

From Public Hero to Poet-Hero: Heroism in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

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Abstract—The Romantic era witnessed a fundamental reconception of heroism in English literature: A transformation of the traditional civic, action-oriented hero of the classical and neoclassical traditions into a new model, based on inner experience, self-consciousness, and imaginative transformation. This study examines that shift through two seminal long poems of the era, William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805/1850) and Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–1818), arguing that each poet constructs what may be termed a heroism of resistance and witness, in Byron's case, and a heroism of formation and integration, in Wordsworth's. Based on the theoretical framework of the Romantic inward turn developed by Northrop Frye (Frye, 1963), the paper engages in a close reading of some passages in both poems. It places them in a wider comparative framework that incorporates structural similarities with the Sufi mystical tradition. Byron and Wordsworth together explore the entire spectrum of what Romantic heroism might entail: Byron's hero always leaves a world that is deprived of inherited meaning; Wordsworth's hero is slowly formed by memory, nature, and imaginative perception. Both movements are a redefinition of the heroic subject that is among the most significant literary legacies of English Romanticism.

Keywords— Anagogic criticism, Byron, Heroism, Romanticism, Wordsworth.

I. INTRODUCTION

The main thesis of the present paper is that both Wordsworth and Byron created a new form of heroism, a form in which the poet himself is the heroic figure, and where the locus of heroism is the inner life of the personal consciousness. The reinvention was not simply a style but an answer to a more profound cultural crisis: the collapse in the post-Newtonian world of the cosmological and political systems that had until this point sustained the significance of the classical hero. When the metaphors of transcendence that have been inherited become incoherent, as Frye (1963) shows, the heroic journey cannot be developed as an external movement toward a predetermined spiritual or civic goal. In response to this, Romantic literature internalizes the pilgrimage, shifting struggle, exile, and transformation into the personal consciousness (Lochot, 2018). It is in this theory that Wordsworth and Byron are read in this present study.

The difference between Romantic heroism and its classical predecessors is educative. Where Virgil begins *The Aeneid* with the proclamation of weapons and warlike intent, and Homer, in the historical framework of his heroes, bases his

on the institutions of honor, duty, and communal reputation, the Romantic poets discovered the traditional epic actively antagonistic to their own historical time (Maxwell, 1971). The tradition faced by Romantic poets, as Bloom (1997) contends, at the very time when it was no longer possible to find a serious poetic subject in the heroic lives of public figures, warriors, monarchs, and founders, was the tradition that had long glorified the heroic lives of such persons. Instead of forsaking heroic ambition, they turned it about: they made themselves their own heroes, and the development or anguish of the personal poetic consciousness became the main action of the poem (Callaghan, 2021).

The best example of this romantic reorientation of the epic is *The Prelude*, by Wordsworth, in unbroken blank verse in 14 books, which has as its apparent subject the molding of the mind of a poet. Wordsworth, in contrast to classical poets like Virgil, who is aware at the first line of what heroic deed he/she is about to relate, finds himself in a state of creative searching. As Hartman (2015, p. 208) observes, Wordsworth does not arrive at the start of his autobiographical account until over 270 lines into the poem, having spent that opening

movement in a searching mission to find a subject that would satisfy his aspirations. The hesitation of the poem is a formal utterance in itself: the heroic theme of *The Prelude* is not presented beforehand but rather found during the process of writing.

The Childe's Harold of Byron makes another, but a complementary reinvention in his *Pilgrimage*. Written in nine-line Spenserian stanzas using archaic language that simultaneously invokes and subverts the chivalric tradition, the poem presents its hero neither as a martial hero nor as a god-invoking hero but as a disillusioned and weary existentialist. This character, as Thorslev (1962) suggests, is a very Romantic kind of character – the Gloomy Egoist – the heroism of whom is not action but the richness and genuineness of inner torment. The poem gradually erases the line between the fictional Harold and Byron himself. It establishes what Csengei (2018) refers to as an autobiographical depth wherein the conquest of external lands is replaced by the inner perseverance of the self.

These parallels of form between this Romantic inward turn and the Sufi mystical tradition, especially the stages of the stations of *talab* (awakening through longing) and *suluk* (the journey of inner formation), provide a resonant comparative framework, shedding light on the universal aspects of the Romantic heroic journey (Hujwiri, 1911). The comparison does not insist on the historical influence, but rather a structural coincidence, which can be examined in detail in future research dedicated to the meeting point of the two traditions. Oueijan (2023, p. 17) states that Sufi concepts and images seem to be present in all British Romanticism, implying that the Romantic inward turn is a part of a larger human trend of quest, breakage, and change that cuts across cultural and historical divides. The current essay sets the Romantic aspect of that identification, especially how both Wordsworth and Byron negotiate the connection between the agonized individual and the world it has rejected.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical framework of the present paper relies heavily on the works of Northrop Frye, who wrote the highly informative essay *The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism* (1963), which provides a very strong framework to comprehend the essential ways in which the concept of heroism was re-evaluated in the Romantic era. Frye argues that Romanticism consists not of an alteration of taste or belief in the literary or the philosophical world, but of an essential re-organization of the imaginative space through which reality is conceived. The pre-Romantic literary tradition has framed meaning in a vertical manner with heaven above, hell below, and the human world in the middle of a divinely approved order. The hero in this cosmological arrangement had to go on a teleological voyage that is oriented to an upward direction, moral closure, and return to a pre-established order.

The symbolic coordinates of the past, which had been the rule of heroic movement, were, however, undermined by the

post-Newtonian collapse of this vertical cosmology. When the metaphors of transcendence inherited by us no longer make sense, as Frye (1963) shows, the heroic journey can no longer manifest itself as an external development toward a predetermined spiritual goal. Rather, struggle, exile, and transformation are internalized in the consciousness of the individual in Romantic literature. The hero ceases to be characterized by conformity to a higher cosmic order but by the ability to resist abstraction and make an inner quest toward self-understanding.

Of great importance to this paper, Frye singles out what he terms a *drunken boat* – the feeling that the Romantic hero is driven along by being a part of a greater creative force rather than a set of moral goals. This assists in understanding why long Romantic poems such as *The Prelude* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are typically open and unfinished in their heroic wanderings, which are resistant to termination and unfold as a process of becoming. The account of the Romantic internalization of the epic by Abrams (1971) adds to the framework offered by Frye in that it follows the manner in which Wordsworth specifically transfers the claim to cultural centrality by the public sphere to the private, suggesting that the development of an individual consciousness is as important a topic of heroic poetry as the establishment of civilizations or the consequences of war. Taken together, these frameworks constitute the analytical foundation of what follows.

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is an analytical comparative study that uses the theoretical framework of Frye (1963) as its main critical tool and close readings of selected passages in both poems as its main approach to textual analysis. The excerpts are selected according to their applicability to the overall theme of the paper, the inward journey of the poet-hero through crisis, exile, and self-discovery. The comparative dimension is based on Frye's notion of anagogic criticism, as discussed in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), which holds that the symbolism of literature is based on a level of meaning that extends beyond the cultural and historical context of particular civilisations – what Frye (1957, p. 119) refers to as the imitation of the total dream of man. It is the propensity to oracle which renders the anagogic criticism of a work especially suitable to a work that passes through two literary traditions without confusing them.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: TWO EXPRESSIONS OF THE ROMANTIC HEROIC JOURNEY

The paper organizes its analysis around a distinction that emerges from the close readings themselves: Byron's heroism of resistance and witness, and Wordsworth's heroism of formation and integration. These two formulations map onto two foundational stations of the Sufi mystical path (Nicholson, 1914) that could be explored comparatively in future research: *Talab*, the awakening born of longing

and departure from the known, and Suluk, the sustained inner journey of progressive self-formation. According to Schimmel (1975), the Sufi journey is not just a devotional process but a methodological inner journey where the seeker experiences a radical reformation of selfhood in a series of experiences.

The first movement is represented by Harold by Byron: He does not have a specific place to go, but rather an escape out of a world that no longer can give him any meaning, and he is propelled by an unnamed and unresolved longing (West and Thorslev, 1963). The poet-hero of Wordsworth is the incarnation of the second: his hero is not a dramatic exile but a long, gradual procession by memory, nature, and experience. Combined with these two manifestations of the inward heroic turn, these imply that what Romanticism had redefined as heroism is simply one part of a larger human narrative logic – one in which the hero is what he experiences in the world, rather than what he conquers.

V. THEMATIC AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

A. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: The Hero as Exile and Witness*

The metamorphosis of heroism that is characteristic of English Romanticism is instantly readable once the works of Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–1818), are juxtaposed with the literary traditions that preceded it. In the classical epic, heroism could not be separated in terms of its visibility to society and its role there. Achilles gains his hero status by demonstrating martial superiority; Aeneas by his predestined role to establish Rome by God; Satan in Milton gets his way by his rebellious greatness in a cosmic political system. In both instances, the hero is created by his relation to an external world, a world of war, empire, divine command, or political power, and his heroism is judged by the effect he has on the world. This model is shattered in the very first stanzas of the poem by Byron in *Childe Harold*. The main character is not defined by his success or status in society, but by his fatigue and disappointment:

“Whilome in Albion’s isle there dwelt a youth,
Who ne in virtue’s ways did take delight;
But spent his days in riot most uncouth,
And vex’d with mirth the drowsy ear of Night.”
(Byron, 1936, Canto I, Stanza II, lines 10–13)

Even the conscious archaism of diction – *whilome, ne, uncouth* – betokens the consciousness of self-consciousness with which Byron abandons the modern realist novel, as well as the classical epic. Instead of presenting a hero with an armorial bearing, or a godlike incantation, Byron begins with a character who is characterized solely by negation: Harold has not delighted in virtue, has not sought social or heroic fame, and has not turned his eyes on any familiar social or moral object. This character is, as Thorslev (1962) would contend, of a very specific Romantic kind – the Gloomy Egoist – whose heroism does not consist in action but sensibility, not in accomplishment but in the richness and reality of his inner anguish. Instead of introducing a hero by

stating what he put on his armour, or by a prayer to the gods, Byron begins with a figure who is not, in any way, a delight in virtuousness, nor is he a seeker of external glory, nor has he set his sights on any social or moral object which could be recognized. This character, according to Thorslev (1962), is a very Romantic character – the Gloomy Egoist – whose heroism is not action but is in the truth and sincerity of his inner agony, not accomplishment but the richness and reality of that agony.

This introspective movement of the heroic self is further intensified when Byron defines the reason why Harold has to go away. In contrast to Odysseus, who is forced to go home by his loyalty and love, or Aeneas, who is pushed by the will of the Gods, Harold’s departure is because the social world is no longer anything to him. Byron describes this state of fundamental interior isolation in Canto I, Stanza VIII:

“Yet oft-times in his maddest mirthful mood
Strange pangs would flash along Childe Harold’s brow,
As if the memory of some deadly feud
Or disappointed passion lurk’d below:
But this none knew, nor haply cared to know;
For his was not that open, artless soul
That feels relief by bidding sorrow flow,
Nor sought he friend to counsel or condole,
Whate’er this grief mote be, which he could not control.”
(Byron, 1936, Canto I, Stanza VIII, lines 64–72)

The radical privacy of the suffering of Harold is the most important aspect here. The feelings of the hero in the classical epic, including the sorrow of Achilles when he lost Patroclus, the lamentation of Aeneas when he abandoned Dido, are communal and socially understandable, and are observed and confirmed by the community surrounding the character. The sorrow that Harold feels, on the contrary, is absolutely hidden and closed inside the *self*. The social world is unable to access his inner life, and he does not even bother to express it. This state of radical interiority is not sold as a form of weakness, but rather as the distinguishing feature of a new form of heroic consciousness – one that is not well served in the popular languages of valor, duty, or the sense of belonging to a community (Gotthardt, 2023). The disintegration of inherited cosmological hierarchies in the post-Newtonian world, as Frye (1963) finds, brings about this condition precisely: A hero whose inner world would no longer be projected onto the extrinsic frameworks of meaning offered by the classical tradition.

The process of recombining heroism by Byron is even further emphasized in the manner in which Harold interacts with the historical terrains he explores. The interaction of the hero with the outside world in the traditional epic is dynamic and productive – he conquers, founds, defeats, or redeems. Harold, on the contrary, is a spectator as opposed to a participant in the world. This is possibly better illustrated in Canto III when Byron speculates on the consequences of the Battle of Waterloo:

“Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire’s dust!
An Earthquake’s spoil is sepulchred below!
.How that red rain hath made the harvest grow!
And is this all the world has gained by thee,

Thou first and last of fields, king-making Victory?"
(Byron, 1936, Canto III, Stanza XVII, lines 145–153)

It is a poem that has executed a scathing satire on the classical heroic tradition. The battlefield is the very place where epic heroism is created and glorified, but is introduced and shown not as a place of glory but as a place of moral doubt and ironic revelation. The rhetorical question of whether this is all the world acquires by thee is an outright challenge to the basic premise of the classical epic: That military triumph is a significant and enduring kind of human accomplishment. It is not Waterloo that is exalted by Byron in his poet-figure, but rather that he pitifully laments the loss of the classical heroic ideal; and in lamenting its loss, he laments the whole school of heroism in the mass, which the battlefield symbolizes. In the view of McGann (1968), Byron's poetry can be described as a radical skepticism of all ideological systems, and the Waterloo stanzas can be said to represent this scepticism at its most acute political level. What is heroic about Harold is his ability to see, unflinching, and to withstand the temptation of popular applause.

This heroic witness culminates in ultimate philosophic focus in Canto III, Stanza XLV, when Byron reconfigures the image of space as a metaphor of ascension, which has often been the symbol of heroism and spiritual triumph, to be that of isolation, exposure, and constant struggle:

"He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below."

(Byron, 1936, Canto III, Stanza XLV, lines 397–405)

This is what happens as Frye (1963) claims: As the upward route ceases to bring one to a divinely approved order, the heights have ceased to promise salvation and now are the place of solitude. The mountaintop is not where it is triumphant, but where it is exposed. The hero of Byron has what may be termed as a negative heroism; he is able to withstand the summit because he is unwilling to stoop down to the falsehoods of the world below, which is comfortable. His heroism is not what he will achieve but what he will not give up: His clarity, his self-sufficiency, and his readiness to live in the state of uncertainty without any resolution.

It is in the heroism of endurance through irony and refusal that perhaps the statement of the Byronic heroic self explicitly appears in the poem, as Byron, by this time having largely broken down the fictional distinction between himself and Harold, provides the poem with its most explicit expression of the Byronic heroic self-understanding:

"I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flatter'd its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee —
.I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts."

(Byron, 1936, Canto III, Stanza CXIII, lines 1049–1056)

"Among them, yet not of them, the crucial situation of the Byronic hero and his status in relation to the tradition of communal heroism to which he inherits and to which he rejects belonging is summed up in this. This is the very

thing that the Romantic hero Csengei (2018) suggests: It is the declaration of an interiority that is sovereign and irreducible to an extent that it cannot be confined or validated by an outer community and tradition. The shroud of thoughts that places Harold out of the crowd is not a shroud of ignorance or of weakness; it is the material of his heroic existence, it is an awareness so balanced and earnestly busy that it must be out of the level of the commonplace social existence.

Such heroic witness is most sublime when, in Canto IV, Stanza CLXXIX, the speaker addresses the ocean:

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore..."

(Byron, 1936, Canto IV, Stanza CLXXIX, lines 1605–1613)

This writing accomplishes a radical change in the heroic relationship between the world and the human being. However, it is the sea, infinite, unconcerned, and immortal, which has a certain power, and human conquest and imperial ambition are rendered insignificant. The heroic in this scene lies not in the strength of Harold but in his ability to see the truth as it is, not in his readiness to see it as it is but in the discovery in that readiness of a sort of liberty that the classical hero, subjected to the pressures of glory and of posterity, could never achieve. It is such a gesture of facing the sheer enormity without falling back into comfort that makes the Romantic hero stand out among all his classical predecessors, and even among his contemporaries in the Napoleonic period: it is a heroism of clear vision, not of conquest.

Overall, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* by Byron destroys the classic heroism pattern in three directions, which are interrelated. First, it shifts the heroic identity to a different level in which it is no longer a matter of public accomplishment but rather a matter of personal sensibility. Second, it changes the heroic journey into an aimless wandering, teleological movement toward a specific aim is substituted by restless and irreconcilable exile. Third, it reinvents heroic virtue as the ability to perceive clearly and endure much more than to win or to make the right decision. Collectively, these changes are the heroism of resistance and witness as Levin (2013) argues: A pattern where the hero is not so great as what he does to the world, but what the world does to him, and his complete unwillingness to turn his eyes away from what he beholds.

B. Wordsworth's The Prelude: The Hero as Mind in Formation

When the *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* by Byron is the most dramatically apparent break with the classical heroic convention, *The Prelude* (1805/1850) of Wordsworth is its philosophical reinvention of the old. Where Byron deconstructs the social heroic ideal with irony, exile, and denial, Wordsworth builds up heroism once again, but this time grounded in the humbler experience of the gradual, natural development of a human mind. The very subject of

the poem – the growth of a poet’s mind – would have been unthinkable as epic material in any earlier literary tradition. As Abrams (1971) argues, Wordsworth’s most fundamental contribution to the reinvention of heroism in English literature is this radical reorientation of the epic toward the private and the autobiographical: the proposition that the growth of an individual consciousness is as significant a subject for heroic poetry as the founding of civilizations or the outcomes of wars.

The poem announces this reorientation from its very opening lines in Book I:

“OH there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky...
now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.”

(Wordsworth, 1850, Book I, lines 1–9)

The difference between the classical epic beginning could scarcely be greater. Where Virgil opens *The Aeneid* with Arms and the man I sing, and (at a glance) sets the reader instantly in the world of action and heroism in arms, Wordsworth opens with a breeze touching my cheek. The scale is personal, sensory, and intimate. However, Wordsworth makes it a moment of true heroism: The flight out of the city, the freedom of the outland, the feeling of creative freedom that ensues, is given not as a trifle biography, but as the commencement of an important inner voyage. As Hartman (2015) observes, Wordsworth’s opening enacts the poem’s central argument: that the encounters between the human mind and the natural world constitute a form of experience as heroically significant as any battlefield or political arena. This intimacy of scale is itself a heroic statement – a deliberate rejection of the public grandeur that the epic tradition had always demanded of its opening gestures.

This elevation of ordinary natural experience to heroic significance is most powerfully demonstrated in the episodes that Wordsworth calls “spots of time” – formative moments in childhood and youth in which the mind is shaped by encounters with the natural world that exceed its capacity for rational comprehension. One of the most celebrated is the stolen boat episode in Book I:

“One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure...”

(Wordsworth, 1850, Book I, lines 357–368)

What follows this act of “stealth and troubled pleasure” is one of the most psychologically acute passages in English poetry. As Wordsworth rows further from the shore, a great peak appears to rise above the horizon, seeming to stride after him with deliberate and punitive intention, “with purpose of its own/And measured motion like a living thing” (Wordsworth, 1850, Book I, lines 384–385). He returns the boat in terror, and for days afterward is haunted by “huge and mighty forms, that do not live/Like living men” that

move through his dreams and waking consciousness alike (Wordsworth, 1850, Book I, lines 398–400). The classical epic presents the involvement of supernatural powers with the hero as external and literal: Gods interfere, monsters menace, oracles speak. In this case, the supernatural is purely internal – a shadowing of the conscience of the child onto the scenery, a point where the natural world is turned to the means through which the growing mind should face its own ethical planes. The ability to engage in a greater creative activity does not mean that the Romantic hero is to have his way with the world, and the stolen boat moment perhaps is the most graphic expression of this principle: The child is not mastering the landscape but being mastered by it, and it is this very receptiveness to experience of the outside that is his heroic potential.

The poet-hero that occurs during these encounters is further clarified in Book I, whereby Wordsworth ponders on the presence of nature as an active and intentional teacher of the growing self:

”Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion...
didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul.”
(Wordsworth, 1850, Book I, lines 401–407)

This apostrophe is doing an analogous task to the classical epic invocation of the Muse, but there is a vital difference. Where the classical poet appeals to some external divine power to sanction and instruct his song, Wordsworth appeals to a spirit which is both external and internal, a spirit that acts by the forms and images of the natural world to accumulate our human soul. The heroic journey does not originate externally but is created internally, as the growing consciousness interacts with the surrounding natural world that forms, influences, and shapes it. The collective possessiveness of our human soul is noteworthy: It is not just Wordsworth who is taken on the inward, heroic voyage, but a kind of map of all human minds that would not be closed to the shaping power of nature.

The poem’s most philosophically explicit articulation of this internalized heroism arrives in Book XII, where Wordsworth defines the concept of “spots of time”:

“There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence—depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought...
our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired.”
(Wordsworth, 1850, Book XII, lines 208–215)

The epic language woven into this text is subtle, yet clear. The functions of the spots of time are similar to the tests and sufferings of the classical hero: they challenge the self, mark it, and eventually make it stronger. Where the classical hero is made strong by physical hardness and military success, the poet-hero of Wordsworth is made strong by the ability to take in, store, and revert to the experiences of his youth – of perception and emotion.

This is the most original contribution Wordsworth makes to the literature of heroism, as Hartman (2015) puts it: the suggestion that the process of the mind in relation to its own past is a heroic act of perseverance as important as any other. The term *invisibly* is especially instructive: the mending and feeding that the dots of time are engaged in have everything to do with the interior life of the self, which is written in no chronicle and marked by no monument of the public. The heroic meaning in this case is entirely internal, and this is what Wordsworth is trying to portray. It is this emphasis on the invisible interior drama as the most important locale of human signification that is, as Bate (1970) has pointed out, the most decisive discontinuity between the Romantic and the classical heroic traditions.

This sustained process of formation reaches its dramatic and visually spectacular climax in Book XIV, where Wordsworth describes his ascent of Mount Snowdon by night and the extraordinary scene that greets him above the clouds:

“For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
The Moon hung naked in a firmament
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.”

(Wordsworth, 1850, Book XIV, lines 38–42)

The Snowdon episode is the vision of the poem, a climax, and its role in reinventing heroism is enormous. It becomes the mountain summit (which is the spatial metaphor of heroic and spiritual accomplishment), not with the help of martial prowess or divine intervention but with the silence and loneliness of walking in the night. It is not a divine revelation in the traditional sense that compensates this ascending but is a natural spectacle of such surpassing majesty, where the moonlight sea of mist is the symbol of the mind itself in its pure creative energy. This realization is something that Wordsworth ponders on in the following lines:

“There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power.”

(Wordsworth, 1850, Book XIV, lines 69–74)

This sums up the Romantic heroic ideal of Wordsworth. The hero at the summit is not a warrior, king, saint, but a mind that can feed on infinity, nourishing itself by the awareness of its own transcendent possibilities. This, as Abrams (1971) points out, is the final act of Romantic heroism: The revelation that the mind itself is the ultimate source of sublime experience, and that the power of imaginative perception of the poet is a kind of power and meaning that the external world can no longer provide on its own without the consciousness that perceives it. The phrase “a mind sustained/By recognitions of transcendent power” is particularly significant: The hero is sustained not by divine grace from without, as in the medieval tradition, nor by martial glory, as in the classical tradition, but by his own capacity for recognition – by the mind’s ability

to perceive and affirm its own sovereign relationship with the infinite. More recent scholarship has reinforced this reading: as Liu (2014) argues, the Snowdon vision represents Wordsworth’s most sustained attempt to ground the authority of poetic consciousness in something more durable than personal biography – a universal claim about the creative imagination as the source of moral and esthetic value.

Wordsworth, in this regard, has done more to reinvent heroism in English Romanticism than Byron in the enduring nature of its philosophical implications. In destroying the classical heroic model, Byron uses irony and rejection, which leaves his hero in an ambiguous state of unresolved exile and newly realized inadequacy. Wordsworth reinvents heroism on radically reoriented principles, suggesting the model where the inward voyage of creation, remembrance, and creative development not only constitutes a different form of heroism but its most profound and original actualization.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, it has been maintained that the Romantic era saw the reconception of heroism in English literature – a transformation of the social, active hero of the classical and neoclassical tradition into a different form of heroism, based on inward experience, consciousness, and self-transformation. By doing a comparative reading of the work of Byron: *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and Wordsworth: *The Prelude* and using the theoretical approach of Frye (1963), the analysis has revealed that this turn inward was not a renunciation of the heroic aim, but a complete reorientation of it.

Byron and Wordsworth are two very different yet complementary manifestations of the new Romantic heroic ideal. The heroism of resistance and witness, the long, ironic survival of Harold in a world that has lost its inherited significance, the heroism of formation and incorporation, Wordsworth slowly reconstructing his self-using memory, nature, and imagination, all chart the full range of what Romantic heroism can be. As the above discussion has indicated, both poets share the essential rejection of the classical model; now the hero is no longer the one who acts on the world and is remembered by it, but the one who is changed inside and whose change is also part of the poem itself, as its own monument.

The structural parallels with the Sufi stations of *talab* and *suluk* – introduced here as a comparative frame of reference rather than a claim of direct influence – suggest that this inward turn participates in a broader and universally recognizable human narrative of quest, rupture, and transformation. This parallel may be developed in full in future research, where both traditions will be examined together. What the present study establishes is the Romantic foundation of that alignment: A reinvention of heroism so thorough and so philosophically consequential that it remains one of English literature’s most enduring contributions to the understanding of the self.

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