

BYRON'S ROMANTIC ADVENTURES IN SPAIN

RICHARD A. CARDWELL
UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

I

On the July 2nd 1809, after several delays with the weather, Byron set off from Falmouth on the Lisbon Packet, *The Princess Elizabeth*, on his Grand Tour of the Mediterranean world not controlled by France. Four and a half days later he landed in Lisbon. From there, across a war-ravaged Portugal and Spain, he headed on horseback to Seville and Cádiz, accompanied by Hobhouse, details recorded in the latter's diary. But we know little of Byron's stay in Seville and Cádiz save what he relates in a letter to his mother, Catherine Byron, from Gibraltar dated August 11th 1809. It is ironic that Byron never saw her in life again. The first part of the letter reads as follows:

Seville is a beautiful town, though the streets are narrow they are clean, we lodged in the house of two Spanish unmarried ladies, who possess six houses in Seville, and gave me a curious specimen of Spanish manners. They are women of character, and the eldest a fine woman, the youngest pretty but not so good a figure as Donna Josepha, the freedom of woman which is general here astonished me not a little, and in the course of further observation I find that reserve is not the characteristic of the Spanish belles, who are on general very handsome, with large black eyes, and very fine forms. – The eldest honoured your unworthy son with very particular attention, embracing him with great tenderness at parting (I was there but three days) after cutting off a lock of his hair, & presenting him with one of her own about three feet in length, which I send, and beg you will retain till my return. – Her last words were 'Adio hermoso tu me gusto mucho'. 'Adieu, you pretty fellow you please me much' – She offered a share of her apartment which my virtue induced me to decline, she laughed and said I had some English 'amante' (lover) and added that she was going to be married to an officer in the Spanish army.¹

What does this part of the letter tell us, filled as it is with an economically related series of facts, where he had stayed, women (*nota bene*) he had met, and observations on the society in which he briefly moved? To my knowledge this letter has never been formally analysed and, despite what seems a series of dutiful commentaries on his short stay in Spain for his mother's interest, they do tell us more than the surface details –and perhaps Byron's real intentions – were meant to relate. So a little analysis might be in order. In Seville Byron quickly established residence, lodged in a house owned by 'two unmarried ladies', as he reports in this Gibraltar letter. Now we must recognise that he is writing to his mother and, thus, presenting a specific image of himself as a pretended dutiful son (typical of the poet) and, so, we must attempt to read between the lines. He does not explain why he is lodged with 'two unmarried women', rather odd I suggest, nor does he venture that there was some form of chaperone. We must assume there was none. We might reasonably expect that he would lodge in an hotel or a small *posada* or *fonda*, but such is not the case. For an strange Englishman, even a Lord, to be thus lodged in 1809 in Catholic Spain with two 'unmarried ladies' as a house-guest is, I find, extraordinary, more than extraordinary, a breach of the accepted decorum of Spanish upper class or even bourgeois society; and the ladies who owned six houses were clearly from a high society. And Byron goes on: in Spanish women he found 'that reserve is not the characteristic of the Spanish belles' and that he is attracted to their 'large black eyes, and very fine forms'. The first detail seems innocent enough, information he wishes to pass on for his mother's interest; a detail that she might find unexpected given the stereotype, perhaps prejudice, against Spanish (and Catholic) sexual relations common among her class in England. But the second, while seemingly anecdotal, seems to suggest that he is offering both information and, at the same time, allowing unconscious traces of his own inclinations, a masculine (and entirely Byronic) appreciation of female allure quite separate from mere reportage. He goes on to relate that the elder of his hosts 'honoured your unworthy son with very particular attention, embracing him with great tenderness at parting (I was there but three days) after cutting off a lock of his hair, and presenting him with one of her own about three feet on length', tresses which he encloses to his mother for safekeeping.² But there is more. First he wants to keep the tresses. Why? Reminders of a conquest? It seems likely since, by giving Byron what amounts to a

1: BLJ I, 219.

2: The tresses remain in the Murray Archive in the National Library in Edinburgh.

great quantity of her hair (with all the sexual resonances implied here), the lady was obviously very taken with the young Englishman. And why did Byron permit the lady to initiate the taking a lock of his own hair? Given the short period of acquaintance this breach of decorum and etiquette among cultured society seems to suggest more than it superficially relates. And further, Byron goes on, the lady offers to share her apartment with him, presumably with the intention his sojourn in Seville would be prolonged. And notice his report of this to his mother; he puts on the pious demeanour of the dutiful son, immune to the blandishments of foreign ladies. Byron writes that in response to the offer ‘my virtue induced me to decline’. He is putting on yet one more of the masks we associate with Byron, after all she embraced ‘him with great tenderness at parting’. And, moreover, gave him an abundant tress of hair (three feet long), her crowning glory, which must have left her severely shorn. Now, at that time, and until relatively recently in Spain, women took pride in the abundance and lustrous quality of their hair for very obvious reasons: as a sexual allure. In giving Byron what was tantamount to her sexual identity, the unspoken narrative of this letter seems to suggest much more than a platonic or casual relationship. Even in such a short sojourn Byron was, evidently, no mere visitor or passing traveller. Given what we know of the noble Lord’s adventures in Cambridge, Newstead and London, we might surmise that the two were more than new-found friends.

In Cádiz, in the same letter, he briefly mentions the bodegas of Jerez and Cádiz city itself, and then goes on, at some length to describe a further relationship with another Spanish lady. The letter continues:

Cádiz, sweet Cádiz! Is the most delightful town I ever beheld, very different from our English cities in every respect except cleanliness (and it is clean as London) but still beautiful and full of the finest women in Spain, the Cádiz belles being the Lancashire witches of their land. – [...] The night before I left it, I sat in the box [at the opera] with Admiral Cordova’s family, [...] and has an aged wife and a fine daughter. – Signorita Cordova the girl is very pretty in the Spanish style, in my opinion by no means inferior to the English in charms, and certainly superior in fascination. – Long black hair, dark languishing eyes, clear olive complexion, and forms more graceful in motion than can be conceived by an Englishman used to the drowsy listless air of his countrywomen, added to the most becoming dress & at the same time the most decent in the world, render a Spanish beauty irresistible. – I beg leave to observe that Intrigue here is the business of life, when a woman marries she throws off all restraint, but I believe their conduct is chaste enough before. – If you make a proposal which in England would bring a box on the ear from the meekest of virgins, to a Spanish girl she thanks you for the honour you intend her, and replies ‘wait till I am married, & I shall be too happy’. – This is literally and strictly true. [...] after regretting my ignorance of the Spanish she proposed to become my preceptress in that language; I could only reply by a long low bow, and express my regret that I quitted Cádiz too soon to permit me to make progress which would doubtless attend my studies under so charming a directress; I was standing at the back of the box [...] when this fair Spaniard dispossessed an old woman (an aunt or a duenna) of her chair, and commanded me to be seated next to herself, at a tolerable distance from her mamma. – At the close of the performance [...] *en passant* ... the lady turned around and called me, & I had the honour of attending her to the Admiral’s mansion. – I have an invitation on my return to Cádiz which I shall accept.³

We might ask at this juncture why he relates these particular personal details rather than the very meagre impressions of Jerez and Cádiz, and nothing of Spain in the aftermath of the Wars, or its monuments or the sights and sounds. But no, he tells his mother all about his meeting with Admiral Córdoba’s daughter. Given that her father was in charge of the Spanish fleet defeated at Cape St Vincent, one might have thought that the poet would have taken the opportunity to speak of military affairs. After all, at Harrow he had studied the battles of the ancient past; before arriving in Cádiz he had visited the battlefield of Arapiles and in Greece he travelled to Marathon, Platea, and the site of the Persian naval defeat at Salamis. But the letter dwells on the fairer sex – the Cádiz equivalent of ‘the Lancashire witches’. And who are they? Ladies he had met at or from his Rochdale estates? At all events, ‘witches’ suggests beguilement, and Miss Cordova certainly seems to have beguiled. Similar details to the description of the ladies of Seville appear once more: ‘Long black hair, dark languishing eyes, clear olive complexion, and forms more graceful in motion than can be conceived by an Englishman used to the drowsy listless air of his countrywomen’. He finds ‘a Spanish beauty irresistible’, especially when he notes that Spanish married women throw ‘off all restraint’ once wed, and that even unmarried women are far from unhappy with a male proposal only with the proviso that the proposal is made anew when the lady is married. He clearly finds them exotic. Once again Byron

3: BLJ I 220.

dwells on the fair sex he encounters: their physical beauty, their graceful deportment, their irresistibility and the unrestrained relations with men. Again Byron reveals, perhaps unconsciously, his main focus of interest. But his desire to engage in this agreeable milieu is tempered by his travel plans. Miss Córdoba offers Byron lessons in Spanish. Thus Byron reports to his mother: 'I could only reply with a long bow, and express my regret that I quitted Cádiz too soon to permit me to make my studies under so charming a directress'. Byron, with his exaggerated bow (playacting again in the event itself and in the letter) clearly had more than lessons in mind. Indeed, so, apparently, did the lady, for she contrived to have Byron seated next to her at the theatre as he writes, 'at a tolerable distance from her mamma' and her *dueña*. He reports that he accompanied her from the theatre to her father's mansion. What took place in that interval alone in a carriage (most likely) or on foot (most unlikely) is not recorded: but we can surmise. The lady was as engaged with the handsome Lord as he with her as Hobhouse records in his diary of Wednesday, August 2nd 1809: 'Went to the play (whilst Byron was in box with Miss Córdoba, a little mad and apt to fall in love...)'. We may never know how this flirtation ended but we might have our suspicions that the unchaperoned young woman and the handsome and attractive Lord did find more than social pleasure in one another that evening.

Byron's 'romantic' adventures in Spain were clearly memorable, so much so that, a decade later, they fill an aside in *Don Juan*, Canto II where Byron reminisces: 'Such graceful ladies, / Their very walk would make your bosom swell; / I can't describe it, though so much it strike, / Nor liken it – I never saw the like'. 'No simile will serve', he writes, but 'Their veil and petticoat – Alas! To dwell / Upon such things would near absorb / A canto, then their feet and ancles – well – / Thank heaven I've got no metaphor quite ready / (And so, my sober Muse – come – let's be steady)'. The details here echo in some way the letter to his mother of August 1809 and those memories of Seville and Cádiz excite his passions all over again. It is not only his 'bosom', I fancy, which 'swells' at the recall. And so he calls upon his Muse to 'steady' him and steer him away from the mental delights and recall of his Spanish conquests. And he transfers the erotic urges to the tryst between Haideé and Juan. We might reasonably surmise from the evidence that Byron enjoyed the female company of Seville and Cádiz more than he admits.

And thus ends Byron's romantic (that is, erotic) adventures in Spain: for I want, now, to study the word 'romantic' in another sense, in the sense of a literary movement, Byron's contribution to it and his reception or 'adventures' in Spain and how he defined their 'Romantic' response.

II

The first translation of Byron appeared in the April 7th 1818 issue (number 107) of the *Crónica Científica y Literaria* (Madrid) by José Joaquín de Mora, a mere six stanzas from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (III, iv, vi, lxii, lxx, xcii and xciii). Later, in the December 1818 issue of the journal *La Minerva* a further anonymous prose rendition, probably from the French Pichot translation, of *The Siege of Corinth* also appeared, probably by Mora again. Prose rather than verse was the norm in the early years of transmission in Spain. Just over a year later Mora, who had maintained a spirited debate with Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber, a Cádiz Hanseatic merchant and scholar, over the importance of Calderón, the seventeenth-century dramatist (of this more anon), between 1814 and 1820,⁴ Mora published further translations of twelve stanzas (lxv-lxvii, lxxii-lxxx) from Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in his own newspaper, the *Crónica*.⁵ He also translated an article on Byron by Pictet de Rougemont, taken from the Geneva journal, *La Bibliothèque universelle* of 1818.⁶ In the translation from Pictet, Byron was described for the Spanish public as 'a soul opposed to the realities of life and inclined to be embittered by misfortune ..., of afflictions unknown to commonplace men, of the sufferings of a melancholy fantasy which enjoys losing itself along the paths of idealism'.⁷ Presumably the Swiss commentator is speaking of *Childe Harold*, the *Oriental Tales*, and *Manfred*. While these sentiments are not his own, Mora seems to have sensed something of Byron's contemporary appeal, one which had fired the imagination of many across Europe. Nevertheless, his own reaction is hardly sympathetic, as he noted in the same literary column: 'Such is the piled up mass of nonsense that a sect of fanatics in literature has the effrontery to present as models of true and sublime poetry', he thundered, 'were we to embark on a literary analysis of these compositions we should see almost all of the beauties fade away and should find nothing left but violent metaphors,

4: See Camille Pitollot, *La Querelle calderonienne de Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber et José Joaquín de Mora reconstituée d'après les documents originaux*, Paris, Alcan, 1909 and later editions.

5: *Crónica Científica y Literaria*, Madrid, 31 December, 1819, p.288.

6: Pictet de Rougemont, 'Coup d'oeil sur la littérature anglaise', *Bibliothèque universelle*, 1(1818), 7-8.

7: 'alma enemiga de las realidades de la vida y dispuesta a agriarse por la desgracia'

incoherent phrases and extravagance of thought'.⁸ That Mora was fascinated yet also worried by Byron's art is clear; nevertheless, he did create the translations and publish them in his own literary journal. This ambivalent attitude was not uncommon.

But we need some historical context for Spain's reaction to Byron. In 1812, in Cádiz, the only city to hold out against the French invaders before Wellington's victories, a group of Spanish liberal intellectuals formalised the Cádiz Constitution, enshrining representative freedoms and constitutional liberties. At the end of the war in 1814 the young King Fernando VII chose to return to absolutist forms of government, the liberals were either imprisoned or exiled, and the liberal Constitution overthrown. His rule did not rescue Spain from the ravages of war or make an end to ideological divisions between radical Catholicism and French-inspired liberties, with the result that, in 1820, General Riego effected a liberal coup, one put down brutally and, ironically, by a French army, in 1823. From then on, until Fernando's death in 1833, Spain was held under a severe absolutism, political oppression, and the persecution of all forms of liberal thought, even in culture. It is not surprising then, when some liberties were restored in 1834, that the new literature, Romanticism, had taken, and was again to take on, a specifically ideological cast, and, arguably, and more inevitably, that the two poles of opinion would clash. Before 1814 intellectual life was dominated by neo-classical ideals based on French models. But in that same year the immigrant German scholar Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber published a series of essays on Calderón, and began his debate with Mora, where he depicted the new literature, Romanticism, as a strictly conservative form of literary expression (see note 4). In this debate Böhl also began to defend a broader definition of Romanticism in terms borrowed mainly from the Vienna Lectures of A. W. Schlegel and from Madame de Staël, in the early decades of the 1800s. That is, that Romanticism was a perennial phenomenon arising in the Middle Ages and expressing Christian and chivalric ideals. For Böhl the greatest exponent of this celebration of throne and altar was Calderón, the seventeenth-century dramatist. Thus for him, Romantic expression was tied to Catholic ideals and absolutist forms of government. He only mentions Byron in passing, in his *Pasatiempo crítico* of 1818, later reissued as part of his defence of Calderón, *Vindicaciones de Calderón*, in 1820, but it is clear he did not warm to him. In a letter of October 31st 1820 he remarks: 'Byron has never been my favourite. I have admired his poems without being able to finish them. One who can praise Bonaparte at the expense of his native country must be rotten to the depths of his heart. His *Don Juan* proved it'.⁹ Mora, as we have seen, was more ambivalent, as the comments appended to his translations of fragments of *Childe Harold* testify when contrasted with later judgements. His complete conversion to Byron came during his exile from 1823, after the defeat of the Riego coup, until the amnesty of 1834. He was among the first to coin the qualification 'the immortal Byron' in his *Leyendas españolas* of 1840. Perhaps his chief contribution is in the *Leyendas españolas*, where we find echoes of Byron's ironic asides and unexpected transitions. Exile literature expresses, before 1834, a caution shaped by the censorship back home. So we denote a shift in regard of Byron between the early 1820s and the return of the exiles in 1834 and after.

I want to return to the impact of Böhl's interpretation of the Schlegel's Vienna lectures. The impact of these lectures, delivered between 1808 and 1812, was immense in Europe, and no less so in Spain. Calderón, supposedly the essential mediator of the great Spanish traditions of Christianity and Romanticism, had been marginalised in Spain at the end of the seventeenth century by the French and Enlightenment inspired Neo-classical tradition. This tradition had enthroned human reason and scientific enquiry, and was now, under absolutist rule, perceived not only as a danger to society, at best heterodox and at worst atheistic. It collided with the hallowed beliefs in absolutism and in the rights of throne and altar. As such, at first Romanticism in Spain was viewed as a wholesome moral doctrine as much as a set of aesthetic values and principles. Classicism, by contrast, was seen as a deleterious force in society as much as in the arts. Witness Mora again, before his exile and change of attitude. Writing in *El Constitucional* in 1820 he declared: 'Liberalism is, within the range of political opinions, the equivalent of classical taste in that of literary ideals'.¹⁰ In such a sectarian critical milieu Byron proved problematical. How could the critic square the fact of a so-called 'Romantic' writer who derived inspiration from the classics (and who wrote in measures derived from Latin, Greek and the

8: 'Tal es el cúmulo de desatinos que una secta de fanáticos en literature se atreve a presentar como modelo de verdadera y sublime poesía. Si entrásemos en el examen literario de estas composiciones, veríamos desvanecerse casi todas sus bellezas y no hallaríamos sino violentas metáforas, frases incoherentes y pensamientos extravagantes'.

9: 'Lord Byron ist nie mein Liebling gewesen. Seine Gedichte habe ich bewundert, ohne sie zu Ende bringen zu können. Wer Bonaparte auf unkosten seines Vaterlandes loben konnte, mußte im tiefsten Grunde verderbtestein!. Sein *Don Juan* hat es ausgewiesen'. Cited in Pitollet, p.221, see note3.

10: Quoted in D. L. Shaw, 'Byron and Spain', in *Byron and Europe, Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 32 (1988), 45-59.

Italian and Augustan schools) with the Schlegelian model? Take, for example, the critic Eugenio de Ochoa, writing in the journal *El Artista* in 1835, where we find ardently expressed the dualistic principle outlined here. He contrasts what he calls the tired and worn-out classicism of Aristotle and Boileau with the young and imaginative Romantic expression which gives voice to the ideas of the Christian Middle Ages, its cathedrals and warriors: that is, the Schlegelian model. Byron, clearly, did not fit. And, more importantly, as we shall see, the critics of the 1820s and early 30s were unable to recognise that the term ‘Romantic’ might contain profound religious questioning, it might express a despairing and deeply pessimistic outlook on life, on the world and the hereafter. As we have seen, Mora came close to recognising this and, thus, his initial revulsion at Byron’s ‘extravagance of thought’. In the early 1820s Byron’s presence almost disappears. One of several Italian exiles in Spain, Count Giuseppe Pecchio, writing in 1821, relates that Byron was virtually unknown in Spain, a view reiterated by the poet and writer Blanco White in 1825.¹¹ Only among the exiles in the 1820s and early 1830s could any real appreciation of Byron be effected. But there were mentions of Byron in Spain and, specifically, in the Barcelona weekly periodical *El Europeo* (1823-24). Here we find the same mixture of admiration and fear noted above. Luigi Monteggia, another Italian political exile, listed Byron alongside Dante, Calderón, Camões, Shakespeare and Schiller as one of what he called the ‘moderns’ in that, ‘Byron’s work reflected the colour of the times in which he lived’.¹² Which works he had in mind is unclear, for as yet, translations of Byron were few and Byron was merely a name and a sort of literary ‘bogeyman’. Monteggia was probably referring to French versions rather than Spanish ones, for only later in the 1820s did Byron’s major works appear in Castilian: *The Corsair* in 1827, *The Bride*, *The Giaour*, *Mazepa* and *Parisina* and the early cantos of *Don Juan* in 1828, *Oscar of Alva* and *The Prisoner of Chillon* in 1829 and *Manfred*, *Childe Harold*, and the full *Don Juan* in 1830. In Monteggia’s list there is no real attempt to discriminate between medieval, sixteenth/seventeenth and modern writers. So in the early 1820s Romanticism was medieval and Christian as much as a modern movement according to the Schlegelian model. Thus, as Böhl was to warn, all that failed to confirm to this pattern and vision of society, when reflected in literature, was seen as dangerous and subversive; a view hardened by the prevailing severe censorship. Worse, it seemed to threaten the very foundations of society itself. And so, when citing Byron among other potential subversives (Chateaubriand, Schiller, Manzoni), Monteggia offers a note of caution and alarm at Byron’s view of the human condition. ‘Those who have read [these works]’, he remarks, ‘will have a better idea of romantic style than we can give speaking in the abstract. A danger of this style is that sad ideas become too terrible and fantastic, like those of *Manfredi* (he must have been referring to an Italian translation; he also cites *The Corsair* and *Childe Harold*) by Lord Byron; and the poetry turns once more into a mere game with words and ceases to interest the mind and the heart’¹³. Note the swerve away from Byron’s dissolvent ideas by alleging that he is guilty merely of bombast and playing games. Byron is, of course: but at the same time he is deadly serious. By the late 1820s, with more of the Byron canon in Spanish, critics continue to explain away the implications of what Manfred calls ‘a continuance of enduring thought’ and ‘the fatal truth’. In 1829 Donoso Cortés, in a similar vein, addressed the problem of how one might distinguish between the moderns and the ancients. Byron, he writes, ‘makes the English muse resound with the high accents of his sublime melancholy and makes her moan with the deep groans of misfortune and pain’ and, he goes on, ‘[e]verything in him reminds us of our nothingness; everything is terrible and mysterious like man himself’.¹⁴ A year later Ramón López Soler, Monteggia’s co-editor of *El Europeo*, in the preface to his Scott-inspired *Los bandos de Castilla*, attempted the capture the essence of the ‘Romantic’, describing Byron’s work in similar terms, again insisting on the links between Romanticism and modern Christian sensibility. His fervent admiration of Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (on which his *Los bandos* is based) suggests that the medievalising tendency was still very much prevalent in Spanish critical thinking. He wrote: ‘Wild, impetuous, we might even say savage, as admirable as the audacious flights of its fantasy as it is striking in the sublimity of its extravagance, we may declare Romantic literature’ (by which he means Romantic in what he supposes to be Byron’s terms) ‘is the

11: See Phillip H. Churchman, ‘The Beginning of Byronism in Spain’, *Revue Hispanique*, 23 (1910), 343 and Ricardo Navas Ruiz, *El romanticismo español* (Madrid, 3rd ed. 1982), p.20.

12: ‘La obra de Byron refleja los colores del tiempo en que vivía’

13: Luis Monteggia, ‘Romanticismo’, reproduced in Navas Ruiz, *op.cit.*, pp.33-42: ‘Quien haya leído [estas obras] tendrá una idea más adecuada del estilo romántico de lo que podemos dar hablando en abstracto. Un escollo de este estilo es el que las ideas tristes se vuelvan demasiado terribles y fantásticas, como las del *Manfredi* (sic) de Lord Byron; entonces la poesía se convierte otra vez en un juego de palabras y cesa de interesar a la mente y al corazón’.

14: Luis Monteggia, *op.cit.*: ‘Byron hace resonar a la musa de Inglaterra con los grandes acentos de su sublime melancolía y la hace gemir con los profundos gemidos del infortunio y del dolor. [...] Todo en él recuerda nuestra nada; todo es terrible y misterioso como el hombre’.

interpreter of those elusive and ineffable passions which, lending to man a sombre mien, urge him towards a solitude where he seeks [in wild nature] the images of his own hidden sorrow, [...] or else moves them to melancholy tears by recalling the poisoned memories of its own past pleasures [...] And thus, plucking at the strings of an ebony lyre, his forehead garlanded with funeral cypress, the solitary muse takes pleasure in raising the tempests of the universe and those of the human heart [...] he is wont to raise his unearthly song, like the cry of those mysterious birds which fly into the air when the disorder of the elements would seem to portend the rage of the Almighty or the destruction of the Universe'.¹⁵ While this seems to indicate that, finally, Spanish critics have begun to identify and confront Byron's vision of a 'fatal truth' and his pessimistic and negative message, their interpretation swerves in another direction. The evocations of a wild nature, the solitary muse garlanded with funereal cypress plucking a lyre amid storms and sickly moonlight, are a travesty of what Byron was writing. They are imposing on his work the poetics of Macpherson's Ossian and Edmund Burke's language of the Sublime. It is probably no coincidence that, when the young José de Espronceda, the 'Spanish Byron' as he was later to become, first began writing we find juxtaposed the influence of the supposed Celtic bard and Byron himself in his early poem *Oscar y Malvina*. At the turn of the 1820s/30s Byron was the poet of the Sublime, a man of unsatisfied transcendent yearnings. His more negative and corrosive message and his radical questioning of the norms of faith are overlooked. It was an approach, despite changes in attitude to Byron after 1834, that was to persist down the century.

An overview of this 'Romantic' period between the first mention of Byron in 1818 and the mid-1830s offers a number of reasons why Byron was domesticated as a poet of the 'Sublime' and the radical questioning of his verses either anathemised or overlooked, despite the publication from 1828 onwards of his major pessimistic works. But attitudes changed with Ferdinand's death in 1833, the collapse of absolutism, the reduction of censorship, the opening up of political opinion and the liberalisation of intellectual discussion in Spain's literary circles. This shift in mood can be seen clearly in the prologue which the former exile, Antonio Alcalá Galiano, wrote in 1834 for *El moro expósito*, the long poem by his friend in exile, the Duke of Rivas. First he countered the Schlegelian division of literary endeavour into Classic and Romantic, arguing, as he knew well from his exile in England, that 'England does not admit or even know of the division of poets into classicists and Romantics'. For him Byron is a metaphysical and descriptive poet, a judgement only slightly different from the views of earlier writers like López Soler and others. But, Alcalá Galiano insists, he is speaking of 'present-day romanticism' (*el actual romanticismo*) not 'historical romanticism' (*el romanticismo histórico*), the Schlegelian model which harked back to medieval times. This, for probably the first time, sets the scene for a proper assessment of Byron. He had been seen as 'modern' in terms of Dante and Shakespeare; now he is seen as entirely modern, contemporary ('actual'), separated from the all-embracing Schlegelian (and thus Catholic and monarchical) model urged by Böhl back in the early 1800s. With the return of the exiles, one of them, Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, was soon to be both Prime Minister and author of the first real 'Romantic' drama, and new ideological and aesthetic ideas began to emerge. These exiles were young, had not participated in the Napoleonic struggle, and had been on the sidelines of the Riego coup. Moreover, they had been exposed to Byron's works either in the original English – many made their homes in England during exile – or from the widely disseminated and unexpurgated French prose versions of Amedée Pichot and others. These young men called for a new and more radical approach to literary expression and, soon, a series of genuinely 'Romantic' plays with tragic endings caused by malign cosmic forces, modelled on Byron's pessimistic vision set out in his early works, were exciting the public, some plays immediately banned. Inevitably, the conservative and Catholic press reacted with hostility. In 1835, a year after the exiles' return, Eugenio de Ochoa in the journal, *El Artista*, under the heading 'Romanticismo' stressed the gulf between the earlier conservative outlook and the new liberal approaches to the question of the nature of Romanticism. He made no bones about the new ideas: 'The word 'Romantic' for them, is the same as heretic, worse than heretic, they are men capable of any crime. That is to say, they are the sons of Beelzebub'.¹⁶ On the one side Ochoa, conservative, absolutist, allied to throne and altar; on the other

15: Quoted in Navas Ruiz, p.103: 'Libre, impetuosa, salvaje, por decirlo así, tan admirable en el osado vuelo de sus inspiraciones como sorprendente en sus sublimes descarríos, puédesse afirmar que la literatura romántica es el intérprete de aquellas pasiones vagas e indefinibles que, dando al hombre un sombrío carácter, lo impelen hacia la soledad donde busca [en la naturaleza salvaje] las imágenes de sus recónditos pesares [...] Así, pulsando una lira de ébano, orlada la frente de fúnebre ciprés, se ha presentado al mundo esta musa solitaria, que tanto se complace en pintar las tempestades del universe y las del corazón humano [...] suele elevar su peregrino canto, semejante a aquellas aves desconocidas que sólo atraviesan los aires cuando parece anunciar el desorden de los elementos la cólera del Altísimo o la destrucción del Universo'.

16: Eugenio de Ochoa, 'Romanticismo', quoted in Navas Ruiz, p. 111: 'Romanticismo para ellos equivale a hereje, a peor que hereje, que son hombres capaces de cualquier crimen. Es decir, que son los hijos de Beelzebub'.

'them', progressive, democratic, deleterious to traditional beliefs and conventions, men who uphold doctrines of rational criticism, social progress and political liberties. The battle lines were drawn with, now, a clear advantage to the reformers and those who had finally begun to understand what Byron's verses suggested. Alcalá Galiano's 1836 preface was soon endorsed by the most important and astute of contemporary essayists, Mariano José de Larra. He rejected the idea that Romanticism belonged to the fervent Catholic, monarchical and despotic tradition espoused by Böhl von Faber. He argued for a literature which was modern, contemporary, progressive, one which sought to question hallowed beliefs and which was at heart philosophic. He believed that 'Intellectual progress which is everywhere breaking ancient chains, discarding outworn traditions and casting down idols, proclaims in the world moral liberty and at the same time physical liberty, because the one cannot exist without the other. Literature has to feel the impact of this prodigious revolution, of this immense progress'.¹⁷ For both Larra and Alcalá Galiano, the key word was 'revolution' and the poet who stood at the head of that 'revolution' was Byron. In an earlier essay Larra had argued that 'the tendency of this century is different [from the previous Neo-Classical tradition] ... we are looking today rather for the important and profound inspiration of Lamartine and even for the sorrowful philosophy of Byron'.¹⁸ Critical essays called for a truly 'Romantic' work, one which expressed the ideals Larra and others had outlined. Rivas' *El moro expósito*, for all the power of Alcalá Galiano's enlightened preface, which had spoken of a new 'present day Romanticism', was hardly the concrete exponent of the new ideals.

And on to this scene steps Spain's greatest Romantic and Byronic poet, José de Espronceda, now returned from exile in England and France after a series of revolutionary endeavours and the elopement with the wife of a fellow exile. One of his earliest poems, *Oscar and Malvina*, based loosely on Macpherson's Ossianic poems and expressing something of the 'Sublime', offers a contrast between a past felicity and a present sense of emptiness compounded by a tale of lost love at the separation of the lovers. The quite unnecessary death of Oscar from misplaced heroics, and Malvina's despair, point also to Byron's *Oriental Tales* and high heroic actions, especially Byron's *The Corsair*. The 'Songs' series of the cossack, the pirate and the condemned man also point to the same sources, one which Espronceda would have read during his exile in London. More emphatically, his poems on renegade figures associated with the law and justice also suggest the presence of Byron, together with men freed from the restraints of family and society. They personify anarchic individuals and unchained natural forces. Espronceda examines, as had Byron, the question of human and divine justice, existential solitude and ultimate metaphysical questions. Espronceda is also concerned, as is Byron, with the question of guilt, or rather, the question of guilt without guilt, that haunting feeling of having committed some unspeakable crime yet remaining innocent. Thus Espronceda's – and Byron's – questioning: Why are the innocent punished? Why is suffering tolerated by a seemingly benevolent God? But it is in *The Student of Salamanca* (1836-1840) (*El estudiante de Salamanca*) and *It's an Absurd World* (1840 and unfinished) (*El diablo mundo*) which betray not only the traces of Byronism but the contest into which the Spanish poet enters with his strong precursor. Espronceda, in my view, strives to out-Byron Byron.

The Student of Salamanca is a narrative poem in four parts composed over four years.¹⁹ The first and final parts deal with the adventures of Félix de Montemar, the student who, in Part I, meets an adversary in a darkened street and kills him. Part II relates the slow death resulting from the abandonment of one of Félix's past conquests; one, Elvira, dies of lost love, rather like Francesca in *The Siege of Corinth*, or Medora in *The Corsair*. Part III, a gambling scene where the Elvira's brother seeks revenge for his sister's death at Félix's hands and challenges him to a duel, follows Part II chronologically, but comes before Part I, where the brother becomes Félix's victim in the darkened street in the opening Part I. The final part relates how Félix suddenly sees a ghostly female figure in the street who reminds him of Elvira, and he pursues it until he comes to a Gothic palace which appears to float just above the ground. He enters in pursuit through labyrinthine corridors, until, finally, he is surrounded by a host of demons. He trips, falls, is whirled down a spiral stair, and is

17: 'El progreso intelectual rompiendo en todas partes antiguas cadenas, desgastando tradiciones caducas y derribando ídolos, proclama en el mundo la libertad moral, a la par que la física, porque la una no puede existir sin la otra. La literatura ha de resentirse de esta prodigiosa revolución, de este inmenso progreso', in Navas Ruiz, *op.cit.*, p.131.

18: 'la tendencia del siglo es otra ... buscamos más bien en el día la importante y profunda inspiración de Lamartine y hasta la desconsoladora filosofía de Byron'.

19: See my 'Lord Byron's Gothic Footprint in Spain: José de Espronceda and the Re-making of Horror', in *The Gothic Byron*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009, pp. 129-44; José de Espronceda, *El Estudiante de Salamanca and Other Poems*, Critical edition with Introduction and notes, (Tamesis, London 1981), lxxiii+111pp; José de Espronceda: *El Estudiante de Salamanca*, (Aris and Phillips Ltd, 1990). English Translation by C.K. Davies and Introduction and Notes by Richard A. Cardwell.

confronted by the mysterious veiled lady sitting on a large bed. As he moves to embrace her the veil falls and he sees a ghastly foetid skeleton which rises and embraces him until, in a vertiginous dance, he is whirled out of the poem. Espronceda utilises a whole range of traditional and his own original verse forms to match the action at each turn, in a revolt against conventional prosody. The descriptive atmosphere of Parts I and IV is high Gothic, the product, I estimate, of his reading in English literature while in London. But the underlying message of Félix's adventures is pure Byron, especially the dimension of existential rebellion. The poem re-interprets two traditional Spanish stories of sin and redemption and sin and damnation, the legends of Miguel de Mañara, who repents from his crimes having witnessed his own funeral (as does Félix), and the better-known story of Don Juan in Tirso de Molina's founding version, where Don Juan wagers with the Stone Guest, the Comendador, and is finally dragged down into Hell by demons. But Espronceda stands these stories on their heads. The Student is a seducer, a gambler, a drunkard a renegade from his society. Yet he is an idealist, seeking for something extraordinary that life cannot offer. He possesses all the qualities we associate with Childe Harold, Alp, Lara and Conrad, with an added frisson of evil, a total lack of moral control, save his own personal honour. He is also suspected, like the heroes of the Oriental Tales and *Manfred*, of having committed some heinous crime. His death, given the context of the founding stories of Mañara and Don Juan, is as mysterious as that of the Giaour and Conrad. But Espronceda seeks to out-do Byron. Félix, who nonchalantly and heartlessly seduces, gambles or fights duels to a death, is supposed either to be destined for repentance and contrition or to be sent into Hellfire – if the founding texts are to be respected. Espronceda rejects these alternatives in a feat of radical re-writing. Félix refuses to the last to renounce his sins or to seek forgiveness. Indeed, Espronceda creates a Satanic figure who calls the powers of divinity into question but much more overtly than Manfred:

Grandiose, puffed with Satanic vanity, / proudly advancing, Montemar comes striding,
/ A spirit of sublime insanity / in sheer madness all Providence deriding / .. he equals
with God, and with daring flight / soars up to challenge the Almighty to fight. / A
second Lucifer rising again / a rebel soul who beats fear with disdain, / limit with
which the prison of life is barred, / who dares to call on God and Him arraign / to lay
before him the extent of his domain'.²⁰

Shades of Manfred and Cain, rather than Mañara and Don Juan. Anticipation, too, of the 'révolte métaphysique' of Camus and Malraux some hundred-odd years later. Like Byron, only more so, Espronceda denies a shaping religious context. His known political rebellion, incarcerated for seditious activities in 1826, and his voluntary exile between 1827 and 1833, has left little impact despite his many scrapes with the secret police forces of Spain, France and England. Byron, too, was under constant police surveillance in Italy, especially in Ravenna. What he also shares with Byron is far broader, less the individual and the State, more the individual and Divine rule and, of course, the question of ultimate divine justice. Espronceda expresses a metaphysical rebellion, calling God to account and rattling the bars of man's existential prison in rage and protest. In an earlier poem, *To the Sun (Al sol)* he had imagined a God so inept that He has created world after world in a crazed process, so manic that, finally, God drops his creation into an abyss of darkness – a tale which has echoes of Byron's *Cain*. He creates a counter-text to the Christian texts of authority. He uses their structure, but turns them inside out and inverts them. He works against the ideologies of Christian teaching and the authorities invested in those ideologies. He rejects the teaching of Catholicism, whose structures are rooted in revealed religion and moral precepts. Within such a frame Félix's death is underwritten by none of the eschatology of the Catholic reformation; it contains no charge of mortal sin and lack of spiritual preparedness, no assertion of purgation and ultimate divine justice, no presumption of redemption or of an ultimately benevolent God. In the face of a total loss of faith in any sustaining belief, Félix Montemar, and through him, Espronceda seems to argue that man, a mortal, cannot but assert his rebellious individuality. If man has no guarantee of order and justice he must be a rebel. Thus Félix moves from passive acceptance, sustained by a nonchalant and mordant black humour (again reminiscent of Byron) to active revolt. He is a prisoner in a kind of madhouse, a man who rattles the prison bars and calls God to account: noble rebellion and metaphysical revolt. This poem, more than the subversive dramas of the time, bespeaks the presence of Byron, whom Espronceda must have read

20: 'Grandiosa, satánica figura, / alta la frente, Montemar camina / espíritu sublime en su locura / provocando la cólera divina: / fábrica frágil de material impura, / el alma que la alienta y la ilumina, / con Dios le iguala, y con osado vuelo / se alza a su trono y le provoca a duelo. // Segundo Lucifer que se levanta / del rayo vengador la frente herida, / alma rebelde que el temor no espanta, / hollada sí, pero jamás vencida, / el hombre en fin que en su ansiedad quebranta / su límite de la cárcel de la vida / y a Dios llama ante él a darle cuenta, / y descubre su inmensidad intenta'.

and thoroughly digested while in London. And, moreover, it is Byron properly understood. How else could it be when Espronceda seeks to out-do the English poet? Byron's voice as heard in the 1820s as the poet of mystery, passion and nature, the poet of the Sublime, is now read very differently through Espronceda's poetic creations. The poet's close friend, Enrique Gil y Carrasco, reviewing Espronceda's collected works in 1840, shows how times have changed. He writes of 'boundless doubts, uncertainty and sorrow' which have 'clouded the mirror of the soul' resulting in 'violent inner conflict and upheaval'. Such literature, Gil goes on, has created 'the vacillating, ill-defined and, to a degree, contradictory nature' of contemporary imaginative writing. The 'religious sadness' of earlier religious writers like Milton and Luis de León had been replaced, Gil insists, by the 'inconsolable scepticism of Childe Harold'.²¹ Espronceda's 'Songs' (cossack, pirate, condemned man) belong, Gil writes, to 'the bitter, sardonic and disconsolate school of Byron. They are the products of a sorrowful and solitary muse that 'despised all consolation and wallowed in its own suffering'. He finds 'the same aggressive and dismal turn of phrase, the same tendency to rancour and disillusion characteristic of the English poet'.²² While Gil praises the Ossianic poems and Byron's 'Sublime' in Espronceda (he is harking back to the critical views of the decade before), he can only condemn the influence of what is, of course, the real Byron. His review is a genuine mirror to the history of Byron's final and proper reception in Spain. But soon, the forces of conservative opinion were to marginalise Espronceda's revisions of Byron. With Espronceda's early death at the age of 36 in 1842 (so much like Byron in every way), the retreat of his fellow exiles from radical Romantic views, the powerful voices of the Church and a yearning for stability in intellectual circles, Spanish literature returns to aspects of the Schlegelian aesthetic, notably in the work of the young poet José Zorrilla. A few poets, like Gabriel García Tassara and Ramón de Campoamor, reprise the pessimistic tone and metaphysical interrogations we associate with Byron and Espronceda, the latter honing his epigrammatic verses into world-weary sentiments carefully crafted for a bourgeois audience. The final phase in Spain's Romantic movement and Byron's shadow came in the same year as the final version of *The Student of Salamanca* in 1840.

Espronceda took the lessons of Byron's pessimistic outlook more than to his heart. He also took it to his head, in that he set out to challenge his strong precursor. We might conveniently divide Byron's work into two phases: from *Childe Harold* and *Manfred* and the later *Cain* and the works beginning with *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. There is a significant shift in Byron's poetic trajectory in these two works away from the brooding and fated heroes of *Childe Harold*, the *Oriental Tales* and *Manfred* to a reformulation of the hero as a figure who, while still an outsider, is more the victim of events than a controlling power. *Beppo* and *Don Juan* are more sinned against than sinning, observers for Byron rather than protagonists.

Espronceda, too, between 1839 and 1840, as he completed *The Student of Salamanca*, made such a shift in the direction of his poetics. In *It's an Absurd World*, published in six cantos in 1841, an epic poem, like *Don Juan* incomplete, he creates a new figure quite unlike Félix de Montemar. His hero, Adam – a significant name – is guileless, innocent in the ways of the world, initially unable to speak, and born into the world as a youth and naked (a mature baby in effect), and is the victim of events rather than their agent. This mock-epic, clearly modelled on *Don Juan* which had appeared in Spanish in 1829 while Espronceda was in exile, so he must have read it in the original in London, marks the best and most systematic exploitation in Spanish of Byron's master work. There is nothing like it either in the Romantic period or later, and it marks the complete assimilation of Byron into Spanish literature. Byron's humour is very distinctive, and so is Espronceda's, the latter striving to outdo the master at every turn in caustic wit. His mock-epic poem is the result of Espronceda's search for a poetic form which would adequately express the vision he shared with Byron beyond that expressed by the brooding heroes both had conceived. It is *Don Juan*'s burlesque form that itself expresses a world view which, by allowing the poet at intervals to mock his own sceptical or despairing attitudes, abruptly distances the reader from them without blunting their impact. Pathos can become bathos without detriment to either. Byron had seen how the informal, burlesque epic allowed the use of certain devices which could be used to reduce the tension yet intensify the effect generated by a dramatic episode or the emotional intensification produced by a pathetic scene. As the poem swerves from one mood, intention or aspect to another, so, too, does the language swerve from high to low, from parody to medical recipe, from the serious to the conversational, from narrative to authorial intervention. The

21: 'Infinitas dudas, desconfianzas y tristezas [que han] nublado el espejo del alma ... [y que ha resultado en] violentas luchas y vaivenes interiores ... el carácter vago, indeciso y hasta cierto punto contradictorio ... la religiosa tristeza ... el escepticismo desconsolado de Childe Harold', Navas Ruiz, pp. 226-27.

22: 'la escuela amarga, sardónica y desconsolada de Byron [que] menospreciaba los consuelos y se cebaba en sus propios dolores ... el mismo giro hostil y sombrío, la misma tendencia rencorosa y desengañada del poeta inglés', Navas Ruiz, p.233.

reader is faced with a want of artistic as well as metaphysical coherence. Humorous and irreverent digression, self-mockery and self-irony, black humour and so on, all emphasise an authorial presence which, simultaneously, is undermined by the exploitation of heteroglossia (multi-voicedness and intertextuality), echoes of other poets, comic juxtapositions, anticlimax, incongruity, grotesque allusions and distorting metaphors. All these elements, especially black humour and parody (one of Espronceda's enduring fortes, which he shares with Byron) are the tokens of the English poet's presence at the very moment the Spanish poet reaches his poetic maturity.

The poem of six cantos and, like *Don Juan*, unfinished, marks a specific engagement with Byron. In the Prologue, by Espronceda's friend, Antonio Ros de Ollano, he mentions Byron who, he argues, 'has brought the dramatic poem to perfection in *Manfred*' (Byron lo impulsó a la perfección en *Manfred*). So Espronceda creates a space for himself in this tale of lost innocence and love and the recognition of the realities of human existence and man's destiny. The poem also offers a caustic commentary on the society and politics of his time. While Byron introduces the reader to the Spanish teenager, Don Juan, and allows us to follow his adventurous (and amorous) periphrases across continents and oceans (with many incidents based on the poet's own experiences), Espronceda places the action of his mock-epic in the narrow confines of low-life Madrid, with occasional glimpses of the world of the aristocracy. Lavapiés, the working-class area of the capital, with its thieves, hucksters, dissolutes and prostitutes was well-known to the bohemian Espronceda. He captures its speech and atmosphere brilliantly in the early cantos of the poem. But rather than the social and sexual awakening of the guileless teenage Don Juan, Espronceda resorts to a surprising stratagem. With possible echoes of the Frankenstein story, he presents the reader with the picture of an old man, reading at midnight, who has an extraordinary vision in the shape of a luminescent female figure who reveals to him the nature of existence in profoundly negative terms, and acts as a harbinger of death (an inverted version of Alp's vision of Francesca in *The Siege of Corinth*, where celestial happiness is offered?). The old man, in death, is transmuted by a form of alchemy into an innocent, naked youth, devoid of speech and knowledge or any social skills. As he enters the street totally naked the local populace are scandalized, and Adam, as he is called – with all the resonances of Genesis – is arrested and imprisoned, guilty without guilt, a powerful Byronic idea. In his cell (a metaphor for the prison-house of life, another Byronic motif) he learns the nature of human and social justice but also, through the gaoler's daughter, La Salada, of love. The poem relates his freedom, his criminal exploits, his love with La Salada and its failure, and concludes in the unfinished canto VII with his first experience of death, in a brothel where he discovers the corpse of a teenage girl and her grieving mother. Espronceda left no plans, but the poem was clearly conceived on the grand scale. Time forbids any extensive assessment of the poem, so I will limit myself in this final part to some Byronic parallels. In the opening canto he confesses to the reader that he has got himself into a mess, and he addresses his potential buyer to stay the course of the entire poem: 'I trust it will never upset you / Oh dear buyer!, whom in a jumpy state, / I implore to my favour, will you not buy my work?' (¿a ti no te sera nada molesto, / ¡o caro comprador, que con zozobra / imploro en mi favor, comprar mi obra?). He promptly goes on to attack his arch-enemy, the Count of Toreno, and the literary establishment, ending with a squib at his (and Byron's) hero, Napoleon Bonaparte, and his own pretensions. In its irony, self-deprecation and wit it is pure Byron. Canto III, after a long digression in Canto II describing his tragic affair with the married Teresa Mancha, with whom he eloped while in exile in London, he returns to Adam, the riot caused by his nakedness and inability to speak. But rather than allow the incident to be a matter for the local constable, Espronceda goes to the extreme: the army is called in with cannon, guards are doubled at strategic points, public meetings are banned, possible agitators are arrested, martial law is declared and a public statement of emergency is published in all the national and provincial newspapers. Of course, this hyperbole is funny but it does remind the Spanish reader of the tyranny of King Fernando's regime in the 1820s and early 30s under which Espronceda and his readers had suffered. He promptly turns to the prison and a pastiche of late eighteenth-century pastoral poetry. After five *octavas* of dense natural description he suddenly breaks off. He describes the birdsong, the dew, the glow of light in the sky, the fine smell of aromatic flowers and then, these lines: 'And resounding ... etcetera, which I believe / is sufficient to relate that dawn has come, / and so many useless phrases and beating about the bush / to my poor understanding is no more than noise. / I wish to say, dear reader, that it was dawning'²³. Yet amid all the verbal play, the subtle undermining of established poetic norms, the playful authorial interjections, the comic asides, all reminiscent of the English poet, it is the innocent questioning of Adam which also indicates the pattern of thought that Espronceda shares with Byron. Adam and La Salada part, he falls in with a band of thieves and enters the low-life of Madrid. In Canto V, written in

23: 'Y resonando ..., etcétea; que creo / basta contar que ha amanecido, / y tanta fase inútil y rodeo, / a mi corto entender no es más que ruido. / ... / Quiero decir, lector, que amanecía', IV, ll.3061-69.

dramatic form, Espronceda raises the most Byronic element of the entire poem: the question of finality. Adam's first confrontation with death in the back room of a brothel to the sound of a dissolute priest drunkenly singing, provokes the still innocent youth to ask questions which go to the heart of human existence. Why does a supposedly benevolent God allow the innocent to suffer and die? This Adam ponders:

That God who dwells / omnipotent in the regions of heaven, / who is he who sometimes floods
with joy, / and at others cruel and with impious hand, / fills the earth with anguish and sorrow? / I
hear him named everywhere, / and mortals invoke him at every moment, / or with prayer or
plaintive complaint, / or with a mouth that curses²⁴.

The innocent Adam is allowed to question the grieving mother of the dead child, and to ask questions that normal, experienced humans could never ask. If you pray, will God not grant your wish? If not, why not? Why does God punish? Why do the innocent suffer? Is there a benevolent Providence? These are all Byronic questions nakedly expressed in this poem. For all the jokes, the asides, the Byronic tone of *Don Juan*, Espronceda depicts a universe ruled by some form of cosmic injustice reminiscent of Byron's *Cain*. His reaction to his own insight is, of course, not unexpected. He turns his commentary into burlesque, cursing logic and a propensity to digress, and, having admitted the fact, he closes the canto. The poem remains unfinished but we can predict the direction it is to take.

With Espronceda's premature death in 1842 at the age of thirty six (he even vies with Byron in an early death) the true voice of Byron ceased to be echoed until the end of the century. Yet he continued to be read, imitated and reviled down the nineteenth hundreds and into our own century. In 2010, for example, Professor Agustín Coletes Blanco published Byron's Mediterranean letters and poems in a superb translation with an informed and exhaustive Introduction. It is to be hoped that this is only the first of a series of scholarly renditions of the noble Lord into Spanish. Time forbids any further assessment, but Byron's continued fortunes can be read in *The Reception of Byron in Europe* in the two chapters dedicated to the question of Byron's Romantic adventures in Spain – and, of course, in this present paper.

²⁴ 'El Dios ese que habita, / omnipotente en la región del cielo, / ¿quién es que inunda a veces de alegría, / y otras veces cruel con mano impía, / llena de angustia y de dolor el suelo? / Nombrar le oye doquiera, / y a todas horas el mortal le invoca, / ora con ruego o queja lastimera, / ora también con maldiciente boca,' VI, ll. 5672-80.