic privilege [...] over against a commercialist economy of production, trade, and accumulation” (39). Catholicism offers Byron a fulcrum against the dominance of an Anglican status quo by allowing him to flaunt aristocratic celebrity, an aesthetic sensibility and outré beliefs as a transgression of this commercialist society. I don’t mean to say that Byron believes in Arnold’s beliefs. Rather these credences give Byron “something sensible to grasp at” or desire and not a fetish to hold onto. While he is in this identificatory moment it “leaves no possibility of doubt” in the power of love to conquer war culture, a Coleridgean suspension of depressive disbelief, irony or skepticism that insists on incarnating the literary value that his contemporaries can no longer believe in due to their inability—socioeconomic or not—to live life as literature. Arnold can, however, only slip into these credences when he temporarily frees himself from the eternal sneers of the Stranger or from the mockery of his transformed form, Caesar:

Arnold: I thought she had loved me.

Cæsar: Blessings on your Creed!
 What a good Christian you were found to be!
 But what cold Sceptic hath appalled your faith
 And transubstantiated to crumbs again
 The *body* of your Credence? (*Fragments of the Third Part*; 43-7)

Arnold, like Byron, insists on em-“*body*“-ing or secularizing his “Creed” of Love in opposition to abstract Satanic postures of “despair, ennui, uncertainty and disillusionment”. *Crede Byron* was, after all, Byron’s familial device: *Believe Byron*. What, then, does Arnold’s belief in Love allow Byron to vicariously experience?

This Love is more than sexual in that it seeks to undo the sexualized violence and militarized bloodlust criticized by *The Deformed Transformed*. Arnold wants to see beyond the horizon of what an anthropologist of ancient geopolitics identifies as “organized homicide,” a horizon that has limited our history since its beginnings in Sumer circa 3000 BC (Childe 130). “Mine eyes are full of blood,” he tells the Stranger. “Then wipe them and see clearly,” the other responds, even as he delimits Arnold to the “dull / And dubious notice of your eyes and ears” (1.2. 2-3; 14-15). The fallen limitations of this sensorium arguably determine Byron’s turn to Catholic sensualism as “something sensible to grasp at” by means of Arnold. Arnold refuses to “listen” “[d]arkling” to words like Keats in “Ode to a Nightingale” (51) or to illuminate “darkness visible” like Milton, Blake or Shelley (*Paradise Lost*, 1. 63). He declines to be blinded by the acoustics of poetry “as the wakeful Bird / Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal Note” (3. 38-40). He prefers to see clearly in the manner of a latter day Saint Paul: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (*Corinthians* 1.13:12).

Arnold is introduced to us as a hunchback who can no longer love a mother who no longer recognizes him: “I love, or, at the least, I loved you: nothing / Save you, in nature, can love aught like me” (1.2 10-11). He wants somebody to love him in a non-sexualized way in spite of his unlikeliness to lovability. This sense of being unlovable is why he makes a pact with the Stranger that goes against tradition in so far as he does not either sell his soul or sign in blood: “Arnold: Must it be signed in blood”; “Stranger: Not in your own”; “Arnold: Whose blood then?”; “Stranger: We will talk of this hereafter” (1.1. 147-8). The price for seeking Love is the blood of others that he may not be able to wipe from his eyes once he finds what he is looking for. Arnold accepts this murderous price when he identifies with Antony’s “los[s] of / The ancient world for [the] love” of Cleopatra: “I cannot blame him, / Since I have risked my soul because I find not / That which he exchanged the world for” (1.1.236-9). Arnold declines Antony’s form as a substitute for his own. He desires a more beautiful form, since he believes it is the lack of Beauty that has kept him from loving and being loved:

I would have looked
 On Beauty in that sex which is the type
 Of all we know or dream of beautiful,
 Beyond the world they brighten, with a sigh –
 Not of love, but despair; nor sought to win,
 Though to a heart all love, what could not love me
 In turn, because of this vile crooked clog,
 Which makes me lonely (1.1 334-41).

Arnold, described in an archetypal Christic image as “a heart all love,” has finally found a form of Beauty which will permit him to win the love that he believes types of this Beauty to withhold from him. He is betrayed into the belief that Beauty will then recognize itself in him and that he will finally be narcissistically complete: “Arnold (*in his new form*): I love, and shall be beloved!” (420). Arnold dubiously believes he is seeing clearly by desiring in this way. “You have opened brighter prospects to my eyes, / And sweeter to my heart” (357-8).

Arnold’s blindness to the narcissistic nature of his desire for recognition is paralleled by his idealization of Catholic Rome: “I see the giant / Abode of the true God” (1.2. 37-8). This sentiment is repeated when he exempts Papal Rome from the fratricidal violence of Romulus and Cain: “But what have they done, their far / Remote descendents, who have lived in peace, / The peace of Heaven, and in her sunshine of Piety” (1.2 90-93). Arnold mistakes a bellicose *Pax Romana* for a transcendental peace “which

passeth understanding,” to recite St. Paul (*Philippians* 4:7). His Catholicism lacks a sense of fallenness, since he “has,” as Peter Cochran dryly notes, “a very innocent conception of the Papacy” (30). He curses Lutherans and Catholics battling each other for the privilege of raping Olympia in a desecrated St. Peter’s as “accursed jackals” while failing to see that he is also no more than a scavenger (2.3. 73). Olympia forces him to recognize his fallenness when she besmirches him with the “holy gore” of his sacrilegious “mates” and refuses to fulfill her traditional role as his spoil of war: “And now thou wouldst preserve me, / To be—but that shall never be [...] I see thee purple with the blood of Rome; / Take mine, ’tis all thou e’er shall have of me” (116, 122, 117-118, 124-5). She is like Olympia in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine II* in that she would rather kill herself than be a war-bride (4.2. 9-80).

She fails to commit suicide, yet her “lifeless” form only increases her desirability in Arnold’s eyes. She had momentarily severed him from his idealization of the Church and made him desire her as someone who saw him for what he truly was—a fallen being—and not for what he wanted to be—a type of narcissistic Beauty. This double fall out of ideal and mirror images ceases, however, when her speechlessness permits her to be fetishized as the essence that all types of Beauty allegedly refer to. Olympia becomes his narcissistic mirror: “How pale! how beautiful! how lifeless! / Alive or dead, thou Essence of Beauty, / I love but thee,” by which he means, of course, I love me or I love he and he is me (2.3. 142-4). To love in this fashion is, as the Stranger comments, to mimic a necrophiliac Achilles copulating with the Amazon Queen he loved and killed: “Even so Achilles loved Penthesilea” (144). Yet to marry Polyxena, one of the many women seized during the Greek Sack of Troy, is to reiterate the militaristic violation of desire alliterated by the phrase “War and Woman”. This option is also deadly, since Polyxena (alluded to as “the sweet downcast virgin, whose young hand / Trembled in his [Achilles’s] who slew her brother [Troilus]”) coaxed the secret of Achilles’s heel from him, leaving the war hero vulnerable to “Paris” fatal “arrow” (1.1. 282).

The stranger is a fierce psychoanalyst, for he flawlessly dissects the doomed corpus of Arnold’s desire as follows:

No! No! you would be *loved* – what you call loved –
Self-loved – loved for *yourself* – for neither health,
 Nor wealth, nor youth, nor power, nor rank, nor beauty –
 For these you may be stripped of – but *beloved*
 As an abstraction – for – you know not what!
 These are the wishes of a moderate lover –
 And so you love.
 Arnold: Ah! could I be beloved,
 Would I ask wherefore?
 Stranger: Yes! and not believe
 The answer (*Fragments of the Third Part*; 61-9)

The quandary of Arnold’s desire is to be loved for what he is and not for the qualities he possesses, yet if he were loved for this or for nothing at all, he would demand to be loved for something, since he cannot remain in nothingness. He must be defined. This is what it means to be “a moderate lover”. To be an immoderate lover is to dwell in this no-place and to love without self-recognition, or as Augustine says: “What then do I love in loving my God?” (*Confessions* 10.7.11; 221). Byron reduces the divine to a beloved mortal, while remaining limited by the obstacle he has placed in the way of secular love: self-definition in one’s own eyes, which is, of course, the motivation of the military hero against his similarly motivated *confrères*. War wins.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

Joshua David Gonsalves is an Assistant Professor of English teaching nineteenth-century British Literature at the American University of Beirut. His focus is Romanticism across the disciplines of geopolitics, film & animal studies, literary criticism and cultural theory. He is at work on two books— *Keats, Close Reading and the Geopolitics of Cultural Production* and *Biopolitics, Anglophilia & the Un-Seeing of War in the Romantic Era*—and has recently published "Byron's Masque of the French Revolution: Sovereignty, Terror and the Geopolitics of *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*" in *Byron and the Politics of Freedom and Terror* (Palgrave 2011).