

<p><b>College of Education</b></p> <p><b>Department of English</b></p> <p><b>Third Stage (Morning)</b></p> <p><b>Lecture 14</b></p>		<p><b>Instructor: Dr.Mugdad</b></p> <p><b>Subject: Poetry</b></p>
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## Lord Byron

George Gordon Byron was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of [January](#) in 1788. He is well-known as Lord Byron or the 6<sup>th</sup> Baron Byron. He was an intelligent child of John (Mad Jack) Byron, a British army officer, while his mother, Catharine Gordon, was a ruined Scots Heiress. Catherine was the second wife of John Byron. He led a traumatic childhood partly because of the fierce temper and insensitivity of his mother and partly because of his clubbed right [foot](#). His father left him in 1791, while his mother left the world in 1811.

### Education

Lord Byron's mother took him to Aberdeenshire, England. There, he attended Aberdeen Grammar School and the school of Dr. William Glennie in Dulwich. He was treated with extra care at school because of his clubbed foot. However, due to the mistreatment of his mother coupled with her uneven temper, he lacked manners and discipline in his early years. Later, between 1801 and 1805, he attended Harrow School in [London](#), followed by Trinity College, Cambridge. It was during that time he started documenting his literary ideas on papers. Also, he got engaged in gambling, boxing, horse riding, and sensual escapades during that time. Moreover, during his stay at Cambridge, he developed a lifelong friendship with John Cam Hobhouse, a political figure and Francis Hodgson who later guided him in literary and other matters of his life.

### Married Life and Tragedy

Lord Byron is a prolific literary figure. Sadly, his life is marred by a series of love affairs, including Lady Oxford and Lady Caroline Lamb. He had had a secret relationship with his half-sister, Augusta, too, who turned him down by marrying Colonel George Leigh. To distract himself, he developed an illegitimate relationship

with Lady Frances Webster. He recorded his unsuccessful love affairs in his dark poems: “The Giaour”, “Lara”, “The Bride of Abydos” and “The Corsair.” However, in January 1815, he married Anne Isabella Milbanke and their daughter, Ada Lovelace, was born in the same year. Unfortunately, after a year, Isabella left him because of his suspected love affair with his half-sister. After this tragic end of their marriage, in April 1816, he left England for good.

## Death

Lord Byron, one of the great poets, died of illness on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April in 1824 in Messolonghi, Greece, where he had traveled to support Grecians in their fight for independence from Turks. His body was sent to England but the clergy refused to give him space at Westminster Abbey. Therefore, his remains were buried near Newstead in a family vault.

## Some Important Facts of His Life

1. At the age of seventeen, he secured a reputable seat in the House of Lords.
2. He led a troubled childhood because of his schizophrenic mother and clubbed foot.
3. He had an illegitimate affair with his half-sister,
4. His [famous](#) pieces include: “She Walks in [Beauty](#)”, “The Curse of Minerva” and “When We Two Parted.”
5. He played an active role in Greek’s war of independence.

## His Career

Lord Byron is considered one of the most controversial, yet leading figures of the Romantic Movement in Europe. He started writing at an early age but did not publish his pieces. However, in 1806, he started gathering his poems and published the first volume of his collection privately which got poor reception. Later, in 1807 he published “Hours of Idleness” followed by *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. These publications brought him into the limelight and he became known among the literary circle of that time.

Moreover, his friendship with John Cam Hobhouse further accelerated his literary career. Together they flew to Greece, Turkey, Malta, Albania, and Portugal. It was during that time he started working on his [epic poem](#), ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ which hit the shelves in 1811. Later in 1816, he traveled to Geneva and Switzerland with Shelley and Mary Godwin. Also, he completed the third [canto](#) of his poem,

“Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” during this time. Besides poetry, he edited the Carbonari newspaper, *The Liberal*.

## His Style

Lord Byron was a leading figure of the Romantic Movement. His specific ideas about life and nature benefitted the world of literature. Marked by Hudibrastic **verse**, **blank verse**, allusive **imagery**, heroic **couplets**, and complex structures, his diverse literary pieces won global acclaim. However, his early work, *Fugitive Pieces*, brought him to the center of criticism, but his later works made inroads into the literary world. He successfully used blank verse and **satire** in his pieces to explore the ideas of love and nature. Although he is known as a romantic poet, his poems, “The Prisoner of Chillon” and “**Darkness**” where attempts to discuss reality as it is without adding fictional elements. The recurring **themes** in most of his pieces are nature, the folly of love, **realism** in literature, liberty and the **power** of art.

## Lord Byron’s Famous Works

- **Best Poems:** Lord Byron is a great English poet, some his popular poems include: “**She Walks in Beauty**”, “Darkness”, “There Be None of Beauty’s Daughter”, “The Eve of Waterloo”, “When We Two Parted” and “And Thou Art Dead, As Young and Fair.”
- **Other Works:** Besides poetry, he tried his hands on the **tragedy** in verse form. Some of them include *The Two Foscari: A Historical Tragedy*, *Sardanapalus*, *Marino Faliero* and *The Prophecy of Dante*.

## Lord Byron’s Impact on Future Literature

Lord Byron’s unique literary ideas brought new **perspectives** for English literature. His distinctive writing approach and experimentation with epics and **lyrics** made him stand out even among the best poets. His **narrative** and lyrical works are regarded as masterpieces and had had significant impacts on generations. He successfully documented his ideas and feelings about historical tragedies and **romanticism** in his writings that even today, writers try to imitate his unique **style**, considering him a beacon for writing plays and poetry.

# Themes of Lord Byron

## Liberty

Several of Byron's poems, particularly those based on his travels, raise the problem of oppression throughout Europe and defend the necessity of human liberty. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* often digresses into long tirades against oppressors. These poetic reflections bear witness to Byron's experience with battlefields of old, such as Waterloo, and present struggles such as the Greek struggle against Ottoman/Turkish occupation. Perhaps his most powerful statement against oppression is found in "The Prisoner of Chillon," in which he traces the eventual mental oppression of a patriot who stood against the oppression of his people. To Byron, liberty is a right of all human beings, while the denial of liberty is one of mankind's greatest failings.

## The power of Nature

To Byron, Nature was a powerful complement to human emotion and civilization. Unlike Wordsworth, who idealized Nature and essentially deified it, Byron saw Nature more as a companion to humanity. Certainly, natural beauty was often preferable to human evil and the problems attendant upon civilization, but Byron also recognized Nature's dangerous and harsh elements. "The Prisoner of Chillon" connects Nature to freedom, while at the same time showing Nature's potentially deadly aspects in the harsh waves that seem to threaten to flood the dungeon. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* looks to Nature as a refuge from human conflict, but sees there, amid the avalanches and volcanoes, the seething fury of the natural world.

## The folly of "love"

Throughout his life, Byron sought the perfect object of his affections, which paradoxically made him a fickle and unstable lover to many women (and men). His poetry reflects this tension, although usually with the weight being on the side of capricious love. He idealizes women he knows in his opening stanzas to the first three cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, turning them into muses who inspire their respective narratives. However, the fact that each canto has a different woman as its muse points to infidelity on the part of Byron's creative genius. "She Walks in Beauty," perhaps his most famous poem dedicated to an individual woman, extols the virtues of a woman with whom Byron was never romantically involved. This theme recurs throughout Byron's poetry: the ideal love is that which is unattainable. Finally, in *Don Juan* Byron mocks the ideal of love even as his hapless protagonist falls into various women's beds.

## The value of classical culture

Byron was a staunch friend of the classical world who grieved what seemed to him the desecration of its cultural achievements and traditions. His journey through Greece showed him the dilapidated state of famous ruins, some of which had been

turned to more mundane uses in the recent past. He also vilified Lord Elgin of England as the chief despoiler of ancient treasures due to Lord Elgin's procurement of several marble statues from Greece to be displayed in England. Elgin became Byron's primary target and a symbol of cultural oppression, just as Napoleon and Turkey became symbols for political oppression.

#### Realism in literature

Although he was a Romantic poet, Byron saw much of his best work as descriptions of reality as it exists, not how it is imagined. Thus, the subjects of many of his poems come from history and personal experience. "The Prisoner of Chillon" was inspired by the real-life imprisonment of [Francois de Bonnivard](#), while *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is more biographical travelogue than adventure tale. Even the apocalyptic "Darkness" was written to reflect the mass hysteria that arose out of superstitious prophetic interpretations related to the natural disaster of a volcano's eruption.

#### **The enduring power of art**

Even as he bewailed the loss of classical culture through the despoiling of Greek ruins, Byron saw permanence in the art created by these cultures and by his own contemporaries. In the fourth canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron notes that even the greatest civilizations decline, yet their art and literature remain. He also contrasted the destructive power of oppressive nations (such as Napoleon's France) with the creative power of the artist to bring into being that which had not, until that point, existed. In keeping with this theme, Byron used his poetry to demonstrate the ephemeral nature of human civilization while creating works of art that would survive long after any empire of his own day.

#### A day of reckoning

While Byron was by no means the prophet of apocalypse that his fellow Romantic poet William Blake was, Byron's poetry nonetheless returns time and again to a "day of reckoning." The most obvious example of this theme is "Darkness," a vision of a future earth nearly devoid of life and populated by creatures no longer human. More subtly, Byron insisted that the leaders of oppressive civilizations and the men who would destroy the works of the past would face their own days of judgment. This day would be hastened by Byron, who cast aspersions upon their characters in his writings, such as he did with Lord Elgin and Napoleon.

#### **On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year by Lord Byron/Critical Analysis**

'*On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year*' by Lord Byron is a ten [stanza](#) poem that is divided into sets of four lines, or [quatrains](#). The lines follow a

consistent [rhyme scheme](#). It conforms to the pattern of abab cdcd, and so on, alternating end sounds as the poet saw fit.

In regards to the metrical pattern, the lines are also very well structured. The first three of each stanza are written in iambic [tetrameter](#). This means that the lines are made up of four sets of two beats. The final line is in [iambic dimeter](#), in which each line only has two sets of two beats. In both cases, the first beat is unstressed and the second is stressed. The most important images of this text are those which refer to themes of glory and heroism. The last five stanzas in particular are filled with references to “manhood,” a “soldier’s grave,” dying an “honourable death” and the elements of the battle. Byron uses these images to depict a change in his demeanour and a desire to end his life as a man worthy of having lived at all. Before beginning this piece a reader should take note of the subtitle at the beginning of the text. It notes that the poem was written on Byron’s birthday, the 22nd of January in Missolonghi, Greece. This also makes it clear that the [speaker](#) of the text is in fact Byron himself, who is writing in a [tone](#) that is sometimes solemn, sometimes inspired, about his future.

### **Summary of *On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year***

‘*On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year*’ by [Lord Byron](#) describes the poet’s own opinion of the youthful, passionate life he has lived.

The poem begins with the speaker stating that he is no longer loved. This lack in his life makes him feel as if he is now unable to feel love himself. His main pleasure has been taken away from him, due to his age, and now he is faced to contend with what he has left.

In the following lines, it becomes clear the speaker does not see himself as having much left at all. There are worms, fungi, and grief, that’s all. He compares himself to a dying tree, which has lost its ability to produce fruit or flowers. Now, in this depressed state, the love he used to nourish in his breast (the fire) is consuming him. It is more like a funeral pyre than a source from which others can take.

The second half of the poem is different. The final five lines are more uplifting. They signal a change in the speaker’s [mindset](#). He decides he’s not going to complain about his loss any longer. He’s going to take a hard look at himself and address how

“Unworthy” he’s been up until this point. The speaker regrets his youth and knows the only thing he can do to repent for how he’s lived is find a way to gloriously end his life, like a soldier. A great deal of “heroic” battlefield [imagery](#) is followed by the speaker asking his soul to find a grave for his body. This is where he’s going to come to a final “Rest.”

#### Stanza One

‘T is time this heart should be unmoved,

Since others it hath ceased to move:

Yet, though I cannot be beloved,

Still let me love!

In the first stanza of *‘On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year’* the speaker begins by stating that it’s time for his “heart” to be “unmoved.” He’s come to a time in his life, his thirty-sixth birthday, when he no longer inspires love in others. This failure makes him feel as though he is unworthy of experiencing love himself. This does not stop him from wanting true love though. It is impossible to ignore the historical details of Byron’s life when considering these lines. He was notorious for his ever changing relationships and the ease with which he would fall in and out of love with women. The idea of willing to take away that freedom from himself would’ve been hard to accept. It is also interesting to note the self-conscious place from which these lines emerge. Due to his age, he feels that he’s no longer the same person he was in his youth. This image of Byron is quite different from the generalized, lustful image seen through the majority of his poems.

#### Stanza Two

My days are in the yellow leaf;

The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;

The worm, the canker, and the grief

Are mine alone!

In the next quatrain, Byron goes on to refer to his days as “in the yellow leaf.” He feels as if his vibrancy is fading, just like an autumn leaf. The seasons of youth are

ending and the progression of age is represented through the loss of “flowers and fruits,” as if he were a tree that no longer produces. This line also comes from a well-known section of [Act 5](#) in [Shakespeare’s \*Macbeth\*](#). In this [verse](#), Macbeth speaks on the change in his way of life and the loss of love, honour, and friendship.

Byron continues on to say that the only things he has left to him are those that come with decay and age. His company is made up of worms and grief, as well as “the canker,” a reference to a disease of fruit trees.

### Stanza Three

The fire that on my bosom preys

Is lone as some Volcanic isle;

No torch is kindled at its blaze—

A funeral pile.

The third stanza is dedicated to making sure the reader knows how alone he is. In his chest, there is still the “fire” though. This was the passion that previously filled his relationships. It’s still there, but now it is as “lone as some Volcanic isle.” It is nowhere for it to go and no torches for it to kindle. Instead, it burns within him, more like a “funeral pile” than the force driving his passion.

### Stanza Four

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,

The exalted portion of the pain

And power of love, I cannot share,



But wear the chain.

This stanza, especially the first lines are notable for the way Byron has listed them one after another without conjunction. This is known as an asyndetic list. The technique is common in Byron's poetry, as well as with many other writers. It gives the text an added emphasis as if all of the listed items or emotions are building up upon one another with an end in sight.

He is explaining the complexities of love in this stanza. There are equal parts pain and pleasure. Love brings with it jealousy, hope, and fear. These were things he relished, but now "cannot share." They hang around his neck like a chain, weighing him down. His passion has become more of a burden than a joy.

#### Stanza Five

But 't is not thus—and 't is not here—

Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor now

Where Glory decks the [hero](#)'s bier,

Or binds his brow.

The fifth stanza of *'On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year'* takes a turn and leads the reader into the second half of the poem. He seems to come to the decision that he isn't going to mope around and feel sorry for himself. It is not "here" that these "thoughts should shake" his soul.

Rather than become a sacrifice to his useless love, he is going to fight on. It isn't time for him to be lifted onto the "hero's bier" or the platform on which a coffin is placed.

## Stanza Six

The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,  
Glory and Greece, around me see!  
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,  
Was not more free.

The sixth stanza continues the militaristic imagery. Here he lists out some of the elements of battle that make up his own mental image of the task at hand. There are swords, banners, the field, and all the glory one could want. He also speaks of Greece as a location for this [metaphorical](#) battle for the recovery of his purpose. Greece was a favourite amongst the Romantic poets and featured prominently in the works of Coleridge and Wordsworth.

It is through this metaphorical battle that the speaker hopes to free himself. He would like to be like the Spartans, who he sees as being as free as is possible.

## Stanza Seven

Awake! (not Greece—she is awake!)  
Awake, my spirit! Think through whom  
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,  
And then strike home!

This stanza begins with a single exclamatory word. It is [repeated](#) in the second line, a technique known as [anaphora](#). It draws additional attention to the word, “Awake,” in this case, and what it means for the speaker. Byron begins the lines by asking that someone, “not Greece,” wake up. It is to his soul that he’s speaking. It is time for it to rise up out of its stupor, remember its “life-blood” or passionate past, and “strike home!”

## Stanza Eight

Tread those reviving passions down,

Unworthy manhood!—unto thee

Indifferent should the smile or frown

Of Beauty be.

This line is curious as it seems to degrade the speaker's past decisions. He asks his soul to repress any "reviving passions." They should be kept down and away from his mind and heart. This makes it seem as if he regrets the way he's lived his life up until this point. Perhaps that is because it has led him to this desperate place.

He feels like he has lived an "Unworthy" life. The speaker continues to address his own soul. This time he tells it that it should be strong enough to resist the "smile or frown / Of Beauty." The capitalization of Beauty, just like "Glory" and "Love" before it, give the force an additional agency in the world. It is depicted as an autonomous actor influencing his life.

## Stanza Nine

If thou regret'st thy youth, why live?

The land of honourable death

Is here:—up to the Field, and give

Away thy breath!

In the second to last stanza, the speaker asks himself what it means to regret one's youth. These lines are also quite dramatic and allude to death as the only option for someone who has lived unworthily.

The only thing someone like the speaker can do is to fight and attempt to regain some glory for himself. He directs his soul, and anyone reading who might feel the same, to go “up to the Field, and give / Away thy breath!”

#### Stanza Ten

Seek out—less often sought than found—

A soldier’s grave, for thee the best;

Then look around, and choose thy ground,

And take thy Rest.

In the final four lines, the speaker returns to the solemn tone with which he began the poem. Now that he has decided death is the only option available to him he asks himself to seek out “A soldier’s grave.” Once there, he needs to look around and “choose” his own “ground” to be buried in. This is his destiny, to finally find “Rest” and repent for the way he’s lived up until now. Byron continues on to say that the only things he has left to him are those that come with decay and age. His company is made up of worms and grief, as well as “the canker,” a reference to a disease of fruit trees.

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