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THE BYRONIC STANDARD

Ecology in Byron's Poetry

Daniel Kolade

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Title: *The Byronic Standard: Ecology in Byron's Poetry*

Author: Daniel Kolade

Supervisor: Margrét Gunnarsdóttir Champion

Abstract: Byron's work is unique amongst writers of the 18th and 19th century due to the human element and its interaction with nature. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the view of nature in Byron's poetry (specifically his sea poetry) and establish a Byronic Standard of ecopoesis offering counterbalance to the Wordsworthian Standard and the ecocritical binaries of dwelling-wandering and nature-culture. This will be done by redefining and extending the definitions of the binaries and how they relate to each other. Primarily, this paper will focus on the ways in which Byron's poetry redefines the binary nature-culture and how his ecological consciousness is presented in his sea poetry. The essay will point at the cultural interaction, the *human element*, with nature and the relationship between the two. It will show how the sea connects all things and how nature offers a *constant* to culture's variations and inconsistencies. Furthermore, using these focal points this paper hopes to establish a Byronic Standard of ecopoesis.

Keywords: Lord Byron, Byronic Standard, Wordsworthian Standard, ecocriticism, ecological consciousness, human element, dwelling-wandering, nature-culture

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the view of nature in Byron's poetry and establish a "Byronic Standard" of ecopoesis that directly counterbalances the "Wordsworthian Standard" of ecopoesis.

Byron's work is unique amongst writers of the 18th and 19th century due to the addition of the human element and its interaction with nature. However, because of this, Byron's work has been avoided by most critics with an ecocritical interest, with few exceptions (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14); for instance, between 1949 and today there have been three major influential critics who have written about Byron's theory of nature, Ernest J. Lovell, Bernard Blackstone and J. Andrew Hubbell (Hubbell, "Byron's Nature" 21). These three are the only critics to make serious claim for Byron's nature philosophy (Hubbell, "Byron's Nature" 21). It then stands to reason that the others that take on Byron's work with regard to nature, do so superficially (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14). Byron is treated more as a social poet and not a nature one; this can be seen in work ranging from Karl Kroeber, Christine Kenyon-Jones, Jonathan Bate, Mark Lussier, Colin Carman and Timothy Morton. Their contributed papers and studies help form an overall picture of Byron's nature; however as mentioned above, Byron is considered more of a social poet than a nature poet (Hubbell, "Byron's Nature" 21). Thus, it seems that the study of Byron's nature poetry has been overlooked and seemingly discarded as it does not measure up to the "Wordsworthian Standard" of "nature" and "dwelling."

In addition, the Wordsworthian Standard functions as the crux of Romantic ecocritical study with the two underlying terms "nature" and "dwelling." Writers such as, James McKusick and Jonathan Bate depend on the two terms and use them extensively, as others in the same field, to establish a Wordsworthian Standard of ecopoesis (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14). This standard is used as a tool to judge other writers of the 18th and 19th century. However, the concept of "wandering" is left out and disregarded as simple "tourism" (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14).

The term "dwelling," is a concept adopted from Heidegger (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14). It means to embed oneself or insert oneself into the very texture of a place or one's environment. This in turn means that the *dweller* becomes open to the empirical base of the infrastructure, inner workings and the organic nature of the environment as a system (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14-15). "Dwelling" is essentially a way of being and a way

of knowing, in other words a practice and a theory. A physical place and one's identity are ultimately connected, establishing the sense of home. Identity, belonging, and the value of the place are all connected to the quality of the empirical or rigorous observation as well as the level of knowledge acquired by said place. Basically, the longer one spends in a given area, the more attentive one becomes to the environmental wisdom. Lastly, the concept of dwelling has become a part of a formula that stands as: dwelling, environmental sensitivity, and ethical care of the given location or place.

This idea of dwelling is in direct opposition to wandering, or in other words, the "touristic" mindset that distances itself from the environment and its inhabitants (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14). The wandering tourist is fundamentally he who views the land as a means to an end or simply as a piece of land meant to be enjoyed aesthetically. The tourist pays little attention to dedicate study to the delicate evolutionary dynamic that brings the place and its inhabitants together. For that reason the tourist fails to know the place, value its meaning or devote some care to it. Additionally, this means the tourist is incapable of engaging with the foundational mechanics of the environmental observation, thinking and belonging; he or she cannot be said to be environmentally conscious (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14).

The dwelling-wandering binary strengthens two other binaries that play a role in *green writing* (McKusick): nature-culture and ecocentric-anthropocentric. Theoretically, culture, epitomized by the city, stands as the failures of modernism, anthropocentrism, and a techno-rational domination over nature. Hubbell ("A Question of Nature" 14-15) also underlines that Wordsworth defines this binary in the *Prelude*: the city is where humans are most distant from nature, most mobile and most anthropocentric. Thus, they are least capable of achieving ecological insight, a sense of home, and give ethical care to one's place or environment. Hubbell's study continues to state that similar ideas have been claimed by Jonathan Bate who said that Thomas Hardy and Jane Austen are environmentally conscious writers because both critiqued "a lack of rootedness and metropolitan brashness [that] are associated with modernity and corruption" (qtd in Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 14).

Hubbell ("A Question of Nature" 14) suggests that in Romanticism "nature" refers to the wild, unspoiled backcountry, the antithesis of the modern anthropocentric city. The idea is that out in the rural country a writer can strip himself off the infectious layers of culture and then proceed to dwell, in turn achieving environmental consciousness. This idea is similarly brought up in James McKusick's *Green Writing*. McKusick makes use of nature-dwelling binaries to exalt Wordsworth and Coleridge's type of *ecology*.

The two poets are more than simple observers of scenic beauty but are dwellers of the Lake District, observing the grand scheme of things. The poetry that was composed by them in that region takes on a persona of a speaker whose voice has harmonized with the local and personal history of the place and its inhabitants. Such a point of view may legitimately be dubbed an ecological perspective of the natural world. Thus, the idea of Earth or a dwelling-place as a holistic household for all living things is further developed by McKusick, who states “A true ecological writer must be ‘rooted’ in the landscape, instinctively attuned to the changes of the Earth and its inhabitants” (Hubbell, “A Question of Nature” 15).

In essence, “wandering” is treated as a concept of being fleeting and therefore experiencing a more *shallow* (Hubbell, “A Question of Nature” 14) understanding of the environment and its inhabitants. With the binaries nature-culture and dwelling-wandering, under the umbrella of the Wordsworthian Standard, wandering and culture are supposedly the weaker of the two and therefore left out.

This presents an issue that is very much alive and very current to the study of ecocriticism and Romanticism. Andrew J. Hubbell’s recent study, *A Question of Nature: Byron and Wordsworth*, has revitalized the debate about depending solely on the terms “nature” and “dwelling” while directly excluding “wandering” (Hubbell, “A Question of Nature” 14). This in turn affects the view of 18th and 19th century writers who do not fit the mold, such as Byron. These ideas that inform Romantic ecocriticism and form the “Wordsworthian Standard” have demonstrated a lack of inclusivity and connection between the two Romantic binaries of nature and culture.

Although similar to Hubbell’s paper, this essay attempts to take it one step further to address underlying problematic issues of nature-culture as well as dwelling and wandering in a critical manner, in order to establish a Byronic Standard of ecopoesis. It will also feature three of Byron’s poems as source material: “The Sea” from *Childe Harold*, “The Shipwreck” from *Don Juan*, and “The Isles of Greece”. The reason for these selections is the influence of the “sea” as the main player of nature in each of them. Similarly, culture, people and societies have a rather large role in each of the poems as well. The dynamic relationship between culture and nature was the fundamental notion that informed the choice of source material. Additionally this paper will be split into three major parts.

False binaries and the human element, will be first of these, where the binaries of nature-culture and ecocentric-anthropocentric will be challenged in order to give way for a more inclusive term “environment”, rather than focusing solely on using one element to criticize another. The idea is to view the environment as a holistic ecosystem where all

players are accounted for, regardless of their role, in order to only bring out the part that they play in the grand scheme of things, in essence, ecological consciousness. In other words, ecological consciousness is the understanding of an ecosystem (an area) in a holistic fashion, displaying awareness of all the players involved and grasping the inner workings and infrastructure of said ecosystem. The human element will also be explored in this section as it belongs to the cultural side of the binary, nature-culture. The human element will serve as the basis for where the distinguishing element of Byron's poetry is brought to the forefront as well as the ecology that is presented because of this. Essentially, this chapter will serve as the foundation in establishing the Byronic Standard of ecopoiesis, while addressing the gaps of Romantic ecocriticism.

Wandering, will be the second section, where this theoretical and practical concept will be outlined, defined and compared to its counterpart, dwelling, in order to produce the background terminology and combat the fundamental reason for Byron's poetry to not be viewed as *green writing*.

The Byronic Standard will be the third and final chapter that will address Byron's standing as an ecopoet and the question of whether ecocriticism is wrong to exclude him. This will be taken up in direct relation to the Wordsworthian Standard mentioned above, demonstrating their similarities and differences in order to suggest where one *standard* fails and the other prevails; however, neither will receive any claim of being superior.

Finally, these chapters will include the primary focal points in order to offer some insight into the knowledge that this current school of Romantic ecocriticism may be lacking. The selected poems that will be examined as source material are copied into the appendix section.

Chapter 1: False Binaries & The Human Element

A definition such as the one outlined above clearly excludes writers like Byron from being credited as a *Green Writer* or an eco-poet.

The most obvious reason is Byron's commitment to being a fleeting urbanite, who chose to spend most of his life on one grand expedition after another, in turn avoiding to dwell in rural areas such as the Lake District. However, much like Wordsworth, Byron draws on the definitions of nature to articulate and express his ideas. Despite this, Byron demonstrates his ecological consciousness by deconstructing the false binary of nature-culture. Instead, he replaces the binary completely with the more inclusive term 'environment' (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 15). Hubbell suggests that Byron's rhetorical questions indicate the intimate relationship between nature and culture, in turn meaning that there is no "nature" art. This implies that any particular stance or point of view regarding nature or any entity for that matter, is taken from a human standpoint. Essentially, the view of "nature" is pre-constructed by the human gaze.

The nature-culture binary reflects a cultural point of view, where "nature" is culture's self critique, instead of one part of a whole (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 15). In other words, understanding the world as a holistic ecosystem directly translates to the understanding of both culture and nature as parts of the grand "environment." Hubbell ("A Question of Nature") continues to say that Byron views nature and culture as two sides of the same coin.

In addition, Byron's nature poetry, in general, is distinguished by the *human element*, the interaction between landscape and man, rural areas and urban ones, on a number of levels from the georgic to the mythical. His imagery of minerals, flowers, crystals and snowflakes, projects a strength/weakness figure of speech which extends into human relationships (Hubbell, "A Question of Nature" 15). In Byron's poetry love continues to stand as the ruling principle within a cyclical pattern of man emerging from, and returning to, his mother earth in a physical-spiritual relationship. This can also be seen in his sea poetry, in which delights of merging and dominating are included in the context of freedom (Blackstone 1974).

Byron's Sea poetry will be the focus in this section and the human element that it presents. More specifically, the human element in the narrative comes in the forms of human narrators, cultural elements or quite simply people partaking in the cultural dwelling of cities. This is the human element that this essay will be concerned with. To be clear, this human

element differentiates itself from anthropocentrism as it does not claim that the human being is at the centre of all things. But rather this human element aims to explore the images and scenes in Byron's poetry that point to the fact that humanity is simply a *part* of one big *whole*.

Ultimately, Byron's sea poetry ("the Sea" and "the Shipwreck") has a speaker witnessing the sea in some form or another. On the other hand, "The Isles of Greece," is focused on the *isles* of Greece obviously, with minor reference to the waters surrounding the islands. In the coming subsections of this chapter this present human element that was mentioned above will be dissected and examined in the selected poems.

"The Sea"

Nature and culture are intertwined concepts that can never be disbanded from one another as long as there is a human being gazing upon them. Furthermore, the major *natural* player that will inform the *natural* element, or nature in contrast to culture, will be the sea and its recurring image in the selected poems.

Firstly, the poem from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* "The Sea," is a poem of reverence, love and majesty towards the sea. It is a poem of a speaker coming to realise just how vast and overpowering the ocean is, especially in comparison to the land and the culture-touched earth. The sea remains the same as it has always been, free from human interference.

In "The Sea" (Line 4), Byron writes, "I love not man the less, but nature more," this line acts as both an observation of the nature-culture dynamic, but also as a *cultural* standpoint of this character, this human. This then marks a situation where, the *love* does not need to be exclusive to one or the other, nature-culture in this case, but rather both can be enjoyed, one can in turn be preferred over the other as can be seen above; however, the loves can not be unhinged from each other.

"The Sea," (Lines 12 -13) informs another connection of culture and nature, by the words, "Man marks the earth with ruin,—his control, /Stops with the shore;—upon the watery plain." This can be seen as the union of nature and culture, where *man* marks the earth (nature) but his control stops at the sea (another marker of nature). In essence, an ecosystem is built up by competition, conflict and other forms of engagement between players that inform an interaction and coexistence that form the entirety of the system. Continuing with the following lines, Byron uses rain as the medium of communication given to the sea:

And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields/ For earth's destruction thou dost all
despise,/ Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,/ And send'st him, shivering in thy playful
spray/ —Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Canto IV*, "The Sea" Lines 21-23

These lines further highlight culture's position in the earth's destruction and the sea's opinion over this matter. This again could be seen as a boundary separating nature and culture as well as an encompassing pen including both nature and culture, communicating in a single sphere.

In the following lines (25-35), the narrator continues to build this character the "Sea" using more subtle nuances, such as narrating the reactions made by the people in the poem (regarding the sea) rather than narrating the actions of the sea itself. This in turn points once again a finger at the concepts of nature and culture, where in this case culture is informing the character of nature. These lines offer a variety of reactions ranging from the response of cities, individual people and monarchs. Thereby, the human observer puts emphasis on the "Sea's" greatness by viewing it through the perspective of *culture* and through viewing nature through this scope of culture; this observation also informs the position of the observer, man, and the overall culture that he belongs to.

Furthermore, this binary, nature-culture, in itself is more of a system that interacts and intermingles rather than trying to be separated: quite simply, just how culture can define nature, in the sense of man commenting, fearing and revering the sea in contrast to man's ability to cultivate the earth, this stands as a system of reflection where one provides an image of the other, essentially a type of comparison. In lines 37-40 of "The Sea", the narrator asks a rhetorical question, that proves a point with its obvious unspoken answer, "Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee; Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?" A question like this does not just offer a definition for the sea's greatness or the narrator's reverence in the face of it, but rather it offers insight into the most central entity to culture: *societies*. The sea remains, fleeting, constant and overpowering in its realm instead of the thought that the earth provides boundaries for the sea limiting its domain.

The opposite can also be seen, where the shores offer protection from the sea's overpowering grasp. This in itself puts nature in a scenario where it is a constant power or force, while culture is but a toddler in comparison to its age and superiority. This in itself is not simply a method of undermining culture in respect to its counterpart but rather a method of showing the interaction between the two where one can not seek definition without the

other and vice versa. This is the sort of “environment” that is envisioned with the dissection of the false binary, nature-culture, where one part of the binary is not more important than the other, but instead, informs and communicates its counterpart in its own respect, thereby offering a more vivid definition and comparison. In essence, this is *ecological consciousness* where the domain of the two players in the ecosystem interact and define one another as prey and predator. This in itself offers further food for thought.

“The Isles of Greece”

Following the vein of thought above, “The Isles of Greece” offers significantly less in terms of nature while having almost an abundance of culture. The poem presents a myriad of aspects of culture, festivals, music, art, beauty, freedom, love and community. On the surface the poem seems to render its connection to nature by the focus of culture and its people. However, the method in which Byron presents said culture and nature complicates the simple thought above. “The Isles of Greece” in its entirety is presented as one big ecosystem of different players interacting with one another. This form of ecological understanding points to the fact that the method of receiving said consciousness is irrelevant. Furthermore, this presented ecology does not simply mean that this poem of Byron’s uses the same method present in Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey”, but rather it is a comment on the ecosystem viewed. Simply put, “Tintern Abbey” is a poem observing its ecology as a muse, something to ponder over; in the same way Byron has established “The Isles of Greece”, viewing the ecosystem as a whole, thereby demonstrating ecological consciousness.

The lack of nature in the poem suggests a failure in Byron’s observation of the “environment,” yet in the closing lines, a gem of nature is presented, the sea. Lines 91-92, offer a sort of melancholy and at the same time a sort of peace where Byron writes “Place me on Sunium’s marbled steep, /Where nothing, save the waves and I,”: this not only presents calmness in mind associated with the sea but also its constantness. Almost as if when everything is dead and gone the waves shall remain for the sea does not change or go extinct; it simply *is*. In the following lines (93-94), “May hear our mutual murmurs sweep/ There, swan-like, let me sing and die:” not only is the sea personified and given a voice, much like the speaker and in this respect the sea and the speaker are equals. This is further constructed with the use of the compound word *swan-like*. But for the time being the focus should be on

the initial word *swan*. The image of a peaceful swan, sailing across the sea comes to mind, transforming the narrator not only into a creature that connects so beautifully with the sea but also a creature that spends a good deal of time in the sea. Despite the narrator's seat on the "marbled steep," the narrator is swan-like. This image of the swan can be compared to the nature-culture binary, where the swan can be substituted for culture and the sea, nature. With this in mind, the image of a swan treading in a body of water defines the sea and the sea defines the swan. Additionally, the pair can not be dismantled into separate items or the image will be dismantled as well. Only with the swan at sea will that image remain; this in turn is the same way the dynamic between nature and culture flows together, providing a solid "environment" and ecosystem where culture defines nature and nature defines culture.

The image continues with the words, "let me sing and die:" with them, the melancholy of the previous line (91) resumes and this in itself, offers a cultural definition of nature, in this case the sea and consistency. The narrator looks up on the waves and speaks to it. The narrator is even *swan-like* but at the shores of the sea, the narrator shall sing and die, but the sea will not. Its song shall remain and its death shall never come. This consistency of life and death is uplifted by the dynamic of movement in culture and it also offers an image of immortality in nature. This cycle can be explained using the image of a child and a sandbox: a child will play in a sandbox and after it outgrows it, another shall come and take its place, playing in that very same sandbox, repeating the cycle of *death* and *immortality* present in nature and culture. Quite simply in this case the sandbox is nature or "The Isles of Greece" and the child, simply culture or people.

Finally, the final bit of nature-culture dissection remaining is in the title of the poem, "The Isles of Greece." This fundamentally is not simply its setting or placement, but solid interaction of nature and culture where the entire poem is situated on an island with the sea all around it. Not only does the sea enclose the earth and the cultural domain but the earth also limits the waters' domain, having an island of earth and culture in the sea. This in itself serves as image demonstrating that the reach of nature shall never be infinite the same way as culture shall be limited because of nature. However, one element of the pair continues to offer boundaries and enclosures for the other, finally producing the wider more inclusive ecosystem, the environment. Thereby, the poem evolves from a simple natural setting into a mutual, co-creative nature-culture system, fully functional and full of festivity (Hubbell, "Byron's Nature" 16).

“Shipwreck”

The poem, “Shipwreck,” as part of *Don Juan* (stanzas 49-53), offers the image of the sea wreaking havoc on a ship filled with people. It follows the initial experience of the wreckage and spans its climax and resolution, drowning “some strong swimmer in his agony,” (Line 40) in its closing lines, ending its tale of the “Shipwreck” (Lines 20-40).

The sea is offered to the reader as a foundational character in the “Shipwreck,” only being presented as a constant while its counterpart the actual shipwreck is the obvious focus which in turn gives the sea its traits and actions. Lines 28 and 29 show the *ship* as the subject, while the sea is personified, as it can *yawn*; the *ship* itself is given a pronoun putting it at the forefront of all images, the sea at its rear. With this in mind, the use of the word *yawn* depicts the sea as passive and patient, while in the next line (29) *she*, the ship, “suck’d with her the whirling wave,” the sea is presented with slight increase of action. This continues in the following lines (30-31), where the sea captures the ship “like one who grapples with his enemy, and strives to strangle him before he die.” This brings back the binary of nature-culture, where the elements of the pair are giving definition and action to one another in a sense of interaction and intermingling.

Furthermore, the shipwreck presents a recurring relationship that exists in Byron’s poetry, the strength-weakness relationship, between nature and culture. In this context of the shipwreck, the sea clearly has the upper hand and is the reason for the ship’s wreckage, while the ship itself is the victim. Or more simply put, the sea holds the position of strength and the ship the position of weakness, which once again circles round back to the dynamic of prey and predator in which the ecological food chain or food web is built upon. With this in mind, this presentation of nature-culture in this dynamic continues to offer positions for either and or, namely the positions of strength, predator, or weakness, prey.

In another regard, the “Shipwreck” is so fundamentally important to the nature-culture binary, as the wreckage is given its magnitude and its severity by the part the sea plays during the entire scene. This can be seen both in how the sea pulls the ship down and also how some of the people fear, die and struggle against the presence of the sea. This properly demonstrates the inclusiveness of the environment, where the players of nature and the players of culture interact and coexist. In simpler terms, nature and culture are both players of the *environment*.

The Human Element

The human element present in the narrative, comes in both the form of a human narrator or human inhabitants or human inventions as part of the narrative. Quite simply, this is the definition of the human element that this section will be concerned with. More importantly, this human element is not synonymous to anthropocentrism as it does not claim that the human being is at the centre of everything. Instead, this human element concerns itself with the images and scenes it helps to form with human elements, or more simply how humanity is one *part of a whole*.

In each of the selected poems an element of humanity is present; not only is this human element there, but through the speaker it gives the reader a sense of love for human-touched areas but also contrasts it by pointing out his reverence and love for nature, in this case the sea, without having those two *loves* compete or rather, the love of one does not dominate or replace the love of the other. For instance, line 5 of “The Sea” presents this very idea with the words, “I love not man the less, but nature more,”; this very notion of being able to love the pair that may sometimes be seen as opposites, strengthens the thought of the pair actually being parts of a *whole*.

Additionally, this provides an instance where love is presented for both in the most overt manner. As in “The Isles of Greece,” love is like an underlying concept and mood for both the human-touched island and the sea at its shores. This creates a dynamic where the pair coexists peacefully with neither holding strength over the other. Furthermore, these built environments enhance and draw from the beauty of their natural counterpart (Hubbell, “Byron’s Nature” 18). Similarly as “The Isles of Greece” has been presented and described, Byron has written of Venice in much the same way. “‘Venice’ is the semi-autonomous human scale evolving out of the especially rich interlayering of natural scales” (Hubbell, “Byron’s Nature” 18). Just like the “The Isles of Greece” Venice in this quote springs from the natural world, giving life to cohabitation. This injection of humanity, spread across the *isles* of Greece and Venice helps form a coexisting, co-creative ecosystem where the very creative energy sustains these places as places of vitality and beauty (Hubbell, “Byron’s Nature” 18).

However, returning back to “The Sea,” the waters carry obvious strength over humanity, as the narrator mentions a greater love towards nature than the love towards man. Following that vein, the sea is presented as an overpowering, almost imposing force that threatens the foundations of culture and conflicts with the notion of man’s mastery over the

earth as the sea refuses to allow its waves to be calmed by a creature such as a human (10-15). This enforces the strength position of the sea while offering the weakness position to man. However, in the same way, man is given the strength position when it concerns the land.

Contrary to the idea of imposed separation mentioned above, by putting one element into the position of strength, while the other in the position of weakness, this organization of elements and players serves to merge the actors and agents mentioned, into a single sphere giving them roles in the grand scheme of things. One exacts dominion and the other limits it, serving as alternates to one another in the sense of a push and pull concept. Fundamentally, this results in the same thought mentioned above: nature and culture belong to the same coin.

A similar situation takes place in “The Shipwreck,” supposing that the actual ship is the element of culture and the sea, the element of nature. Then in an overt sense, this highlights, the concepts of merging and dominating, with the sea dominating the ship and finally swallowing it into its rolling waves, in turn forcing the ship to merge with its depths. With that in mind, the overtness demonstrated in the interaction of the ship and the sea lies in the images that inform them and the struggles of the crew on board the vessel. The image of the sea projected by those witnessing it, produces a grim mood, where the deep desolate waters, with Fear and Death at its reigns, roll on wave after wave (Lines 1-8). Furthermore, this exemplifies, how without the observation of an agent of culture the sea would never be defined as something so grim and dark. Basically, without the human observer such a stormy sea would not reach such a definition, as the fish are barely disturbed and the birds remain airborne. Therefore only a creature (fairly weak in long distance swimming) in search of crossing such a cascade of unsteady waters on a ship (capable of being destroyed) would fear such waters, seeing it only as their doom.

Quite simply the ecosystem of both culture and nature identify and produce judgements of the other depending on situation; for example, the sea remains to be revered and a source of freedom and endless fleeting (“The Isles of Greece”, “The Sea”). However, in “The Shipwreck” the sea carries more of an eerie, ominous expression due to its interaction with culture, or people, as it will surely result in their demise at this point (Lines 9-10). This in turn reproduces the strength-weakness binary mentioned above, where the sea in this regard is overwhelmingly powerful. This in itself also brings the notion back to the physical-spiritual relationship culture and humanity share with nature, the sea, and how in one way or another, humans’ return to the earth is inevitable (line 27-28).

Chapter 2: Wandering

Wandering as a method of receiving ecological consciousness has been for quite some time under-represented and undermined as simple tourism as it does not actually inform an individual about the intricacies of a place, much less the natural life inhabiting the ecosystem, which dwelling both hopes to do and does quite readily (Hubbell, “A Question of Nature” 14). Due to this attitude toward *wandering*, several Romantic writers of the 18th and 19th century have failed to be recognized as *green writers*, simply because of the way they chose to live their lives (Hubbell, “A Question of Nature” 14; Wohlgemut 96). In essence, they chose to *wander* rather than *dwell*.

However, the concept of *wandering* is quite prevalent in the works of green writers credited for their ecological consciousness, namely, Blake and Wordsworth. In Blake’s “London” (Line 1-4), *wandering* is the method used in order to both gain perspective and witness the different lifestyles that make up the city “London” at the time. This in turn points to *dwelling* as being *wandering-in-a-small-area*; by no means is London small, yet physical movement through the city allows the narrator to gain a certain experience, a certain understanding. This certain perspective is one in which the narrator seems to understand “London” as an urban ecosystem rather than merely a city of people, but rather a dynamic living organism with multitude of players interacting and affecting one another.

Similarly, in Wordsworth’s “Daffodils” or “I Wander Lonely as a Cloud,” there is a certain kind of movement implied with the word *wandering* (Line 1-3). Especially *wandering as a cloud*. Taking this image, the narrator is obviously walking or at least moving slowly. With this in mind, the idea of *dwelling* simply being *wandering* but in a smaller area is strengthened in the same way as it is in Blake’s “London”, as the narrator is able to both notice the daffodils and watch them as well. This concept of dwelling (or *wandering-in-a-small-area*) present in these poems produces a question: *dwelling* could be summed up as *wandering-in-a-small-area*, then what is *wandering*?

Byron stands as the epitome of a wandering Romantic (Hubbell, “A Question of Nature” 14), as he was dedicated to traveling and spending his life on a constant expedition. To dissect the very definition of *wandering*, two things need to be addressed first and foremost, similarly as *dwelling* was: area and movement (Wohlgemut 96). In Byron’s case he traveled to the Orient and spent a good amount of his time in Europe as well. The continent of Europe will be the situated area for my argument. With this in mind, Byron traveled

Europe, or he *wandered* Europe, or going even further he *dwelled* in Europe. The verbs may change when addressing Byron's travels in Europe, but the meaning has stayed the same, with few technical and sociocultural changes in definition. Yet the most important part of the meaning remains: he spent time in Europe.

If this idea of him *wandering-in-a-large-area* is understood relative to Wordsworth's *wandering-in-a-small-area* then arguably Byron *dwelled* in Europe for most of his life, traveling to Italy and Greece where he spent most of his time (and obviously England) (Satarupa Sinha 41). However, the understanding of an ecosystem will obviously change, because observing a larger area such as a continent, Europe, is very different from a city, London, or a rural area, Tintern Abbey, yet the *rootedness* (regardless of what is observed) can remain the same; the only difference is that the *wanderer* strove to observe the larger ecosystem, Europe, instead of a smaller one, London or Tintern Abbey (Wohlgemut 96).

The notion mentioned above will serve as the foundational and basic view of the dwelling-wandering dynamic in my essay as they both can be seen as wandering or dwelling, while the only major difference is the size of the area in question (Wohlgemut, 96).

Using the definition mentioned above, the fruit born of Byron's Europe dwelling is presented in the form of landscape and the sea as nature, and, societies, people and ships as culture. These ideas and images can be seen in the selected poems, "The Isles of Greece", "Shipwreck" and "The Sea," in the form of ships, festive isles and the sea which exemplify not only movement of culture, but the constance of the sea as well and how it connects all things. In this way, Byron has produced an interaction between nature and culture, viewing the intricate dynamic between them, where one holds strength over the other, in the same way where one demonstrates weakness towards the other.

Finally, the necessity for an extended definition of dwelling and wandering is to provide basic, more simplified definitions in order to combat some of the negative attitudes towards wandering brought up in Hubbell's paper ("A Question of Nature"). Furthermore, this extension of the binary helps funnel into the nature-culture binary, especially when the selected poems are involved as it helps provide background understanding of the method, *wandering*, and how such a method helps Byron reach ecological consciousness.

Now due to this extended definition of wandering and dwelling, Byron's work can be observed through the scope of *green writing*. However, the question that needs to be asked first is what distinguishes Byron from other Romantic poets for it to be necessary to extend a perfectly reasonable definition of dwelling and wandering and the nature-culture binary? The answer to that is the *human element* that presents itself in Byron's poetry.

Chapter 3: The Byronic Standard

A final point needs to be addressed which will take into account the discussions on false binaries, the human element and wandering mentioned above: “Is Lord Byron a Romantic poet or not?” In the literary canon he is, but in this regard that question refers to his expertise as a green writer, a nature poet, one who observes ecosystems. But, this question is not independent as it follows another question, “is ecocriticism wrong for excluding Byron, in regards to green writing?” These questions lie at the crux of this paper and this section, and with the help of the informed concepts above, I shall hope to answer them.

Firstly, is the definition of first-wave ecocriticism allowing only a select few to enjoy the ranks of green writers? It does, according to Hubbell (“A Question of Nature” 14-15) the binary dwelling-wandering is the main issue as there is a negative attitude surrounding wandering as a method of observation. Dwelling and wandering are simply part of the methodology of achieving ecological consciousness and not the reason or the “end all and be all” of such an experience, but rather, the pair serve as different lenses equipped on a microscope. Dwelling, serves as the hyper magnification lens allowing the object of study to be viewed through the scope, targeting only a single element of said object with absolute clarity into its fundamentals and intricacies. Wandering on the other hand is more like the enhanced magnification that allows the object of study to be viewed through a scope covering its entirety and all the players involved. In essence one targets and studies a smaller area while another a larger one (Wohlgemut, 96). To simply associate one with ecology, greeting it with grand praise, and another as simple tourism, shunning it whenever possible, is neglectful and simplistic (Hubbell, “A Question of Nature” 14-15). It is obvious, that dwelling and wandering offer fundamentally different experiences and perspectives, therefore simply judging the methodology is directly ignoring the end product itself, *ecological consciousness*. Therefore, the extension of first-wave ecocriticism is necessary to answer the question of whether writers such as Byron are observers of ecosystems.

Secondly, in ecocriticism the nature-culture binary serves an end where the pair are separated and valued differently. Similarly to the problems associated with dwelling and wandering, simple opinion privileging one over the other clouds the initial experience and shades the ecology presented. In essence, something such as the Earth in all its entirety is built of a multitude of players, too many to keep track of, and culture is one of them. To sever culture from that ecological experience undermines not only the ecology, but the fact of the

human gaze where green writing is involved. Writers regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity carry an inherent pulse of culture because they are surrounded by a community of culture, the moment they are born, which means culture will always be part of their experience. When this innate experience is used to gaze onto the natural world and then record through a pen and paper, that very gaze, the world of culture no matter how small or how insignificant, will always play a role in forming the inevitable definition of the natural world. The words of Byron make a better point of this: “The works of culture ‘are a direct manifestation of the mind, and presuppose poetry in their very conception; and have, moreover, as being such, a something of actual life which cannot belong to any part of inanimate nature’” (qtd in Hubbell, “Byron’s Nature” 18).

The importance of a cultural perspective can also be seen in Byron’s sea poetry, where the sea could be just the *sea*, without any additional ties, but when a ship is mentioned, or an island, or an empire, the sea takes on so many different definitions and moods that continue to inform this natural element. This could easily be summed up as, “what is the world to a dead person? Nothing.” And “what is the world to a living one? It is the world, obviously.” Ecology is a matter of perspective and the backstory that comes with that perspective.

Thirdly, the human element presented in Byron’s work, much like other 18th and 19th century Romantic writers, should not be overlooked for its expression, but rather examined, for its inclusivity of the natural world in the cultural one and vice versa. This environment deployed in poetry where culture is a player in the environment might connect more readily with the second wave of ecocriticism, rather than the first one. The mention of cities and cultural elements may connect to second-wave ecocriticism, but the way in which the natural world is a muse and romanticized by its writers belongs to the first wave, Romantic ecocriticism. This brings up a thought where either these 18th and 19th century writers, such as Byron, who bring up the human element in their ecopoetry should be considered by second-wave ecocriticism as a compromise or they should simply be neglected as a whole. Therefore, extending the definition of the first wave ecocriticism, into a, if you will, Byronic Standard, much like the Wordsworthian Standard is necessary as placing the writers into either wave of ecocriticism as compromise is not a good enough option. It fails to be a good alternative because writers such as Byron, offer ideas and philosophies that tiptoe on the boundaries of first-wave and second-wave ecocriticism, meaning his work almost seems to have a place in both waves, however only partially.

This Byronic Standard, the one that includes wanderers of the Earth, observing ecosystems as holistic with all the players accounted for, simply puts agents of culture and

nature in the grand scheme of things. This Standard promotes an *overview approach* rather than what may seem as a more narrowed scope, that may also only be relevant to a smaller population. This standard serves as an instrument and lens in order to understand, take in and observe the tools of the Earth connecting all life, whether human, animal or plant in ecocritical writing. There is a single underlying element, if not more, that is capable of connecting all, and that is water: The sea. The ocean. Through the physical movement of wandering one moves as the sea does, visiting one place and then another, in order to compare and view differences rather than spending the majority of one's existence with the same inspiration and canvas. Dwelling as an experience obviously allows one to embark on a similar journey to wandering; however, the difference is that this one place, the single source of inspiration, the only canvas to be enjoyed, will replace the world and instead become it. Dwellers, in part, are therefore choosing to magnify their scope highlighting finer details of their local world. In this case the Byronic Standard and the Wordsworthian Standard could be easily summed in the words: a small picture with more details and a big picture with less details. In this regard, the Byronic Standard stands as *a big picture with less details* and the Wordsworthian as *a small picture with more details*. These Standards are not contradictions and are not meant to show one as superior to the other, but rather they offer different perspectives and experiences. In addition, the aim of my study is to exalt and bring the Byronic Standard (the counterpart to the Wordsworthian Standard) to the forefront of study, allowing aspects of both the Byronic and the Wordsworthian Standard to be researched and visited, allowing comparisons that previously may not have been very fruitful. These adventures into ecopoetry can be significantly more nuanced, highlighting different aspects of the new binary, Byronic-Wordsworthian, allowing them to be compared and contrasted further, building the school of thought further than it once was.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper has attempted to examine Byron's view of nature and establish a sort of Byronic Standard of ecopoesis. This was done by focusing on what made Byron's work unique amongst writers of the 18th and 19th century. This meant that the chapters were split into multiple parts, showcasing the cultural interaction with nature that is so central to Byron's ecopoetry.

The first section revolves around the binaries in place which inform the attitude of Romantic ecocriticism. The binaries, nature-culture and ecocentric-anthropocentric were looked at, criticised and challenged, in a critical manner giving way for the more inclusive term "environment," that Byron used. This was done so that the sole focus was not on a single element criticising another, but rather the pair, nature and culture, providing a holistic environment, an ecosystem, where all the players are accounted for. Ultimately, in order to provide a rich ecological understanding of the ecosystem and its intricacies, Byron's "environment" was used to provide an *ecological consciousness* that included *culture* and the inter- and intra- actions of it in the bigger picture. Furthermore, the *human element* that appeared in the nuances of culture, helped inform the cultural side of the binary, nature-culture. With this basis, the human element, that is a distinguishing element in Byron's poetry, was closely examined as was the resulting ecology. Finally, this section plays a critical role in providing grounds for the Byronic Standard of ecopoesis to stand upon, while pointing to the gaps of Romantic ecocriticism.

The issue of *wandering* was next in line for critical examination. This theoretical and practical concept was simplified, explained and compared to its counterpart, dwelling, in order to prepare for background terminology and combat the fundamental reason for Byron's poetry to be viewed as social rather than nature poetry.

Now, with all else taken care of, the third and final piece of the puzzle was addressed, *The Byronic Standard*. Byron's standing as an ecopoet was discussed while the question of ecocritical theory was addressed as well. With this in mind, Byron's exclusion from the canon of eco-poets, was looked at. This was brought face to face with the Wordsworthian Standard, in order to demonstrate their similarities and the differences. In essence, this section provides an environment where both standards function, however for some different reasons that lead to very similar results, in this case *ecological consciousness*.

Finally, these discussed chapters and the ideas in them, have offered some necessary

insight into this branch of knowledge, with the hopes of expanding said knowledge and the current school of ecocritical thought. Now to answer the question, “is Byron an eco poet?” the answer is obviously debatable. However, under the scope of first wave ecocriticism, Romantic ecocriticism, he may be regarded as a social poet; however, due to his aesthetic tying into the twentieth- and twenty-first-century theories of social, cultural and political ecology, i.e. second wave ecocriticism, his work offers a rich and inclusive ecology that demands attention (Hubbell, “Byron’s Nature” 18). This being said, the modernity of his view ties very well into the view of ecosystems in the current school of ecology (Hubbell, “Byron’s Nature” 18). This makes the study of Byron’s ecology and poetry, much like other Romantic 18th and 19th century writers, that much more compelling and important, as such may offer a dynamic and rich concept of *environment* that can improve and nuance the current view of *green writing*.

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Appendix

“Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage: The Sea” by Lord Byron

THERE is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but nature more,
5
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the universe, and feel
What I can ne’er express, yet cannot all conceal.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean,—roll!
10
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin,—his control
Stops with the shore;—upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man’s ravage, save his own,
15
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,

He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields

Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise

20

And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields

For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,

Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,

And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray

And howling, to his gods, where haply lies

25

His petty hope in some near port or bay,

And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls

Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake

And monarchs tremble in their capitals,

30

The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make

Their clay creator the vain title take

Of lord of thee and arbiter of war,—

These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,

They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
35
Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee;
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?

Thy waters wasted them while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
40

The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts: not so thou;
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play,
Time writes no wrinkles on thine azure brow;
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.
45

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,

Calm or convulsed,—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime

Dark-heaving; boundless, endless, and sublime,
50

The image of Eternity,—the throne
Of the Invisible! even from out thy slime

The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy 55

Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward; from a boy

I wantoned with thy breakers,—they to me

Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror, 't was a pleasing fear;

60

For I was as it were a child of thee,

And trusted to thy billows far and near,

And laid my hand upon thy mane,—as I do here.

“The Isles of Greece” by Lord Byron

THE isles of Greece! the isles of Greece

Where burning Sappho loved and sung,

Where grew the arts of war and peace,

Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!

Eternal summer gilds them yet,

5

But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,

The hero's harp, the lover's lute,

Have found the fame your shores refuse:

Their place of birth alone is mute

10

To sounds which echo further west

Than your sires' 'Islands of the Blest.

The mountains look on Marathon—

And Marathon looks on the sea;

And musing there an hour alone,

15

I dream'd that Greece might still be free;

For standing on the Persians' grave,

I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow

Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis; 20

And ships, by thousands, lay below,

And men in nations;—all were his!

He counted them at break of day—

And when the sun set, where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou, 25

My country? On thy voiceless shore

The heroic lay is tuneless now—

The heroic bosom beats no more!

And must thy lyre, so long divine,

Degenerate into hands like mine? 30

'Tis something in the dearth of fame,

Though link'd among a fetter'd race,

To feel at least a patriot's shame,

Even as I sing, suffuse my face;

For what is left the poet here? 35

For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?

Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.

Earth! render back from out thy breast

A remnant of our Spartan dead! 40

Of the three hundred grant but three,

To make a new Thermopylæ!

What, silent still? and silent all?

Ah! no;—the voices of the dead

Sound like a distant torrent's fall, 45

And answer, 'Let one living head,

But one, arise,—we come, we come!'

'Tis but the living who are dumb.

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;

Fill high the cup with Samian wine! 50

Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,

And shed the blood of Scio's vine:

Hark! rising to the ignoble call—

How answers each bold Bacchanal!

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet; 55

Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?

Of two such lessons, why forget

The nobler and the manlier one?

You have the letters Cadmus gave—

Think ye he meant them for a slave? 60

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

We will not think of themes like these!

It made Anacreon's song divine:

He served—but served Polycrates—

A tyrant; but our masters then 65

Were still, at least, our countrymen.

The tyrant of the Chersonese

Was freedom's best and bravest friend;

That tyrant was Miltiades!

O that the present hour would lend 70

Another despot of the kind!

Such chains as his were sure to bind.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,

Exists the remnant of a line 75

Such as the Doric mothers bore;

And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,

The Heracleidan blood might own.

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—

They have a king who buys and sells; 80

In native swords and native ranks

The only hope of courage dwells:

But Turkish force and Latin fraud

Would break your shield, however broad.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine! 85

Our virgins dance beneath the shade—

I see their glorious black eyes shine;

But gazing on each glowing maid,

My own the burning tear-drop laves,

To think such breasts must suckle slaves. 90

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,

Where nothing, save the waves and I,

May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;

There, swan-like, let me sing and die:

A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine— 95

Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

Don Juan: The Shipwreck (Stanzas 49-53) by Lord Byron

'Twas twilight, and the sunless day went down

Over the waste of waters; like a veil,

Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown

Of one whose hate is mask'd but to assail.

Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown,

5

And grimly darkled o'er the faces pale,

And the dim desolate deep: twelve days had Fear

Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

Some trial had been making at a raft,

With little hope in such a rolling sea,

10

A sort of thing at which one would have laugh'd,

If any laughter at such times could be,

Unless with people who too much have quaff'd,

And have a kind of wild and horrid glee,

Half epileptical, and half hysterical:—

15

Their preservation would have been a miracle.

At half-past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars,

And all things, for a chance, had been cast loose,
That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
For yet they strove, although of no great use: 20
There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews;
She gave a heel, and then a lurch to port,
And, going down head foremost—sunk, in short.

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell— 25
Then shriek'd the timid, and stood still the brave,—
Then some leap'd overboard with dreadful yell,
As eager to anticipate their grave;
And the sea yawn'd around her like a hell,
And down she suck'd with her the whirling wave, 30
Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he die.

And first one universal shriek there rush'd,
Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hush'd, 35

Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash

Of billows; but at intervals there gush'd,

Accompanied with a convulsive splash,

A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry

Of some strong swimmer in his agony.