1. Introduction

Women readers shall have to forgive me for my addressing male readers first, but one particular question has engaged me ever since I began my research on nineteenth-century dandyism one and a half year ago. Dear reader, do you think you would qualify as a dandy? What exactly makes or breaks a dandy? How to recognise a twentieth-first-century dandy? Does his dandyism equal or outshine nineteenth-century dandyism? The answer to the last question is as predictable as it is easy: probably not. In his biographical essay *Du dandysme et de George Brummell* (1844) (On Dandyism and George Brummell), the French writer Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808-1889), whose dandyish and Byronic airs boosted his poor self-esteem, insisted that "the day that the society which produced Dandyism was transformed, Dandyism would be no more."[1] And yet there are men today whose idiosyncrasies strike us as dandyish: their unrestrained narcissism, for example, their fastidiousness about clothes and personal hygiene, their inclination to alcohol and drug abuse, their eating disorders, their fear and depression problems, their megalomaniac and self-destructive schemes, their sense of failure and a grating void inside, their poor self-image, their incapacity of steady relationships, their subsequent loneliness, their fits of uncontrollable emotions, their manipulative philandering, and their unquenchable thirst for success. Whereas these "remarkable" men are now conveniently diagnosed with a borderline personality disorder, nineteenth-century dandies based their sudden rise to fame on these idiosyncrasies and entertained their public for a remarkably long stretch of time before they were discarded for another plaything.

In the strictest sense of the word, dandyism was an essentially aesthetic doctrine and a cultural phenomenon that was inextricably linked to the Regency, the period of transition in British history that stretched from 1788, the eve of the French revolution,

[1] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly. *Who's a Dandy?* London: Gibson Square Books, 2003: p. 146; orig. French: «le jour où la société qui produit le Dandysme se transformera, il n'y aura plus de Dandysme.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée. *Du dandyisme et de George Brummell*. Paris: Ballend, 1986: p. 102).

to 1830, the year in which George IV (1762-1830), the King of Pleasure, died unmourned. In the broadest sense of the word, dandyism was an artistic phenomenon that crossed the English Channel in the wake of Lord Byron (1788-1824) and safely settled on the Continent where it developed into a fully-fledged literary movement whose key figures were Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly in the 1840s and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) in the 1860s. When Baudelaire's magnum opus *Fleurs du Mal* (1857) (Flowers of Evil) was first published in Great Britain, it reintroduced dandyism, along with decadence, in the fin-de-siècle literary circles, revolving around Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Although Oscar Wilde is the most famous dandy today, this descriptive and historical study of dandyism chooses to end with the discussion of Oscar Wilde's aesthetic dandyism and prefers to trace back the origins of this nineteenth-century movement to the very beginning, that is to say, to the Regency Period. This study focuses on the opposition between the pure dandyism of George "Beau" Brummell (1778-1840), who was indeed the first dandy, and the literary and sophisticated dandyism of Lord Byron, which the Byron authority Jerome McGann has come to call Byron's "lyrical dandyism".[1]

First of all, I pay attention to the immediate predecessors of the Regency dandy, more precisely, to the seventeenth-century "fobs" and the eighteenth-century "Macaronis". Seventeenth-century England witnessed how Oliver Cromwell's (1599-1658) puritan regime was succeeded by King Charles II's (1630-85) flamboyant merriness in 1660, and how the "would-be gallant or fop" became the stock character of the Restoration comedy.[2] In eighteenth-century England, it was a young nobleman's privilege to complete his education with a grand tour that led him through the whole of Europe and inevitably ended in Italy where he studied foreign languages, appreciated fine works of classical Roman art and adapted stylish and sophisticated manners. Upon their return to Great Britain, these young travellers, who called each other "Macaronis" or "Bond Street Loungers", founded the exclusive Macaroni Club at St James's in 1764.[3] These idling and trifling fobs, who overdressed in the tradition of the French court style, considered metropolitan London as their territory where their sartorial eccentricities

[1] McGann, Jerome. *Byron and Romanticism*. Ed. James Soderholm. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002: p. 99

[2] Salgado, Gamini. "Introduction." *Three Restoration Comedies: "The Man of Mode", "The Country Wife" and "Love for Love"*. By George Etherege, William Wycherly and William Congreve. London: Penguin Books, 1968: p. 16

[3] Krosny, Katharina. "Dandy." *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era 1760-1850*. Ed. C.J. Murray, New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004: p. 257

disgusted the older generation and amused caricaturists. Along with the etymology, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors of the Regency dandies are the topics of my discussion in the first chapter.

In the second chapter, I turn my attention to George, who was Prince of Wales and Prince Regent before he ascended the British throne in 1820 and remained King until his death in 1830. The Prince Regent – so the malicious version of the story goes – rejoiced in the upper classes' lavish lifestyle, doted on the Whigs, his father King George III's (1738-1830) political opponents, and tolerated swindling dandies at his court, neglecting the tremendous effect the American, French and Industrial Revolutions had on British society. Furthermore, the Napoleonic Wars held Continental Europe in a violent grasp for almost twenty years, but the atrocities of the war echoed only faintly through the story of the Regency. In the non-malicious version of the story, the view of the Prince Regent and his reign is more subtle: besides being the patron of the dandies, he generously contributed to the cultural life in London. The Regency period not only brought forth the satirical writers Jane Austen (1775-1817) and Lord Byron but also the Romantic poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), John Keats (1795-1821), and William Wordsworth (1770-1850). In fact, both dandyism and romanticism emerged in answer to the decline of traditional institutions, such as the aristocracy and the church, to the rise of the middle class, and to the general malaise at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The third chapter is entirely dedicated to the Regency dandy George "Beau" Brummell and the celebrated poet Lord Byron who competed for the public's attention and were society's celebrities during the Regency era, even though "Beau" Brummell has now sunk into oblivion. The question "What makes or breaks a dandy?" has guided me to tell the story of Brummell's life: his middle-class origins he disdained, his privileged education at Eton College, his ambiguous sexuality, his sudden rise to fame, his tyranny of high society that lasted for almost twenty years, his fastidiousness about dress and personal hygiene, his phlegmatic temperament, his charming wit, and his eventual downfall. In the same section, I explain how Brummell's pure dandyism inspired male fashion for years to come, a new kind of masculinity, and the fashionable novel, a popular subgenre of Victorian literature in which the dandyish main character was clearly modelled on "Beau" Brummell. Being a scion of impoverished Norman nobility, the mid nineteenth-century French Romantic Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly wrote *Du*

dandysme et de George Brummell, a biographical essay on "Beau" Brummell and his dandyism, to take revenge of the society that had treated him and his hero so uncongenially.

Lord Byron, who had been introduced to Brummell by their mutual friend Scrope Berdmore Davies, was determined to eclipse Brummell's fame as fast as possible and to become Great Britain's most handsome and fashionable man, according to the French writer Stendhal (1783-1842).[1] Byron's and Brummell's lives were matched by several parallels, and at the same time, were divided by clear differences. Lord Byron, who spent the first ten years of his life in the backstreets of middle-class Aberdeen before he inherited his baronetcy, despised the burgeoning middle class and insisted on being treated as an aristocrat during the rest of his life. As a future Lord, Byron was educated at Harrow College and Cambridge University and completed his privileged education with a grand tour, which formed the background of Byron's famous epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812). Like Brummell, Byron used his dandyism – a combination of studied poses and carefully crafted masks – to conceal his physical shortcomings, for example, his clubfoot or just to cut a figure in the public eye. There was a striking difference between Byron, the man who appeared in public, portraits, and literature and Byron, the dandy-about-town. Unlike Brummell, however, Byron cherished the burning ambition to launch a political career, but he decided to stick to poetry when his two attempts to deliver a convincing speech in the House of Lords failed. Integrating the poses and masks of his everyday dandyism into poetry, Byron created his "lyrical dandyism", which made established Romantic poets like William Wordsworth accuse him of blatant insincerity and hypocrisy, a reproach that haunted Byron's reputation throughout the nineteenth century and has lasted until today. The Byronic hero, the anti-hero Byron portrayed in many of his early narrative poems like *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, *The Giaour* (1813), and *Manfred* (1817), was interpreted as the personification of Byron's own tempestuous character and life. This suffering and brooding wanderer re-emerged in many nineteenth-century novels, notably in those of the Brontë sisters. The Promethean Man, another Byronic persona, however, incarnated Byron's burning political and artistic ambition, which was a most un-dandyish feature.

Charles Baudelaire recognised a kindred spirit in Byron thanks to the latter's "lyrical

[1] Stendhal. "Lord Byron en Italie." *Mélanges de littérature III-Mélanges critiques, le style et les écrivains*. Ed. Henri Martineau. Paris: Le divan, 1933. L'Encyclopédie de l'Agora. 21 Oct. 2005. 5 Nov. 2005<http://agora.qc.ca/reftext.nsf/Documents/Gordon_Lord_Byron/Lord_Byron_en_Italie_par_Stendhal>.

dandyism" and deliberate hypocrisy. In "Au lecteur" (To the Reader), the poem that opens *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), Baudelaire welcomed the reader's artificiality and hypocrisy, for they were opposed to the natural behaviour and morality he despised. For his part, Baudelaire cultivated a dandyism that was elaborately unnatural and self-consciously artificial in every aspect of his appearance and behaviour. The pioneering essay on his interpretation of dandyism *Le peintre de la vie moderne* (The Painter of Modern Life) (1863) established his reputation as a decadent dandy once and for all. The discussion of Baudelaire's *Le peintre de la vie moderne* concludes the third chapter.

Finally, in Oscar Wilde, the last and most famous dandy, the different kinds of nineteenth-century dandyism harmonised. In his childhood, Wilde was particularly fond of the fashionable novels in which Brummell-like characters played the leading role, and he tended to manipulate his audience in the same way "Beau" Brummell had done at the beginning of the nineteenth century. While Oscar Wilde shared his flamboyant sartorial style with Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, he inherited Byron's dramatic sense for theatricality and exaggeration. In the same way as Byron had done before him, Oscar Wilde also concealed his true intentions behind masks and poses both in real life and work. He based his successful plays and sole novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) on the dandyish themes of confusion, mistaken identity, eventual recognition, self-knowledge, and truth. Both Baudelaire and Wilde considered the artist "the forerunner and the revealer" who discovered beauty in the most unexpected places, beneath all the "brutalities" and "filth".[1] In the dock of the Old Bailey, however, Oscar Wilde, who was accused of "sodomy", silently forswore his dandyism. "I amused myself with being a *flâneur*, a dandy, a man of fashion," he wrote in *De Profundis*, a long letter to his lover Lord Alfred Douglas (1870-1945) that was posthumously published.[2] "There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility."[3]

Today, our conception of dandyism is a far cry from what it originally stood for in the early nineteenth century. In the preface to their *Le dandy*, Patrick Favardin and Laurent de Bouëxière lament that the label "dandy" has become so fashionable nowadays that any media personality who spends more time and care to his dress and manners than an

[1] Pine, Richard. *The Dandy and the Herald: Manners, Mind and Morals from Brummell to Durrell*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988: p. 61
[2] Wilde, Oscar. "De Profundis." *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1987: p. 857
[3] Ibid., p. 857

average man is doted with the title of dandy.[4] Time has had its eroding effect on dandyism:

> Since the beginning of this century, since the word [dandy] has become fashionable, we constantly talk about the dandyism of this or that writer. Genres have intermingled and eras have become blurred. Gifted with a magic virtue, the word has taken wing and broken free in order to land there where one least expects it, but where the critic thinks it fits.[1]

We have come to associate dandyism with frivolous foppery, homosexuality, snobbery, affectation, and pointless rebellion. Nowadays, we intuitively link a dandy with a foppish young man who devotes his entire life to the cause of style, smartness, and fashion. We probably have Elton John in mind, who fastidiously overdresses in eighteenth-century court dresses, wears wigs and make-up, and puts on sun glasses in all colours and shapes. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, officially the first theoretician of dandyism, would declare that this association is justified, but he would also add that dandyism is so much more:

> People who see things from a narrow perspective have got it into their heads that it was above all a question of dress, of external elegance – that Dandies were merely dictators of fashion, bold and felicitous masters of the art of making one's toilet. It is most certainly that, but it is other things besides.[2]

With "people who see things from a narrow perspective", Barbey indignantly referred to the author of *Sartor Resartus* (1831), Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who accused dandies of being a "Dandiacal" sect, a gathering of foolish "Clothes-Wearing Men".[3] Our view on dandyism has been largely determined by the Victorians who frowned upon the frivolous and amoral conduct of the Regency dandies. Barbey's words are echoed in Charles Baudelaire's defence of the dandy: "Contrary to what many thoughtless people may believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than a symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind."[4]

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[4] Favardin, Patrick, et Laurent Bouëxière. *Le dandy*. Lyon: La Manefacture, 1988: p. 17

[1] Ibid., p. 17; orig. French: "Depuis le début du siècle, depuis le mot est à la mode, on ne cesse de parler du dandysme de tel ou tel écrivain. Les genres se mélangent, les époques se télescopent. Paré d'une vertu magique, le mot s'enprend son envol et se détache pour s'abattre selon le bon vouloir du critique, là où on l'attend le moins.» My translation.

[2] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 78; Orig. French: «Les esprits qui ne voient les choses que par leur plus petit côté, ont imaginé que le Dandysme était surtout l'art de la mise, une heureuse et audacieuse dictature en fait de toilette et d'élégance extérieure. Très certainement c'est cela aussi; mais c'est bien davantage.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 31)

[3] Carlyle, Thomas. *Sartor Resartus*. 1831. *Project Gutenberg*. 29 Oct. 2005 <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1051>.

[4] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles. *Critique d'art suivi de Critique musicale*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976: p. 370; orig. French: «Le dandysme n'est même pas, comme beaucoup de personnes peu réfléchies paraissent le croire, un goût immodéré de la toilette et de l'élégance matérielle. Ces choses

Today, the Regency dandy is likely to be confused with his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors, the "Fobs" and the "Macaronis", who challenged the average Englishman's desire for more simplicity in dress.[1] Unlike his predecessors' foppishness, "Beau" Brummell's elegance was based on cleanliness and on the perfect "cut and style of a coat, not its ability to startle."[2] His own words perfectly illustrate this creed, "If John Bull turns round to look after you, you are not well dressed; but either too stiff, too tight, or too fashionable."[3] In contrast to "Beau" Brummell, George, the Prince of Wales, the later Prince Regent and George IV, found it very difficult to abandon the bright and rich-looking fashion he had been used to in his youth.[4] He continued sporting flamboyant fashion because he was a monarch after all and had to impress his court in some way.[5]

It is also generally thought that all dandies were effeminate homosexuals, androgenic creatures, or heartless seducers of young virgins. In reality, the link between dandies and their sexual preference was far more complex. "Beau" Brummell, for instance, avoided every form of emotional commitment, including sexual relationships with either men or women.[6] In the preface to his translation of Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*, George Walden points out that "Beau" Brummell's sexuality was an adjunct to his life rather than the core of it.[7] Brummell was "sufficient to himself", and all his desires, including sexual desires, yielded to the one and sole purpose of his life: the creation of an unapproachable and artificial pose.[8] Another Regency poser, Lord Byron, delighted the senses and dazzled the minds of both men and women. His notorious string of impossible love affairs, frivolous flings, incest with his half-sister, and broken marriage continue fascinating people today. Dandyism has become synonymous with homosexuality since the fin-de-siècle aestheticism of Oscar Wilde who explicitly admitted his homosexuality. When Oscar Wilde was accused of "sodomy", the reactionary Victorian society had found a scapegoat in order to take

ne sont pour le parfait dandy qu'un symbole de la supériorité aristocratique de son esprit.» My translation.
[1] Murray, Venetia. *High Society in the Regency Period 1788-1830*. London: Penguin Books, 1998: p. 24
[2] Ibid., p. 25
[3] Ibid., p. 25
[4] Ashelford, Jane. *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society 1500-1914*. London: The National Trust, 1996: p. 147
[5] Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 147
[6] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 54
[7] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 43
[8] Ibid., p. 43

revenge on the frivolous dandyism.[1] André Hielkema mentions in his introduction to a collection of essays by Dutch authors on dandyism that dandies adopted dandyism according to their own view on it and to their own background.[2] Since Oscar Wilde, dandyism has been closely associated with homosexuality, while Charles Baudelaire gave it a misogynistic character. In his intimate journal *Mon cœur mis à nu* (My Heart Laid Bare), a collection of instinctively written aphorisms, Baudelaire made fiercely clear what the dandy's stance is towards women and female sexuality:

> Woman is the opposite of the dandy.
> Thus she must inspire horror.
> Woman is hungry and she wants to eat. Thirsty, and she wants to drink.
> She's in heat and wants to be fucked.
> What fine merit!
> Woman is *natural*, that is to say, abominable.
> Thus she is always vulgar, that is to say, the opposite of the dandy.[3]

According to Baudelaire, women were the dandies' opposites because they were "natural", while dandies were "artificial".[4] In *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, Baudelaire's fascination with the artificial dandy and his aversion to nature re-appeared when he wrote: "Vice is done effortlessly, *naturally*, accidentally, virtue is always the product of an art."[5]

Dandyism is often confused with snobbery because both the dandy and the snob had the same goal: distinguishing themselves from the common herd.[6] Jean d'Ormesson, however, claims in *Le mythe du dandy* (The Myth of the Dandy) that these two kinds of social mountaineers reached that goal in their own way.[7] While the snob aimed at entering the upper classes, the goal of the dandy, who had already found his niche among the "exquisites", was to scandalise high society as much as possible.[8] Whereas the dandy could take as many liberties as he pleased, the snob could only dream of those

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[1] Goedgebuure, Jaap, en Ton Steijger. "De dandy tijdens het fin de siècle." Ed. Hielkema, André. *De dandy, of de overschrijding van de alledaagse facetten van het dandyisme.* Meppel: Boom, 1989: pp. 50-52

[2] Hielkema, André, 1989: p. 8

[3] Feldman, Jessica. *Gender on Divide, The Dandy in Modernist Literature*. Ithaca, London: Cornell UP, 1993: p. 6; orig. French: «La femme est le contraire du dandy./ Donc elle doit faire horreur./ La femme a faim et elle veut manger. Soif, et elle veut boire./ Elle est en rut et elle veut être foutue./ Le beau mérite!/ La femme est *naturelle*, c'est-à-dire abominable./ Aussi est-elle toujours vulgaire, c'est à dire le contraire du dandy.» (Baudelaire, Charles. *Fusées, Mon cœur mis à nu; La Belgique déshabillée suivi de Amoenitates Belgicae*. Paris: Gallimard, 1986: p. 90)

[4] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: pp. 374-75

[5] Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: pp. 374-75; orig. French: «Le mal se fait sans effort, *naturellement*, par fatalité; le bien est toujours le produit d'un art.» My translation.

[6] Jean d'Ormesson in Carassus, Emilien. *Le mythe du dandy*. Paris: Colin, 1971: p. 278

[7] Ibid., p. 278

[8] Ibid., p. 278

privileges because "provoking scandal was far above the snob's competences."[1] In his study of the dandy, Emilien Carassus adds another reason as to why we should make a distinction between a dandy, on the one hand, and the snob and the arriviste, on the other. These three types dedicated their lives to the creation of an artificial pose to mask their "insufficiency of the given me".[2] "Beau" Brummell could not boast wealth, any aristocratic title or artistic talents, and this was a serious obstacle in the Regency, an unfair social system that was based on social class and the old school tie exclusiveness.[3] Regency dandies were also doomed to remain in the shadow of their far more talented and aristocratic patrons. According to Carassus, the dandy, snob, and arriviste vented their frustration each in their own way:

> The arriviste sought power, the snob and the dandy rather sought a mirror. But in that mirror the dandy created his own reflection with the images that were already inscribed on it. Both placed the utmost importance on appearing, but the dandy sought to appear "differently", [while] the snob sought to appear "similarly".[4]

The French critic Jacques Boulenger (1870-1944), a contemporary of Oscar Wilde, equated dandyism with a special kind of snobbery:

> The dandy boasts of being a snob to such an extent that he ceases being it. He does not imitate anymore; on the contrary, he innovates. Far from obeying fashion, he dictates and creates fashion. And this intentionally exaggerated snobbery, which even transcends the dandy himself and becomes a new feeling, is dandyism. [5]

For both Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire, originality, singularity, and the ability to surprise other people without being surprised themselves were the most important features of the perfect dandy. Barbey d'Aurevilly often deplored that France had lost all its sense of originality and had been submerged in plain mediocrity since the middle class had taken over not only economic control but also political and ideological power in society.[6] Likewise, Baudelaire found in dandyism a new philosophy of stoicism that had been lost since the classical antiquity.[7] He formulated the main rule of dandyism as

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[1] Ibid., p. 278
[2] Ibid., p. 46
[3] Moers, Ellen. *The Dandy*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1960: pp. 17-18
[4] Carassus, Emilien, 1971: p. 53; orig. French: «L'arriviste recherch[ait] un pouvoir, le snob et le dandy recherch[aient] plutôt un miroir. Mais dans ce miroir le dandy crée son propre reflet avec les images qui s'inscrivent déjà. Tous deux accordent la plus grande importance au paraître, mais le dandy cherche à paraître 'autre', le snob à paraître 'parmi'.» My translation.
[5] Boulenger, Jacques. "George Brummel, esq." *Mercure de France* 213 (1906): p. 19. 22 Oct. 2005 <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/Visualiseur?Destination=Gallica&O=NUMM-105539&P=5)> orig. French: «[T]out en vantant d'être snob, . . . [le dandy] cesse de l'être. Il n'imite plus, il innove au contraire. Loin d'obéir à la mode, il la dirige et il la fait. Et ce snobisme volontairement outré, qui se dépasse lui-même et devient comme un sentiment nouveau, c'est le dandysme.» My translation.
[6] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée. 1986: p. 58, note 1
[7] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles: 1976: p. 370

"the pleasure of causing surprise in the other, and the proud satisfaction of never being surprised oneself".[1] The ability to surprise without being surprised explains Baudelaire's fascination for the warrior because the latter is "accustomed to surprises, [and therefore] is not easily surprised."[2] The beauty of a warrior lies in his "necessity of being prepared to die every minute."[3] In his theory on dandyism, Barbey d'Aurevilly had previously claimed this in the same way: "Dandyism's motto, the *Nil mirari* of its adherents . . . whose aim it was always to astound whilst remaining impassive themselves.[4]

That dandyish impassibility leads us to the following characteristic that is nowadays generally associated with dandies: their affectation. Nineteenth-century dandies generally adapted a pose of cool indifference. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly captured the underlying cause of this pose extraordinarily well in the following passage of his essay on dandyism: "At the heart of the agitations of modernity Dandyism introduced an antique calm. [T]he calm of the Dandy is the repose of a mind that, though acquainted with many ideas, is too abused to get excited." [5] Baudelaire associated the feeling of satiety, mental saturation, and consequent boredom with Byron and called it "le spleen". In Byron, Baudelaire recognised a kindred spirit because Byron's poetry reflected Baudelaire's own malaise – Barbey's "agitations of modernity" – that affected both his life and work. Whereas the term "melancholy" appears in Baudelaire's prose, its counterparts "spleen" or "ennui" are to be found in his poetry.[6] The English term "spleen" is derived from the Greek word "splên" that literally referred to the spleen, the organ near the stomach, where the black bile and melancholy gathered, according to the Greek physician Hippocrates (?460-?377 BC).[7] While the Roman poet Lucretius (?99-55 BC) called this feeling the "taedium vitae" or the "tedium of life", the influential French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-62) identified it as "l'ennui".[8] For the Romantics, "le spleen" was general disgust with life for which they

[1] Ibid., p. 370; orig. French: «le plaisir d'étonner et la satisfaction orgueilleuse de ne jamais être étonné» My translation.
[2] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: pp. 367-68; orig. French: «Accoutumé aux surprises, le militaire est difficilement étonné.» My translation.
[3] Ibid. pp. 367-68; orig. French: «la nécessité d'être prêt à mourir à chaque minute.» My translation.
[4] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 93; orig. French: «[L]a devise même du Dandysme, le *Nil Mirari* des ces hommes [dandies] . . . qui veulent toujours produire la surprise en gardant l'impassibilité.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 45)
[5] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: pp. 45-46, note 2; orig. French:«Le dandysme introduit le calme antique au sein des agitations modernes, . . . le calme du Dandysme est la pose d'un esprit qui doit avoir fait le tour de beaucoup d'idées et qui est trop dégoûté pour s'animer.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986, pp. 45-46, note 2)
[6] Pichois, Claude, et Jean-Paul Avice. *Dictionnaire Baudelaire*. Tusson: Du Lérot, 2002: p. 298
[7] Ibid, p. 298 and Bonneville, George. *Les Fleurs du Mal, Baudelaire*. Paris: Hatier, 1987: p. 31
[8] Bonneville, George, 1987: p. 32

could not find a plausible, underlying reason.[1] Baudelaire inherited this feeling from them and added his own philosophical dimension to the concept: "le spleen" was the unsatisfied aspiration for an impossible elsewhere.[2] The nineteenth-century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) described it as "anguish", and the twentieth-century French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80) labelled it as "la naussée".[3] Both Baudelaire and Barbey d'Aurevilly were convinced that they were born too late, for the French aristocracy had already lost much of its former allure, and the despicable middle class had gained considerable power by the middle of the nineteenth century. This inevitable process had also taken place in Great Britain decades before.[4] César Graña gives many reasons as to why Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire were so unhappy:

> the disappearance of the traditional forms of literary sponsorship, the final emergence of the middle class as the dominant class, not only economically but politically and ideologically, and the advent of industrialisation, technology, popular government, social utilitarianism, the concentration of cultural life in the cities, and intellectual unemployment.[5]

The reasons of "le spleen" formed a similar pattern in the case of Lord Byron and Barbey d'Aurevilly. Both Lord Byron and Barbey d'Aurevilly were scions of impoverished peerage. Therefore, they sensed that they lived rather on the fringes of high society than at the core of it, and that their birthright had been unjustly denied to them.[6] Another feature that they shared was their unhappy childhood and their troubled relationship with their mother.[7] Throughout Barbey d'Aurevilly's childhood, his mother called him an ugly monkey, and he described the day he was born as "a sombre and frosty day: the day of sighs and tears, marked with a prophecy of dust of the dead and from whom its name has been derived. Yes, I have always remembered how that day has doomed my life and my thought." [8] Catherine Byron, Byron's mother, had an ungovernable and cruel temper, and she reproached her son for everything that had gone wrong in her life.[9] Byron and Barbey d'Aurevilly were both fastidious about their

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[1] Ibid., p. 31
[2] Ibid., p. 35
[3] Ibid., p. 32
[4] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 370
[5] Graña, César. *Bohemian versus Bourgeois: French Society and the French Man of Letters in the Nineteenth Century*. New York, London: Basic Books, 1964: p. xiii
[6] Favardin, Patrick, et Laurent Bouëxière, 1988: p. 95 and Eisler, Benita. *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Flame*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999: p. 165, p. 170
[7] Favardin, Patrick et Laurent Bouëxière, 1988: p.96 and Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 13, p. 46, p. 66, p. 294
[8] Favardin, Patrick et Bouëxière, Laurent, 1988, p.96. orig. French: «un jour sombre et glacé: le jour des soupirs et des larmes que les morts dont il porte le nom ont marqué d'une prophétie de poussière. Oui, j'ai toujours cru que ce jour répandrait une funeste influence sur ma vie et sur ma pensée.» My translation.
[9] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 27

physical appearance and had a troubled love life. In his letters to his confidante Madame de Bourglon, Barbey incessantly complained about his poor health and mysterious ailments.[1] Likewise, Byron considered his club foot the tragedy of his life.[2] In his 1951 essay *L'homme révolté* (The Rebel), Albert Camus drew the attention to Byron's addiction to impossible love rather than real love as a possible cause of his spleen, which was fictionalised as one of the many characteristics of the Byronic hero in Romantic literature.[3] Barbey d'Aurevilly also felt that love for a woman was impossible and could never be consumed. Madame de Bouglon, whom he called his "ange blanc", remained his "fiancée éternelle" until he died at the age of eighty-one in 1889.[4] Another reason for Barbey d'Aurevilly's spleen was his frustration about his literary career that had not yielded the expected success. If he had been an impressive war hero of France instead of a misunderstood writer, he would have reached eternal glory. In one of his letters to Madame de Bourglon, he poured out all his frustrations:

> My talent is a reaction against my life, it is the dream of that of which I have been deprived. In fact, I would have preferred being a brilliant colonel of the hussars, leading his regiment into battle to having written everything I have written. Most of my friends do not share this view, but in my own opinion a marshal of France stands far above a marshal of literature.[5]

Today, Barbey d'Aurevilly comes across as a frustrated writer, whose creativity was constantly interrupted by the excessively high demands of publishers, correction of manuscripts, and worries about disappointing sales figures. Authorship was far from being artistic or heroic, it was merely a life of slave labour. In one of his last letters to Madame de Bourglon, he wrote,

> O! My life! My life has been one of efforts, of struggles, of work without rest, but at least it has been to some use to me in my old age . . . and maybe it will make me famous, maybe … who knows? I do not believe that my life will bring me glory and how I wished I had shared some happiness with you.[6]

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[1] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée. *Lettres à Madame de Bourglon*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978.
[2] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 13
[3] Camus, Albert. *L'Homme révolté*. Paris, Gallimard, 1951: p. 73
[4] Cocksey, David. *J. Barbey d'Aurevilly*. n.d. 14 Nov. 2005 <http://www.univ-tlse.2.fr/lla/barbey>.
[5] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1978: p. 108; orig. French: «Mon talent est une réaction contre ma vie, c'est le rêve de ce qui m'a manqué. En fait, j'aurais mieux aimé être un brillant colonel des hussards conduisant son régiment au feu que d'avoir écrit tout ce que j'ai écrit. Ce n'est pas l'avis de beaucoup de mes amis, mais c'est le mien à moi, pour qui un maréchal des lettres ne vaudra jamais un maréchal de France.» My translation.
[6] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1978: p. 134; Orig. French: «Ah! Ma vie! Elle a été une vie d'efforts, de luttes, de travail sans repos, mais du moins, elle me sert dans la vieillesse . . . et elle me fera peut-être une renommé, peut-être … qui sait? Je n'ai pas grande croyance à la gloire et j'aurais mieux aimé un peu de bonheur avec vous.». My translation.

When Byron was in one of his bleak moods, far away from public adulation, he despised poetry and considered it "the poorest substitute for his ideal of worth".[1] He was often quoted to have said that, "No one should be a rhymer who could do anything better".[2] Byron wanted to be seen as an aristocrat or politician who chanced to be a poet rather than the reverse. Douglas Ainslie (1865-1948), the translator of the 1897 English edition of Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*, sought for reasons as to why the French writer could become so infatuated with British dandyism. "Dandyism charmed him [Barbey d'Aurevilly], but rather on the intellectual side than on the positive side. He loved the isolation, the aristocratic reserve, the impertinent self-concentration of the Dandy," Ainslie wrote.[3] In conclusion, Byron's and Barbey d'Aurevilly's spleen was caused by social, psychological, physical and professional reasons.

Baudelaire's ennui, however, is ascribed by Favardin and Bouëxière to his questions about the meaning of life, his negative attitude towards life, and his personal revolt against the established society.[4] In his biography of Baudelaire, Jean-Paul Sartre described Baudelaire as an "impostor" because he had deliberately chosen

> to be Satan, the accomplished type of painful beauty. Defeated, fallen, guilty, denounced by the entire Nature, banned from the Universe, condemned by the remembrance of an inexpiable mistake, devoured by insatiable ambition, transfixed by the gaze of God who understands his diabolical essence.[5]

To protect himself against the outside world and against his megalomaniac self, Baudelaire created a world of beauty and artifice. His dandyism would "survive the pursuit of happiness in the others, in women, for example, that may even survive all illusions."[6]

Although a pure or prototypical dandy like "Beau" Brummell did not defy the aristocratic rules but slyly played games with them, for many twentieth-century critics, among whom Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, dandyism became a symbol for rebellion and defiance of the decorum. Their theory of the rebellious dandy was based

[1] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 407
[2] Ibid., p. 407
[3] Pine, Richard, 1998: pp. 18-19
[4] Favardin, Patrick, et Laurent Bouëxière, 1988: p. 90
[5] Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Baudelaire* cited in Pichois, Claude, et Jean-Paul Avice, 2002: p. 434; orig. French: «Baudelaire est surtout un imposteur, qui a choisi d'être Satan, le type accompli de la beauté douloureuse. Vaincu, déchu, coupable, dénoncé par toute la Nature, au ban de l'univers, accablé par le souvenir de la faute inexpiable, dévoré par une ambition inassouvie, transpercé par le regard de Dieu qui le fige dans son essence diabolique». My translation.
[6] Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 370; orig. French: «survivre à la recherche du bonheur dans autrui, dans la femme, par exemple; qui peut survivre même à tout ce qu'on appelle les illusions.» My translation.

on what Baudelaire had written in *Le peintre de la vie moderne*. For many twentieth-century critics, Baudelaire was the first to lay bare the true soul of dandyism and was therefore considered the most important theorist of the dandy school. The saying "You must shock the bourgeois" is generally attributed to be his.[1] According to Ellen Moers, English dandyism was "distressingly personal", for it was exclusively related to the person of "Beau" Brummell, but in France it became "an abstraction, a redefinement of intellectual rebellion."[2] Dandies defied society's rules, complying with their internal strict rules. In *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, dandyism incarnated heroism and rebellion against the background of a decadent society:

> Dandyism, which is an institution outside the law, has a rigorous code of laws by which all its subjects are strictly bound, however ardent and independent their individual characters may be. Dandyism is the last spark of heroism in times of decadence, debris of lost high civilisations. [3]

Long before Baudelaire, Byron had already coloured dandyism with heroism and rebellion because his travels to the Iberian Peninsula, devastated by the Napoleonic Wars, and to the East, where he swam the Hellespont, his defiance of British hypocrisy and Christian orthodoxy, his transcending of gender distinctions, his statelessness, and "heroic" death at Missolonghi made a legend of him already during the Regency and mythologized him for eternity.

Time has had its eroding effect on dandyism in the sense that dandyism has always been inextricably linked to fashion consciousness and fastidiousness, leaving out its literary, rebellious, artistic and psychological content. Whereas dandyism is often ascribed to the idiosyncratic and ephemeral whims of some nineteenth-century celebrities, it has its roots in the seventeenth-century Restoration comedy and the eighteenth-century grand tour made by British youngsters on the Continent. In order to come to grips with dandyism, we should first consider the etymology of the word "dandy" itself.

[1] «Il faut épater le bourgeois.» PoemHunter.com. "Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)." *PoemHunter.com*. 11 Apr. 2006 < http://www.poemhunter.com/charles-baudelaire/quotations/poet-6743/page-1/>.
[2] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 13
[3] Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: pp. 369-71; orig. French: «Le dandysme, qui est une institution en dehors des lois, à des lois rigoureuses auxquelles sont strictement soumis tous les sujets, quelles soient d'ailleurs la fougue et l'indépendance de leur [des sujets] caractère. Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroïsme dans les décadences, les débris de grandes civilisations disparues.» My translation.

2. Precursors of Dandyism

2.1 Etymology of the Word "Dandy"

Dandyism is a phenomenon that revolutionised cultural life in the nineteenth century and had a lasting effect on literature. Mid nineteenth-century thinkers, critics, and writers who observed how this apparent foppishness had appeared for the first time at the turn of the century and had consequently swept cultural life, devouring even the most rational mind, brooded on why dandyism had fired their enthusiasm or caused their irritation. It was not a very enviable task to disentangle myth from reality and lies from truth. Dandyism was indefinable, but still there were those who stubbornly persisted because something as ephemeral as dandyism had to be pinned down in writing in order to survive. One might wonder if a definition can capture something as fleeting and passing as dandyism because one of the objectives of most dandies was to transcend all bounds that society imposed on them. In order to define dandyism, it is important to trace the origin of the word "dandy" by means of its etymology.

Dandyism attracted as much adverse criticism as praise in Great Britain and France in the first half of the nineteenth century. Since neither the French nor the British wanted to be associated with frivolity, they attributed the origin of the word "dandy" to the British or the French respectively. On 17 April 1819, *The Northampton Mercury* published an article, edited by the honourable Bishop of Fleetwood, that studied the origin of that despicable term, "which has been recently applied to a species of reptile very common in the metropolis": "[the term] appears to have arisen from a small silver coin struck by King Henry VII, of little value, called a *dandiprat*, and hence Bishop Fleetwood observes the term is applied to worthless and contemptible persons."[1] In the eyes of the chauvinist French, these "worthless and contemptible persons" could not be one of them. In mid nineteenth-century France, *Le magasin pittoresque* reported how the word "dandy" was derived from the English term "dandiprat", a small silver coin, but they mistakenly ascribed it to Henry VIII (1491-1547) instead of Henry VII (1457-1509).[2] Besides the meaning of a small silver coin of little value, Françoise Coblence adds the second meaning of "midget" and "dwarf" to the word "dandiprat".[3] Nowadays,

[1] LoveToKnow 1911 Online Encyclopedia. "Dandy." *LoveToKow*. 2003-2004. 11 Nov. 2005 <http://56.1911 encyclopedia.org/DA/DANDY.htm>.
[2] L'Encyclopédie de l'Agora. *Dandysme*. 21 Oct. 2005. 10 Nov. 2005 <http://agora.qc.ca/mot.nsf/Dossiers/Dandysme>.
[3] Coblence, Françoise. *Le dandysme, l'obligation d'incertitude*. Paris: PUF, 1980: p. 14

critics acknowledge that the origin of the word "dandy" is as uncertain as the phenomenon it describes. In fact, the origin may be both English and French, but it is more likely to be English, and when anglomania, the craze for everything English, swept France during the first part of the nineteenth century, fashionable French started using it in their speech and writing.[1]

The word made its first textual appearance in an old Mother Goose nursery rhyme *Handy Spandy Jack-a-dandy* or *Handy Spandy Jack'O dandy* in 1632.[2] Mother Goose was the imaginary writer of songs and poems that were sung to young children to lull them to sleep. In the nursery rhyme, the dandy is depicted as a ridiculous and untrustworthy fat who is fond of expensive sweets:

> Handy spandy Jack-a-dandy
> Loves plum cake and sugar candy,
> He bought some at the grocers [*sic*] shop
> And out he came, hop, hop, hop.[3]

Five decades later, the term "dandy" re-appeared in a Scottish border song at the end of the eighteenth century to mock the "fine" English gentlemen.[4] The English-Scottish border region had been the setting of a bloody history of conquests, subsequent re-conquests, battles and merciless raids, and the Scottish ballads evocated that turbulent past.[5] The Scottish ballad that mentions the dandy runs as follows: "I've heard my grany crack O/ O sixty years twa years back/ When there were sic a stock of Dandies O."[6] Like the nursery rhyme, this border ballad depicts the dandy as a despicable and effeminate Englishman.

The word "dandy" re-appeared in the 1770s in a setting far away from Great Britain: the American revolutionary colonies. An unknown, battle-weary British soldier created the first stanzas of the song *Yankee Doodle Dandy* to vent his frustration of an endless and bloody guerrilla war far away from home and to mock the appearance of the American troops.[7] Unlike the British soldiers who were dressed in their ostentatious scarlet-led uniforms, indignant American citizens, who were tired of paying taxes without being represented in the British Parliament, joined the ranks of the new American army,

[1] Ibid., p. 14
[2] Ibid., p. 14
[3] *Nursery Rhymes Lyrics and Origins*. Ed. L.K. Alchin. 15 Sep. 2004. 11 Nov. 2005 <http://www.rhymes.org.uk, 11 November 2005>.
[4] Kelly, Ian. *Beau Brummell, The Ultimate Dandy*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2005: p. 2
[5] "Border Ballad." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 13 Nov. 2005. 22 Nov. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Border_Ballad>.
[6] Coblence, Françoise, 1980: p. 14
[7] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 11

dressed in whatever could pass for a uniform. Although they had not enjoyed any military training and wore "variegated, ill-fitting and incomplete" uniforms, their determination to end British tyranny over the colonies was decisive.[1] Nowadays, American children still sing the following lines:

> Yankee Doodle came to town,
> Riding on a pony,
> Stuck a feather in his hat
> And called it Macaroni!
> Yankee Doodle keep it up,
> Yankee Doodle Dandy,
> Mind the music and the step
> And with the girls be handy.[2]

The Regency dandies' nearest ancestors, the "Macaronis", also appeared in this song because the Americans' hilarious uniform probably reminded the English soldier of the affected, oddly-dressed, cosmopolitan Londoners.

The word "dandy" might also originate from the French words "dent-de-lion", which was transformed into English as "dandelion", or "dandin", the French word for a "ninny", a "booby", or "someone who balances from one foot onto the other".[3] Either in French or in English, the word "dandy" had so many negative connotations that it was ideal to designate vain, affected and idle fobs, such as the "Macaronis" and their descendants, the Regency dandies. Society did not take them and their art seriously, and apparently the Regency dandies adopted this name to provoke society. "Within Brummell's own lifetime [the term] was used as compliment, insult, sexual slur and braggadacio," Ian Kelly concludes in his biography of "Beau" Brummell.[4]

[1] Ibid., p. 11
[2] Ibid., pp. 11-12
[3] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 14
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 2

2.2 The Precursors of the Regency Dandies

> The DANDY was got by *Vanity* out of *Affectation* – his dam, *Petit Maître* or *Macaroni* – his granddam, *Fribble* – his great-granddam, *Bronze* – his great-great-granddam, *Coxcomb* – and his earliest ancestor FOP …[1]

2.2.1 French Precursors: The Restoration Comedy

Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly did not believe that dandyism was a universal institution of all times. Instead it was tightly connected with one particular era and place where it emerged for the first time, that is to say, the British Regency. In *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*, Barbey d'Aurevilly claimed that dandyism was inextricably linked to Great Britain because it was a very particular kind of vanity only to be found in British society.[2] More than anywhere else in the civilised world, British society was ruled by conventions and hypocrisy, causing man's eternal dilemma between John Milton's (1608-74) sin and death, a central theme in English literature since John Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost" (1667), which was based on the fall of Adam and Eve.[3] Barbey d'Aurevilly admitted that French history had known great male personalities like the noble statesman Richelieu, but he sadly concluded that "the country of Richelieu would never produce a Brummell."[4]

On several occasions throughout his essay, Barbey d'Aurevilly was not always consistent and even contradicted himself, for instance, when he traced back the origin of dandyism not to the British Regency but to seventeenth-century France where future King Charles II prepared the restoration of the British Monarchy, which Barbey d'Aurevilly described as a "grace" that chased away "the terrible and unperturbed seriousness of Cromwell's puritans."[5] When he wrote this, Barbey d'Aurevilly must have had the young, affable, charming, and easy-going Charles II in mind who arrived in London with a spectacular procession in 1660.[6] The new monarch was "[s]lim in

[1] Passage taken from Egan, Pierce. *The True History of Tom and Jerry; or the Day and Night Scenes of Life in London*. London, 1820-1828 in Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 24
[2] Barbey D'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 29
[3] Ibid., p. 33
[4]Barbey D'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 25; orig. French: «le pays de Richelieu ne prouduira pas de Brummell». My translation.
[5]Barbey D'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 42; orig. French: «le sérieux terrible et imperturbable des Puritains de Cromwell» My translation.
[6] Strong, Roy. *The Story of Britain: A People's History*. London: Pimlico, 1996: pp. 278-79

build, with dark hair and saturnine features, . . . soberly dressed, apart from the crimson plume waving in his hat which he raised 'to all most stately ever seen'."[1] Four years after Charles II had ascended the British throne, the first Restoration comedy was performed, and this event marked the Royalist reaction against the Puritanism of Cromwell, who had the theatres closed in 1642.[2] *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub* (1664) was a sensational success and its playwright Sir George Etherege (1634-1691) was a prime example of the Restoration ethos.[3] Etherege, for example, was not only familiar with French language and literature and Molière's (1622-73) elegant comedies, but he was also "a dashing man about town", priding himself on his gentlemanly behaviour and his cultivation of "noble laziness of mind".[4] In *Love in a Tub*, Etherege announced a "modern way of writing".[5] From then on, his plays were directed to a new kind of audience, the setting of the comedies was new, new themes were dealt with, and a new stock character was introduced.[6] Unlike the Elizabethan theatre that had entertained on a massive scale, Restoration playwrights socially elevated their comedies, restricting their audience to the "polite society".[7] The setting of the plays was the aristocrats' own environment, a "world, gay, bright and brittle, a world where grace and style [were] all-important, where elegance of dress and deportment [was] matched by polished epigram and lively repartee," Gamini Salgado explains in his introduction to *Three Restoration Comedies*.[8] The nineteenth-century essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834) referred to the Restoration comedy as the "comedy of manners" because low characters were no longer distinguished from high characters because of their "humble birth or fortune" but because of their deficiency "in the manners and accomplishments of a gentleman".[9] In that way, the Restoration gallant and the fop or the would-be gallant were born.[10] The aristocratic spectator saw "a satisfactorily idealised portrait of himself" in the gallant, his dress and behaviour being extremely elegant, his conversation agile and witty, and his attitude sceptical, even cynical.[11] The fop, on the contrary, made a complete fool of himself in his desperate

[1] Ibid., pp. 278-79
[2] Salgado, Gamini,1968: p. 12, p. 13
[3] Ibid., p. 29
[4] Ibid., p. 28, p. 30
[5] Ibid., p. 15
[6] Ibid., p. 15
[7] Ibid., p. 16
[8] Ibid., p. 15
[9] Ibid., p. 16
[10] Ibid., p. 16
[11] Ibid., p. 20

attempts to imitate the gallant, and his antics made the gallant's wit seem brighter than it actually was.[1] Sir Frederick Frolick in *Love in a Tub* and Sir Fopling Flutter in *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), which were two plays by Etherege, were both men of fashion whose attempts to conceal their inner vacuity with affectation and outer appearances failed to the great amusement of the public.[2] Whereas the fop's affectation stood for "hypocrisy, dissimulation and mere vanity", the gallant's artificial mannerisms were the necessary and desirable way in which the "natural man" worked his way through a highly sophisticated society, based on disguise and masquerade.[3] Although Restoration dramas remained popular for their witty conversations and glittering merriness, charges of "intellectual and moral dishonesty" were levelled against them, especially in the Victorian era, when sincerity was highly regarded.[4]

2.2.2 Italian Precursors: "The Macaronis"

The immediate predecessors of the Regency dandy were young and wealthy scions who upon their return home from their grand tour were determined to introduce the sophisticated and elegant manners they had known on the Continent into the – in their eyes – somewhat plain British culture. The grand tour was a period from a few months to eight years that completed the education of a young nobleman who had previously studied at one of the public schools – Eton, Harrow, Westminster and Winchester – and at the universities of Oxbridge.[5] A contemporary described the purpose of the grand tours as follows:

> As such it [the grand tour] fulfilled a major social need, namely the necessity of finding young men, who were not obliged to work and for whom work would often be a derogation, something to do between school and the inheritance of family wealth? It allowed the young to sow their oats abroad and it kept them out of trouble, including disputed [*sic*] with their family, at home.[6]

Apart from having a first sexual experience and keeping out of trouble at home, the young British noblemen were expected to broaden their minds, to learn foreign languages, and to acquire a "new self-reliance and self-possession as well as highly developed taste and manners."[7] Thanks to the improved European road network and the

[1] Ibid., p. 17
[2] Ibid., p. 32
[3] Ibid., p. 33
[4] Ibid., p. 22
[5] J. Paul Getty Trust. *Italy on the Grand Tour*. 2001. 29 Oct. 2005 <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibition/grand_tour/index.htm>.
[6] Eighteenth-century England. Ed. Sarita Kusuma et al. n.d. U of Michigan. 29 Oct. 2005 <http://www.umich.edu/~ece/student_projects/grandtour_tourism/index.html>.
[7] Ibid.

well-developed stagecoach system, British tourism on the Continent reached its height just before the outbreak of the French Revolution.[1]

The grand tour traditionally led the young travellers to Paris where they were submerged in French "refinery".[2] The travel went then either in the direction of Germany or more likely to Italy with its heritage of ancient Roman monuments.[3] During the eighteenth century and well into the Regency, the British revered the art and culture of the Ancient Greeks and Romans.[4] Upon their return, the young travellers founded the "Macaroni Club" in 1764 – named after the Italian national dish "maccherone" – with an exclusive dress code of their own.[5] The "St James Street Macaronis" or the "Bond Street Loungers" were eighteenth-century bucks who were uncomfortably dressed in "a very tight, very long-tailed coat with pastel-coloured breeches, a suffocating stock", wore "wigs a yard high and high-heeled shoes" and put special emphasis on accessories, such as "jewelled quizzing glass[es], snuffbox[es], rings", muffs and fans, and carried "nosegays of flowers".[6] The "Macaroni Club" reached its zenith in 1778, when William Brooks founded an exclusive men's club in St James Street where originally only "Macaronis" were admitted.[7] Brooks's had once been a public chocolate house but became a private club when scions of ancient families preferred gambling away their family wealth and estate behind closed doors.[8] Rumours of alcohol abuse, sexual excesses, and exaggerated gambling spread through London. Brooks's had so many Whig politicians among its clientele that the famous politician Charles James Fox (1749-1806) was more easily found there than in Parliament.[9] Another leading "Macaroni" was the eccentric playwright Sir Lumley Skeffington (1771-1850) who wrote *The Sleeping Beauty* that was first performed at Drury Lane in 1805.[10] In his memoirs, Captain Rees Howell Gronow (1794-1865) remembered how the fop whitened his face to look like "a French toy", how he was "dressed à la Robespierre", and how his sweet perfume heralded his arrival.[11] Captain Gronow was one of the most

[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] J. Paul Getty Trust. *Italy on the Grand Tour*. 2001. 29 Oct. 2005 <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibition/grand_tour/index.htm>.
[5] Krosny, Katharina, 2004: p. 257
[6] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 45 and Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 147
[7] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 160
[8] Ibid., p. 160
[9] Ibid., p. 160
[10] Ibid., p.45
[11] Gronow, Rees Howell. *The Reminisces and Recollections of Captain Gronow*. London: Nimmo, 1900: p. 63

accurate observers of the Regency who spent his old age collecting his memoirs in *Reminiscences of Captain Gronow: Being Anecdotes of the Camp, the Court and the Clubs* (1862). When he was still a young dandy and man-about-town, he eagerly enlisted in the army to see action on the battlefields of the Iberian Peninsula and of Waterloo.[1] Unlike many others, he survived the fierce battles, the Regency, his dandyism, the gambling, drinking, and duelling.[2] Writing his memoirs in old age, he looked back on his "sinful" youth with distaste and repentance.[3] Unsurprisingly, the "Macaronis" and Sir Lumley Skeffington in particular were mercilessly lampooned by Regency caricaturists and satirists. Young Lord Byron, for instance, mocked Skeffington's play *The Sleeping Beauty* in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), in which he excoriated the contemporary literary scene:

> In grim array though Lewis' spectres rise,
> Still Skeffington and Goose divide the prize.
> And sure *great* Skeffington must claim our praise,
> For skirtless coats and skeletons of plays
> Renown'd alike; whose genius ne'er confines
> Her flight to garnish Greenwood's gay designs;
> Nor sleeps with 'Sleeping Beauties', but anon
> In five facetious acts comes thundering on,
> While poor John Bull, bewilder'd with the scene,
> Stares, wondering what the devil it can mean;
> But as some hands applaud, a venal few!
> Rather than sleep, why John applauds it too.[4]

As Lord Skeffington had always lived in a great style, squandering his family fortune, he wasted away in King's prison in London, where debtors and bankrupts were held.[5]

Throughout the eighteenth century, the French Court of Versailles had set the tone of fashion, using make-up, powdering hair, and dressing in elaborately embroidered garments. The direct opposite of this artificial look was the "natural" look that became in vogue after the French Revolution. In her critical study of fashion correlated with society, Jane Ashelford points out that besides the objectionable outer appearances of the "Macaronis", their unembarrassed copying of foreign fashions was an insult in the face of "a growing sense of cultural nationalism".[6] After all, Great Britain had lost its

[1] McKie, David. "A Captain about Town." *Guardian Unlimited* 10 Nov. 2005. 16 Dec. 2005 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,5673,1638893,00.html>.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Byron, George Gordon Noel. *Selected Poems*. Eds. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996: p. 30
[5] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p.45
[6] Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 147

colonial possessions in America, and the society on the Continent was radicalising in the advent of the French Revolution. The British aristocracy and ruling classes could no longer afford to compromise themselves with the "Macaronis" who promoted "continental and Courtly styles and values", while the nation called for heroism and patriotism. [1] The flamboyant Whig politician Charles James Fox, who had introduced red-heeled high shoes, gave up his "Macaroni" style and astonished London in about 1780 when he decided no longer to bathe, to wear perfumes or to shave, and had his hair and beard grow long and tousled.[2] In that way, the future sympathiser of the French Revolution broke social boundaries and propagated egalitarian ideas.[3] The reign of the "Macaronis" only lasted for a decade, and the reign of the dandy was about to dawn.

[1] Ibid., p. 147
[2] Chenoun, Farid. *Des modes et des hommes: deux siècles d'élégance masculine*. Paris: Flammarion, 1993: p. 19
[3] Ibid., p. 19

3. The Regency: The Reign of the Dandy

3.1 The King of Pleasure: King George IV (1762-1830)

3.1.1 Prince of Wales (1762-1811)

On 12 August 1762, gunshots were fired in honour of the little Prince, born to King George III and his Queen Consort Charlotte Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744-1818). Since the child was next in line to the British throne, he was created Knight of the Garter, the highest order of British knighthood, and bore the title of Prince of Wales.[1] Although little George was brought up plainly and strictly far away from the Court of St James, he grew into a well-educated, quick-witted and handsome Prince who had "easy and engaging manners".[2] When he was a teenager, the Prince grew ashamed of the archaic way in which his mother kept dressing and of his father's priggishness. He was also aware that the wealthier aristocracy despised him for his comparative poverty, and how the fashionable beaux looked down on his tasteless cravats and coats.[3] On his introduction into society, a contemporary critic described the Prince's appearance in such a way that the Prince, who was always anxious for admiration and affection, desperately shut himself in his room for days:

> His magnificence was such that the arbiters of fashion were compelled reluctantly to admit that a powerful rival had come upon the scene. His coat was pink silk, with white cuffs; his waistcoat white silk, embroidered with various coloured foil and adorned with a profusion of French paste. . . .[4]

One of the most influential arbiters of taste was "Beau" Brummell who set new trends for a nobility, desperately in search of a style of their own, after they had been increasingly mocked at by a middle class who had steadily grown self-confident. In my opinion, when Brummell and the Prince Regent first met in 1793, they did not begin a normal friendship, but a professional partnership that benefited both of them. While "Beau" Brummell took care of the Prince's public relations and created the image of the Prince as "The First Gentleman of Europe", the Prince of Wales introduced the ambitious dandy in London society and kept duns at a safe distance.[5] The Prince of Wales himself was a transitional figure between two different centuries and codes of

[1] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p. 21 and "Order of the Garter, the." *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. CD-ROM. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1978-2003

[2] Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. *George III (1738-1820) & Queen Charlotte (1744-1818)*. n.d. 3 Dec. 2005 <http://www.kew.org/heritage/people/george3_charlotte.html>.; Priestley, J.B., 1971: p.21; Favardin, Patrick, et Laurent Bouëxière, 1988: p. 24

[3] Priestley, J.B., 1971: pp.15-16

[4] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 25

[5] Ibid., p. 209

conduct. In the eighteenth century, the royal family and the nobility who lived at the court had been the core of high society.[1] The Industrial Revolution, though, was creating a new moneyed aristocracy and a powerful middle class who self-confidently created a style of their own, drawing inspiration from their fondness of the countryside and the classical antiquity.[2] Ashamed of his mother's eighteenth-century musty hoops, his creativity curtailed by a dominant father, and despised by a wealthier and more elegant nobility, the Prince rebelled, adopting an extravagant, dandyish attitude and running into serious debts. One of George III's ways to curtail the extravagant nature of his son was to cut down his official allowance. The old King's efforts, however, were in vain because money was a fairy gold that a pleasure-loving Prince had not to take seriously.[3]

All hope was lost when the Prince of Wales turned twenty-one in the summer of 1783, gaining a grant of £60,000 from Parliament and an annual income of £50,000 from his father.[4] The Prince celebrated his coming-of-age in such a grand way that the colour drained from his father's cheeks, and many contemporaries described the fête in their journals and memoirs. One guest remembered how the party was "of the most expensive, magnificent and varied description, prolonged in defiance of usage, and almost of human nature, from the noon of one day to the following day."[5] That same summer, the Prince of Wales visited the seaside resort of Brighton, where he rented a snug cottage on the river Styne and lost his heart. The Royal Pavilion, as it still stands today, grew over thirty-five years from a picturesque cottage with a rose garden to an opulent palace where the Prince's great passions for music, interior decoration, and fine arts developed to their full extent.[6] Upon his return to London in November 1783, the Prince took proudly residence in Carlton House, a palace off Pall Mall that his father had reluctantly given him.[7] The enthusiastic and spendthrift Prince immediately set his mind on its enlargement and embellishment which took more than thirty years and "involved a series of architects, a commensurate number of styles and a vast fortune

[1] Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 122
[2] Ibid., p. 147
[3] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p.15
[4] "George IV of the United Kingdom." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 19 Feb. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_IV_of_the_United_Kingdom>.
[5] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 202
[6] Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. George III (1738-1820) & Queen Charlotte (1744-1818). n.d. 3 Dec. <http://www.kew.org/heritage/people/george3_charlotte.html>
[7] Hibbert, Chistopher. *London: The Biography of a City*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984: p. 125

which the improvident Prince admitted was 'enormous'."[1] Carlton House was the home of the "Carlton House Set", the Prince's inner circle of friends who dictated fashionable life of the Regency.[2] The radical Whig politician Fox, who welcomed the French Revolution in 1789, was a regular visitor at Carlton House, as was the legendary beauty Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806), the successful playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), "Beau" Brummell, and other Regency personalities.[3] The Prince of Wales's choice of friends perfectly fitted the pattern to tease and provoke his father, the King. Since he had reached the age of majority and gained financial freedom, the Prince developed a policy and a political outlook of his own. Unlike his father who favoured the Tories, the political leaning of the Prince of Wales was towards the Whigs. The Duchess of Devonshire, for example, was one of the great Whig hostesses who openly championed the Whig causes, using her Devonshire House as a political platform.[4] "Beau" Brummell's perfectly balanced costume and elegance became the trademark of the Whigs.[5] At one of those gatherings of the "Carlton House Set" in 1784, the young Prince was introduced to Maria Anne Fitzherbert (1756-1837), who had previously been married and widowed twice.[6] While his father the King led a frugal and chaste life with Queen Charlotte, the Prince of Wales ostentatiously kept mistresses, producing several illegitimate children but not one legitimate heir to the British throne.[7] Several mistresses came, stayed a while and went, but the life of the Prince changed when Mrs Fitzherbert came into his life. She was older than the Prince and therefore more careful: she only accepted his advances when he proposed to marry her.[8] Although Mrs Fitzherbert had a respectable background, she was Roman Catholic, and the 1701 Act of Settlement declared that the heir apparent who married a Roman Catholic forfeited all rights to the crown.[9] Some years before, Parliament had passed the 1772 Marriage Act, stipulating that any marriage contracted by a member of the royal family was invalid without the King's consent.[10] George III had indeed arranged everything in order to prevent his wayward son from doing foolishnesses. Nevertheless, George and Maria "secretively" contracted a void marriage in 1785, a relationship that

[1] Ibid., p. 125
[2] Ibid., p. 3
[3] Ibid., p. 3
[4] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 307
[5] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 6
[6] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p. 26
[7] Ibid., p. 21
[8] Ibid., p. 26
[9] Ibid, p. 29
[10] Ibid., p. 29

was to last until 1803.[1] Although Mrs Fitzherbert fell from his grace, she was well provided for, and she determined the pattern of the Prince's later love life. His preference for older and buxom ladies, with whom he had a more platonic friendship than a sexual relationship, was mercilessly ridiculed by contemporary satirists and caricaturists:

> The foremost of the royal brood
> who broke his shell and asked for food;
> Turn'd out a cock of manners rare,
> A fav'rite with the feather'd hair . . .
> But though his love was sought by all,
> Game, dunghill, bantam, squab and tall,
> Among the whole, not one in ten
> Could please him like a tough old Hen.[2]

Hopelessly debt-ridden and at his wits' end, the Prince of Wales consented to marry his German cousin, Princess Caroline of Brunswick (1768-1821), in 1795, provided that his debts were paid and his income doubled.[3] The greedy Prince immediately regretted the bargain because he instantly disliked his bride when they met for the first time in 1795. When he saw his "blowsy, petulant, noisy, vulgar and dirty" bride, the sensitive Prince desperately prayed his attendant for a glass of brandy.[4] Her family was relieved that they had been able to marry her off so well, as she was ungraceful, coarse and was even thought to be mentally ill from porphyria that lay dormant in the Hanoverian dynasty.[5] Although the unlucky groom was reported to have spent the wedding night on the carpet in front of the fire, they contrived to produce their only child, Princess Charlotte (1796-1817), who was born in January 1796.[6] As much as the Prince of Wales hated his new bride, she hated him even more. One of her ladies-in-waiting spread the rumour in London that the Princess of Wales "made wax effigies of him [the Prince of Wales], stuck the figurines through and through with pins of her own dress, roasted them, chanted a few curses and actually believed that such methods would succeed in killing him."[7] Despite all her shortcomings, the public favoured her instead of the Prince because his expensive extravagance, his dissolute mode of life, and his deliberate alienation from wife and daughter made him increasingly unpopular.[8]

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[1] Ibid., p. 29
[2] Peter Pindar (John Wolcot) cited in Murray, Venetia, 1998: pp. 4-5
[3] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p. 30
[4] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 4
[5] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p. 31
[6] Ibid., p. 31 and Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 80, note 1
[7] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 4
[8] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p. 32

3.1.2 Prince Regent (1811-1820) and King George IV (1820-1830)

Upon declaring George III no longer fit to rule in June 1811, British parliament bestowed all the rights of a monarch on the Prince of Wales but refrained from conferring the title of King to him as long as the old King lived.[1] When George was still Prince of Wales, he had been obliged to account for his expenditure to Parliament.[2] As soon as he became Prince Regent, though, that control was no longer possible, and he was free to spend as much as he wanted. Therefore, neither effort nor cost was spared to celebrate the inauguration of his Regency in a grand style that suited the occasion and his character.[3] The Prince used his talent for entertaining and Carlton House, which was a perfect setting for splendid parties, to get even the most sceptic mind on his side. A bedazzled guest of the ball in June 1811 observed how

> on these occasions, for which he seemed particularly formed, he appeared to great advantage. Louis XIV himself could hardly have eclipsed the son of George III in a ballroom, or when doing the honours of his palace surrounded by the pomp and attributes of luxury and royal state.[4]

On the list of invitees figured the principal national and international nobility, but his wife, Princess Caroline, his mother, Queen Charlotte, and his sisters were not allowed to attend the most brilliant party of the season and possibly of the decade.[5] The Prince Regent, with all his newly restored self-confidence, could not care less for conventions and protocol. Nor did the list include his most loyal friends like "Beau" Brummell and Whig politicians, for he had decided to favour the Tories instead. His daughter Princess Charlotte was reported crying when her father betrayed his closest Whig friends and shifted to the Tory clan.[6] Lord Byron dedicated his satirical poem "Lines to a Lady Weeping" (1812) to the event:

> Weep, daughter of a royal line,
> A Sire's disgrace, a realm's decay;
> Ah! happy if each tear of thine
> Could wash a father's fault away!
> Weep – for thy tears are Virtue's tears –
> Auspicious to these suffering isles;
> And each drop in future years
> Repaid thee by thy people's smiles![7]

[1] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 21
[2] "George IV of the United Kingdom." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 19 Feb. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_IV_of_the_United_Kingdom>.
[3] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 209
[4] Ibid., p. 202
[5] Ibid., p. 202
[6] Byron, George Gordon Noel. *Selected Poems*. Eds. Susan F. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996: p. 788
[7] Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 154

The shift from the Whigs to the Tories, however, was not one of the Prince's whimsical antics but had underlying political causes. When the Prince Regent asked the Whigs to join the existing Tory administration under Spencer Perceval (1762-1812), his former allies bluntly refused to cooperate with their political arch-enemies because of their disagreements over the Catholic Emancipation.[1] When King Charles II restored the English monarchy in 1660, Parliament passed the Test Act (1663) that made membership of the Anglican Church compulsory and prevented Catholics, Jews, and dissenting Protestants from becoming members of Parliament or holding public offices.[2] By the opening years of the Regency it was no longer possible to ignore the controversial issue of the Catholic Emancipation.[3] Since the question hopelessly divided the government – the Whigs supporting it, and the Tories opposing it – the predecessors of the Prince Regent had carefully avoided this political hot potato.[4] This vexed issue stirred people's mind throughout the Regency and the reign of George IV. In 1829, one year before George IV passed away, all political and civil liberties were finally restored to the Catholics, except from the provision that only Anglicans could be King, Queen or Royal Consort.[5]

Charles James Fox, the Whigs' brilliant standard-head, died in 1806 and proved to be irreplaceable.[6] In revenge for their exclusion from the political scene, the Whigs started championing the cause of the abandoned Princess Caroline. One of the closest intimates and most fervent campaigners of Princess Caroline was Lord Byron who was fond of her lack of pretension, her funny German accent, her noisiness, and her bawdy and blunt humour that had so much distressed the aesthetic Prince.[7] As much as his old, insane father cast a shadow over the Prince's Regency, the Prince's troubled relationship with his wife, who lived banished from court in Europe, marred his public image. When his father died in 1820 and the Prince Regent ascended the throne, Caroline returned to

[1] "George IV of the United Kingdom." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 19 Feb. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_IV_of_the_United_Kingdom>.
[2] "Test Act." *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. CD-ROM. Harlow, Pearson Education Limited, 1978-2003 and "Test Act." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 29 Dec. 2005. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Test_Act>.
[3] "Test Act." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 29 Dec. 2005. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Test_Act>.
[4] "Catholic Emancipation" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 18 Feb. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Emancipation>.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p. 35
[7] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 389

London to assert her rights as lawful Queen of Great Britain.[1] After their only bond had been broken when their child, Princess Charlotte, died giving birth to a stillborn boy in 1817, George IV could not care less for his wife, whom he had loathed from the start of his marriage.[2] He summoned her to appear before a court of law on accusation of adultery.[3] At the same time, the impatient King introduced a bill to deprive Caroline of her title of Queen Consort and to dissolve his mismatched marriage.[4] She denied the charge of adultery, bluntly saying that it was true she had committed adultery once, but "it was only with the Husband of Mrs Fitzherbert."[5] The bill was never passed because Caroline died in 1821. One of J.B. Priestley's conclusions about George IV is that "he would have made a splendid show-figure for a nation richly prosperous, with contented subjects everywhere; but as it happened his extravagant love of pleasure gleamed and flared against a dark background of frustration, poverty and despair."[6] Having discussed the character of the Prince of Pleasure, time has come to shed light on his reign, the Regency.

3.2 The Regency: "the greatest happiness of the smallest number"[7]

A contemporary of George IV, Captain Gronow, who looked back on the Regency in his old age, also admitted that the King of Pleasure and the time in which he reigned were mismatched:

> When the eldest son of George III assumed the Regency, England was in a state of political transition. The convulsions of the Continent were felt amongst us; the very foundations of European society were shaking, and the social relations of men were rapidly changing. His Royal Highness was as much the victim of circumstances and the child of thoughtless impudence as the most humble subject of the crown.[8]

Indeed, the foundations of European society were violently shaken when outraged Parisians stormed The Bastille, the prison which symbolised the "ancien régime" and all its terrors, on 14 July of 1789, and in doing so, marked the beginning of the French Revolution. Four years later, the French King Louis XVI (1754-93) was found guilty of

[1] "Pains and Penalties Bill 1820." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 14 Jan. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pains_and_Penalties_Bill_1820>.
[2] "George IV of the United Kingdom." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 19 Feb. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_IV_of_the_United_Kingdom>.
[3] "Pains and Penalties Bill 1820." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 14 Jan. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pains_and_Penalties_Bill_1820>.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Priestley, J.B., 1971: p. 33
[7] Catherine Gore cited in Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 255
[8] Gronow, Rees Howell, 1900: pp. 38-39

treason and consequently guillotined together with other members of the French nobility. The horrors of the Robespierre regime traumatised the British society. Great Britain could no longer ignore the events on the other side of the Channel and declared war on France, a conflict that was to last almost continuously for the next twenty-two years and almost killed or maimed an entire generation of young men.

The effect of the French Revolution and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) may be compared to the one that followed the 2001 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. Much in the same way as the United States never expected to be attacked, Great Britain was totally unprepared for the cataclysm of the French Revolution whose consequences were to affect the whole of Western Europe.[1] The social upheaval on the Continent set off an immense wave of extensive self-examination among the British ruling classes who reconsidered their beliefs and values.[2] Their self-confidence, for instance, had already been severely undermined when they lost the lucrative American colonies.[3] They also feared that the revolt of the American colonies and the ideology of the French Revolution would inspire the Irish to declare their independence who, unlike the Scottish and Welsh, remained with a Parliament of their own.[4] One of the first priorities on the political agenda was to unite the English, Scots, and Irish into one British nationhood, creating a new collective and inclusive British identity.[5] The conservative government abolished Irish Parliament in 1800 and tightened its grip on its vassal state, thus creating a breeding ground for many savage conflicts in the future.[6] The ruling classes' instinct of self-preservation also drove George III to put severe restraints on liberal values, such as freedom of press and speech and basic human rights, within less than ten years after the French Revolution.[7] Habeas corpus, for example, was suspended in 1794, enabling the government to detain prisoners without a court's decision.[8] British Parliament passed the Treasonable Practices Act one year later, a law that branded anyone who criticised the King or government as a traitor.[9] In this way, any demand for change or reform was made impossible. That same year, the Seditious Meeting Act rooted out all "corresponding societies", which were reforming groups of

[1] Strong, Roy, 1996: p. 370
[2] Ibid, p. 367
[3] Ibid., p. 367
[4] Ibid., p. 378
[5] Ibid., p. 367, p. 378
[6] Ibid., p. 378
[7] Ibid., p. 371
[8] Ibid., p. 371
[9] Ibid., p. 371

working men who campaigned for universal male suffrage, and the Combinations Acts of 1799 and 1800 prevented workers from establishing workers' associations.[1] The cornerstone of the late eighteenth-century "corresponding societies" and workers' associations was Thomas Paine's (1737-1809) *Rights of Men* (1791), in which the American intellectual "denounced a society founded on inherited privilege and wealth and called for equality of opportunity and rights, including universal male suffrage."[2] Social unrest continued brewing throughout Great Britain and came to various violent climaxes. In 1811 and during the four subsequent years, the Luddites smashed the knitting looms that produced more cloth at a cheaper and faster rate than they could ever do with their handloom.[3] In the infamous massacre of Peterloo (1819), local militias killed eleven unarmed people, who had come to listen peacefully to radical orators at a huge open-air rally in Manchester.[4] In the subsequent year, the plot of a group of shoemakers and silk weavers to assassinate cabinet members and to overthrow the government was discovered and their act passed into history as the Cato Street Conspiracy (1820).[5] What did ordinary artisans and workers drive to exchange the shuttle for the sword?[6]

First of all, the population of Great Britain doubled between 1789 and 1830, and while people were mainly housed in the countryside at the beginning of the Regency, by the end of it, nearly fifty percent lived in towns and cities, often in appalling conditions.[7] Secondly, only two million men, out of the total population, were employed, of whom 450,000 in the lowest, poorest social classes, "living on family earnings of just £1 a week."[8] The unemployment figures even rose higher when hundreds of thousands soldiers and sailors flooded on the job market after Napoleon had been defeated at Waterloo in 1815.[9] Thirdly, twenty-two years of warmongering had swallowed a hundred million pounds of the national budget.[10] World trade also slumped into deep depression, harvests failed because of climatic variations, and the British government

[1] Ibid., p. 371
[2] Ibid., p. 371
[3] Ibid., p. 404
[4] Ibid., p. 386
[5] Ibid., p. 386
[6] "When the web we weave is complete, /And the shuttle exchanged for the sword, /We will fling the winding sheet/ Over the despot at our feet,/ And dye it deep in the gore he has poured."(Lord Byron, "Song of the Luddites" (1816) on Spartacus Schoolnet. *Lord Byron*. N.d. 5 Dec. 2005 <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/PRbyron.htm>.
[7] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 16
[8] Ibid., p. 16
[9] Strong, Roy, 1996: p. 388
[10] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 84

controlled the price of foreign corn, making it more expensive than home-grown corn.[1] The Corn Law (1815) protected British farmers and the great landlords from foreign competition but hurt the ordinary people who starved to death.[2] The five years following 1815 and the whole Regency was a time when the gap between rich and poor widened because the running inflation made the rents soar.[3] Although the burgeoning new industrial centres such as Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield spurred the British economy, they were not independently represented in Parliament.[4] What the artisans and workers really demanded from the Government was a reform of Parliament, universal male suffrage, lower taxation, and relief from poverty, but the Prince Regent turned a deaf ear to their demands and tightened the existing laws even more.[5] Satirists and caricaturists like Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), James Gillray (1757-1815), George Cruikshank (1792-1878), James Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), and Lord Byron were in their heyday, depicting the Prince Regent as the figurehead of a corrupt and extravagant ruling class. Leigh Hunt, for example, described him as "[a] libertine over head and ears in debt and disgrace . . . a man who [had] just closed half a century without a single claim on the gratitude of his country or his respect."[6]

Writers like Lord Byron did not enjoy complete freedom of artistic expression but had to sidestep censorship and possible prosecutions. One of the reasons as to why Lord Byron was hounded into exile was his open defiance of censorship and authority. In the first two cantos of his epic poem *Childe Harold* (1812), for example, he denounced Great Britain's foul role in the Napoleonic Wars on the Iberian Peninsula.[7] Refusing to make any alterations and omissions in his work, he complained with offended pride to a close friend that, "It is bad enough to be a scribbler, without having recourse to such shifts to extort praise, or deprecate censure. It is anticipating, it is begging, kneeling, adulating – the devil! the devil! the devil! and all without my wish, and contrary to my desire."[8] His poem "Lines to a Lady Weeping" (1812), which denounced the Prince Regent's betrayal of his loyal Whig friends, provoked a harsh counterattack from the Tory press.[9] According to them, Lord Byron had abused his rank as a peer in a

[1] Ibid., p. 84
[2] Ibid., p. 84
[3] Ibid., p. 84
[4] Strong, Roy, 1996: p. 387
[5] Ibid., p. 386
[6] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 5
[7] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 300
[8] Ibid., p. 300
[9] Ibid., p. 314

"scandalous reflection on an exalted personage; and a calumny on the nation."[1] The Tory press also called him a traitor who "sees his native country, the pride of Britons and the envy of the world; and he labours to degrade it in the eyes of all."[2] And they concluded their attack as follows, "Is it not natural to conclude from these circumstances that a conduct so perverse and unnatural, must spring from disordered imagination and a depraved heart?"[3] As Lord Byron grew tired of the Tory sniping at him and his private life, he mentioned his intention to give up writing in a letter to his literary executor Thomas Moore (1779-1852): "My great comfort is, that the temporary celebrity I have wrung from the world has been in the very teeth of all opinions and prejudices. I have flattered no ruling powers: I have never concealed a single thought that tempted me."[4] Unlike Lord Byron, whose spectacular grand tour of 1809-1811 led him to the Iberian Peninsula, Malta, Albania, Greece, and Turkey, an entire generation of youngsters was virtually cut off from "continental travel and direct encounter with foreign thought until about 1820."[5] This isolation inevitably led, on the one hand, to the justification of the repressive social legislation of the Tory government who kept an iron grip on Great Britain, and on the other, to boredom and frustration felt by the aristocratic, idle young men who had not gone to war.[6] Nowadays, social historians argue that the isolation from the Continent, the sense of being excluded from everything exciting, and idleness drove young scions to create a new identity, the one of dandyism.[7]

Others created an identity out of another set of ideals, such as Christian piety, a devotion to family life, and dedication to good causes which are now considered quintessentially Victorian.[8] The politician William Wilberforce (1759-1833), for instance, who descended from a rich merchant family, repented his whirling social life very soon and decided to use his wealth and status to relieve his fellow human beings from misery.[9] He epitomised "the change which overcame the established classes between 1790 and 1820."[10] By the 1800s, cracks had come into the polished surface of Great Britain, a trading nation who largely based its success on the appalling, but

[1] Ibid., p. 314
[2] Ibid., p. 314
[3] Ibid., p. 314
[4] Ibid., pp. 424-25
[5] Gilmour, Robin. *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1830-1890*. London: Longman, 1993: p. 149
[6] Krosny, Katharina, 2004: p. 258
[7] Ibid., p. 258
[8] Strong, Roy, 1996: p. 383
[9] Ibid., p. 381
[10] Ibid., p. 381

lucrative slave trade.[1] Although William Wilberforce had already founded a committee against slavery in 1787, the outlawing of slavery was postponed indefinitely when the French Revolution broke out in 1789.[2] As an alternative to the abolition cause, Wilberforce engaged himself to root out the decadence of the upper classes and to convince them that morals were fashionable, not their excesses.[3] In his bestseller *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in the Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity* (1797) he set the trend of how Christianity could guide the nation's politics, habits, and attitudes.[4] The abolition of slavery, the cause for which he had worked so hard, became an act in 1807 but was only enforced in all parts of the British Empire three years before William Wilberforce died.[5] By the closing years of the Regency and the reign of George IV, the demand for reform had become a political issue that could no longer be avoided. The rule of "the greatest happiness for the smallest number" applied to all levels of society but was most iniquitous on the political level.[6] Being excluded from power, Dissenters, Catholics, and "the new commercial and industrial classes" united their forces to achieve the so much desired political status.[7] In 1830, the year in which King George IV died unloved and unmourned, riots broke out in the streets of Paris. The new prime minister in power, Lord Earl Grey (1764-1845), realised that the days of the aristocratic regime were numbered, unless the middle class was involved at all stages of the nation's decision-making process.[8] George IV's reign of pleasure had been a transitional period and a political void when "democracy ha[d] not yet become all-powerful, and when aristocracy was only partially weakened and discredited," Charles Baudelaire concluded so many years later.[9]

The "Prince of Pleasure", as J.B. Priestley calls him in his biography, died addicted to laudanum, too obese to be hoisted on his horse, and mentally ill from porphyria.[10] William Makepeace Thackeray's (1811-63) description of George IV as an absurdly

[1] Ibid., pp. 381-82
[2] Ibid., p. 383
[3] Ibid., p. 382
[4] Ibid., p. 384
[5] Ibid., p. 393
[6] Catherine Gore cited in Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 255
[7] Ibid., pp. 388-89
[8] Ibid., p. 391
[9] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 371; orig. French: «où la démocratie n'est pas encore toute-puissante, où l'aristocratie n'est que partiellement chanchelante et avilie». My translation.
[10] "George IV of the United Kingdom." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 19 Feb. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_IV_of_the_United_Kingdom>.

extravagant, self-indulgent, thoughtless, idle, decadent, and incapable King has become part of our perception of the Regency.[1] In the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) did not have a high opinion of the Regency:

> In that strange land money is poured out lavishly; bank-notes drop on the breakfast plates; pearl rings are found beneath pillows; champagne flows in fountains; but over it all broods the fever of a night-mare and the transiency of a dream. The brilliant fade; the great mysteriously disappear; the diamonds turn to cinders, and the Queens are left sitting on three-legged stools shivering in the cold.[2]

More recently, critic Carolly Erickson has observed that "Far beneath the surface glitter of Regency life – the opulent interiors, the elegant dress, the grand, scenic architecture – was an underlying malaise, a pervasive emptiness and a sense of loss that afflicted a wide spectrum of the populace."[3] Nevertheless, George IV should also be remembered as one of the founders of the National Gallery, as a monarch who generously contributed to the British Museum, doted the West End of London with the Regent's Park, revolutionised the art of interior decoration, and who entertained a high society that was bored to death.[4] Although the Prince was calumniated by Lord Byron and other satirists, Jane Austen dedicated her book *Emma* (1815) "by permission to HRH the Prince Regent", her most fond admirer.[5] His power, influence, and experience launched his protégé "Beau" Brummell to the star-spangled sky of the Regency high society. "Beau" Brummell has been waiting too long behind the scenes, time has come to grant him his moment of glory.

[1] Thackeray, William M. *The Four Georges*, 1860.
[2] Woolf, Virginia. "Beau Brummell." *The Common Reader*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1965: p. 227
[3] Carolly Erickson cited in Elfenbein, Andrew. "Silver-Fork Byron and the Image of Regency England." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999: p. 77
[4] Priestley, J.B., 1971: pp. 32-33
[5] 'dedicated by permission to HRH the Prince Regent' on the title page of Austen, Jane. *Emma*. Ed. Fiona Stafford. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

4. Two Case Studies of Regency Dandyism: "Beau" Brummell and Lord Byron

Françoise Coblence observes how dandyism went two separate ways during the Regency Period. While Brummell restricted his pure dandyism to an impassive and ascetic pose, to a fashion impossible to imitate, and to humorous remarks, sure to be repeated in the small world of the Regency high society, Byron integrated his poetic and sophisticated dandyism into his poetry, modelling his literary personae after his dandyism. In due time, I shall call Byron's poetry "lyrical dandyism". "From the beginning," Coblence claims, "there was a tension between Brummell and Byron, between the cold dandyism of a person who was nothing more than a dandy and the Romantic dandyism of a poet who put his entire soul in his writing."[1] Giuseppe Scaraffia indicates that it is very difficult to retrace the history of pure dandyism because from the very beginning, literature transformed dandyism into myth.[2]

4.1 "Beau" Brummell: The Emergence of Pure Dandyism

In the London home of gentlemen's fashion, more precisely at the entrance of Piccadilly Arcade in Jermyn Street – one of London's most fashionable shopping thoroughfares – stands today the life-size statue of the Regency style icon George Bryan "Beau" Brummell (1778-1840).[3] The original and greatest dandy of all dandies has been depicted as he was at the height of his fame. His softly curling hair ends in light whiskers, his unusually high forehead furrows in concentration, his eyebrows are expressive and raised, his intelligent eyes scrutinise the area with a languid indifference, and his lips are slightly pursed. The ultimate dandy adopts a relaxed attitude, posing one hand on a walking cane. The bronze also shows off a perfectly-tailored coat, and Brummell's figure-revealing pantaloons are tucked into V-fronted Hessian boots, named after the German mercenary troops.[4] His waistcoat, his famous starched neckcloth, and some links of his watch chain are visible under the tight coat with gleaming brass buttons.[5] In his own lifetime, however, Brummell carefully avoided sitting for a full-length portrait because he knew that a reproduction of his real self in a

[1] Coblence, Françoise, 1980: p. 15; orig. French: «Dès le départ, s'instaure, entre Brummell et Byron, la tension entre le dandysme froid d'un personnage qui n'est que dandy et le dandysme romantique d'un poète qui investit l'écriture elle-même.» My translation.
[2] Scaraffia, Giusseppe. *Petit dictionnaire du dandy*. Paris: Sand, 1988: p. 15
[3] Brummell' statue is by Czech sculptor Irena Sedlecka; Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 482, p. 560
[4] Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 186
[5] Ibid., pp. 185-86

portrait would never meet the high expectations of his admirers.[1] Since Brummell grew into a legend during his own lifetime, the question who Brummell actually "was" or what he "did" is perhaps less important than what he stood for in his days of fame, and came to stand for after his decline, according to Virginia Woolf.[2] Although Brummell's name may have slipped into oblivion ever since the Regency came to its closing years, there are still admirers who commissioned his life-size statue. "'Beau' Brummell is an icon, quite simply," Christopher Fenwick said, the Bond Street department store owner at whose instigation the statue of the "Beau" was erected. "Everyone knows the name. His is the spirit of the glamorous part of the town."[3] The glamorous part of London – today and in Brummell's time – is West End where the Brummell family – originally West End servants – started their spectacular rise through society.[4] The landscape painter and diarist Joseph Farrington (1741-1821) sententiously noted in his diary, "I have seen the rise of the Father [William Brummell] and the fall of the son [who] enjoyed for a time but dissipated what had been acquired for him."[5] Today, "Beau" Brummell's name is more enigmatically glittering than ever and the man behind the name more elusive with each passing year.[6] After all, Barbey d'Aurevilly might have been right when he wrote that the most famous man in the British kingdom was "nothing but a name mysteriously sparkling in all the memoirs of his time."[7] In order to unravel this mystery and to discover where Brummell stood for, we should listen to "Beau" Brummell's own words that have been neglected by most of Brummell's nineteenth- and twentieth-century biographers, but most significantly by his French biographer Barbey d'Aurevilly who pretended to be his most honest biographer. Brummell is reported to have said that, "I have no talents other than to dress: my genius is in the wearing of clothes."[8] Brummell's great admirer Oscar Wilde confessed to André Gide (1869-1951) in a similar way that he had put all his genius in his life and only his talent in his work.[9] Oscar Wilde placed life above all arts for its beauty and elegance. In his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Oscar Wilde wrote, "[T]o

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 7
[2] Woolf, Virginia. "Beau Brummell." *The Common Reader*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1965: p. 149
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 482
[4] Ibid., pp. 27-28
[5] Ibid., p. 465
[6] Brown, Joanna. "Nothing but a Name Mysteriously Sparkling." *The Jane Austen Magazine*. n.d. 9 Feb. 2006. <http://janeausten.co.uk/magazine/index.ihtml?pid=312&step=4>.
[7] Ibid.; orig. French: «Brummell n'a qu'un nom, qui brille d'un reflet mystérieux dans tous les Mémoirs de son époque.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 39)
[8] Ibid.
[9] André Gide cited in Coblence, Françoise, 1988: p. 9; orig. French: «J'ai mis tout mon génie dans ma vie; je n'ai mis que mon talent dans mes œuvres.» My translation.

him [Dorian Gray] Life itself was the first, the greatest, of the arts, and for it all the other arts seemed to be but a preparation."[1] Brummell did not only inspire novels but also many letters, diaries and memoirs of his contemporaries, including those of the infamous Regency courtesans Harriette Wilson (1786-1845) and Julia Johnstone (1777-?), and the ones of Captain Gronow, his lifelong friend and fellow Etonian Tom Raikes, the German Prince Pückler-Muskau (1785-1871), the eccentric blue-stocking Lady Hester Stanhope (1776-1839), and the writer William Hazlitt (1778-1830). Brummell's life also constituted the thread in the poems he received from Fox, the Duchess of Devonshire, Sheridan, Lord Byron, and many others that he carefully kept together with his own verses in an album.[2] When his creditors inevitably closed in on him in France and had him arrested, his thoughts immediately went out to his "papers", and he shrieked at the top of his lungs that, "My papers are the only things I posses to which I attach particular value, they are of no use to any one else, but to me they are treasure."[3] When Byron's fame was fast eclipsing Brummell's own, Brummell fed the letters he received from his former friend to the flames, although he was convinced that they "would produce more than sufficient to pay my debts."[4] He did this following the example of Byron's other intimate friends who burned the poet's "scandalous" memoirs in the grate of Byron's publisher John Murray (1778-1843).[5] Unfortunately, Brummell never published his memoirs, but his view on the metropolitan fashion he devised remains clear in his study *Male and Female Costume, Grecian and Roman Costume, British Costume from the Roman Invasion until 1822* (1822). Brummell's life – his piece of art – was broadly covered by lengthy accounts of his whereabouts in the diaries and memoirs of his contemporaries. "I could understand a good deal of Brummell's extraordinary success and influence in highest society," mused statesman Charles Stanhope (1753-1816), father of Lady Hester Stanhope, who was one of Brummell's best friends, in his memoirs. "He was a vast deal more than a mere dandy; he had wit as well as humour and drollery, and the most perfect coolness and self-possession."[6] With no title except Mr Brummell but with talent, wit and style to spare, the most exquisite of

[1] Wilde, Oscar. "The Picture of Dorian Gray." *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1987: p. 103
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 117
[3] Ibid., p. 416
[4] Ibid., p. 307
[5] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 3
[6] Brown, Joanna. "Nothing but a Name Mysteriously Sparkling." The Jane Austen Magazine. n.d. 9 Feb. 2006. <http://janeausten.co.uk/magazine/index.ihtml?pid=312&step=4>.

dandies forced his way into an exclusive world whose doors would normally have remained closed.

At his wits' ends and the duns closing in on him in 1820, another Regency dandy, Scrope Berdmore Davies (1782-1852), saw no other way out than to do a moonlight flit. He hastily crammed everything that might be needed for his memoirs into a trunk that he deposited in the vault of the London bank Barclay's.[1] There the trunk remained untouched for more than one hundred and fifty years until 1976, when the bank moved its premises.[2] The trunk's contents revealed bills from Davies's bankers and moneylenders, records of bets – silent testimonies of how Regency dandies recklessly lived their lives – drawings, many letters from Davies's distinguished friends, and most astonishingly, the original manuscript of the third canto of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), and some drafts of poems by Byron and Shelley.[3] Scrope Davies had left behind a life of manic drinking, intemperate womanising, reckless gambling, and squandering fortunes but also the memories of an intense friendship with Byron. He had been born a simple clergyman's son with limited prospects but turned into one of the most celebrated wits, scholars, and dandies of his time who had access to the grandest drawing-rooms of London.[4] Although Scrope Davies was "Beau" Brummell's junior by four years, they coursed their lives in very much the same way. They were both of middle-class stock, but their fathers had ambitious plans for their sons: they sent them to Eton and afterwards to prestigious universities. Therefore, "Beau" Brummell and Scrope Davies were not willing to fulfil the role that a class-conscious society had reserved for them, that is to say, the one of obediently serving the aristocracy and monarchy. Instead, they conceived a genial but reckless plan: they would create a dandy aristocracy based on sheer nerve, unconquerable self-assurance, and rules so strict that even the privileged aristocracy could not comply with them.[5] In my account of the Regency dandies, "Beau" Brummell will take the leading part, whereas Scrope's story will echo through until Byron appears on the stage.

[1] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: back cover of the book
[2] Ibid., p. 217
[3] Ibid., back cover of the book
[4] Ibid., p. 13
[5] *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 371

4.1.1 The Making of a Dandy: "It is my folly the making of me"[1]

4.1.1.1 The Family of Surfaces[2]

In an unguarded moment with Lady Hester Stanhope, Brummell forgot to put his mask of impassivity for a while and confessed that he was as much puzzled as she was as to why high society worshipped him so much as it did. "It is the folly that is the making of me," he pensively said, looking over at the curious expression on his friend's face.[3] He hesitantly added that, "If I did not impertinently stare [D]uchesses out of countenance and nod over my shoulder to the [P]rince, I should be forgotten within a week: and if the world is so silly as to admire my absurdities, you and I may know better, but what does that signify?"[4] The greatest female wit of the Regency, who had once declared that she was not handsome, but that her teeth were nevertheless brilliant, was silenced for a while and nodded sympathetically.[5] On another occasion, witty Hester succeeded in encouraging another scarce admission of Brummell. According to her, he was an "exceedingly clever man" who had once admitted to her that he had wasted his talents because a dandy's way of life was the only one "which could place him in a prominent light, and would enable him to separate himself from the society of the ordinary herd of men, whom he held in considerable contempt."[6] Although Brummell would reluctantly admit it – unless it were to Lady Hester Stanhope of course – he was as much a self-made man as the many industrial entrepreneurs whose ingenuity had fuelled the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. "Beau" Brummell was irrefutably a child of his time.

It was in the nature of a self-made man like "Beau" Brummell, though, to hush up the influential role of others in the making of his success and to pretend that he alone made his fortune. When Brummell first arrived in London in 1798, he decided to dispose of his only living near relatives by totally ignoring his brother and sister.[7] When his friends at the fashionable gentlemen's club White's asked him if he had lately seen his elder brother William in town, Brummell responded that he had ordered his rustic relative "to

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 224
[2] This subtitle is based on a passage in Richard Sheridan's successful play *The School for Scandal* (1777): "Walk in gentlemen, walk in; here they are – the family of the Surfaces . . . Gad, I never knew till now that ancestors were such valuable acquaintance." in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 27
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 224
[4] Ibid., p. 224
[5] Ibid., p. 220
[6] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 38 and Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 221
[7] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 18

walk the backstreets" until he had paid a visit to a decent tailor.[1] Although his elder brother William and sister Maria were not fashionable people, they prospered, married well and married off their offspring to people of rank and title.[2] In doing so, they were typical examples of how the burgeoning middle class tried to imitate the manners of the haughty aristocracy and to become a part of that elitist world. Brummell also disowned his parents – who died while he was still at Eton College – by alluding to their origins as baser than they actually were.[3] After he had mocked the humble background of an officer, who was a possible rival in Lady Hester Stanhope's attentions, she teasingly asked Brummell whether his father's position was so elevated that he should boast of it.[4] He coldly answered that his father had been a superior valet, and that he had kept his place all his life.[5] His defensive reaction betrayed his open contempt for social mountaineers who had become wealthy enough to buy large country estates, to send their sons to the same prestigious public schools and universities as the aristocracy had done for centuries, and married off their daughters in peerage. "Beau" Brummell consciously minimised the role of his family in the making of his success because he was a scion of strictly middle-class stock.[6] The rise of his family in society is a prime example of how perspectives in the strictly organised British society started shifting at the end of the eighteenth century, and how upward social mobility was permitted in some cases. Brummell's grandfather was most likely a former valet – he might also have been "a confectioner, a treasury porter, an army tailor or a steward" – who bought a stately lodging house in Drury Street, St James's, to take in Members of Parliament as lodgers.[7] Mr Brummell Senior's boarding house lay conveniently situated in the golden triangle between the fashionable gentlemen's clubs, the Houses of Parliament, and the West End brothels.[8] Among his flamboyant tenants – who spent more time with the ladies of easy virtue or at the gaming tables than on the parliamentary benches – was Charles Jenkinson (1727-1808), father of the future Prime Minister Lord North (1732-92), who offered William "Billy" Brummell (?-1794), "Beau" Brummell's father, a position as a clerk in the Treasury.[9] When George III appointed Lord North Prime

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 246
[2] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 24
[3] Ibid., p. 18
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 224
[5] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 24
[6] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 28
[7] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 24 and Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 28
[8] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 36
[9] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 28

Minister of Great Britain in 1770, ambitious Brummell moved along and became the private secretary to his lordship, "the god of emoluments", who generously awarded his employees with lucrative government sinecures.[1] He created William Brummell, for instance, "Receiver of the Duties on Uninhabited Houses in London and Middlesex".[2] In no time, clever William Brummell became immensely wealthy, for his income consisted of "government pay", "officially sanctioned sinecures", "officially acknowledged back-handers", "unknown sums accrued through the dividends from his investments in government stock", returns on his investments in the West Indies and East India Company.[3] William Brummell had the East India Company so firmly in his grasp that the governor-general of the lucrative trading company urged one of his acquaintances that he contacted, "Mr Brummell as soon as you can . . . for he is active and intelligent, and has more influence than any man with Lord North."[4] To consolidate his fortune, William Brummell married a Miss Richardson who was not only one of the richest heiresses of the age – her father owned the lucrative Lottery Office – but was also one of the prettiest, from whom "Beau" Brummell probably inherited his good looks.[5] On 7 June 1778, George Bryan Brummell was born in one of the apartments above No. 10 or No. 11 Downing Street.[6] Soon afterwards, the charming young family moved into a "grace and favour apartment" at Hampton Court Palace in fashionable Mayfair, where the rich and the famous of the day lived and where they tried to socialise with the high-born aristocracy.[7] The "grace and favour residences" were houses and apartments that were allocated to those who had rendered some service to the British nation.[8] The Brummells immediately charmed the Dukes of Gloucester, Kent and Clarence, who were their immediate neighbours.[9] No doubt, this unique small community whose apartments overlooked the central Fountain Court left an indelible impression on young George's mind.[10] Lord North, Sheridan, Fox, and other Whig wits were regular visitors to the Brummell home in London and later to The Grove, the

[1] Ibid., p. 28
[2] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 24
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 46
[4] Ibid., p. 46
[5] Murray Venetia, 1998: p. 28
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 48
[7] Favardin, Patrick et Laurent Bouëxière, 1988: p. 26
[8] "Suffragettes, Soldiers and Servants — 1750-1950, Some Interesting Facts on 'Grace and Favour' at Hampton Court." *Historical Royal Palaces*. n.d. 24 Feb. 2006 < http://www.historicroyalpalaces.org/Downloads/989C62_FINAL%20-%20HCP%20-%20Grace%20and%20Favour.pdf>.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

country estate of the Brummells near Donnington Castle in Berkshire.[1] The Donnington Grove had only been constructed some years before, but the artificial neo-Gothic style of the house gave its visitors the impression that it was an ancient country seat, which had been in the family's possession for centuries.[2] These artificial country estates were one of the tricks with which a burgeoning middle-class family like the Brummell family marked its arrival in society. William Brummell retired from government and was appointed "High Sheriff of Berkshire", a representative of George III in the counties, after Lord North had resigned from government following the loss of the American colonies in 1781.[3] No doubt, little George must have been impressed by Lord North's pop eyes that protruded "from a swollen face atop his unwieldy body".[4] Young Brummell attented the lively and witty conversations on current topics between the versatile wit Sheridan, brilliant Fox, splendid Edmund Burke (1729-97), and his father, while the remarkably able and tactful Lord North seemed to slumber only to wake up in time to trounce his young opponents and leave them baffled.[5] The painters Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) and Benjamin West (1738-1820) also frequented the Brummell household at Donnington.[6] Barbey d'Aurevilly was convinced that these remarkable politicians, talented artists, and greatest wits of their time were a shining example for Brummell, for they inspired him with their intelligence and wit.[7] They eventually turned him into an eloquent speaker who flawlessly mastered every conversation and situation in later life.[8]

Although contemporary diarists like Captain Gronow want us to believe that Brummell suddenly appeared "in the highest and best society in London", nothing could be further from the truth.[9] In fact, handsome Brummell gained the attention of London society very early when he, at the age of three, sat with his two-years-elder brother William for a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.[10] The painting was shown to great acclaim at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1783.[11] At that very early age, the little boy was introduced to one of the parties in Devonshire House, hosted by the "phenomenal"

[1] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: pp. 48-49
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 57
[3] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: pp.48-49
[4] Strong, Roy, 1996: p. 364
[5] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 49
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 67
[7] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 97
[8] Ibid., p. 97
[9] Gronow, Rees Howell, 1900: p. 43
[10] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 53
[11] Ibid., p. 53

Duchess of Devonshire, who was called the "Most Envied Woman of the Day".[1] Brummell shared a lifelong intimate friendship with the Duchess only to be interrupted when she spent seven years abroad.[2] Brummell's careless childhood, however, dramatically ended when his mother died in 1793 and his father in 1794, while he was still at Eton.[3] According to Jacques de Langlade, it was extremely difficult for young Brummell to cope with the death of his mother who had already become a distant and estranged figure in his childhood.[4] From then on, he meticulously composed a mask of impassibility to disguise his extreme sensibility that he never dropped for the rest of his life.[5]

4.1.1.2 The Decisive Years at Eton

As may be expected from a family who had "arrived", George Brummell was sent to the nearby Eton College where his impassive front proved to be very useful. Spending seven years, from 1786 till 1793, among his peers at one of the most prestigious public schools was not only a way to pursue a career in politics, but it was also a decisive step in the formation of his character.[6] By the time he entered Eton College, the "King's scholars" or "Collegers", for whom the school originally was founded, were almost entirely gone, and they were replaced by the fee-paying "Oppidan Scholars".[7] Those "Oppidan" schoolboys were lodged in the town of Eton rather than in the premises of the College and were drawn from among the sons of nobility, Church, the well-connected, and the growing entrepreneurial and professional classes.[8] Whereas "Oppidan" schoolboys like Brummell were accommodated in the relatively comfortable "dames' houses" or boarding houses, "King's scholars", including Scrope Davies, were confined to the infamous "Long Chamber" where they were left unsupervised from dusk till dawn.[9] Study was virtually impossible in those conditions, and those who were defenceless fell victim to cruel bullying and sexual abuse.[10]

[1] Ibid., p. 224 and p. 61
[2] Ibid., p. 225
[3] Langlade, Jacques de. *Brummell ou le prince des dandys*. Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1984: p. 34
[4] Ibid., p. 34
[5] Ibid., p. 34
[6] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 51
[7] "Eton." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 22 Feb. 2006. 22 Feb. 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/eton_college>
[8] Ibid.
[9] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 68 and T.A.J. Burnett, 1981: p. 14
[10] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 14

4.1.1.2.1 Education in Latin and Greek

Brummell's insistence on exclusiveness, which characterised him during his entire life, was typically Etonian because Etonians were a select group of schoolboys who met each other at a very young age and formed the old-boy networks that lasted through life's hardships, broken marriages, financial disasters, forced exiles and were only severed by death. "Once Etonian, always Etonian," was then and is still the motto of former schoolboys. In his biography of Scrope Berdmore Davies, T.A.J. Burnett considers Eton the gateway to the world of "rank and fashion" and to the one of politics and power that normally remained closed for a boy of middle-class stock.[1] In his biography of George Brummell, Ian Kelly agrees with T.A.J. Burnett that Brummell's "later history was . . . strongly coloured by Eton", and that he had "a style – linguistically elegant, socially adept, sartorially aware and some might claim, sexually ambiguous – forged at and by the school in the years that he spent there."[2] The public school's exclusiveness was based on the fact that education was limited to the study of the Greek and Latin classics, inculcating "the cult of heroism and patriotism" in the young pupils' minds.[3] From early childhood on, Brummell construed, wrote and read Greek and Latin verses, performed "plays" and created speeches in the style of the ancient Greeks and Romans.[4] During the long hours they were cooped up together either in the "Long Chamber" or in the boarding houses, the schoolboys entertained each other with amateur plays.[5] Brummell's talent of entertaining people, for which he was later lauded, was polished during those long nights he performed for his fellow students. A late eighteenth-century Etonian, however, was not only expected to be a brilliant actor or poet but also a wit.[6] In preparation of entertaining society with witty remarks, they were schooled how to reduce "an argument to an epigram", that is to say, how to end their Greek and Latin stanzas with a "pithy remark".[7] Wit was rarely found in others, but Brummell abundantly possessed this gift, and it made him rise to the top of London high society. Extra-curriculum activities were Brummell's lessons of French, dancing, fencing, drawing, reading, and sports like swimming, cricket, and boating.[8] Old Etonian

[1] Ibid., p. 15
[2] Ibid., p. 66
[3] Strong, Roy, 1996: p. 377
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 74
[5] Ibid., p. 75
[6] Ibid., p. 76
[7] Ibid., p. 76
[8] Ibid., p. 73

Captain Gronow later insisted that Brummell was an accomplished sportsman who "distinguished himself as the best scholar, the best boatman and the best cricketer; and, more than all, he [possessed] the comprehensive excellences that are represented by the familiar term 'good fellow'."[1]

4.1.1.2.2 "Buck" Brummell

"Buck" Brummell – George only earned the nickname '"Beau"' after he had successfully entered London high society – proved to possess all the qualities that were required of gentlemanliness. Due to the care he devoted to his immaculate looks and his cool, languid manners, his fellow pupils added "Buck" to the name of George Brummell, alluding to the fastidious attention the London "Macaronis" paid to their appearance.[2] According to Ian Kelly, the nickname may also have alluded to his West-End origins, for the term described licentious Londoners who visited the brothels of West End.[3] One of the favourite pastimes of the "Buck" was shopping in Eton High Street that was lined with hatters, tailors, glove makers, cobblers, drapers, and haberdashers.[4] At Eton, there was no school uniform that put restrictions on the schoolboys' imagination or extravagance.[5] "Buck" Brummell shared his fastidiousness with Scrope Davies who had his towels made from stout linen, used a large quantity of soap and toothbrushes, and spent fortunes on clothes that were made out of the most luxury fabrics of the East India Company.[6] In fact, Scrope Davies's personal papers, including the recently discovered bills of Eton shopkeepers, reveal that the teenager spent "a sum amounting to well over £5,000 in today's money".[7] Brummell's bills with the local shopkeepers have not been preserved to this day, but one can imagine that he spent far more than Scrope Davies, who was a mere vicar's son. At Eton, Brummell developed the nasty habit of living off credit that was a common treat of his class in that period.[8] Much to our surprise nowadays, living for virtually nothing a year was tolerated then, and money was of no concern to gentlemen because wealth had always been derived from the land they owned.[9] Brummell had no idea of money's value, for he had

[1] Ibid., p. 87
[2] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 97
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 80
[4] Ibid., p. 78
[5] Ibid., p. 78
[6] Ibid., p. 79
[7] Ibid., p. 79
[8] Ibid., p. 67
[9] Colonel Crawley and his family "lived for nothing a year" in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) in Murray, Venetia 1998: p. 62

never lived on a fixed income. In a much-revealing anecdote, a beggar asked Brummell for alms – "if only a halfpenny." "Poor fellow," Brummell replied, "I have heard of such a coin, but I never possessed one." He gave the beggar a shilling instead.[1] Even in Calais, without any obvious ways of income, Brummell continued living in grand style much to the amazement of his visitors from Great Britain. One day, one of them asked how he had acquired "the trappings of gracious living", Brummell's answer was revealing: "My friend, it is truly an aristocratic feeling, the gift of living happily on credit! One must be endowed with the gift of having no idea of the value of money."[2]

In Brummell and Scrope Davies's schooldays, pupils were encouraged to express their personality in the way they dressed. Last-year schoolboys enjoyed many sartorial privileges and were attended by younger pupils who played the role of valets and footmen.[3] "Whatever might be the success in after life [*sic*], whatever gratification of ambition, whatever triumph might be achieved," the British diplomat and ambassador Stratford Canning (1786-1880) wrote in later life, "no one is ever again so great a man as was he a Sixth Form Boy at Eton."[4] At Eton, both Brummell and Scrope Davies developed a sense of superiority, elegance, and luxury that characterised them later on. Steeped in history and ancient traditions, Eton was an institution that put special emphasis on military dress, hierarchy, and ostentatious display of clothes. In Whitsun week, for example, the Etonians dressed up in splendid military costumes they had designed themselves and marched proudly in a column, accompanied by regimental bands, to the nearby Salt Hill where the dirtiest boy in College was kicked down the hill.[5] This ancient tradition was called "Ad Montem" – the word "mons" stands for "hill" in Latin – and on this occasion, most Etonians wore the habit of the Montem "polemen" or "musician polemen".[6] Brummell was fascinated by this remarkably sober uniform because it was more flattering and more masculine than the prevalent male fashion of that period.[7] The "polemen" outfit became Brummell's trademark, after he had perfected the dark blue jacket with two rows of brass buttons, the white stock, and the pale breeches.[8]

[1] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 18
[2] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 32
[3] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 15
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: pp. 85-86
[5] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 24
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 97
[7] Ibid., p. 97
[8] Ibid., p. 98

At the Montems of 1790 and 1793, "Buck" Brummell performed his role to so much acclaim that the Prince of Wales, who had always been fond of Eton, allegedly honoured the College with an extra visit of inspection.[1] In stunned silence, the Prince disbelievingly stared at the proud and languid Brummell, recognising in the adolescent "something of himself, the part of him that had remained healthy and radiant".[2] Perhaps he envied the boy's self-confidence and natural grace he had never possessed when he had the same age. Although Brummell was only sixteen at that time, he was already doted with "the self-possession of a man who knew how the world worked and who intended to master it", with "an unfailing wit", and a dress sense that inspired envy in most of the men he met.[3] Apart from the Prince's regular visits to Eton College, young Brummell met the Prince of Wales on several occasions at Devonshire House where they were both invited by the Duchess of Devonshire.[4]

4.1.1.2.3 Violence, Drinking and Gambling at Eton

With a family far away, Eton College taught young Brummell how to adopt himself socially to all possible circumstances and to know the ins and outs of a society based on exclusiveness and ostracism. Public schools were a way to produce a ruling class whose "hardiness, self-composure, coolness in the face of danger and pain" were legendary.[5] Headmasters kept order by flogging the schoolboys, while they tolerated and even approved of the ancient "fagging", a brutal and cruel system in which younger pupils learned to do as they were told by their older and therefore superior schoolboys.[6] "Fags", for their part, would take it for granted to be obeyed without question, when they eventually reached the last form and ruled in the place of adults. Burnett calls Eton a "brutal, filthy and corrupt world, unknown in Jane Austen's novels", with senior boys flogging and in worst cases, abusing their "fags".[7]

At Eton, Scrope Davies and "Beau" Brummell also developed their notorious gambling skills that came in handy in the gambling hells of White's, Brooks's and Watier's, the exclusive men's clubs of the Regency where the passion of gambling and drinking caused havoc among the aristocratic families.[8] Gambling was a deadly serious passion

[1] Ibid., p. 96
[2] Walden, George and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 99
[3] Ibid., p. 99
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 225
[5] Mason, Philip. *The English Gentleman, The Rise and Fall of an Ideal*. London: Pimlico: p. 170
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 84
[7] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 14
[8] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 164

that reached its peak during the Regency and dominated every layer of British society.[1] Whole estates that had been in family possession for many centuries changed hands during one night of arduous play.[2] Whereas sons of large landowners were solvent enough, middle-class dandies like Brummell and Scrope Davies, who could not recur to large family fortunes and possessions, were "doomed from the first moment they took up gaming".[3] At Cambridge, young Lord Byron carefully observed how his four-years-older friend Scrope Davies incurred debt after debt at the gaming tables, and the poet discerned a notion of self-destruction in his friend's behaviour. Since gamblers lived like they would die the next day, the attraction of gaming became "sensual" in the eyes of Byron:

> I have a notion that Gamblers are as happy as most people, being always *excited*. Women, wine, fame, the table, even Ambition, *sate* now and then; but every turn of the card, and cast of the dice, keeps the Gamester alive: besides one can Game ten times longer than one can do anything else. . . .[4]

Byron also committed to his diary that he had "thrown as many as fourteen *mains* running, and carried off all the cash upon the table occasionally", but he wisely gave up gambling, for he "had no coolness or judgment or calculation."[5] He concluded that "it was the *delight* of the thing that pleased [him]."[6] A contemporary of Lord Byron, Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859), described the ecstasies and torments of addictions like gambling, using drugs, and drinking that dominated Regency London in his chronicle *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822).[7] "[I]t is not faith, unconquerable faith, in their luck," De Quincey wrote about gamesters like Brummell and Scrope Davies, "it is the very opposite principle – a despair of their own luck; rage and hatred in consequence as at the blind enemy working in the dark."[8] T.H. White adduced another reason for Brummell and Davies's gambling addiction. He comments in his *Age of Scandal* (1950), which deals with the scandalous mores of the late eighteenth century, how young men who felt useless because they had stayed home instead of fighting overseas recurred to gaming to prove their "bottom", which stood for

[1] Ibid., p. 161
[2] Ibid., p. 162
[3] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 65
[4] Ibid., p. 64
[5] Ibid., p. 64
[6] Ibid., p. 64
[7] Ibid., p. 64
[8] Ibid., p. 65

courage, coolness, and solidity in Regency parlance.[1] "[Y]oung men sought to harden their courage," T.H. White explains,

> it was Spartan to take one's fortune in one's hand and to risk at the turn of pitch and toss. When they lost, they paid like men of honour, and it was then their business to start again at their beginnings, and never breathe a word about their loss. It was in order to be Man, in order to be a person of endurance that they risked hereditary acres so desperately.[2]

It was a code of honour among Regency dandies to keep their lips sealed about the details of a dandy's financial situation. The urging letters of creditors, bills of angry bankers, and records of bets in Scrope's hidden trunk, and the "Betting Books" in Brummell's club White's reveal how Regency dandies managed to make the ends meet.[3] T.A.J. Burnett sustains that gaming and money-lending were the dandies' main source of income.[4] Brummell and Davies, for example, managed to amass a small fortune by gambling, and in that way they remained solvent for nearly fifteen years.[5] When these resources failed and their luck had run out, they were forced to flee to the Continent as the only alternative to imprisonment in Fleet Prison, where debtors and bankrupts were held at the time.[6] According to T.H. White, excessive drinking was another way for Regency dandies to prove their manliness and courage.[7] Since heavy drinking was a basic part of the social mores in the Regency Period, it pervaded the thick walls of Eton College where the unsupervised schoolboys far away from home indulged themselves in alcohol out of pure boredom.

4.1.1.3 Brummell's Sexuality

The seven years spent at Eton College were also of decisive influence on Brummell's sexuality. In the long hours spent in the unsupervised "Long Chamber" and boarding houses, sexual abuse was common and surprisingly enough tolerated.[8] A blind eye was turned on homosexuality, as long as it was a merely passing phase.[9] Being a closet homosexual, Brummell chose never to admit any homosexual experience at Eton or later, neither did his nineteenth-century or even twentieth-century biographers. Homosexuality – "buggery" or "sodomy" in the parlance of the day – was illegal and in

[1] White, T.H. *The Age of Scandal*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1950: p. 68
[2] Ibid., p. 76
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 251
[4] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 64
[5] Ibid., p. 65
[6] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 164
[7] White, T.H., 1950, p. 80
[8] Ibid., p. 92
[9] Ibid., p. 93

theory punishable by death since 1553.[1] Against the mid nineteenth-century background of prudery, Brummell's first biographers could write explicitly neither about their hero's sexuality nor about his syphilis, the venereal disease that was to kill him slowly in Caen.[2] According to Captain Jesse William, whose *Life of Beau Brummell* (1844) was the first biography of Brummell, the dandy "had too much self-love ever to be really in love."[3] In Thomas Henry Lister's (1800-42) novel *Granby* whose main character Vincent Treveck speaks about homosexuality in terms of his not exactly being a woman hater but merely indifferent to the charms of women, whom he calls "nonentities":

> Unfortunately, the word "indifference" is much more applicable to my [Treveck's] case. It is in fact my fault – I *am* indifferent . . . I can talk, laugh, and philander, and keep a silly "persiflage", with the thousand nonentities that one meets in society; but it is a mere habit, or mere idleness; they excite no interest, and they seem to know it . . . .[4]

In Barbey d'Aurevilly's opinion, however, it was Brummell's bless not to be a passionate lover as Lord Byron was.[5] The dandy gained his independence, getting involved with neither men nor women. "To love, even in its least elevated sense, means to desire, which means being dependent, a slave to one's desire. This was the slavery from which Brummell was free."[6] Barbey d'Aurevilly never wished to discuss Brummell's last days, as Captain William Jesse had done before him. The French author justified his choice with the following words: "What concerns us [is] the Dandy, his influence and his public life, his social role. What does the rest matter?"[7] One of the most important twentieth-century scholars of dandyism, Ellen Moers, agreed with Barbey d'Aurevilly on this matter and wrote:

> [T]he disturbing story of Brummell's decline is separate entirely from the dandy legend, and played an oblique part in its dissemination. The Victorian assumption that Brummell's collapse was a divine judgment on his career helped to keep his name in circulation in England; and the lurid finale of Brummell's story satisfied his mid-century French admirers in their exploration of decadence.[8]

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[1] Ibid., p. 93
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005, p. 462
[3] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 37
[4] Ibid., pp. 36-37
[5] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 54
[6] Walden, George, and Jules-Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 101; orig. French: «Aimer, même dans le sens le moindre élevé de ce mot, désirer, c'est toujours dépendre, c'est être esclave de son désir. Voilà l'esclavage auquel Brummell échappa.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 54).
[7] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 140; orig. French: « C'est du Dandy qu'il est question, de son influence, de sa vie publique, de son rôle social. Qu'importe le reste?» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 97).
[8] Moers, Ellen, 1960: pp. 29-30

Moers alludes here to Charles Baudelaire, father of French Decadentism, who in his search of beauty found it in human degeneration and misery. In the last few decades of the twentieth century, however, attitudes towards biography and the competition of biographers changed. Sexual behaviour is now considered an essential component of the biographical picture of a person, his time and the place where he lived. Social historian Richard Ollard, who was a former Etonian himself, summed up the reasons as to why Brummell's Eton experience influenced his sexuality:

> [T]he inbuilt forces that made for his last tendency [homosexuality] may thus be briefly summarised. First and most fundamental the single sex character of the institution and the age of its inmates. Second the cult games, promoted by masters, which added a touch of the numinous and more than a touch of the romantic to the physical beauty, the grace of movement and elegance of form so common in young athletes . . . [lastly] applying to those who could read Greek authors easily or were curious enough to read them in translation, the ethos of Athens in the fifth century BC.[1]

At Eton, Brummell suffered unrequited love for the headmaster's daughter and for Julia Johnstone, who ran off with a dashing, married colonel.[2]. In the same way that Brummell felt the pang of heartache and lost love for Julia Johnstone, Lord Byron also experienced unrequited love for Mary Ann Chaworth (1785-1832).[3] Being friends, Brummell and Byron may have discussed their similar experiences of first love and humiliating rejection that ended it.[4] After their mutual bad experiences with these young women, their sexuality was never the same again. In his album of poems, Brummell copied one of Byron's poems that dealt with the theme of the fallen woman and the feelings of revenge a man experiences when he has been rejected.[5] Although Byron wrote the poem in 1812 when he was breaking off relations with Lady Caroline Lamb (1785-1828), it was published for the first time by Captain Jesse in his *Life of Beau Brummell* (1844):

> Go—! Triumph securely – the treacherous vow
> Thou hast broken, I keep but too painfully now;
> But never again shalt thou be to my heart
> What thou wert – what I fear for a moment thou art:
> To see thee – to love thee – what heart could do more?
> To love – to lose thee, 'twere vain to deplore!
> Ashamed of my weakness, however beguiled,
> I shall bear like a man what I feel as a child.
> If a frown cloud my brow, yet it lours not on thee;

[1] Richard Ollard cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 95
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 98 and p. 102
[3] Eisler, Benita,1999: p. 67
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005, p. 117
[5] Ibid., p. 523

If my heart should seem heavy, at least it is free:
But thou, in the pride of a new conquest elate,
Alas! E'en envy shall feel for thy fate.—
For the first step of error none e'er could recall,
And the woman once fallen for ever must fall;
Pursue to the last the career she begun,
And be false unto many, as faithless to one
And they who have loved thee will leave thee to mourn,
And they who have hated will laugh thee to scorn;
And he who adored thee – must weep to foretell
The pangs which will punish thy falsehood too well.[1]

Both Byron and Brummell wisely abandoned whimsical and demanding young women like Lady Caroline Lamb and her ilk and enjoyed the company of dowagers who did not pose a threat to their fragile male ego. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Hester Stanhope, and Princess Frederica, Duchess of York (1767-1820), were "useful stepping stone[s] in [Brummell's] social ascendancy."[2] Lady Melbourne (1751-1818) – as much a schemer as the fictive Mme. de Merteuil in Choderlos de Laclos's (1741-1803) *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782) – was Byron's intimate woman friend who knew how to flatter him and to win over his wounded soul.[3] Byron's love affairs with older women were often believed "his main emotional focus", while "relations with boys [were] no more than diversions," Fiona McCarthy points out in her biography of Byron.[4] Nowadays, the opposite is thought to be more likely.[5] Brummell might have been a bisexual like Byron because Lady Stanhope Hester wrote in her memoirs that, "[Brummell] was . . . envied and admired by both beaux and belles of all ranks of society."[6] "[H]e was the idol of women," Tom Raikes mused about his friend, "he was such a favourite with *men*, that *all* were anxious then to join the party [of women] . . . Brummell was as great an oracle among the women of the highest rank in London, and his society much courted and followed, as amongst his male associates."[7]

When Brummell's father died, he left his son with an inheritance of twenty thousand pounds – around more than one and a half million pounds in today's money – and thus financially armed young Brummell prepared himself for his move to Oxford University, the next obvious step in his preparation for political life.[8] With the benefit of hindsight,

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005, pp. 117-18
[2] Ibid., p. 238
[3] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 351
[4] MacCarthy, Fiona. *Byron, Life and Legend*. London: Murray, 2002: p. xii
[5] Ibid., p. xii
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 183
[7] Ibid., pp. 216-17
[8] Ibid., p. 113

one can see how Eton made "Beau" Brummell and Scrope Davies who they were. The College introduced them to the great world of the ruling classes and encouraged them to cultivate an aesthetic style of their own. The nights at Eton, however, gave them a passion for drinking and gambling, and Eton's insistence on their pupils' exclusiveness gave them an attitude of effortless superiority. The College also set the pattern of their sexuality in later life. Bracketed together, these qualities made them the very models of a Regency dandy. From this moment on, "Beau" Brummell and Scrope Davies went their separate ways, for they went to Oxford and Cambridge University respectively. Brummell, whose stay at Oxford University was short-lived, joined the army soon afterwards. Scrope Davies, on the contrary, proved to be an excellent scholar at Cambridge University where he met Lord Byron.

4.1.1.4 Oxford University and The 10th Light Dragoons

Before George Brummell and his brother William went up to Oxford, they paid a visit to their aunt Mrs Searle, who had a farmyard in the middle of Green Park.[1] Captain Gronow remembered that the old lady, who was proud of her charming nephew, told him that the Prince of Wales and Brummell met in Green Park for the first time since 1793 "At Montem":

> Her nephew George Brummell, who had only a day or two before left Eton, happened to be present. The Prince, attracted by his nice manners, entered into conversation with him, and before he left said, 'As I find you to intend to be a soldier, I will give you a commission in my own regiment.' Tears of gratitude filled the youth's eyes, and he fell on his knees and kissed the royal hand.[2]

On this point, the old Captain Gronow might have been wrong, overpowered as he was with emotions of the past that easily blur one's objectivity. It is rather difficult to imagine that proud and self-confident Brummell "fell on his knees" and kissed royal hands as a token of his gratitude. Brummell eventually spent only a brief and unimpressive period at Oxford because study was not exactly what he had in mind. In a fictionalised account of his stay at Oxford, Brummell "consumed a considerable quantity of midnight oil, but very little of it over his books".[3] The high society at London and Brighton with all their amusements tempted young George who had just inherited a small fortune, and who had, above all, put his mind on ruling the fashionable society. Moreover, by the time Brummell entered Oxford University, British

[1] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 29
[2] Ibid., p. 148
[3] Passage taken from T.H. Lister's *Granby* (1826) cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 115

universities "had fallen into moral and intellectual decay," Benita Eisler claims.[1] "This place is the *Devil*," Byron candidly wrote about Cambridge to his tutor John Hanson,

> or at least his principal residence, they call it the University, but any other appellation would have suited it much better, for study is the last pursuit of the Society; the Master eats, drinks and Sleeps, the Fellows *drink dispute* and *pun*, the *employments* of the under Graduates you will probably conjecture without my description.[2]

Byron also noted how the vicious habits of risky gambling and heavy drinking, which started at Eton College, haunted Scrope Davies at Cambridge University. "This place is wretched enough," Byron wrote in one of his letters, "a villainous Chaos of Dice and Drunkenness, nothing but Hazard, Hunting, Mathematics and Newmarket [racecourses], Riot and Racing."[3] The eighteenth-century historian Edward Gibbon (1737-94) agreed with Byron when he wrote that, "I spent fourteen months at Magdalen College. They proved to be the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable months of my whole life."[4] Lord Malmesbury (1778-1841) wrote in similar way that,

> The discipline of the university happened to be so lax that a gentleman commoner was under no restraint and never called upon to attend either lectures or chapel or hall . . . The rest of men with whom I lived were very pleasant but very idle fellows. Our life was an imitation of high life in London.[5]

One of Brummell's fellow students at Oxford University depicted Brummell as a relentless social climber, who was more than willing to sacrifice a friend from Eton in order to move on the social ladder. It is also described how he put the finishing touches to his dandaical pose with which he would conquer high society:

> He rapidly progressed in the exclusive habits to which he had found himself predisposed, the little that remained of the schoolboy frankness was quickly thrown aside in his violent desire to be perfectly correct; and, to gratify his taste, he [Brummell] cut one of his brother Etonians, because he [an unfashionable brother Etonian] entered a junior college, and discontinued visiting another, because he [another brother Etonian] had invited him to meet two men of . . . Hall. The plan which he acted upon was to make intimacies with men of high rank and connexions: he was a consummate tuft hunter [a social mountaineer]; and to the preservations of an embryo baronet or earl, he fancied it necessary to sacrifice a friend a term.[6]

Brummell left Oxford very soon and travelled to Brighton to join the 10th Light Dragoons, the most idle and fashionable regiment of the day, whose soldiers were

[1] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 89
[2] Ibid., p. 89
[3] Burnett, T.A.J, 1981: p. 64
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 114
[5] Ibid., p. 114
[6] Ibid., p. 116

handpicked by the Prince of Wales himself for their exceptional elegance, charm, and birth.[1] This regiment, mockingly called "The Elegant Extracts" or "China 10th", followed in the Prince's wake to Windsor, London, and Brighton.[2] Although Captain Gronow asserted that the Prince of Wales gave Brummell the cornetcy in The Light Dragoons as a present, it is more likely that Brummell bought that position in the army with a part of his inheritance to gain access to the high society in Brighton and London.[3] The army commissions of lieutenancy and captaincy ate in Brummell's inheritance, as did his expensive uniform and the upkeep of it, horses and riding equipment, groom, servant, "barrack furniture", and "8s. 5d. a day for the forage of each of his horses and . . . considerable sums to the mess and band fund".[4] In those days, Brummell gained less than he actually invested in the regiment.[5] In that way, it was guaranteed that the officers were no mere "mercenaries", but gentlemen who "had an interest in the country they defended."[6] Brummell became the regiment's "practised and privileged jester" who was "the life and soul of the mess . . . for his original wit and collection of good stories . . . [and] always kept his brother officers in roars of laughter."[7]

While a regiment of his own was the Prince of Wales's outlet for his creativity and an ideal medium for the expression of his opposition to his dominant royal father, it was a thorn in his father's flesh in times when the military had to be a shining example for the rest of the nation.[8] Rumours of the regiment's bad reputation spread round the country and a veteran noted many years later how

> [t]he officers of those days [were] . . . thrown headlong into a vicious school. [The] officers were suffered to get drunk, swear, gamble, seduce, and run into debt at pleasure; that such a school produced many scamps, many incorrigible, bad characters is surprising; it is indeed, truly wonderful that it produced anything else.[9]

The Prince of Wales also tested his father's patience when he started dressing his officers in the outlandish, outrageous and foreign Hussar uniforms.[10] Originally, the Hussars were Hungarian mercenaries and horse trainers who had stirred the imagination

[1] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 24
[2] Ibid., p. 24 and Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 122
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 125
[4] Ibid., p. 146
[5] Ibid., p. 146
[6] Ibid., p. 146
[7] Ibid., p. 131
[8] Ibid., p. 148
[9] Ibid., p. 130
[10] Ibid., p. 148

of the Prince of Wales since his youth.[1] No doubt, the officers' white and tight riding breeches were the garment that attracted the attention of many seaside visitors in Brighton.[2] They were uncomfortably worn without underwear which permitted "close contact between horse and rider" and echoed the classical nudes.[3] According to John Mollo, an authority on military dress, the craze for the Hussar uniform coincided with the rise of the dandy because many Regency dandies had served in the Prince of Wales's Hussar Regiment.[4] No doubt, the officers' costumes had an indelible effect on Brummell's later sartorial style.

As captain of the regiment, Brummell was on very intimate, even homoerotic, terms with the Prince of Wales.[5] Brummell, for example, escorted Caroline of Brunswick, the future bride of the Prince, from Greenwich to London, was the Prince's best man at his wedding and might even have accompanied the Royal couple on their honeymoon to Windsor.[6] Nevertheless, the Prince's personal regiment was transferred to northern England in 1798 because the Napoleonic Wars on the Continent started taking a heavy toll, and riots had broken out in Manchester.[7] "Just imagine, Your Highness!" Brummell had said with disgust about the utterly unfashionable city, "Manchester!", upon which the Prince sympathetically accepted Brummell's resignation from the regiment.[8] The dandy could not leave London, which epitomised all possible elegance, luxury, and leisure. He bought a house in Chesterfield Street from where he ruled fashionable society for nearly twenty years.

[1] Ibid., p. 128
[2] Ibid., p. 125
[3] Ibid., p. 125
[4] John Mollo cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 148
[5] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 149
[6] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 24
[7] Ibid., p. 24
[8] Ibid., p. 24

4.1.2 Brummell's Reign over High Society

4.1.2.1 An Exclusive Parallelogram

Brummell's new snug house in Chesterfield Street was conveniently situated at the intersection of the parallelogram between Oxford Street, Regent Street, Piccadilly, and Hyde Park, a neighbourhood much in vogue at the time that "enclose[d] more intelligence and human ability, to say nothing of wealth and beauty, than the world ha[d] ever collected in such a place before," the Regency wit Sydney Smith (1771-1845) observed.[1] The fashionable parallelogram included the fashionable gentlemen's clubs White's, Brooks's and Watier's, Almack's Assembly Rooms, the Prince of Wales's Carlton House, Rotten Row in Hyde Park, and the exclusive shopping streets, such as Bond Street and Regency Street. When Brummell was at the height of his power, these places were exclusively reserved for the "haut ton" of society. From his house in Chesterfield Street, a power base in the middle of a street, "Beau" Brummell based his reign over London's high society on the desire for exclusiveness that was inherent to that world. "He was a nobody, who made himself somebody, and gave the law to everybody," Catherine Gore mischievously wrote in one of her fashionable novels.[2] Brummell's familiar territory did not stretch beyond London, except from the fashionable seaside resort Brighton and Oatsland Park in Surrey where he held court with the Duchess of York.[3] Although Brummell was a regular visitor to the country estates of his fortunate friends after the London season had ended, he seemed to have disliked the countryside and was reported to have fled to London because he had found a spider in his chamber pot. Brummell once explained that he had caught a cold in a coaching inn because the foolish innkeeper had put him into a room "with a damp stranger".[4] Brummell's defence of country gentlemen's exclusion from White's stemmed from the plain fact that "their boots . . . stung of horse-dung and bad blacking."[5]

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005, p. 158
[2] Heijkoop, Annemarie. "Beau Brummell in leven en letteren." *De dandy of de overschrijding van het alledaagse: facetten van het dandyisme*. Ed. André Hielkema. Meppel: Boom, 1989: p. 14
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 238
[4] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 21
[5] Ibid., p. 21

4.1.2.1.1 Almack's: "The Seventh Heaven of the Fashionable World"[1]

Another fashionable place was Almack's Assembly Rooms on King Street, St James's, which Captain Gronow considered "The Seventh Heaven of the Fashionable World".[2] At Almack's ball every Wednesday evening – where Regency gentlemen sold their daughters into marriage and corrupted their neighbours' wives – a faint smile of approval from Brummell was indeed worth more to a debutante than the most exclusive ball or the most expensive education at a foreign boarding school.[3] Understandably, the Duchess of Richmond, who wished to find a good match for her daughter, urged the girl, at the risk of being overheard, to take utmost care of her posture, her movements, and responses, if Mr Brummell should by any chance be kind enough to address them.[4] "For he is the celebrated Mr Brummell," she added whisperingly.[5] Almack's was an assembly room like all others, except that the most fashionable "Lady Patronesses" of the day – the Ladies Castlereagh, Jersey, Cowper and Sefton, Mrs Drummond Burrell, the Austrian Princess Esterhazy, and the Russian Princess Lieven – gave their weekly ball there on Wednesday evening.[6] While these high-born ladies kept an eye on the behaviour of the invited debutantes, Brummell advised on the acceptability of fellow gentlemen.[7] Brummell, who never danced and instead scrutinised the gentlemen's dress and manners, might have inspired Jane Austen's Mr Darcy who with "his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien . . . spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room", although there was a "scarcity of gentlemen [to dance with]".[8] Neither the food nor the music made Almack's the most exclusive club of London. The "Lady Patronesses", for instance, had the nerve to serve watery lemonade, dry biscuits, bread and butter, shunned the craze for the German waltz and preferred the old-fashioned quadrille dance instead.[9] In Edward Bulwer-Lytton's fashionable novel *Godolphin* (1833), this rigorous simplicity is explained in the following way: "There shall be no ostentatious display of wealth, no suppers. It will be everything if these entertainments [are] perfectly distinct from those of rich bankers, rich bankers cannot afford to vie with

[1] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 48
[2] Ibid. p. 48
[3] Based on a passage from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's fashionable novel *Godolphin* (1833) cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 284
[4] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 102
[5] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 283
[6] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 48
[7] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 284
[8] Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes Publishers, 1997: pp. 11-12
[9] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 284

us."[1] The admission, however, was by subscription vouchers.[2] Although respectable merchants' daughters were excluded from the invitation list, cunning gentlemen managed to sneak their courtesans into the assembly room. In his satire *Letters to Julia* (1822), Henry Luttrell (1765-1851) mocked the rules at Almack's:

> All on that magic list depends;
> Fame, fortune, fashion, lovers, friends.
> 'Tis that which gratifies or vexes
> All ranks, all ages, and both sexes.
> If once to Almack's you belong,
> Like Monarchs you can do no wrong;
> But banished thence on Wednesday night,
> By Jove, you can do nothing right.[3]

The theme of ostracism based on the exclusive character of the club did not escape the attention of the Regency satirists.

4.1.2.1.2 The Art of Cutting and Greeting in Hyde Park

Hyde Park, and more precisely Rotten Row, the horse-and-carriage avenue in the park, was "haut ton" preserve and an excellent place to exercise, socialise, and flirt.[4] "Where the fashionable fair," Byron mockingly wrote in his poem *Don Juan* (1819-1824), "can form a slight acquaintance with the fresh air."[5] "Is there a more gay and graceful spectacle in the world?" Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81) wondered. "Where can one see so beautiful women, such gallant cavaliers, such fine horses, and such brilliant equipages?"[6] Only the wealthiest – or those who could comfortably live on credit – were able to afford a carriage with footmen in liveries and coachmen for women and well-groomed horses for men.[7] "In those days," Captain Gronow points out to us, only the privileged few "would have dared to show themselves [in Hyde Park] . . . nor did you see any of the lower or middle classes of London intruding themselves in the regions [of Hyde Park] which, with a sort of tacit understanding, were given up exclusively to persons of rank and fashion."[8] Although Brummell insisted that, "Civility, my good fellow, may truly be said to cost nothing: if it does not meet in return, it at least leaves you in the most creditable position", Brummell politely greeted

[1] Passage taken from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's fashionable novel *Godolphin* (1833) cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 284
[2] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 48
[3] Luttrell, Henry. *Letters to Julia, on Rhyme … to which are added lines written at Ampthill Park.* London: Murray, 1822: pp. 9-10
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 214
[5] Ibid., p. 214
[6] Ibid., p. 215
[7] Ibid., p. 216
[8] Ibid., p. 216

his favourites but coldly ignored those whom he wished no longer to meet.[1] This custom was fictionalised in Lister's fashionable novel *Granby* (1826):

> In the art of cutting he [Vincent Trebeck] shone unrivalled: he knew the 'when', the 'where' and the 'how'. Without affecting useless short-sightedness, he could assume that calm but wandering gaze, which veers, as if unconsciously, round the proscribed individual.[2]

Brummell's elegant house in Chesterfield Street was within a stone's throw from Hyde Park.

4.1.2.2 A Ménage Recherché

Brummell's little "ménage recherché" was composed of a Mr Robinson, Brummell's valet, a cook, and a groom.[3] Since Brummell had a trained eye for beauty, he immediately set about collecting the status symbols of his time: Sevres china, Buhl furniture, drawings, books, snuff-boxes, and the finest wardrobe.[4] While Scrope Davies's lost trunk revealed his shopkeepers' bills, the frontispiece of Christie's Sale Catalogue of the public auction on "May 22nd and following day", four days after the heavily indebted Brummell had taken his heels, listed all the trivia he had so arduously collected for nearly twenty years.[5] "A MAN OF FASHION, GONE TO THE CONTINENT" was the headline of the catalogue, and it continued in the following way:

A Catalogue
of
A very choice and valuable assemblage
of
Specimens of the rare old Sèvres Porcelaine [*sic*]
Articles of Buhl Manufacture
Curiously chased Plate
Library of Books
Chiefly of French, Italian, and English Literature, the best
Editions and in fine Condition
The Admired Drawing of *The Angry Child*, and others
Exquisitely finished by Holmes, Christall de Windt
and Stephanoff
Three capital double-barrelled Fowling Pieces
by Manton
Ten Dozen of capital Old Port, sixteen dozen of Claret (Beauvais)
Burgundy, Claret, and Still Champagne;

[1] Ibid., p. 211
[2] Passage from Lister's fashionable novel *Granby or a Tale of Modern Society* (1826) cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 214
[3] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 159
[4] Ibid., p. 335
[5] Ibid., p. 335

The whole of which have been nine years in bottle in the
Cellar of the proprietor
also, an
Assortment of Table and Other Linen, and some Articles of
Neat Furniture[1]

To assure the many curious-minded buyers and bargain hunters that these trivia were genuine, Mr Christie indicated that these were "[t]he genuine Property of A MAN OF FASHION gone to the Continent".[2] Although Brummell's belongings seem trivial today, they were everything a true gentleman needed to entertain his most prominent guests. Brummell's butler, for instance, neatly laid an elegant table with the whitest table linen, polished the silver, served delicious food on the most expensive china plates and purchased the finest wines at Berry Brothers and Rudd in St James Street.[3] When Brummell was once asked how much it cost to launch a young man into London society, he replied, "with strict economy, it might be done for eight hundred pounds a year."[4] Some years later, when Brummell was at the height of his fame, young Lord Byron meticulously prepared his introduction into the fashionable social circles. He started spending a vast deal more on his clothes, on the interior of his rooms at St James's, where he played host to his friends, on visits to restaurants, hotels, coffeehouses, on the membership of the exclusive gentlemen's clubs White's, Brooks's, and Watier's, and on the subscription to London theatre boxes.[5] Being a member of impoverished peerage and being in the habit of spending more than he actually should, Byron inevitably amassed heavy debts, an anxiety he suffered almost his entire life and shared with most Regency dandies.

One of the most singular status symbols of the time was the snuff-box, comparable with today's cellular phones because it was the most exquisite "objet d'art" of the time, made in every possible shape and size. According to Captain Gronow, the majority of fashionable men, including the Prince of Wales and Brummell, carried snuff-boxes.[6] A fellow dandy, Lord Petersham (1780-1851), who was one of Brummell's closest acquaintances, also had a passion for snuff. On one side of Lord Peterham's sitting-room, boxes of precious teas were shelved, while

[1] Ibid., p. 335
[2] Ibid., p. 335
[3] Brown, Joanna. "Nothing but a Name Mysteriously Sparkling." *The Jane Austen Magazine*. n.d. 9 Feb. 2006 <http://janeausten.co.uk/magazine/index.ihtml?=312&step=4>.
[4] £33,000 in today's money in Brown, Joanna. "Nothing but a Name Mysteriously Sparkling." *The Jane Austen Magazine*. n.d. 9 Feb. 2006 <http://janeausten.co.uk/magazine/index.ihtml?=312&step=4>.
[5] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 315
[6] Ibid., p. 335

> on the other side . . . were beautiful jars, with names in gilt letters, of innumerable kinds of snuff, and all the necessary apparatus for moistening and mixing . . . Other shelves and many tables were covered with a great number of magnificent snuff-boxes . . . [for it] was supposed to have a fresh box for every day of the year.[1]

Snuff was so expensive and therefore a status symbol because only the moist stems of the tobacco plant were ground into powder and then laced with alcohol or scent.[2] Leaders of fashion like Brummell prided themselves on mixing their own snuff.[3] One day, Fribourg and Treyer, "tobacconists and purveyors of foreign snuff", invited Brummell to take a first sniff from a new brand of snuff they had on sale.[4] The shopkeepers soon regretted their choice because "after taking a few pinches, [Brummell] gravely pronounced it a detestable compound and not at all the style of thing that any man, with the slightest pretensions to correct taste could possibly patronise."[5] Although cigars already existed at the time, Brummell deemed it more fashionable to take a pinch of snuff once in a while.[6] In fact, Brummell developed the etiquette of snuff-taking, which already existed at the end of the eighteenth century, into a fine art by the time of the Regency.[7] It required dexterity and concentration to avoid yellow stains on the fingers, unsightly brown drips from the nose, ridiculous sneezing, or a grimace of disgust on the face.[8] "Brummell flicked open the lid of the snuff-box with the thumb of his right hand, which had the effect of presenting the lid," Ian Kelly explains. "The same thumb was used to convey a small amount of snuff in the indentation by the thumbnail to the nose, the box meanwhile held at the chin."[9] The Prince of Wales, however, was not as dexterous as Brummell, and he once admitted to a friend that he did not like to take snuff at all.[10] To gossipmonger Captain Gronow it also appeared that, "The Majesty took snuff for fashion's sake."[11] Apparently, the Prince mastered every gesture of the hand and arm technique Brummell had taught him, but he "allowed all of it to escape from his finger and thumb before it reached the nose."[12] More than once, a snuff-box triggered a row between the Prince of Wales and his young

[1] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 251
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 253 and Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 252
[3] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 252
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 257
[5] Ibid., p. 257
[6] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 252
[7] Ibid., p. 251
[8] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 254
[9] Ibid., p. 256
[10] Gronow, Reese Howell, 1900: p. 335
[11] Ibid., p. 335
[12] Ibid., p. 335

protégé. When the Bishop of Winchester, who was the Prince's guest at the Royal Pavilion, took Brummell's snuff-box to take a pinch of snuff, Brummell ordered his servant to throw the rest of the snuff into the fire, much to the annoyance of the Prince.[1] Brummell offended the Prince once more when he ostentatiously placed his snuff-box on a table opposite Mrs Fitzherbert.[2] The Prince bluntly reminded Brummell that the place of his box was in his pocket, not on the table.[3] Another incident shows us the Prince's true nature and the awkward position Brummell held. When Brummell gifted the Prince one of his snuff-boxes the Prince particularly liked, Brummell was allowed to commission another box instead.[4] He found out, however, that the Prince had expressly cancelled the order and also refused to return Brummell's original.[5] "It was this more than anything else," Captain Gronow explains, "which induced Brummell to bear himself with such unbending hostility towards the Prince of Wales. He [Brummell] felt that he [the Prince] had treated him unworthily. . . ."[6] Among the knick-knacks that Brummell left after his moonlight flit, the auctioneer Mr Christie found a snuff-box that Brummell had intended for the Prince with a note on which he had hastily scribbled, "If he had conducted himself with more propriety towards me".[7]

4.1.3 Leader of Male Fashion

After Brummell's sudden departure, his mahogany dressing table was found in the room where according to an admirer Brummell "composed that elaborate portrait of himself which was to be exhibited for a few hours in the clubrooms of the town."[8] According to the fin-de-siècle aesthete Max Beerbohm (1878-1956), Brummell conceived "the notion of trousers and simple coats" in front of his mirror.[9] In claiming "Beau" Brummell the "father of modern costume", Beerbohm failed to discern the several tendencies towards studied simplicity in dress that were present in British society from the end of the eighteenth century on. Brummell's timing was perfect because he crystallised all his former dress experiences – the uniform of the "Montem polemen" at Eton, the Hussar uniform of the 10th Light Dragoons, and the riding outfit of the country gentleman –into

[1] Ibid., p. 336
[2] Ibid., p. 227
[3] Ibid., p. 227
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 278
[5] Ibid., p. 278
[6] Ibid., p. 278
[7] Ibid., p. 344
[8] Second-generation dandy Philip Warton cited in Beerbohm, Max. "Dandies and Dandies." *Vanity* 1895. 7 March 1999. U of Albany. 22 Oct. 2005 <http://www.albany.edu/faculty/rlp96/beerbohm.html>.
[9] Beerbohm, Max. "Dandies and Dandies." Vanity 1895. 7 March 1999. U of Albany. 22 Oct. 2005 <http://www.albany.edu/faculty/rlp96/beerbohm.html>.

a unique dress style of his own. Brummell, however, would not have been able to develop his original dress sense without the ingenuity of the British tailors who had established an international reputation in their trade.[1] "By the end of the eighteenth century English tailors became the leaders of men's fashions," the historian Nora Waugh observes in her study of male fashion, "their long experience of the subtleties of cloth had developed their skill and gave style and elegance to the practical country coats and so made them acceptable for fashionable wear."[2] According to Waugh, "Beau" Brummell was not "an innovator but a perfectionist [who] set the seal on the new fashion by removing the odour of the stable. He had the floppy cravat starched, the muddy boots polished and above all, he demanded perfect cut and fit."[3] Thanks to the innovations of the Industrial Revolution, British tailors had new fabrics, such as cotton, linen and wool, at their disposal. In his study of nineteenth-century male fashion, the French historian Farid Chenoun calls the technical innovations in the textile industry and the skills of the British tailors to work with wool and linen the silent revolution as opposed to the harsh American and French Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century.[4] During the four decades that spanned the Regency, apparently cheap fabrics like wool, cotton, and linen decidedly replaced the luxurious fabrics like silk, velvet, and lace in which the previous generation had swathed themselves to show their social rank.[5] Likewise, the bright colours of the exuberant eighteenth century softened down to skin tones, white, blue, grey, and black.[6] In the aftermath of the American and French Revolutions, a new style based on the idea of how the English country gentleman dressed rivalled with the court style of the formal eighteenth century.[7] The Whig politician Charles James Fox, for instance, sported a rustic dark coat and riding breeches in sympathy with the French Revolution, and also the Prince of Wales occasionally dressed up like a country gentleman to tease his father the King.[8] In their aversion to the elaborated eighteenth-century court style and in their search for simpleness, men and women also drew inspiration from the ancient Greeks and Romans.[9] Neoclassicism pervaded the entire cultural life of the Regency, from architecture and interior

[1] Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 185
[2] Ibid., p. 185
[3] Ibid., p. 184
[4] Chenoun, Farid, 1993: p. 22
[5] Ibid., p. 22
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 171
[7] Ibid., p. 120
[8] Ibid., p. 120
[9] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 245

decoration to fashion. According to the neoclassical precept, dress had to be based "on continuity of surface, line, form and contour . . . [and on] unity, simplicity and a continuously flowing movement from one part of the body to the next."[1] In his treatise on British fashion *Male and Female Costume, Grecian and Roman Costume, British Costume from the Roman Invasion until 1822*, Brummell argued that the London male fashion was one of the highest expressions of neoclassicism, for Great Britain was the natural and worthy successor of the ancient Greek and Roman empires.[2] "The Athenians to whom we owe whatever we know of fine arts, ranked Costume as one of these. However varied its details may be, its principles are fixed, and its means of producing effects, its power of expression, as definite as those of the other arts," he wrote in 1822 while he was in exile in Caen.[3] Most importantly, the Regency witnessed a significant shift in the structures and meanings of dress which the renowned British psychoanalyst John Carl Flugel (1884-1950) called "The Great Masculine Renunciation" in his *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930).[4] This twentieth-century psychologist argued that,

> At the end of the eighteenth century . . . there occurred one of the most remarkable events in the whole history of dress, one under the influence of which we are still living, one, moreover, which has attracted far less attention than it deserves: men gave up their right to all the brighter, gayer, more elaborate, and more varied forms of ornamentation, leaving them entirely to the use of women.[5]

One observer, whose beauty ideal dated from the eighteenth century, did not understand the craze for "Beau" Brummell and his sartorial elegance because "he was dressed as plain as any man in the field, and the manly expression of his countenance ill accorded with the implication the sobriquet [Beau] conveyed."[6] With the benefit of hindsight, we discern now how Brummell's ascetic sartorial style coincided with the moment in which the recognition of masculinity prevailed over the recognition of rank in dress.[7] In the old system of the eighteenth century, both male and female costume had been extravagant because the visibility of social position had always been ranked higher than the one of gender.[8] The anonymous author of *Neclothitania*, an early nineteenth-century treatise on the art of tying the perfect cravat, lamented the decline of the eighteenth-century court style.[9] "It can hardly be imagined how political events should, even in the remotest way,

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005, p. 168
[2] Ibid., p. 366
[3] "Beau" Brummell cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 367
[4] George, Laura. "Byron, Brummell, and the Fashionable Figure." *The Byron Journal* 24 (1996): p. 33
[5] George, Laura, 1996: p. 33
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 184
[7] George, Laura, 1996: p. 34
[8] Ibid., p. 34
[9] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 167

influence or affect the thermometer of fashion," the anonymous author addressed his readership,

> but it is nevertheless true, that both the American and French [R]evolutions have totally changed it – a change, no doubt, very disadvantageous to the man of the *Haut Ton*, inasmuch as it has completely obliterated all distinction between the Occidental (West End) nobleman and the Oriental (City) shoppy; the master from his servant. . . .
> [The eighteenth-century court style] possessed enormous advantages, forming, by the furious expense necessarily incurred to support it, an impassable barrier, and insurmountable obstacle, to the aping attempts of the lower orders and shabby genteels, to appear accoutred as their superiors. Now, alas! Fashion has made it quite otherwise; a tradesman can have his coat made short-waisted, the tops of his boots shallow, his waistcoats cut as they ought to be, and many other similar things, equally as well as the higher ranks, and even in many instances better.[1]

Contrary to what this treatise makes us believe, Brummell's dress sense was neither egalitarian nor democratic. His style was a difficult one to emulate for commoners and aristocrats alike because it was based on the severe precepts of "perfect fit, faultless construction and exquisite attention to detail".[2] Under Brummell's influence, "gentlemen would communicate with one another through the subtleties in tailoring, in a language that would seem not merely foreign but totally incomprehensible to those who were not a gentleman," a fashion historian points out.[3] Moreover, the seemingly rustic riding breeches were so tight – they were kept close-fitting with the newest suspenders and straps which buckled under the instep – that it was impossible for a dandy to sit down.[4] The coats were made so small that a dandy needed a valet to get them on in the morning.[5] Whereas the military Hessian boots had to be carefully polished until the black leather shone, the German Prince Pückler-Muskau warned his economical wife that a London dandy sported pumps "as thin as paper" in the evening.[6] When Brummell was asked one day where he purchased his blacking, he complacently gazed at his boots and replied, "My blacking positively wins me." "It is made with the finest champagne!" he whispered loudly enough to be overheard.[7] When Brummell introduced the fashion of mirror-polished boots, he knew quite well that is was

[1] Ibid., p. 167; Many Regency dandies, Brummell's friend Tom Raikes for example, were sons of prosperous City merchants with lucrative businesses in the eastern part of London and ended their life in the more fashionable West End. Hence the author makes the binary opposition between the "Occidental nobleman" and the "Oriental" merchant.
[2] Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 185
[3] C. McDowell cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: pp. 4-5
[4] Ashelford, Jane, 1996: p. 186 and Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 174
[5] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 26
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 165
[7] Gronow, Reese Howell, 1900, p. 52

impossible not to get them spattered with mud in the unpaved streets of East London or on the hunting fields of the aristocrats. Brummell's favourite primrose yellow gloves were so flimsy that they were easily torn when a dandy had put them on too hastily.[1] The mere fact that Brummell got up very late in the morning – he allegedly liked to have the morning well-aired – and spent hours in his dressing-room before venturing out of his door reinforces his status of a man of leisure.[2] Brummell consciously took hours to tie his starched cravat carefully, discarding all crumpled "failures".[3] The high, starched cravat restricted every movement of the dandy and, in the case of Brummell's most assiduous disciples, it prevented them from seeing their own boots while standing.[4] Contemporary satirists did not miss the occasion to mock the dandies' neckcloth:

> My neckcloth, of course, forms my principal care,
> For by that we criterions of elegance swear
> And cost me each morning some hours of flurry
> To make it appear to be tied in a hurry.[5]

Since the whitest white of shirts and cravats had to contrast with the deepest blue of coats and the blackest black of boots, Brummell recommended "very fine linen, plenty of it, and country washing."[6] Brummell was well aware that it was impossible to dry laundry without getting it stained with soot in the London smog. Lord Byron, for example, was more than willing to run into deep debts to meet the wide-ranging requirements of linen and spared no expense for keeping them whiter than white.[7] Regency dandies were a washerwoman's best customers, for they had the fastidious habit of changing clothes three or four times a day.[8] On one of his visits to London, Prince Pückler-Muskau was astonished to see how "a dandy cannot get on without dressing three or four times a day, the affair is *tout simple*, for he must appear: 1st Breakfast toilette; a chintz gown and Turkish slippers: 2nd Morning riding dress; a frock coat, boots and spurs; 3rd Dinner dress; dress coat and shoes; 4th Ball dress".[9] We may conclude that Brummell built in enough safeguards to prevent commoners and aristocrats alike from aping his dress code. One of Brummell's fondest admirers, the

[1] Based on an anonymous extract from *An Exquisite's Diary* (1819) that mocked the tribulations of a Regency dandy in Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 33
[2] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 32
[3] Gronow, Reese Howell, 1900: p. 1
[4] Ibid., p. 52
[5] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 165
[6] Ibid., p. 161
[7] Ibid., p. 166
[8] Ibid., p. 165
[9] Ibid., p. 165

Prince of Wales, for example, could impossibly comply with the severe dress code that the dandy imposed. Teasingly, Brummell started calling the hefty Prince "Big Ben" – the nickname predated the famous bell and tower on the New Palace of Westminster – and extended the unflattering label to the Prince's overweight mistress Mrs Fitzherbert, whom he called "Benina".[1] Much to the Prince's despair, Brummell's close-fitting coats were "designed to fit a body trained in the rules of deportment, a wearer well used to framing his identity as public spectacle through posture and a discerning attitude to dress."[2] The Regency witnessed an unprecedented fascination for male physicality.[3] Thomas Raikes compared his friend's body to a statue of the Greek god Apollo, for he was as tall, well-made, muscular, and perfectly proportioned as the Greek marble.[4] Under the influence of Brummell,

> [d]ressed form became an abstraction of nude form, a new ideal naked man expressed not in marble but in natural wool, linen and leather . . . The perfect man, as conceived by English tailors, was part English gentleman, part innocent natural Adam, and part naked Apollo . . . a combination with an enduring appeal in other countries and in other centuries.[5]

Although Brummell is now seen as an effeminate fop rather than as the harbinger of masculinity, cultural historians describe Brummell as "a symbol, a sort of New Man, of 'overstated manliness' and 'unambiguous masculinity' but who was clearly in touch with his feminine side."[6] "In this aspect," Ian Kelly concludes, "he resembles Byron."[7] Brummell, for instance, was an accomplished horseman and was often invited over for the hunt season at one of his friends' country estates. Brummell's fellow dandy, Scrope Davies, shared Lord Byron's fascination for pugilism, athletics, and swimming. Unthinkable in the previous centuries when sport had been limited to hunting or betting on the outcome of a horse-race, Regency gentlemen actively engaged themselves in strenuous exercise.[8] Scrope Davies's trunk revealed invitations to the newly-founded "Pugilistic Club" where Lord Byron and he went sparring "ad sudorem" with "Gentleman" John Jackson, a professional pugilist who set up as an instructor to amateurs in St James Street.[9] Among Davies's personal belongings, there was also a draft for proposals for the foundation of a tennis club, which was then "played with a

[1] Ibid., pp. 276-77
[2] Ibid., p. 175
[3] Ibid., p. 165
[4] Ibid., p. 168
[5] Fashion historian Anne L. Hollander cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 171
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 298
[7] Ibid., p. 298
[8] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 66
[9] Ibid., pp. 66-67

hard ball in a large court".[1] During his grand tour of 1809-1811, Byron famously swam the Tagus in Portugal and the Hellespont in Greece.[2] Swimming temporarily concealed his lameness that mortified him, and swimming the Hellespont "assured him fame through his lifetime and immortality thereafter."[3] Regency gentlemen started taking vigorous exercise either to control their weight – Brummell had him weighed on the scales inside the shop of his wine suppliers – or to prove their masculinity.[4] Unlike their eighteenth-century predecessors and many contemporaries, Brummell, Scrope Davies, and Lord Byron shared an obsession for water and cleanliness. They bathed in hot water for hours, washed and scrubbed, shaved with extreme care and ferociously brushed their teeth. In the *Literary Gazette* of May 1828, an anonymous correspondent recalled how Byron "wore his nails very short, and was very particular about his teeth and linen, but otherwise not remarkable in his toilette."[5] In Brummell's case, "he rubbed himself all over with a pig-bristle brush till he shone like a 'scarlet fever' victim."[6]

4.1.4 Brummell's Wit: Do you call that thing a coat?[7]

Brummell's fame for his aloofness, indifference, and wit that occasionally verged on insult easily outdid his fame for his good looks and unique sartorial style. "We may look upon 'Beau' Brummell as the greatest of small wits," William Hazlitt wrote,

> [h]e has arrived at the very *minimum* of wit, and reduced it, "by happiness or pains", to an almost invisible point. All his *bons-mots* turn upon one single circumstance, the exaggerating of the merest trifles into matters of importance, or treating everything else with the utmost nonchalance and indifference, as if whatever pretended to pass beyond those limits was a *bore*, and disturbed the serene air of high life.[8]

Indeed, Brummell's snobbish wit was designed to appeal to the class he dominated and to relieve the tedium of their everyday life. Like all other Regency wits, Brummell's humour explored themes like class, rank, social mobility, and manners that were current topics in his time. Unlike the warm wit from Jane Austen's novels, however, Brummell's witty remarks were rather sardonic and intended to mock the pretension of

[1] Ibid., p. 67
[2] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 184 and p. 258
[3] Ibid., p. 257 and p. 259
[4] Brown, Joanna. "Nothing but a Name Mysteriously Sparkling." The Jane Austen Magazine. n.d. 9 Feb 2006 < http://janeausten.co.uk/magazine/index.ihtml?pid=312&step=4>.
[5] Jones, Christine K. "Fantasy and Transfiguration: Byron and His Portaits." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999: p. 113
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 404
[7] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 20
[8] William Hazlitt cited in Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 20

his aristocratic admirers.[1] To William Hazlitt, Brummell's greatest witticism was the dry one-liner, "It is no more like a coat than it is to a cauliflower", which was recorded in the following conversation between Brummell and fellow dandies:

> "My dear fellow," Brummell said [with a sardonic smile], "where did you pick up that extraordinary affair you have put on your back? I protest I have never seen anything so singular."
> "Most singular indeed," Lord Yarmouth said.
> "Maybe it's an heirloom?" Lord Fife suggested.
> "Coeval with Alfred the Great, at least," Lord Alvanley observed.
> "Exactly!" Lord Wilton said.
> "It is not your fault, mine goot [*sic*] sir," Prince Esterhazy [the Austrian ambassador in London] said, "you shall be not to blame because of a devoid-of-conscience-influencing tradesman deceived you when you [did] him the honour to purchase of his delusive fabrics."
> "*Is there anything the matter with my coat?*" [cried the Duke of Bedford angrily.]
> "Coat?" Brummell exclaimed. "Coat?" the others cried in chorus. "For heaven's sake my dear fellow, don't misapply names so abominably! It is no more like a coat than it is to a cauliflower – if it is, I'll be damned!"[2]

Today, we can only imagine how Brummell shrugged his shoulders, how his voice must have sounded, how he haughtily raised his fine eyebrow, how his grey eye pityingly glanced at the aspiring dandy's "coat", and how he disapprovingly pursed his lips. Unfortunately, the essence of humour can only be partly rendered in written language, for its effect largely depends on the situation. In the presence of this infamous fashion police – "Beau" Brummell, Lord Yarmouth, Lord Fife, Lord Alvanley, Lord Wilton, and Prince Esterhazy – an eager aristocrat with pretensions to elegance had come to ask Brummell's opinion who disregarded the Duke's higher social position and undermined the man's pretensions. "It seems all at once a vulgar prejudice to suppose that a coat is a coat, the commonest of all common things, – it is here lifted into an ineffable essence, so that a coat is no longer a *thing* . . . What a cut upon the Duke! The beau becomes an emperor among such insects!"[3]

"Beau" Brummell's pose of supposedly effortless superiority, aloofness, indifference – or "cool" in today's parlance – influenced the way in which men behaved both in real life and in fiction.[4] In his essay on Brummell's dandyism, Barbey d'Aurevilly described "Beau" Brummell's pose with the following words: "A cold languor . . . Eyes glazed

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005, p. 270
[2] Ibid., p. 206 and p. 246
[3] William Hazlitt cited in Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 20
[4] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 469

with indifference . . . A concentrated irony . . . The boldness of conduct, the sumptuous impertinence, the preoccupation with exterior effects, with vanity incessantly present."[1]

At the height of his fame, "Beau" Brummell dominated the social scene, threatening to undercut or overshadow the efforts of all other aspiring dandies, including those of the Prince of Wales. The influence he exerted on London high society for more than twenty years was so profound that the Regency hostesses felt that their ball had been a complete flop if he failed to appear or that the Prince burst into tears when the supreme dandy mercilessly disapproved of his newest coat. "In Society, stay as long as you need to make impression, and as soon as you have made it, move on," was one of Brummell's favourite mottos.[2] In *Vivian Grey* (1827), one of the many fashionable novels modelled on Brummell's life, Benjamin Disraeli wrote, "All feared, many admired, none hated him. He was too powerful not to dread, too dexterous not to admire, too superior to hate."[3] Brummell instinctively knew "every trick of the publicity game" in order to become famous for being famous.[4] His late entrance or arrogance not to turn up at all, his witty one-liners and cruel remarks, sure to be repeated in the small world of London society, his exclusiveness, his arrogance, and his "cool" indifference arouse everybody's curiosity or inspired fear.[5] With a lift of his fine eyebrow and a caught glance, he allegedly made or broke people's reputations, and his scrutinising small grey eye was reckoned to be "one of the most deadly weapons in London."[6] One day a high-born lady had the nerve to offend him, whereupon he assured Tom Moore that he would turn her into a social pariah.[7] "She shall suffer for it. I'll chase her from society; she shall not be another fortnight in existence," he told his companion.[8] Brummell may have been famous for his good looks, charm and wit, his rule over high society was primarily based on his cockiness, impertinence, and emotional detachment. This dandaical pose disguised the discomfort with his social position, the tedium of being the leader of London society for so many years, and the exacerbating symptoms of syphilis. The exiled Scrope Davies, who also died of syphilis, wrote to a fellow dandy of yore, Thomas Raikes: "The dead are less to be deplored than the insane. Babylon in all its desolation is a sight not so awful as that of the human mind in ruins. It

[1] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 16
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005: pp. 296-97
[3] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 26
[4] Murray, Venetia, 1998: p. 30
[5] Ibid., p. 30
[6] Ibid., p. 30
[7] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 26
[8] Ibid., p. 26

is a firmament without a sun, a temple without a God. I have survived most of my friends: Heaven forbid I should survive myself."[1]

In his biography of "Beau" Brummell, Ian Kelly concludes that Brummell's "manner – the poise, deft wit and languorous indifference – became a signifier of the gentleman, just as clearly as his clothes. And it is this manner, as much as the well-cut suit, which has remained as a recognisable type in English fiction, in English life and in the wider sphere of masculine aspiration."[2]

4.1.5 The Legacy of "Beau" Brummell in Literature

Brummell's fame is based on a series of anecdotes and incidents that his contemporaries assiduously wrote down in their journals, correspondence with friends and family, and memoirs. Drawing-room gossip on what Brummell had said or done did not long remain upstairs but in no time reached the ears downstairs. These scandalous bits of news whirled through the lanes of Hyde Park and Marylebone Park, along Regent Street and St James Street and entered into the gentlemen's clubs, operas, theatres and pleasure gardens. Stage-coaches hurriedly spread the "have-you-heard" news to the watering places of Brighton and Bath where the "bon ton" of society pursued pleasure and health. One day, when another of these magnified rumours reached Lord Byron, he grudgingly made a list of the men on whom outrageous stories were circulating. Placing himself third, Napoleon second, and Brummell at the top of that notorious list, Byron was well aware that these three men, including himself, were "figures of legend, almost of myth, well before they died."[3]

During his exile in France, Brummell diligently contributed to the final version of his life story and to the process of myth-making. "Beau" Brummell had become a new French tourist attraction on whom distinguished travellers – "every bird of passage from the fashionable world" in Prince Pückler-Muskau's words – called on their way to Paris or Rome.[4] Brummell continued inventing and shaping stories and weeded out all uncharacteristic features.[5] The travel writer Charles MacFarlane (?-1858) was one of those curious tourists who visited the dandy on his way to Great Britain and recorded how Brummell tried to rewrite his life story:

[1] Burnett, T.A.J. 1981: p. 201
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 469
[3] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 22
[4] The German Prince Pückler-Muskau cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 347
[5] Sillevis, John. "De dandy als held." *De dandy – mode, kunst, literatuur*. Den Haag: Museum Het Paleis, 1997: p. 6

> Brummell confessed to the story of the 'stout friend', and to his threat, after his quarrel with the Prince, to go down to Windsor and make the old people [King George III and Queen Charlotte] fashionable; but he [Brummell] emphatically denied that other tale, 'George, ring the bell!' 'I knew the Prince too well,' said he, 'ever to take any kind of liberty with him! Drunk or sober, he would have resented it, with a vengeance! His vindictive spirit – and he would be vindictive about trifles – was the worst part of him; and were he once took a spite he never forgave.[1]

The "George-ring-the-bell" or "Wales-ring-the-bell" story was the most notorious example of Brummell's impudent behaviour towards his superior. In her 1925 essay on "Beau" Brummell, Virginia Woolf, however, leapt to Brummell's defence claiming that, "Brummell could never have said, 'Wales, ring the bell', any more than he could have worn a brightly coloured waistcoat or a glaring necktie."[2] She continued that his style indeed hovered "on the verge of insolence", but that he always kept "within some curious means."[3] Virginia Woolf concluded that "one knew the false Brummell story from the true by its exaggeration."[4]

4.1.5.1 Captain William Jesse's *Life of George Brummell*

One of the above mentioned British tourists, who lingered in Continental Europe long after the Battle of Waterloo had been fought, was Captain William Jesse. He regularly visited the legendary dandy and became so besotted with him that he wanted to write a biography of "Beau" Brummell. Young Captain Jesse, however, had spent most of his life on military campaign outside Britain. When Jesse interviewed "Beau" Brummell in Caen, the ageing dandy had already been in exile for sixteen years and outlived most of his legendary peers, even his former patron George IV. Jesse's ambitious project to write a biography of "Beau" Brummell was not at all an enviable task. Apart from the occasional doggerel verses jotted down for an inner circle of friends and some hasty drawings, Brummell had never fostered the ambition to leave an artistic legacy to posterity. Most of his peers had died, and Brummell's possessions were scattered over Great Britain and France after they had been sold to settle his debts with the duns. Jesse could not make a sound word of Brummell's incoherent drivel to which the former dandy succumbed due to syphilitic dementia.[5] Because Jesse had been abroad for so many years, he knew almost nothing at first hand. Ellen Moers, however, points out that

[1] Charles MacFarlane cited in Laver, James. *The Age of Illusion: Manners and Morals 1750-1848*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972: p. 148
[2] Woolf, Virginia. "Beau Brummell." *The Common Reader*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1965: p. 151
[3] Ibid., p. 151
[4] Ibid., p. 151
[5] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 449

Jesse consulted three source texts that recorded Brummell's life at the height of his fame: "three brief magazine articles, a sketchy book of memoirs by one of Brummell's acquaintances, and Byron's letters and papers."[1] Indeed, "Beau" Brummell and his whereabouts were a recurrent topic of conversation between Lord Byron and Scrope Davies who both held a fascination for the famous dandy. In fact, Lord Byron was among the first who used the word "dandy" to refer to "Beau" Brummell in a letter to his friend and literary executor Thomas Moore on 25 July 1813: "The season has closed with a dandy ball."[2] Despite of Lord Byron's valuable testimony, Jesse commuted incessantly between the Continent and Great Britain to satisfy his hunger for information.[3] He pestered Brummell's former landlord for more details on the period that Brummell spent under his roof and cross-examined the frightened scullery maids in Hôtel D'Angleterre in Caen, charitable nuns of the convent Saint Saveur where Brummell died, and the local bourgeoisie with whom Brummell had frequently dined.[4] Four years after Brummell's death, Jesse's two-volume biography was published in London.[5] More than half of Jesse's biography was spent on the description of the dandy's unfortunate fall from grace, his hide-and-seek play with British and French bailiffs and creditors, and his final degrading struggle against the agony of syphilis.[6] If the prude Victorians ever read Jesse's biography, undoubtedly they drew moral out of Brummell's deplorable downfall and – in their opinion – the despicable lifestyle of their grandparents.[7] "Beau" Brummell's most recent biographer, Ian Kelly, disagrees with the general opinion that Jesse's biography was sensationalist and biased, and he sympathises with Jesse's difficult position, writing as he was in the prudish 1840s.[8] After all, Jesse structured his seven-hundred-page *Life of George Brummell Esq. Commonly Known as Beau Brummell* (1844) around letters and testimonies that would have otherwise been lost.[9] In Barbey d'Aurevilly's viewpoint, however, Jesse's biography might have been more effective, if he had written less. Moreover, he objected

[1] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 22
[2] Moore, Thomas. *Life of Lord Byron, Vol. III With His Letters and Journals*. 1830. *Project Gutenberg*. 23 Oct. 2005 <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/16548>.
[3] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 22
[4] Ibid., pp. 22-23.
[5] Sillevis, John, 1997: p. 8
[6] Ibid., p. 7
[7] Ibid, p. 7
[8] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 19
[9] Ibid., pp. 17-18

to the many gory details in Jesse's account of Brummell's last days in Caen, suspecting that Jesse had the intention to put the dandy in a bad light.[1]

4.1.5.2 The Fashionable Novel

Apart from memoirs, diaries, and testimonies, Jesse drew inspiration from the so-called *Brummellania* that Ellen Moers defines as "the ephemeral literature of the day: fashionable novels, salon verses, lampoons, burlesques and miscellaneous sketches."[2] Within his own lifetime, "Beau" Brummell had rather reluctantly approved of his fictional characterisation in the dandy novels that appeared in print while he was in exile: *Granby* by Lister and *Pelham, The Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828) by Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873). Brummell, for instance, disapproved of Bulwer's formal black-and-white evening costume.[3] When Captain William Jesse unsuspectingly appeared in his black-and-white attire one evening, "Beau" Brummell, wearing his usual deep blue coat and buff pantaloon, mocked at him, saying: "My dear Jesse, I am sadly afraid you have been reading *Pelham*; but excuse me, you look like a magpie."[4]

These fashionable novels, published between 1820 and 1830, are also called "dandy novels" or "silver fork novels".[5] William Hazlitt coined the derisive term "silver fork novels", mocking that the novel's hero "also informs you that the quality [the British upper class] eat fish with silver forks."[6] Tamara S. Wagner defines the fashionable novel as a Victorian subgenre,

> frequently set in the Regency, it was at once escapist in describing former elegance and glitter, anticipating the genre of the Regency Romance, and censorious in judging the frivolities and often supercilious [in putting] emphasis on the aesthetic rather than the moral that characterised aristocratic high society.[7]

Wagner defines the Regency Romance as a literary style in which the stress on morality was abandoned that typified the Victorian "silver fork novels", and in which the Regency aristocracy and their elegance were idealised instead.[8] Following the "scandalous" life of the exiled Byron, the novels teemed with ostentatious, "disillusioned and often punished Byronic heroes", whom the voracious public

[1] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 97
[2] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 23
[3] Ibid., p. 82
[4] Ibid., p. 82
[5] Wagner, Tamara S. "The Silver Fork Novel." *The Victorian Web*. 12 Dec. 2002. 23 Oct. 2005 <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/silverfork.html>.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

wrongfully associated with "Beau" Brummell.[1] In her essay *Beau Brummell in leven en letteren* ("Beau" Brummell and his life in literature), Annemarie Heijkoop describes the main character in dandy novels as a dandyish, well-educated scion of an aristocratic family who proves his gentility in spite of all kinds of mischievous intrigues and problematic love affairs.[2] Ellen Moers ascribes the instant success of the fashionable novel to the commercial genius of publisher Henry Colburn (1780-1855) "to see that a literature written about the exclusives, by the exclusives (or those who knew them well) and for the exclusives would be royally supported by those who were not but wanted desperately to become exclusives: the nouveaux riches of post-war England."[3] Besides Bulwer and Lister, the most successful fashionable writers were Benjamin Disraeli, Catherine Gore (1799-1861), and the poet Henry Luttrell.

In the preface to his novel, Bulwer explained that it was his intention to judge the enigmatic figure of the Regency dandy against the background of the social structures and mores of the Regency:

> I have drawn for the hero of my Work, such a person as seemed to me best fitted to retail the opinions and customs of the class and age to which he belongs; a personal combination of antithesis – a fob and a philosopher, a voluptuary and a moralist – a trifler in appearance, but rather one to whom trifles are instructive, than one to whom trifles are natural . . . .[4]

Bulwer's novel *Pelham* was considered the "hornbook of dandyism", for it dictated the strict rules to aspiring dandies who wanted to become fully-fledged members of the "Dandaical Body".[5] "Dress so that it may be never said of you, 'what a well-dressed man,' but 'what a *gentlemanlike* man!'" was one of its mantras.[6] On its publication in Paris in 1828, the French art and literary critic Gustave Planche (1808-57) acclaimed *Pelham* to be "le manuel du dandysme le plus et le plus parfait" in *La Revue des deux mondes*.[7] Barbey D' Aurevilly, however, thought very little of Bulwer's *Pelham* and Lister's *Granby* because he thought them snobbish scribblers, middle-class rabble, who hoped to pass for Regency exclusives: "Within Brummell's lifetime two well-known authors took up their pen – sharpened to exquisite points and dipped in musk-scented

[1] Ibid.
[2] Heijkoop, Annemarie. "Beau Brummell in leven en letteren." *De dandy, of de overschrijding van de alledaagse facetten van het dandyisme*. Ed. André Hielkema. Meppel: Boom, 1989: p. 20
[3] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 52
[4] Ibid., p. 68
[5] Sillevis, John, 1997: p. 7 and Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 176
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 177
[7] Gustave Planche cited in Heijkoop, Annemarie, 1997: p. 22; "the most perfect handbook of dandyism". My translation.

Chinese ink – threw down on blue-tinted paper with silver borders a few lines where one catches a glimpse of Brummell."[1] Barbey D'Aurevilly, however, failed to acknowledge how valuable the information in Bulwer's fictionalized characterisation of George Brummell was. In her critical study *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in Seventeenth and Nineteenth-Century French Literature*, Domna C. Stanton comments how both dandies – the real and fictional ones – waged war on all kinds of vulgarity, running the gamut of aristocratic pastimes, such as foxhunting and horse-riding, to the despicable morality of the emerging middle class.[2] The exact words that Pelham used to justify his vanity were echoed in the opening sentence of Barbey d'Aurevilly's essay *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*: "Feelings have their fate, and there is one for which no one is prepared to show pity: vanity."[3] In Bulwer's *Pelham*, the novel's hero says, "Why stigmatise vanity as a vice . . . when it creates, or at least participates in so many virtues? I wonder why the ancients did not erect the choicest of their temples to its worship."[4] According to Ellen Moers, Bulwer's merit was that he "had probed more deeply in the psychological springs of the dandy pose than any other novelist".[5] Ian Kelly claims that *Pelham*'s amoral, indifferent, and witty hero served as a model "for recognisable heroes of British fiction ever since, from his time to our own. *Pelham* was used as a guidebook, both for future literary heroes . . . but also in real life."[6]

4.1.5.3 Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*

Although some French called *Pelham* the "hornbook of dandyism", the French establishment frowned upon the British dandyism. It had become so common that debt-ridden dandies and other British eccentrics fled their old country, crossed the Channel and landed in Calais, Caen, or Paris where they greedily partook of the locals' hospitality. It took almost ten years after the publication of *Pelham* before a French writer had the courage to come to terms with the strange British phenomenon of

[1] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p.87; orig. French: «Du vivant même de Brummell, deux plumes célèbres, mais taillées trop fin, trop trop fin, trempées d'encre de Chine trop musquée, jetèrent sur un papier bleuâtre, à tranches d'argent, quelques traits faciles à travers lesquels on vit Brummell». (Barbey d'Aurevilly, 1986: p. 39)
[2] Stanton, Domna C. *The Aristocrat as Art, A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in Seventeenth and Nineteenth-Century French Literature*. New York: Columbia UP, 1980: pp. 39-40
[3] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly 2003: p. 69; orig. French: «Les sentiments ont leur destinée. Il en est un contre lequel tout le monde est impitoyable: c'est la vanité.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 21)
[4] Stanton, Domna C., 1980: p. 39
[5] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 68
[6] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 470

dandyism. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly took the task upon him to write a biography of "Beau" Brummell that would become the first theoretical treatise on dandyism. *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell* was a small book of which presumably only thirty copies were sold, and which was carefully passed on from admirer to admirer as if it were a relict.[1] This small book, however, became the fountainhead of French dandyism and inspired future generations of French writers, among whom was Charles Baudelaire.

4.1.5.3.1 "Anglomania" of the 1820s and 1830s

Following in Lord Byron's wake, dandyism crossed the Channel together with Romanticism, the fashionable novels by Bulwer-Lytton and Benjamin Disraeli, and many British tourists who had been cut off from the Continent for several decades. For the first time since George III had declared war on Napoleonic France, "[t]he intercourse of French and English aesthetics" could blossom once more.[2] The Parisian publisher and bookseller Galigliani, for instance, published an original edition of Byron's complete works as early as 1818 for British tourists who were in Paris, and who did not want to miss a single letter by their favourite poet.[3] Much to Galigliani's surprise, Byron's work also sold like hotcakes to French youngsters who could not wait until there was a French translation on the market because they had heard of "the brilliance of his work and the audacity of his thought".[4] Although a modern language like English was not on the curriculum at that time, they taught themselves enough English to read English literature, and they discussed Byron's work in their weekly seminars, which they solemnly called the "matinées britanniques".[5] One of these Anglophiles commented that "to read Byron was to risk becoming addicted as to opium", while another remembered that he was "like those who become enslaved to strong drink; everything else seem[ed] tasteless to them."[6]

At the height of the "anglomania", a craze for everything English that had already started in the latter part of the eighteenth century and dominated French cultural life during the 1820s and 1830s, Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* was simultaneously published in London and Paris in 1828.[7] The popularity of the British fashionable novels was already

[1] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 137
[2] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 59
[3] Hemmings, F.W.J. *Baudelaire the Damned*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982: p. 103
[4] Ibid., p. 103
[5] Ibid., p. 103
[6] Etienne Delécluze and Jules Michelet cited in Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 103
[7] Sillevis, John, 1997: p. 8

past its peaks, though, when Roger de Beauvoir (1806-66) wrote in 1835 that, "*Pelham* was English dandyism after Byron, that is to say, the fat deprived of depth and intelligence, having no other resources than the inextricable knot in his tie."[1] In his intimate journal, Barbey d'Aurevilly noted how he had come home and had read *The Bride of Abydos* (1813) at one sitting before he went to bed.[2] According to him, Byron "was not satisfied with ordinary sentiments in life, [and therefore] [Byron] invent[ed] extraordinary sentiments in which, more than in all the other, triumph[ed] the purity of his genius."[3]

4.1.5.3.2 Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly

According to Barbey d'Aurevilly, dandyism had no other representatives than "Beau" Brummell and was culturally and historically anchored in one specific era, the British Regency. Only the British society under the reign of George IV could have brought forth a man like Brummell, for the latter mainly based his dandyism on vanity and boredom to which the age-old British society had fallen victim.[4] Although vanity was an ancient feeling, inherent in the human nature, people had come to despise "that restless search for the approval of others . . . in great things, that search goes by the name of the *love of glory*, in small ones, *vanity*."[5] Barbey d'Aurevilly encountered difficulties, when it came to give a definition that included all the aspects of Brummell's dandyism. He hesitantly began with "Dandyism is a whole way of being".[6] Barbey d'Aurevilly may have had difficulties in defining dandyism, he decidedly knew what dandyism was not. He, for instance, claimed that a dandy "was not just a walking suit of clothes! On the contrary, what constitute[d] Dandyism [was] a particular way of wearing them."[7]

[1] Roger de Beauvoir cited in Favardin, Patrick et Laurent Bouëxière, 1988: p. 75; orig. French: « *Pelham* [était] le dandysme anglais après Byron, c'est-à-dire le fat sans portée, sans intelligence, n'ayant plus d'autres ressources que le nœud inextricable de sa cravate.» My translation.

[2] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée. 1858. *Memorandum Quatrième. Œuvres Complètes*. T. 12. Paris: Bernouard, 1927. L'Encyclopédie de L'Agora. 21 Oct. 2005. 22 Apr. 2006 < http://agora.qc.ca/mot.nsf/Dossiers/George_Gordon_Lord_Byron>.

[3] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée. 1858. *Memorandum Quatrième. Œuvres Complètes*. T. 12. Paris : Bernouard, 1927. L'Encyclopédie de L'Agora. 21 Oct. 2005. 22 Apr. 2006 < http://agora.qc.ca/mot.nsf/Dossiers/George_Gordon_Lord_Byron>; orig. French: «Non content des sentiments ordinaires dans lesquels triomphe mieux que dans tous les autres la pureté de son génie.». My translation.

[4] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 24

[5] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 69; Orig. French: «cette recherche inquiète de l'approbation des autres, . . . qui, dans les grandes choses, s'appelle *amour de la gloire*, et dans les petites, *vanité*». (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 22)

[6] Walden, George and Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 2003: p. 79; Orig. French: «Le dandysme est toute une manière d'être». (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: pp. 31-32)

[7] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: pp. 78-79; Orig. French: «n'[était] pas un habit qui march[ait] tout seul! au contraire! c'[était] une certaine manière de le porter qui cré[ait] le Dandysme.» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 31)

Neither did dandyism equal eccentricity to which the bored British society had fallen victim because dandyism played with the rules, but unlike eccentricity, it never broke those rules.[1] Barbey d'Aurevilly quoted Lord Byron who is reported to have said that a dandy could not exist without a "certain exquisite originality".[2] Could this originality be ascribed to Brummell's sense for irony? "Irony is a gift that dispenses with all the others. It confers on a man a sphinx-like air, as absorbing as mystery, as troubling as danger."[3] In Barbey d'Aurevilly's imagination, "Beau" Brummell stealthily stalked his unsuspecting prey and voraciously devoured it.[4] Indeed, the dandy was gifted with mordant wit, and his words crucified verbally defenceless victims.[5] Using another image, Barbey described Brummell as a scientist who poured equal doses of terror and sympathy in a flask to distil the perfect blend that amused and mocked a bored high society at the same time.[6] Brummell meticulously balanced his intonation, rehearsed his particular gaze and gesture in front of a mirror for hours and knew when to be silent to sort effect.[7] Mysteriously enough, Barbey d'Aurevilly was very reluctant to reproduce "Beau" Brummell's "one-liners" because he considered them untranslatable.[8] In fact, Brummell's days of fame were counted when the dandy set foot on French soil because his host country did not understand and consequently never appreciated his wit. Barbey wondered if there were any French equivalents of the English words "wit", "humour", and "fun" that had been so significant in Brummell's reign over London's high society.[9] Brummell' words, however, did survive within the memory of his Regency contemporaries. One evening, for example, Brummell's table-companions asked the dandy whether he liked vegetables. Brummell is said to have replied that he did not know because he had never eaten them. Then a brief, meaningful silence fell and everyone waited with bated breath for what the dandy was next to tell. "No, that's not quite true; I once ate a pea," retorted the beau, whereupon the assembly burst into laughter.[10]

[1] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 34
[2] Ibid., p. 58
[3] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: p. 113; Orig. French: «L'ironie est un génie qui dépense tous les autres. Elle jette sur un homme l'air de sphinx qui préoccupe comme un mystère et qui inquiète comme un danger» (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: pp. 66-67)
[4] Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p.68
[5] Ibid., p.68
[6] Ibid., p. 70
[7] Ibid., p. 70
[8] Ibid., p. 71
[9] Ibid., p. 71
[10] Murray, Venetia, 1998: pp. 30-31

The most important aspect of Brummell's dandyism, however, was his independence, and therefore he never left any rules, principles, or dogmas of how he defined dandyism to posterity. Barbey d'Aurevilly concluded that, "Every Dandy is endowed with audacity, but his boldness is combined with tact, so that he will always exercise restraint and unerringly home in on the point . . . where originality and eccentricity intersect."[1] Although Barbey d'Aurevilly acknowledged that dandyism was a difficult term to describe and to define, he mainly based his definition of the dandy on his vanity, but he also included other aspects to complete his definition. The dandy's code of conduct, for instance, was characterised by his impassivity, sang-froid, grace, spiritual superiority, originality, irony, wit, asceticism and independence. Surprisingly enough, he discarded exaggerated attention to appearances, eccentricity, and snobbery as possible components of the definition of dandyism.

[1] Walden, George, and Jules-Amadée Barbey d'Aurevilly, 2003: pp. 106-7; orig. French: «Tout Dandy est un oseur, mais un oseur qui a du tact, qui s'arrête à temps et qui trouve . . . [le point d'intersection] entre l'originalité et l'excentricité». (Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules-Amadée, 1986: p. 59)

4.2 Lord Byron: The Emergence of Literary Dandyism

4.2.1 Lord Byron and "Beau" Brummell: Mutual Fascination and Jealousy

During the tedious afternoons in Calais, "Beau" Brummell created an appliqué collage screen for his beloved Duchess of York that was a kind of coded commentary on his years of fame in London and on the celebrities he and she had known so well.[1] Unfortunately, the Duchess of York died an untimely death, and the screen was never sent to Oatlands Park, the Duchess's country estate where Brummell had spent so many happy days.[2] Instead, it was sold to a pawnbroker in Boulogne where eager Captain Jesse found it some years after Brummell had died.[3] The screen, however, has not survived intact until today, but Jesse's description does. Once the screen was unfolded, it was divided into six panels that the ageing dandy had decorated with prints and etchings he had received from London friends and with drawings of animals, birds, and flowers.[4] Whereas Napoleon and his downfall were the central theme of the first board, a second panel bore the caricatures of fellow dandies, infamous courtesans, and other Regency celebrities.[5] On the sixth and last panel, an etching of Lord Byron, whose fame had eclipsed the dandy's by then, was embowered in flowers.[6] Brummell, however, had drawn a wasp that dangerously pointed its sting at the poet's throat.[7]

Byron and Brummell shared a mutual fascination for each other but also an intense rivalry and jealousy.[8] The pioneer of ascetic male fashion, for example, disapproved of the poet's sartorial flamboyance and characteristically sneered at Byron as "the minor poet who goes into company with a dirty neckcloth and straggling locks . . . and anticipates the question 'Who is that?'."[9] Byron's "rings and curls and lace", his effeminacy, and "shirt collar . . . all thrown over his neck" were an obvious eyesore to Brummell's delicate senses who thought that "there was as much vanity and coxcombry in slovenliness as there [was] in the most extravagant opposite."[10] As was to be

[1] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 359 and p. 366
[2] Ibid., p. 360
[3] Ibid., p. 359
[4] Ibid., p. 359
[5] Ibid., p. 359
[6] Ibid., p. 360
[7] McCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. x
[8] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 308
[9] Ibid., p. 367
[10] Isaac Disraeli, Benjamin Disraeli's father, remembered how he had once "met Lord Byron before he was known, before he travelled. Such a fantastic and effeminate thing I never saw. It was all rings and curls and lace. I was ashamed to speak to him; he looked more like a girl than a boy. I remember his shirt collar was all thrown over his neck, and I observed him, while he spoke to some one, fence with a light

expected, though, Brummell was soon under the spell of Byron's easy-going charm and turned a blind eye to the poet's flashy and continental dress style. Despite Byron's wayward style, he soon became a fully-accepted member of "Beau" Brummell's inner circle, and Byron remembered how

> the Dandies; they were always civil to *me*, though in general they disliked literary people . . . The truth is, that, though I gave up the business early, I had a tinge of dandyism in my minority, and probably retained enough of it to conciliate the great ones at five-and-twenty. I had gamed, and drank, and taken my degrees in most dissipations, and having no pedantry, and not being overbearing, we ran quietly together.[1]

Some years later, Byron was much amused to hear from his friend Scrope Davies how the exiled Brummell took severe pains to master French, and how he, despite his grammar book of elementary French, "had been stopped like Buonaparte in Russia by the *Elements*."[2] Scrope Davies's pun was based on the fact that "elementary" and "*Elements*" shared the same three initial syllables. While Brummell found it difficult to integrate in French society because he did not have any elementary knowledge of French, Napoleon's invasion of Russia failed because of the "*Elements*", the extremely bad weather. In his intimate journal *Detached Thoughts*, Byron confessed that he had "stolen" Scrope Davies's pun and put it in his poem *Beppo* (1818): "Crushed was Napoleon . . ./ Stopp'd by the *elements*, like a whaler, or/ A blundering novice in his new French grammar".[3] In his eyewitness account *Lord Byron en Italie* (Lord Byron in Italy), the French writer Stendhal recalled how, "Lord Byron was not satisfied with being the most handsome man of England, he would also have liked to be the most fashionable man. When he was a dandy, a quiver of adoration and jealousy ran through him each time he pronounced the name BRUMMELL".[4] In spite of all rivalry and jealousy, Byron bitterly commented on the downfall of the Regency dandies, "Beau" Brummell and Scrope Davies, and of his one-time hero Napoleon in a letter to his lifelong friend James Hobhouse: "Brummell – at *Calais* – Scrope at Bruges –

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cane in a very affected manner." in MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 559
Beau Brummell cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 367

[1] Moore, Thomas. *Life of Lord Byron, Vol. III With His Letters and Journals*. 1830. *Project Gutenberg*. 23 Oct. 2005 <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/16548>.

[2] Lord Byron's *Detached Thoughts* cited in Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 32

[3] Ibid., p. 32 and Byron's *Beppo: A Venetian Tale*, Stanza LXI, ll. 481-84 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 589

[4] Stendhal. "Lord Byron en Italie." *Mélanges de littérature III-Mélanges critiques, le style et les écrivains*. Ed. Henri Martineau. Paris: Le divan, 1933. L'Encyclopédie de l'Agora. 21 Oct. 2005. 5 Nov. 2005 <http://agora.qc.ca/reftext.nsf/Documents/Gordon_Lord_Byron--Lord_Byron_en_Italie_par_Stendhal>; orig. French: «Non content d'être le plus bel homme d'Angleterre, lord Byron aurait aussi voulu être l'homme le plus à la mode. Quand il était dandy, c'était avec le frémissement de l'adoration et de la jalousie qu'il prononçait le nom de BRUMMELL» My translation.

Buonaparte at St. Helena – . . . and I at Ravenna – only think so many great men!"[1] Having read the closing sentences of Thomas Moore's *Life of Byron* (1830) in the debtors' prison in Caen, Brummell sorely cried and admitted that "this poet, this great man, he used to be my friend."[2] Byron had been dead for more than a decade by then.

It is worthwhile noticing that Byron often bracketed his name together with the ones of Napoleon and Brummell. Fit for a legend in his own lifetime, Byron saw two of his pronouncements on Brummell and Napoleon conflated into one: "The three greatest men of the age are myself, Napoleon and Brummell, but the greatest of these is Brummell."[3] Jesse, for instance, began his biography of Brummell with "I will now enter upon the life of him who Lord Byron said was one of the great men of the nineteenth century, placing himself third; Napoleon second, and Brummell first", and Barbey d'Aurevilly also wrote in his biography of the dandy how "Byron quipped that he would rather be Brummell than Napoleon."[4] Byron would not have been a Romantic, if he had not fanatically idolised Napoleon, but how does the ten-years-older dandy fit into this picture?

The early nineteenth century saw the rise of a new type of man: "an anarchic rebel or a conquering tyrant."[5] According to the British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), who tried to trace back the horrors of the Second World War to the Romantic Movement, the period immediately preceding the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquest of Europe had been relatively peaceful, so peaceful that "people grew tired of safety and had begun to desire excitement."[6] But then Europe headed towards unprecedented times of revolution and war. Byron, for instance, who was born on the eve of the French Revolution, was conscious that he was living at an unprecedented time, or as he put it, "we live in gigantic and exaggerated times, which all under Gog and Magog appear pigwean."[7] It was a time when individuals like Napoleon, Brummell, and Scrope Davies, who were otherwise doomed to mediocrity because of their middle-class backgrounds, violently threw off the constraints imposed by religion and socially accepted rules and freed "human personality from the fetters of social convention and

[1] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 192
[2] Kelly, Ian, 2005: p. 436
[3] Ibid., p. 534
[4] Ibid., p. 534
[5] Russell, Bertrand. *History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. London: Routledge, 1996: p. 656
[6] Ibid., p. 653
[7] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. vii

social morality."[1] The sense of superiority these early nineteenth-century icons gained was related to their belief that the profound impact of their personality on the public and their right to individuality would eventually prime over middle-class mediocrity. Afterwards, this Romantic sense of superiority and hero worship typified Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire's aversion to democracy, was a central theme in Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, and culminated in Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) ideal of the "noble" man who belongs to "a new vast aristocracy based upon the more severe self-discipline, in which the will of philosophical men of power and anti-tyrants will be stamped upon thousands of years."[2] Nietzsche's definition of aristocratic heroism coincides with the way in which Baudelaire defined his ascetic dandyism, which I will discuss in due time.

4.2.2 Byron's Fascinating and Dramatic Life: A Portrait of a Doomed Dandy

Megalomaniac personalities like Napoleon, Brummell, and Byron were determined to cut a figure in the public eye.[3] How exactly did this happen? How exactly did a penniless English aristocrat of obscure origins like Byron rise to the position of a prominent key player in Europe's cultural history? How did the adolescent poet of *Hours of Idleness* (1807) – a collection of verses to cherish according to the influential Regency reviewer Henry Brougham (1778-1868) "for they are the last we shall ever have from him" –awake one bright morning to find himself famous and capable of sweeping the international literary scene?[4] How indeed did the "fat bashful boy . . . with his hair combed straight over his forehead", who was extremely sensitive about his lame foot and experienced violent tempers, manage to break the heart of many a sophisticated high society lady?[5] To these questions there are no easy answers. In the preface to her biography of Lord Byron, Fiona MacCarthy calls the poet "the first European cultural celebrity" because he was "a great voicer, a conduit of [a] feeling" that dominated his age.[6] Surprisingly enough, Bertrand Russell dedicated an entire chapter to Byron in his *History of Western Philosophy* (1945), for the aristocratic poet was, in the philosopher's opinion, one of those important men who were a "cause of change in the social

[1] Russell, Bertrand, 1996: p. 658
[2] Friedrich Nietzsche cited in Russell, Bertrand, 1996: p. 731
[3] Graham, Peter W. "His Grand Show: Byron and the Myth of Mythmaking." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999: p. 26
[4] Henry Brougham cited in Wilson, Frances, ed. "Introduction: Byron, Byronism and Byromaniacs." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999: p. 4
[5] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. x
[6] Ibid., p. x and p. xiv

structure, in judgments of value and in intellectual outlook", but who were more significant as a myth than they were in real life.[1] Indeed, the words "pretence", "fame", "legend", and "myth" play a crucial role in our understanding of Byron's versatile mind and life. Above all, Byron was a "mythmaker" who took great pains "to control the image of himself being produced", but who "also identified with it, feeling his reflection to be more finished and complete than the fragmented figure he experienced himself as being."[2] In order to understand the myth, we should first meet the historical figure who lived between 1788 and 1824, travelled widely through Europe, liked to be thought of as a nobleman who chanced to be a poet, rather than the reverse, was society's darling for as long as it lasted, went voluntary into exile after a disastrous marriage and a number of scandals, and eventually died preparing to fight for the Greek independence.

4.2.2.1 A Journey into Despair: Byron's Childhood

Unlike "Beau" Brummell, Byron did not have happy memories of his childhood. "So sad and dark a story is scarcely to be found in any work of fiction," critic Lord Macaulay (1800-59) observed.[3] He did not, for instance, remember his father, Captain John "Mad Jack" Byron (1755-91), except from the savage battles he witnessed between him and his mother, Catherine Gordon Byron (1765-1811).[4] In Byron's eyes, his dissolute father turned into a glamorous and handsome figure in sharp contrast to his coarse mother whom he despised for her cruelty and vulgarity. Benjamin Disraeli even reproduced the troubled relationship between Byron and his mother in his fashionable novel *Venetia* (1837):

> But a coarse and violent woman jarred even his young nerves; and this woman was his mother, his only parent, almost his only relation; for he had no near relative except a cousin whom he had never seen . . . This poor boy would fly from that mother with a sullen brow, or perhaps, even with a harsh and cutting repartee; and then he would lock himself up in his room, and weep. But he allowed no witnesses of this weakness. The lad was very proud.[5]

Despising his mother, Byron typically leapt to his father's defence whenever there was a rumour that Jack Byron had caused his first wife's death: "[My father] seemed born for his own ruin and for that of the other sex."[6] In fact, Byron's absent father was a

[1] Russell, Bertrand, 1996: p. 716 and p. 721
[2] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 6
[3] Ibid., p. 12
[4] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 21
[5] Benjamin Disraeli's *Venetia* (1837) cited in Elfenbein, Andrew. "Silver-Fork Byron and the Image of Regency England." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999: p. 83
[6] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 21

Regency rake – dazzlingly handsome but vicious – who lived beyond his financial means, ran into deep gambling debts, mercilessly hunted down and seduced rich heiresses, and eventually died of tuberculosis, leaving his three-years-old son the responsibility of paying off his debts and the expenses of the funeral.[1] Byron vented the anger and frustration his father had caused him on his mother. He also blamed her for his deformed foot and calf because she had been "excessively delicate" in the period immediately preceding the delivery.[2] In Byron's opinion, she had crippled him, cursing his life and symbolically castrating him.[3] Lord Sligo, one of Byron's fellow travellers in Greece, reported how Byron flew into a violent temper whenever they talked about his mother.[4] "Look there!" he exclaimed while he pointed at his lame foot. "It is to her false delicacy at my birth I owe that deformity; and yet, as long as I can remember, she has never ceased to taunt and reproach me with it."[5] Only second to his lameness, Catherine Byron herself was a source of shame because she was physically unattractive and even awkward – her corpulence and slovenliness made her look ten years older than she actually was – she possessed no grace whatsoever, determined as she was to speak bluntly her own mind, and, worst of all, she was a social outcast.[6] Mother and son endlessly quarrelled about money – or the lack of it – and about missed opportunities in life. By a single day, they missed the chance to forgive each other, for Catherine Byron died upon her son's return from his travels through Europe.[7] Byron being orphaned, his only relative was his elder half-sister Augusta Leigh.

Apart from his parents, Byron's nursemaids, the sisters Agnes and May Gray, strongly influenced his personality from early infancy on. It was an awkward decision of Catherine Byron to leave a future nobleman in the care of these rather coarse Scotswomen whose insistence on the inerrancy of Scripture and strict Calvinist moral standards were taken to uncongenial and repressive extremes.[8] One of Byron's earliest childhood memories was of his nurses keeping Sunday for the study of the Bible and worship of God, warnings of death and damnation, and endless sermons delivered from the pulpit. He had read the Bible "through and through before I was eight years old," he boasted to his publisher John Murray, "that is to say, the *Old* Testament, for the New

[1] Ibid., p. 20
[2] Ibid., p. 13
[3] Ibid., p. 13
[4] Ibid., p. 270
[5] Ibid., p. 270
[6] Ibid., p. 10, p. 32, p. 46
[7] Ibid., p. 294
[8] Ibid., p. 26

struck me as a task, but the other as a pleasure."[1] Byron's childhood, however, came to an abrupt end when one of his nurses, May Gray, physically and sexually abused the eleven-years-old boy.[2] He had been mercilessly punished, driven from childhood, he later said, "by the knowledge of heaven and hell as sexual torment."[3] This childhood tragedy explains Byron's ambiguous attitude towards religion in adult life: he always associated orthodox Christianity with cant and hypocrisy, while his Calvinist sense of guilt and sinning was a recurrent theme in his poetry and had an all-pervading effect on his life. Annabella Milbanke (1792-1860), who was Byron's wife for twelve disastrous months, included his Calvinism in the character sketch she drew of her husband in order to understand his cruel behaviour towards her.[4] She clearly understood how his early Calvinism had led to both his "irritation" toward religion, and how the "gloom and despair" had "discoloured his views of Divine Government here, and Judgment hereafter."[5] According to Bertrand Russell, Byron sensed that his wickedness was an evil and hereditary curse in his blood.[6] His drunk great-uncle, the "Wicked Lord", for example, had killed his kinsman in a violent row thirty-three years before the poet was born.[7] As much as the Byrons were a gang of outlaws, the Gordons, his mother's ancestors, were even more so.[8] In Byron's mind, this long chain of wicked and violent ancestors conformed to the type of the "noble ruffian".[9] Since Byron's dandaical lifestyle of excessively drinking, womanising, and gambling was incompatible with his Calvinist moral standards, the poet felt constantly torn between doing well and indulging himself into evil, between virtue and sin.[10] In his overwhelming urge to be remarkable in whatever way, however, he decided that he would be remarkable as a sinner.[11] During her short marriage to Byron, Annabella Milbanke also noticed how the "[e]nnui of a monotonous existence that drives the best hearted people . . . to the most dangerous paths, and makes them often seem to act from bad motives when in fact they are only flying from internal suffering by an external stimulus."[12] What she feared most and thought was her husband's "greatest misfortune" was his "habitual passion for

[1] Ibid., p. 26
[2] Ibid., p. 37
[3] Ibid., p. 299
[4] Ibid., p. 474
[5] Ibid., p. 474
[6] Russell, Bertrand, 1996: p. 717
[7] Ibid., p. 717
[8] Ibid., p. 717
[9] Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970: p. 72
[10] Russell, Bertrand, 1996: p. 717
[11] Ibid., p. 718
[12] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 474

excitement," always found in "ardent temperaments."[1] In her *Conversations of Lord Byron* (1832-33), Lady Blessington (1789-1849), who met the poet in Genoa one year before his death in Greece, noted how the ageing poet had said to her that, "Passion is the element in which we live: without it we vegetate."[2] Although Byron was only thirty-six when he died, the autopsy revealed how Byron's dandy lifestyle had entirely obliterated "the sutures of the brain" and how "the heart bore signs of incipient ossification."[3] While Byron's dandyism relieved the tedium of everyday life, crime and the subsequent feeling of guilt and sin "arouse in him . . . moral sense."[4] According to Mario Praz (1896-1982), whose pioneering work *The Romantic Agony* (1933) studied the roots of Decadentism, Byron found his happiness in transgression and crime.[5] To prove his case, Praz cites the writings of French critic Charles Du Bos (1882-1939) on Lord Byron: "Obeying the law, he experiences nothing; trespassing the law, he feels deeply."[6] Du Bos also concluded that Byron's character was dominated by an "innate melancholy, which was perhaps caused by . . . a static heart that needs to accelerate its beats at a maddening rate in order to perceive them."[7] "The great object of life is sensation," Byron wrote to his future wife Annabella Milbanke, "to feel that we exist, even though in pain."[8] Being victim of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of his Calvinist nursemaid, being convinced that his ancestors and he were doomed to commit crimes, and in his urge to defy the rules of social behaviour and moral principles, he hinted both in fictional and real-life accounts that he had committed incest with his half-sister Augusta Leigh. Looking for redemption in his blood relative, he had made an irreparable mistake and put his future in England at stake. Except for the eponymous character Don Juan, each of Byron's poetic heroes – whether in his overnight success *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) or in his popular "Eastern Tales" – was haunted by a shady past of a "thousand crimes", which always remained unnamed.[9] The line between biographical revelation and dramatic fiction is very fine in Byron's dramatic

[1] Ibid., p. 474
[2] Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 73
[3] Ibid., p. 73
[4] Ibid., p. 73
[5] Ibid., p. 72
[6] Charles Du Bos cited in Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 72; orig. French: «Dans la loi, il n'éprouve rien; hors la loi, il se sent à fond.» My translation.
[7] Charles Du Bos cited in Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 73; orig. French: «Le fonds byronien est bien cette mélancolie innée, due peut-être à un cœur . . . pour percevoir ses battements, a besoin que ceux-ci s'accélèrent jusqu'à la folie.» My translation.
[8] Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 74
[9] "He left a Corsair's name to other times,/ Link'd with one virtue, and a thousand crimes" in *The Corsair: A Tale*, Canto III, stanza XXIV, ll. 695-96 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 305

poem *Manfred* (1817), in which the tormented hero – who wants to die because of an unbearable secret – invokes the spirit of his lover Astarte who died in suspicious circumstances. After his attempted suicide to escape his troubled conscience, Manfred is offered a glass of wine that has blood on its brim:

> I say 'tis blood – my blood! the pure warm stream
> Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
> When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
> And loved each other as we should not love,
> And this was shed: but still it rises up,
> Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from heaven.[1]

Whether Byron's his wish to enhance his fame – or notoriety – inspired Manfred's confessions, Astarte's fathom haunted Byron's relatives for generations. In his book *Astarte*, Ralph Milbanke testified how his grandfather

> had a fancy for some Oriental legends of pre-existence, and in his conversation and poetry took up the part of a fallen or exiled being, expelled from heaven, or sentenced to a new avatar on earth for some crime, existing under a curse, predoomed to a fate really fixed by himself in his own mind, but which he seemed determined to fulfil. At times his dramatic imagination resembled a delusion; he would play at being mad, and gradually get more and more serious, as if he believed himself to be destined to wreck his own life and that of everyone near him.[2]

From his childhood on, Byron felt great affinity with the biblical story in which Cain killed his younger brother Abel in a fit of jealousy, whereupon God placed a mark of sinner on Cain and cursed him to wander the earth.[3] Like Cain, Byron sensed that he was predestined for evil and that God had bestowed on him a curse of his own: his clubfoot.[4] From early age on, his lame foot and his sensitivity about it were a key component of Byron's identity. The protagonist of his early play the *Wheel of Fortune* (1806), for example, was a gloomy misanthropic who introduced himself by saying, "I have the mark of Cain, the stamp of cruelty imprinted upon my forehead."[5] His deformed foot and calf became not only a source of shame and pain, but Byron also interpreted his lameness as a sign of greatness and a mark of satanic connection.[6] Not without pride, he called himself "le diable boiteux", the crippled devil.[7] In his verse drama *The Deformed Transformed* (1817), Byron connected his disadvantageous lameness with his victory over able-bodied but mediocre people:

[1] *Manfred*, Act II, scene I, lines 24-30 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: pp. 476-77
[2] Ralph Milbanke cited in Praz, Mario, 1970: pp. 63-64
[3] Eisler, Benita, 1998: p. 26
[4] Ibid., p. 26
[5] Ibid., p. 119
[6] Ibid., p. 13
[7] Ibid., p. 13

> Deformity is daring.
> It is its essence to o'ertake mankind
> By heart and soul, and make itself the equal-
> Aye, the superior of the rest. There is
> A spur in its halt movements, to become
> All that the others cannot.[1]

Many years later, Byron wrote about his favourite poet, the hunchback Alexander Pope (1688-1744), in a letter to his publisher John Murray that "deformed persons . . . are born with strong passions. They are condemned to combat, not only against the passions which they feel, but the repugnance they inspire."[2] Nevertheless, Byron's deformed foot was the tragedy of his life and it explains his split personality. Byron, for instance, developed impressive verbal skills, social fluidity and self-mockery to compensate his shyness about his lameness, but he continued showing great sensitivity about his limp, especially in the presence of strangers, far into adulthood.[3] In one of his dispirited moods, Byron added his limb as one of the "Four or Five Reasons in Favour of a Change" and scribbled underneath: "A man who is lame of one leg is in state of bodily inferiority which increases with years and must render his old age more peevish and intolerable."[4] He was obviously determined not to live a long life, but then he checked himself and mockingly added: "Besides in other existence I expect to have two or four legs by way of compensation."[5] He even suspected his closest friends of making fun of his foot. When Hobhouse arrived in Genoa to visit his exiled friend, Byron greeted his guest, saying, "Now, I know, Hobhouse, you are looking at my foot." Upon which Hobhouse kindly replied, "My dear Byron, nobody thinks or looks at anything but your head."[6] Captain Gronow, who violently wished to be admitted to the inner circle of dandies but to no avail, frequently asked the privileged Scrope Davies for his opinion on the poet.[7] According to Scrope Davies, Byron was

> very agreeable and clever, but vain, overbearing, conceited, suspicious, and jealous. [Byron] thought that the whole world ought to be constantly employed in admiring his poetry and himself: he could never write a poem or drama without making himself its hero, and he was always the subject of his own conversation.[8]

Although Byron took as much time and energy to disguise his lame foot as "Beau" Brummell did to hide his physical shortcomings, Byron was well aware that his clubfoot

[1] Byron, *The Deformed Transformed*, Part I, scene I cited in Eisler, Benita, 1998: p. 53
[2] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 103
[3] Ibid., p. 25 and p. 118
[4] Ibid., p. 282
[5] Ibid., p. 282
[6] Gronow, Reese Howell, 1900: p. 154
[7] Ibid., p. 153
[8] Ibid., p. 153

was a part of his legend and he exploited this feature to its full extent.[1] Byron, for instance, was famous for his singular way of entering a room because "he would wheel round from chair to chair, until he reached the one where he proposed sitting, as if anxious to conceal his lameness as much as possible," a table-companion observed.[2] He also flew into a bad temper when he arrived late for a dinner "and was obliged to cross a spacious saloon, in which every eye was fixed on him and his club foot."[3] Long before he made his first public appearance, Byron sought ways to disguise his deformed foot and calf. While a drawing of the seven-years-old Byron shows how the child carefully hides his right foot behind some foliage, in other images mature Byron wears wide trousers to conceal his lame foot.[4] The boot of Byron's sound foot, for example, was deliberately made clumsy in order to render "the shapelessness of the other less apparent."[5] At times, his lameness was a determining component of his identity which he thankfully exploited, but then again he was deeply mortified about it. While his lameness fuelled his ferocious determination to greatness, the sense of being but half a man, of not being complete triggered his most melancholic moods.[6] Pugilism and swimming, passions he shared with his friend Scrope Davies, were ways to prove that his clubfoot did not make him less of a man – but more.[7] Both his lameness and his Calvinist conviction to be born a sinner had a moral function because they justified the fact that "his subversive self . . . required . . . the anarchic irrationality of passion."[8]

Byron was also deeply ashamed of his early childhood in middle-class Aberdeen, where his mother could barely make ends meet.[9] He unexpectedly inherited his uncle's baronetcy at the age of ten in 1798.[10] From one day to the other, he found himself his mother's superior, owner of the ancient country seat Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire, and member of the landed aristocracy and the ruling class.[11] He interpreted the journey from Aberdeen to Newstead – "from a shabby Scotch flat to a

[1] McDayter, Ghislaine. "Conjuring Byron: Byromania, Literary Commodification and the Birth of Celebrity." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999: p. 48
[2] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 275
[3] Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 114
[4] Ibid., p. 114
[5] Ibid., p. 116
[6] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 53 and p. 332
[7] Ibid., p. 282
[8] Ibid., p. 333
[9] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 12
[10] Ibid., p. 12
[11] Ibid., p. 12

palace" – as a "reversal of fortune and a restoration".[1] At first, he was surprised that an aristocratic title inspired so much awe, and that the treatment of a peer differed so much from that of a commoner.[2] Gradually, though, he grew accustomed to the privileges of his newly-acquired rank and eventually insisted to be treated in accordance to his superior social position. At Harrow, for example, the practice of "fagging" – the ancient practice at public schools in which junior pupils served older and therefore superior schoolboys – was such a humiliating experience that the self-conscious Byron never breathed a word about it until he was a "fagging" master himself in the sixth form.[3] Another example of Byron's fastidious class consciousness was the fact that he wore robes embroidered with gold and matching hats like all other noble students at Cambridge University who distinguished themselves from commoners, who were dressed in a dull cap and gown.[4] It even grew into an obsession that annoyed other people. On the steamer that brought Byron and Hobhouse from Malta to Sardinia, a fellow passenger observed how Byron "affected . . . more aristocracy than befitted his years, or the occasion . . . Hobhouse with more of the commoner, made himself one of the passengers at once; but Byron held himself aloof. . . ."[5] When Byron inherited Newstead Abbey, the ancient country seat was in a dilapidated state: the rain poured through the leaky roof, leaving few rooms habitable, and "the wind howled through damp galleries and cavernous reception rooms."[6] For one long mild summer, though, Newstead Abbey and its parks formed the perfect background against which young Byron staged imaginative battles between his heroic mail-coated forbears and savage pagans.[7] Under the abbey's wretched roof, Byron eagerly devoured the "tales of horror" by Mrs Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), John Moore (1729-1802), Horace Walpole (1717-97), and William Beckford (1760-1844), which were a lasting source of inspiration.[8] When Byron was still at Cambridge University, he set about refurbishing the abbey to his personal taste. It was not in Byron's somewhat dandiacal mind, though, to repair the leaking roof first. Instead, he was more than willing to run into deep debts to render the abbey's rooms elegant for himself and his future guests.[9] The shy boy who had been

[1] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 31 and p. 33
[2] Ibid., p. 30
[3] Ibid., p. 56
[4] Ibid., p. 89
[5] Ibid., p. 199
[6] Ibid., p. 34
[7] Ibid., p. 35
[8] Praz, Mario, 1970: pp. 68-69
[9] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 153

raised in the modest backstreets of Aberdeen some years before, now ecstatically raved about his "very superb" bed that boasted "feet posts carved and finished with burnished gold hung with full green silk and yellow draperies, rich silk French fringe, gilt cornice surmounted by a coronet, lines, tassels, etc."[1] In Byron's Newstead library, a bust and painting of his political hero Charles James Fox drew the visitors' attention, along with a "couple of the most perfect and finely polished skulls" which naturally led to much speculation, rumour, and gossip in the neighbourhood.[2] Apparently, Byron and his fellow revellers had the sacrilegious habit to drink wine from the friars' skulls during the notorious "monk" parties at Newstead Abbey.[3] "Our average hour of rising was at one," Charles Skinner Matthews, one of Byron's invitees at Newstead, wrote to his sister,

> I, who generally got up between eleven and twelve, was always – even when an invalid – the first of the party, and was esteemed a prodigy of early rising. It was frequently past two before the breakfast party broke up. Then, for the amusements of the morning, there was reading, fencing, single-stick, or shuttlecock, in the great room, practising with pistols in the hall; walking, riding – cricket – sailing on the lake, playing with the bear, or teasing the wolf. I must not omit the custom of handing round, after dinner, on the removal of the cloth, a human skull filled with burgundy. A set of monkish dresses, which had been provided, with all the proper apparatus of crosses, beads, tonsures, etc. often gave a variety to our appearance, and to our pursuits.[4]

Indeed, Newstead's galleries and great dining room were never restored to their original state, but they were used instead as a games room, where the revellers fenced and fired pistols at bottles, and as a theatre.[5] Byron, however, was very fastidious about his furniture both in Newstead Abbey and in his rooms in Cambridge, where Charles Matthews lodged during Byron's absence.[6] The landlord had warned the latter that he should pay utmost "attention not to damage any of the movables, for Lord Byron, Sir, is a young man of *tumultuous passions*."[7] In early adulthood, Byron was forced to sell Newstead in order to settle his heavy debts.[8] He experienced the irretrievable loss of Newstead Abbey as a very painful event because "the property, more than the title *Lord* Byron, was his tangible patent of nobility, and with his immediate family dead or dispersed, the abbey reassured Byron of his place in a historic continuum that might

[1] Ibid., p. 154
[2] Ibid., p. 154
[3] McDayter, Ghislaine, 1999: p. 48
[4] Charles Skinner Matthews cited in Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 174
[5] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 155
[6] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 29
[7] Ibid., pp. 29-30
[8] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 363

have reached his own heirs," Benita Eisler explains in her biography of the poet.[1] Newstead Abbey had become a vital part of his identity and fictional work, in which the Gothic abbey figured as a Romantic hero comparable to his most famous poetic persona, Childe Harold.[2] "Through thy battlements, Newstead, the hollow winds whistle," Byron wrote in his early poem "On Leaving Newstead Abbey" (1803), "Thou, the hall of my Fathers, art gone to decay."[3] The image of the dilapidated abbey became one of the most distinguishing features of Byron's poetry and Romantic literature in general because Byron interiorised Newstead's decay and associated it with "his personal chagrin at his own ruined inheritance and early nineteenth-century England in terminal decay."[4] Although Byron was a member of the ruling class, he was a scion of impoverished peerage in a time when the aristocracy was fast losing power to the burgeoning middle class. Byron was painfully aware that his class was doomed and that the privileges it had once enjoyed were lost. Byron, in fact, was truly of his age in the way that he lived as fast and as amorally as other members of the Regency upper classes because they all knew that their eighteenth-century lifestyle and cherished values were fading.[5] The great Italian politician Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-72), who played a key role in Byron's myth-making, wrote in his essay on Goethe (1749-1832) and Byron that the latter not only appeared "at the close of one epoch, and before the dawn of another", but that he lived "in the midst of a community based upon an aristocracy which ha[d] outlived the vigour of its prime."[6] In a discussion with fellow Byron scholars, Jerome McGann calls this painful sense of impending doom Byron's "privilege" because he was one of those persons who had no longer "any stake in what [was] happening. He [knew] it [was] a middle-class world. The middle class and its power structures, its ideologies [were] winning. He [was] resentful of that, [but] it [gave] him a peculiar kind of privilege."[7] McGann also explains that with the rise of the middle class, "the

[1] Ibid., p. 363
[2] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 19
[3] Byron, George Gordon Noel. "On Leaving Newstead Abbey." *ReadBookOnLine.net.* 2003-2005. 25 Mar. 2006 < http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/3608/>.
[4] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: pp. 19-20
[5] McGann, Jerome. *Byron and Romanticism*. Ed. James Soderholm. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002: p. 135
[6] Mazzini, Giuseppe. "Byron and Goethe." *Literary and Philosophical Essays.* Vol. XXXII. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14. *Bartleby.com*. 2001. 3 Apr. 2006 <www.bartleby.com/32/>.
[7] Transcribed discussion between Jerome McGann and other scholars on Byron in McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 135

aristocracy either [got] out, the way Byron sort of dropped out, or agree[d] to become middle-class. But Byron was nihilistic; he said no. It was a suicide."[1]

Having an aristocratic background, Byron took a detached view of the middle class and Christian morality he associated with that burgeoning class.[2] He shared this contempt with the Regency dandies "Beau" Brummell and Scrope Davies and with mid nineteenth-century French writers Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire who feared the political, economic and cultural dominion of that new class. Byron has often been reproached for his upper-class snobbery both by his contemporaries and more recent critics. When Lady Blessington met Byron in Genoa, she disappointedly wrote, "Were he but sensible how much the *Lord* is overlooked in the *Poet* he would be less vain in his rank; but as it is this vanity is very prominent, and resembles more the pride of the parvenue [*sic*] than the calm dignity of an ancient aristocrat."[3] In Bertrand Russell's view, Byron was the annoying personification of a "peculiar blend of snobbery and rebellion", a social pariah who was "a bold baron in the style of his crusading ancestors".[4] Indeed, Byron wanted to be viewed as "a man of war-like action" or "a peer of the realm" rather than "a poet with a quill" in the grip of a persistent writers' block.[5] Byron vehemently refused to be portrayed with a pen, books, or paper, which were the habitual attributes of a poet in a painting, and preferred a sword, dagger, or pistol instead.[6] "I don't care what becomes of the arms," Byron boldly warned his portraitist Thomas Phillips (1770-1845), "so that *pens* [&] *books* are *not* upon ye canvas."[7] Neither did Byron comply with Hobhouse's request to be portrayed with a laurel wreath, a symbol of honour and eternal literary glory. "I protest against & prohibit the 'laurels' – which would be a most awkward assumption and anticipation of what may never come to pass," he wrote in a letter to Hobhouse, "I won't have my head garnished like a Xmas pie with Holly – or a Cod's head and Fennel – or whatever the damned weed is they strew round it."[8] In refusing the typical attributes of literary men, he dissociated himself from the popular "Lake Poets" and "Cockney School".[9] It is worthwhile noticing that

[1] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 135
[2] Northrop, Herman F. "Lord Byron." *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986: p. 56
[3] Lady Blessington, *Conversations of Lord Byron* cited in Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 719
[4] Russell, Bertrand, 1997: p. 718
[5] McDayter, Ghislaine, 1999: p. 16
[6] Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 114
[7] Ibid., p. 114
[8] Ibid., p. 114
[9] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 8

not until the 1860s did the label "Romantics" become a generally accepted collective name for the poets William Blake (1757-1827), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Sir Walter Scott (1771-1834), Lord Byron (1788-1824), Percy Shelley (1792-1822), and John Keats (1795-1821).[1] Although these poets were more or less his peers, Byron abhorred being placed on the same rank of those "despicable" "Lake Poets" and Keats, that "Tadpole of the Lakes".[2] Neither had John Keats a high opinion of the noble poet and mocked that, "Lord Byron cuts a figure – but he is not figurative" in a letter to his brother George Keats.[3] "As an accepted member of the dandy world, Lord Byron was an exception," Katharina Krosny points out in her article on the dandy because "there was no overlap between Regency high-society and the Romantic poets, who were mostly of middle or lower class descent."[4] Historically, the Romantic Movement and the Regency coincided, but the Regency was not "at all the middle-class world [with the] bourgeois set of parameters [that usually come to mind with] Romanticism," Jerome McGann explains.[5] At the height of his fame, Byron provoked the industrious Lake Poets by boasting that he had written *Lara* (1814) with effortless ease, "while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades . . . The Bride [of Abydos] was written in four, The Corsair in ten days."[6] Indeed, Byron "manages his pen with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality," Walter Scott sneeringly retorted.[7] On another occasion, Walter Scott lashed out at both Byron and Brummell, who enjoyed equal fame at that time:

> If you are celebrated for writing verses, or for slicing cucumbers, for being two feet taller, or two feet less, than any other biped, for acting plays when you should be whipped at school, or for attending school, and institution when you should be preparing for your grave, your notoriety becomes a talisman, and an "opened sesame", which gave way to everything till you are voted a bore, and discarded for a new plaything.[8]

Although Byron and Shelley are often bracketed together today, Byron insisted that there was a difference of rank, himself being a peer and Shelley a scion of the landed gentry.[9] Byron wished to be seen as an aristocrat who chanced to be a poet, rather than

[1] Butler, Marilyn. *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981: p. 1
[2] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 683
[3] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 36
[4] Krosny, Katharina, 2004: p. 257
[5] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 135
[6] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 8
[7] Walter Scott cited in Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 8
[8] Walter Scott cited in Gronow, Reese H., 1900: pp. 137-38
[9] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 524

the reverse, as a "man of action who wrote as fast as he lived and with as much nonchalance."[1]

4.2.2.2 Byron's Grand Tour of 1809-1811

Unlike the Lake Poets who retreated to the idyllic Lake District in northwestern England, Byron chose to be a "Citizen of the World".[2] In much the same way as Byron had a troubled relationship with his mother Catherine, with whom he had never found a real home, the poet assumed an ambivalent attitude towards his mother country, Great Britain. Since Catherine Byron administered the little money Byron had, her dominance made the youngster yearn for financial independence and spiritual freedom.[3] Likewise, young Byron did not associate self-reliance with England but with exotic cultures or the Continent when he imagined himself "a German Prince who coins his own cash, or a Cherokee Chief who coins no cash at all, but enjoys what is more precious, Liberty. I speak in raptures of that Goddess because my amiable Mama was so despotic."[4] As early as the autumn of 1807, Byron was enthralled with foreign travel, with a grand tour of his own, for ideas of possible routes constantly appeared in his letters to friends.[5] Byron saw a voyage to the Continent or the East not only as a way to complete his privileged education at Harrow and Cambridge University or to broaden his mind, but also as a way to escape the tedium of his everyday life – duns were lying on the lurk and there were rumours of unhappy love affairs – and his mother's suffocating dominion. In a letter to his mother, Byron wisely omitted her dominant behaviour as one of the reasons of his urgent wish to leave England, and he summed up more "noble" reasons: "If we see no nation but our own, we do not give mankind a fair chance, it is from *Experience* not *Books*, we ought to judge of mankind. – There is nothing like inspection, and trusting to our own senses."[6] For Byron's poetic persona Childe Harold, the feeling of "satiety" was also one of the reasons to wander the globe:

> Worse than adversity the Childe befell;
> He felt the fulness of satiety:
> Then loath'd he in his native country to dwell,
> Which seem'd to him more lone than Ermite's sad cell.[7]

[1] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 8
[2] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 11
[3] Russell, Bertrand, 1997: pp. 717-18
[4] Young Byron cited in Russell, Bertrand, 1997: pp. 717-18
[5] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 75
[6] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 160
[7] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto I, stanza IV, ll. 33-36 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 62

Nevertheless, both Byron and his friend James Hobhouse, who was to join him on his grand tour, were desperately out of pocket. Therefore, Byron immediately set about pestering his guardian and lawyer Mr Hanson for money. "I wish to know before I make my final effort elsewhere," Byron urged Hanson for money, alluding to the Jewish moneylenders, who were more than willing to lend money to penniless, young noblemen, "if you can or cannot assist me in raising a sum of money on fair and equitable terms and immediately."[1] Mr Hanson, however, took his time answering his pupil's urgent request which drove Byron nearly insane. "I have not five pounds in my possession," Byron wrote in an angry letter to his indifferent counsellor. "I do hope the money will be procured for I certainly must leave England on the fifth of June, and by every power that directs the lot of man, I will quit England if I have only cash to pay my passage."[2] Hanson eventually chose to ignore his client's demands, and Byron was forced to take out a loan from "the tribes of Israel", an event in which Scrope Davies acted as guarantor, to finance his considerable expenses.[3] Before Byron left, for instance, he commissioned a life-sized portrait by the Scottish painter George Sanders in order "to leave behind a painted substitute of himself for his mother and his household" at Newstead Abbey.[4] The painting depicts the young aristocrat in a comfortable sailors' outfit – "a navy blue jacket, wide trousers, a half-open shirt collar and a loose cravat" – stepping out of a sailboat on a rocky coast in company with his valet Robert Rushton, who embarked with Byron and Hobhouse.[5] This image of the tempestuous sea in the background, Byron's windswept hair, and casually tied cravat "has given posterity its best idea of Byron as young romantic, and . . . was an important visual contribution to the Romantic Movement," historian Doris Langley Moore observes.[6] Apart from another travelling outfit – a scarlet staff officers' uniform – Byron ordered an "entire set of new luggage, including a mahogany dressing case lined with velvet and fitted with silver bottles, and a portable writing desk of heavy wood, with a secret drawer."[7] Byron was determined to travel in style and to stay abroad for a long while. Since England was at war with France and Byron was passionately fond of the East, Byron and Hobhouse departed from the conventional grand tour and chose to

[1] A letter from Byron to Mr Hanson, dated 26 April 1809, in Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 76
[2] A letter from Byron to Mr Hanson, dated 23 May 1809 in Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 76
[3] Burnett, T.A.J, 1981: p. 76
[4] Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 126
[5] Ibid., p. 127
[6] Ibid., p. 126
[7] Eisler, Benita, 1998: p. 188 and p. 393

travel to Portugal, Spain, Malta, Greece, Albania, and Turkey instead.[8] "I leave England without regret, I shall return to it without pleasure," Byron informed Hanson from Falmouth, where he waited to take the Lisbon packet to the Continent.[1] In a parting letter to Scrope Davies, Byron wrote: "Seriously, dear Scrope, you are one of the few things in England I leave with regret & shall return to with pleasure."[2] Eventually, Byron was forced to make his way home to settle his debts he had left Scrope Davies to deal with, though he never intended to "revisit England if I can avoid it. It is no country for me. – Why I say this is best known to myself. I never will live in England if I can avoid it, *why* must remain a secret," he told Hanson in one of his letters from abroad.[3] The reasons of his being rather reluctant to return home were obvious. Whereas Byron associated England with cant, hypocrisy, and zero tolerance for homosexuals, on the Continent, particularly in Greece and Albania, homosexuality was tolerated and not burdened with repression and guilt.[4] Therefore, Hobhouse thought it wise to burn the journal in which his friend described "every circumstance of his life, and many of his thoughts while young" because its contents would irreparably harm Byron's reputation in England.[5] In a way, the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* replace the journal lost for eternity because Byron transformed his journal's contents into poetic form, while he was still in the East.[6]

[8] Ibid., p. 187
[1] Ibid., p. 180
[2] Burnett, T.A.J., 1981: p. 80
[3] Ibid., p. 83 and p. 228
[4] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 199
[5] Ibid., p. 224
[6] Ibid., p. 224

In one of his letters to his mother, Byron described the Oriental splendour with which he had been received in Albania:

> The Albanians in their dresses (the most magnificent in the world, consisting of a long white kilt, gold worked cloak, crimson velvet gold laced jacket & waistcoat, silver mounted pistols & daggers), the Tartars with high caps, the Turks in their vast pelisses & turbans, the soldiers & black slaves with the horses . . . .[1]

This theatrical scene of dazzling splendour was reproduced in the second canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

> The wild Albanian kirtled to his knee,
> With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun,
> And gold-embroider'd garments, fair to see:
> The crimson-scarfed men of Macedon;
> The Delhi with his cap of terror on,
> And crooked glaive; the lively, supple Greek:
> And swarthy Nubia's mutilated son;
> The bearded Turk, that rarely deigns to speak,
> Master of all around, too potent to be meek[.][2]

During his travels in the East, the poet himself also underwent a metamorphosis: the shy, chubby provincial revealed himself as a self-conscious young dandy who would intoxicate high society some years later.

Wishing to be considered as an aristocrat rather than a poet, Byron's ambition was aimed at a political career rather than an artistic one. Byron's burning political ambition, however, is atypical for a Regency dandy. In fact, Byron's grand tour was a logical and final step in the political education of the young aristocrat, who had first inherited the title and estates of Newstead, enjoyed privileged education at Harrow and Cambridge University, and "soldered future contacts by joining the highly select Whig Club".[3] Upon his return to England in 1812, Byron duly assisted all major debates in the House of Lords and participated in committee meetings.[4] "[Byron] saw himself as a liberal reformer," Jerome McGann comments. "He went into Parliament on these terms, and he quickly became completely disillusioned with th[at] procedure."[5] Despite all his efforts, Byron's plea to spare the life of the rebelling Luddites did not come across well with the conservative Members of Parliament who preferred to ignore him and passed the controversial Frame Bill.[6] Jerome McGann concludes that at that moment, Byron

[1] Ibid., p. 219
[2] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto II, Stanza LVIII, ll. 514-22 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 113
[3] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 323
[4] Ibid., p. 232
[5] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 135
[6] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 325

"became cynical, nihilistic, with all the stylistic and poetic privileges that come with that."[1] In "An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill" (1812), disappointed and angry Byron not only poured scorn on his political opponents and technological progress but also paved the way for his misanthropic alter ego Childe Harold.[2]

4.2.2.3 Fame, Legend, Myth, and "Byromania"

On 10 March 1812, Byron's epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was published by John Murray, who had already skilfully marketed Walter Scott, "in an expensive edition of 500 quarto copies and was sold out in three days".[3] By the end of 1812, the book had gone through four editions, and reached a tenth by 1815.[4] The Duchess of Devonshire remembered how a copy of the poem was "on every table", and how its author, who had become a celebrity overnight, was "courted, visited, flattered and praised wherever he appear[ed] . . . he [was] really the only topic of almost every conversation – the men jealous of him, the women of each other."[5] Walter Scott ascribed the poem's huge success to the "novelty of an author speaking in his own person", and he saw Byron as "the first poet who . . . ha[d] directly appeared before the public, an actual living man expressing his own sentiments, thoughts, hopes, and fears."[6] Walter Scott's explanation of *Childe Harold*'s success still stands today, for Jerome McGann points out that "the most salient aspect of Byron's work is that he wrote about himself, and that his books, like God's human creatures, are all made in his image and likeness."[7] Byron, for his part, vehemently denied every connection with the poetic persona he had created: "I by no means intend to identify myself with *Harold* but to *deny* all connection with him . . . I would not be such a fellow as I have made my hero for all the world."[8] This firm denial, however, was a well thought-out move in Byron's own contribution to his fame. In the preface of *Childe Harold*'s first two cantos, the anonymous author of the satiric *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* defended the choice of his "fictitious character" as having been "introduced for the sake of giving some connection to the piece".[9] To Byron's contemporaries, however, the effect of the poem was daringly personal: like

[1] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 135
[2] "An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill" (1812) in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: pp. 153-54
[3] Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 787
[4] Ibid., p. 787
[5] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 4
[6] Walter Scott cited in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 787 and in McDayter, Ghislaine, 1999: p. 46
[7] Jerome McGann cited in McDayter, Ghislaine, 1999: p. 46
[8] Byron cited in Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 12
[9] Preface to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt*, Canto I-II in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 56

Byron, Childe Harold could pride himself on an ancient aristocratic lineage, left his country seat to travel over all oceans, tried to hide an obscure past, was young and handsome, but doomed in a mysterious way, gave himself world-weary airs and graces, and was a passionate lover caught in unhappy love affairs.[1] For the first time, "British readers had the chance to admire and identify with the depths of an aristocratic psyche."[2] How did Byron deal with this instant success?

In his characteristic way, Byron reacted ambiguously. *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), for example, in which Byron took pride to have written in less than two weeks, broke the sale record of any of his preceding works: "6,000 copies the first month, 125,000 by early 1814, five editions in 1813, five more in 1814, and an eleventh by the end of 1815."[3] Obviously, Byron was flattered that his readers appreciated the "authenticity of his Oriental tales", but then again the steady sales annoyed him because he saw it as a sign "that he was pandering to a mass audience".[4] The poem's success "certainly did not raise my opinion of the public taste," he is reported to have said.[5] At the peak of Byron's fame, his future wife Annabella Milbanke composed the poem "The Byromania" (1812) in which she criticised the contemporary, fanatical – especially the female – rage for Byron and everything he stood for:

> Reforming Byron with all his magic sway
> Compels all hearts to love him and obey –
> Commands our wounded vanity to sleep,
> Bids us forget the Truths that cut so deep,
> Inspires a generous candour in the mind
> That makes us to our friend's oppression kind.[6]

One of the many features of "Byromania" was that Byron's audience first identified him with Childe Harold and later with Byron's other fictional personae, such as the Giaour, the Corsair, Lara, and Manfred. At first, "Byron colluded with the idea that his work was a continuation of his life, and he flirted with his readers, hinting at the diabolical deeds in his past".[7] Byron's contemporaries, for example, were very surprised that they met a cheerful dandy, who enthusiastically plunged with fellow dandies into London's night life, instead of a world-weary hero from one of their favourite Byronic tales. A year before his death in Missolonghi, Byron confessed to Lady Blessington that

[1] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 4
[2] Elfenbein, Andrew, 1999: p. 80
[3] Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p.792
[4] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 407
[5] Ibid., p. 407
[6] Milbanke, Anabella. "The Byromania" in Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. xii
[7] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 10

> People take for gospel all I say, and go away continually with false impressions . . . .One will represent me as a sort of sublime misanthrope, with moments of kind feeling. This, *par exemple*, is my favourite *rôle* . . . Now, I know myself, I should say that I have no character at all . . . But, joking apart, what I think of myself is, that I am so changeable, being everything in turn and nothing long. – I am such a strange *mélange* of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me.[1]

In the many etchings and frontispieces that were made public during Byron's life, he was always depicted with "haughtiness and affected dignity never once visible to those who ever saw him," Byron's distant relative Robert Dallas (1757-?) pointed out.[2] "Instead of having a thin and rather sharp and anxious face, as he has in his pictures," the American scholar George Ticknor (1791-1871) wonderingly observed, "it [Byron's face] is round, open, and smiling; his eyes are light, not black; his air easy and careless, not forward and striking; and I found his manners affable and gentle, the tones of his voice low and conciliating, his conversation gay, pleasant, and interesting in an uncommon degree."[3] Another feature of "Byromania" was that Byron, together with his "rival" Walter Scott, inspired an entire generation of young men how to behave, dress, and write.[4] Matthew Arnold (1822-88) observed how young men worshipped "[t]heatrical Byron", and how "they caught the fashion of deranging their hair or of knotting their neck handkerchief or of leaving their shirt collar unbuttoned."[5] The French writer Chateaubriand (1768-1848), who fanatically worshipped Byron, described how a Byronic young man had to look like in *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* (1848-1850):

> In 1822 the fashionable man looked gloomy and unwell at first sight: he had an air of neglect, his beard not fully-grown nor shaved, but grown in a moment of surprise, of oblivion, during his despairing moods; a windswept lock of hair, a haunting, sublime, absent and fatal gaze, stiff lips in disdain of human species; a bored, Byronic heart, drown in the disgust and the mystery of being.[6]

One of the most important consequences of "Byromania" was that contemporary poets like the "Lake Poets" did not take Byron's work seriously. This partly explains why Victorians no longer read Byron but preferred the work of Coleridge, Wordsworth,

[1] Ibid., p. xii
[2] Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 124
[3] Ibid., p. 129
[4] Chenoun, Farid, 1993: p. 51
[5] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 5
[6] François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* (1848-1850) cited in Chenoun, Farid, 1993: p. 51; orig. French: «En 1822 le fashionable devait offrir au premier coup d'œil un homme malheureux et malade: il devait avoir quelque chose de négligé dans sa personne, la barbe non pas entière, non pas rasée, mais grandi un moment par surprise, par oubli, pendant les préoccupations du désespoir, mèche de cheveux au vent, regard profond, sublime, égaré et fatal, lèvres contractées en dédain de l'espèce humaine; cœur ennuyé, byronien, noyé dans le dégoût et le mystère de l'être.» My translation.

Scott, and Keats instead.[1] "[A]way then with the senseless iteration of the word 'popular' applied to new works of poetry as if there is no test of excellence in this first of fine arts, but that all men should run after its production as if urged by an appetite, or constrained by a spell," William Wordsworth sharply criticised.[2] Another effect of "Byromania" was that Byron was incapable of controlling the way he was presented in literature. His most famous mistress, Lady Caroline Lamb, for example, fictionalised her affair with Byron in her novel *Glenarvon* (1816) in order to revenge herself on her unpredictable and fickle lover.[3] *Glenarvon* "can't be good," Byron coldly reacted having his short-lived affair with Caroline in mind, "I did not sit long enough."[4] Byron, though, was more annoyed with the way he was represented in French literature. The poem "L'homme", which Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) had dedicated to him, irritated Byron to such an extent that he complained to Lady Blessington that a well-educated gentleman like de Lamartine should have known better.[5] "I dislike French verse so much that I have not read more than a few lines of the one in which I am dragged into public view. He [de Lamartine] calls me 'Esprit mystérieux, mortel, ange ou démon', which I call very uncivil for a well-bred Frenchman."[6] According to Byron's most recent biographer Fiona MacCarthy, Byron's continental readers "did not comprehend the English dandy side of Byron" because they did not have access to his intimate journals, his correspondence, and they could only rely on translations which were often poor substitutes for the originals.[7] They sternly identified the man behind Byron with poetic personae like Childe Harold, Lara and Manfred, and "they had little or no appreciation of [Byron's] English sharpness of wit."[8] Thomas Moore also feared that Byron's continental readers might be disillusioned by the "social, practical-minded and, with all his faults and eccentricities, English Lord Byron".[9]

From 1816 on, Byron saw how the fame he had so much enjoyed turned into notoriety which he abhorred, after his marriage had failed and he had been forced into exile in 1816. Although the "Epistle to Augusta" was not to be published without Augusta Leigh's consent, Byron must have wished it published because the poem was an angry

[1] McDayter, Ghislaine, 1999: p. 50
[2] Ibid., p. 50
[3] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 333
[4] Byron cited in Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 120
[5] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 554
[6] Ibid., p. 554
[7] Ibid., p. 554
[8] Ibid., p. 553
[9] Thomas Moore cited in McCarthy Fiona, 2002: p. 554

outcry from a man who felt unjustly treated and victimised by his own fame and notoriety.[1]

> With false Ambition what had I to do?
> Little with love, and least of all with Fame;
> And yet they came unsought, and with me grew,
> And made me all which they can make – a name.[2]

According to Byron, only his name was left, over which use he had no longer control. In Roland Barthes' (1915-80) view, that name devoid of all personal connections turns into a myth when "it adopts a magical potency".[3] "Myth results from a closed and contained word or 'sign', the marriage of a concept and an image, being stripped of its imagined sense of completion and becoming a mere 'signifier', a word without a stable referent or meaning," Frances Wilson explains.[4] "So in the construction of a myth, the signifier dissociates itself from what it conventionally signifies and refers instead to something entirely separate, to a different and constantly changing set of secondary cultural associations."[5]

4.2.2.4 Byron's Dandyism

According to Frances Wilson, it was Byron's poetry that "appealed first to the public, then his appearance."[6] In Byron's legacy that has reached the twenty-first century, however, Byron's talent as a poet has been left out, and his personal fame has reached enormous proportions.[7] "[We] have come to think of Byron's Romanticism not as a political force," Jerome McGann observes, "but as a purely personal one: Byron the great lover, the man of not political but erotic affairs, the broken dandy of the fast and luxurious world of Regency England."[8]

From the moment Byron appeared in the public eye, he "took great efforts to control image of himself being produced".[9] In his epic poem *Don Juan*, the ageing Byron defined the dandyism of his youth in much the same way as "Beau" Brummell did: they both insisted on "refined sobriety of dress" and avoided showy and extravagant behaviour:

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[1] Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 802
[2] "Epistle to Augusta", XIII, lines 97-100 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 459
[3] Frances Wilson discusses Roland Barthes theory of myth in Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 9
[4] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 9
[5] Ibid., p. 9
[6] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 2
[7] Ibid., p. 4
[8] McGann, 2002: p. 113
[9] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 6

His manner was perhaps the more seductive,
Because he ne'er seem'd anxious to seduce;
Nothing affected, studied, or constructive
Of coxcombry or conquest: no abuse
Of his attractions marr'd the fair perspective,
To indicate a Cupidon broke loose,
And seem to say, "Resist us if you can" --
Which makes a dandy while it spoils a man.[1]

Apart from Byron's exaggerated insistence on being treated according to his rank, Byron's fellow traveller John Galt (1779-1839) also observed Byron's dandyism. "His dress indicated a Londoner of some fashion . . . with just so much of a peculiarity of style as served to show, that although he belonged to the order of metropolitan beaux, he was not altogether a common one."[2] The Regency portraitist Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) captured Byron's peculiar beauty remarkably well. Byron's face was not only characterised by "its keen and rapid genius," Lawrence noted, "but also by

> its pale intelligence, its profligacy, and its bitterness; its original symmetry distorted by the passions, his laugh of mingle merriment and scorn; the forehead clear and open, the brow boldly prominent, the eyes bright and dissimilar, the nose finely cut, and the nostril accurately formed; the mouth well made, but wide and contemptuous even in its smile, falling singularly at the corners, and its vindictive and disdainful expression heightened by the massive firmness of the chin, which springs at once from the centre of the full under-lip, the hair dark and curling but irregular in its growth; all this presents to you the poet and the man; and the general effect is heightened by a thin spare form, and, as you may have heard, by a deformity of limb.[3]

Much to his despair, Byron had inherited his mother's tendency to corpulence.[4] In order to lose weight, the young dandy restricted his diet to "nothing but hard biscuits and soda water" and took strenuous exercise.[5] At times, Byron lost so much weight that he "could not walk upright from sheer weakness", but then again he was so corpulent that "the knuckles of his hands were lost in fat".[6] According to Christine Kenyon Jones, Byron's access and loss of weight corresponded to his particular moods, aspirations, and his ever-changing self-image because at times when he was determined "to do something notable and make his mark on a public stage, Byron took more exercise, ate less and presented himself slim, while in the periods when he was less self-assured, or more

[1] *Don Juan*, Canto XV, Stanza XII cited in Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 112
[2] John Galt cited in Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 198
[3] Sir Thomas Lawrence cited in Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 6
[4] Ibid., p. 114
[5] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 308
[6] Mary Loveday and Newton Hanson cited in Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 302 and p. 602 respectively

relaxed or self-indulgent, he gained in physical terms while 'losing' in his own estimation."[1]

Unlike "Beau" Brummell who carefully avoided sitting for a full-sized portrait, Byron was willing to spend large amounts of money, time, and trouble on the way he was portrayed. He made a distinction between portraits for "private remembrance" and those which had "public pretensions".[2] In ordinary life, Byron was very fastidious about his carefully tied neckcloth, while he appeared with an open-necked shirt and loosely tied cravat in paintings that were to be publicly displayed.[3] Byron's inconsistency concerning neckties inspired the anonymous author of *Neckclothitania* to teach his readership how to tie a cravat *à la Byron*:

> As Lord Byron differed so widely from the world in general, we can hardly expect to find in the cravat worn by the prince of poets any of that *élégance récherchée* which generally characterizes an Englishman of rank. It is universally allowed that the least constraint of the body has a corresponding effect on the mind, and it must, therefore be admitted that to a certain extent a tight cravat will cramp the imagination, and, as it were, suffocate the thoughts. That Lord Byron feared this effect is proved from his submitting to the inconveniences of the cravat, only when accommodating himself to the *beinséances* [*sic*] of society, and in every other portrait where he is painted in the ardour of composition, his neck is always free from the trammels of a neck-cloth.[4]

In the portraits for "public pretensions", Byron wore "old English" or "Vandyke" costumes that were very popular with eighteenth-century actors like David Garick (1717-79) and portraitists like Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) who loathed the ostentatious fashion of their own time and wanted to replace it with the timeless dress that had been in vogue in the preceding centuries.[5] Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets like William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and John Milton (1608-74) wore "black or dark clothes set off by white linen at neck or wrists . . . [and] sometimes a draped cloak".[6] Although Byron was dressed differently in everyday life, this flamboyant style became the quintessential Romantic Byronic look and was carried to extremes.[7] Benjamin Disraeli, a second-generation dandy, made his entrance into London high society with a "velvet coat of an original cut thrown wide open, and ruffles to its sleeves, shirt collars turned down in Byronic fashion . . . announcing himself as the

[1] Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 118
[2] Ibid., p. 122
[3] Ibid., p. 113
[4] anonymous *Neckclothitania or Tietania, Being an Essay on Starchers by One of the Cloth*, 1818 cited in Kelly, Ian, 2005: pp. 565-66
[5] Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 113
[6] Ibid., p. 113
[7] Ibid., p. 113

Homer or Dante of the age!"[1] Although the poet was known as the life and soul of the party in his intimate circle of friends, Byron "was, above all, desirous of looking extremely unhappy," the Danish sculptor Thorwaldsen (1770-1844) told.[2] It was Byron's habit to assume "a countenance that did not belong to him, as though he were thinking of a frontispiece of 'Childe Harold'."[3]

4.2.2.5 Lyrical Dandyism

> *"Man is least himself, when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth."*[4]

At the very beginning of his authorship between 1812 and 1816 – or Byron's "pre-exilic period" in Jerome McGann's words – imitations of the character Childe Harold, who seemed to be based on Byron's personal life and experiences, constantly appeared in Byron's work.[5] In that period, Byron consciously calculated every move in his career, advising aspiring writers like Thomas Moore to do the same:

> Stick to the East; – the oracle, [Madame de] Staël, told me it was the only poetical policy . . . The little I have done in that way is merely a "voice in the wilderness" for you; and, if it has had any success, that also will prove that the public are orientalizing, and pave the path for you.[6]

Reactions from the established literary scene were bound to come, though. First of all, some did not take Byron's literary work seriously because "he cranked out verse between 1812 and 1815 to various formulas and audience expectations", which makes Jerome McGann provokingly conclude that Byron "was not so much a poet as he was a pander and whore to public tastes" for those who deemed Byron's work not good enough to draw so much public attention.[7] Byron's divorce and subsequent exile, however, represented a watershed in his literary career.[8] The "post-exilic" Byron critically examined himself, his public life until then, and "his poetical/ moral goals".[9] In a letter to his distant relative Douglas Kinnaird, he wrote "*my* object is not *immediate* popularity in my present productions which are written on a different system from the rage of the day."[10] Byron did not name that "system from the rage of the day" because

[1] Henry Austen Layard cited in Elfenbein, Andrew, 1999: p. 81
[2] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 16
[3] William Edward West cited in Jones, Christine K., 1999: p. 124
[4] Wilde, Oscar. "The Artist as Critic." *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1987: p. 984
[5] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 36 and p. 142
[6] A May 1813 letter from Byron to Thomas Moore cited in McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 36
[7] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 36
[8] Ibid., p. 36
[9] Ibid., p. 37
[10] Ibid., p. 37

he probably did not have a name for it. In his *Byron and Romanticism* (2002), though, Jerome McGann calls this system Byron's "lyrical dandyism".[1] McGann defines "lyrical dandyism" as poetry in masquerade, as "deliberate hypocrisy", as "a discourse not of truth but of illusions and deceits – what [William] Blake earlier called 'bodies of false-hood'", and as the poetic process in which Byron "revealed the secrets of imagination".[2] Regency reviewers, for instance, disliked that Byron exploited the narrow border between fiction and reality. "The personal interest," a reviewer of the *London Magazine* wrote in 1821, "has always been above the poetical in Lord Byron's compositions; and, what is much worse, they seem to have been, in almost every instance, studiously calculated to produce this effect."[3] Henry Brougham, the Scotch reviewer from the *Edinburgh Review*, had been the first to blame young Byron and his collection of poems *Hours of Idleness* for calculation and insincerity.[4] "[T]he noble author is peculiarly forward in pleading his minority," Brougham mockingly observed. "We have it in the title-page, and on the very back of the volume; it follows his name like a favourite part of his *style*. Much stress is laid upon it in the preface, and the poems are connected with this general statement of his case, by particular dates."[5] Henry Brougham, for example, failed to notice Byron's dramatised hypocrisy in one of his juvenile poems "Damaetas" – the poem's suppressed title was "My Character" – in which Byron admits his hypocrisy and lack of sincerity: "In lies an adept, in deceit a fiend;/ Vers'd in hypocrisy, while yet a child".[6] In reaction to Brougham's criticism, Byron published *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) in which he mocked the literary review and establishment of his time and manipulated his public in such a way as to achieve "an effect of honesty":

> Still must I hear? --- shall hoarse Fitzgerald bawl
> His creaking couplets in a tavern hall,
> And I not sing, lest, haply, Scotch reviews
> Should dub me scribbler, and denounce my muse?
> Prepare for rhyme --- I'll publish, right or wrong:
> Fools are my theme, let satire be my song.[7]

[1] Ibid., p. 114
[2] Ibid., p. 95 and p. 114
[3] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 10
[4] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 118
[5] Henry Brougham cited in McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 118
[6] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 99; and Byron, George Gordon Noel. "Damaetas." *ReadBookOnLine.net*. 2003-2005. 25 Mar. 2006 < http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/3463/>.
[7] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 118; Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: pp. 783-84; *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), ll. 1-6 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 8

According to Byron, Fitzgerald – the "Small Beer Poet" – was a second-class poet whose doggerel verses could only be sustained after "the company ha[d] imbibed a reasonable quantity of bad port".[1] McGann calls Byron's satirical poetry "an act of self-justification" because Byron does not deny Brougham's charge and openly "admits his weaknesses as a writer and his faults of character".[2] From *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* on, satirical Byron and the truthful Lake Poets were at loggerheads, Byron's "poetry of masquerade" being in sharp contrast with the Romantics' "poetry of sincerity".[3] English Romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge placed high value on sincerity in a poem because it was "a deeply felt relation binding the poetic Subject to the poetic subject, the speaking voice to the matter being addressed."[4] In their opinion, a poet was "a man like other men but endowed with more lively sensibilities" who found truth, an inner vision, knowledge, and "the unfolding of the truths of that inner vision" within his own self.[5] Byron seemingly adopted "the conventions of Romanticism he inherited" only "to break them apart".[6] In his poetry, he struck poses and put on masks, satirising the "normative code of Romantic writing".[7] All his poetic personae were carefully constructed "artifices of himself", "illusory and theatrical selves".[8] In real life, Byron also experienced the thrill of putting on masks and professing to be someone else alongside "Beau" Brummell, Scrope Davies, Douglas Kinnaird, and other dandies in the gentlemen's club Watier's:

> In the Pantomime of 1815-1816 – there was a Representation of the Masquerade of 1814 – given by "us Youth" of Watier's Club to Wellington & Co. – Douglas Kinnaird – & one or two others with myself – put on Masques – and went *on* the Stage amongst the οι πολλοι [hoi polloi] – to see the effect of a theatre from the Stage. – It is very grand. – Douglas danced among the figuranti too –& they were puzzled to find out who we were – as being more than their number. – It is odd enough that D.K. & I should have been both at the *real* Masquerade – &

[1] *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 8, note 2
[2] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 118
[3] The concept "poetry of sincerity" can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), the father of the Romantic Movement, who had a high opinion of sincerity in his *The Confessions* (1782), which was published posthumously: "I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once accomplished, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself. Simply myself. I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different." Jean-Jacques Rousseau cited in Soderholm, James. "Byronic Confession." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999: p. 191
[4] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 115
[5] Ibid., p. 98 and p. 115
[6] Ibid., p. 95
[7] Ibid., p. 96
[8] Ibid., p. 97

> afterwards in the Mimic one of the same – on the stage of D.L. [Drury Lane] Theatre.[1]

The older generation of Romantics considered Byron a "double-faced" person, and the poet was constantly charged of blatant hypocrisy because he gave his readers the false impression of being sincere and yet, at the same time, of speaking "deliberate falsehoods and develop[ing] subtle equivocations".[2] This reproach reached its peak when Byron's poem to his ex-wife Annabella Milbanke "Fare Thee Well!" was published without authorisation in the *Champion* in April 1816.[3] According to Jerome McGann, William Wordsworth immediately denounced the poem as a mere "doggerel", wrongly interpreting the poem as "a failed and utterly debased effort at Romantic sincerity".[4] The poem, though, was not an outcry of a broken heart in which Byron posed "as the sinner candidly self-exposed, confessed, and repentant," Jerome McGann explains.[5] Wordsworth failed to notice Byron's deliberate hypocrisy and his mockery of Romantic sincerity and confession.[6] Wordsworth's reaction shows how Romantics cherished "a double illusion".[7] According to Jerome McGann, poetry did not necessarily express "the best that has been known and thought in the world" and criticism could falter "in its visions of judgment".[8] Due to Wordsworth's misreading of the poem, the Victorians adopted a negative attitude towards Byron himself and his poetry because his "masquerades were a source of contempt."[9] Whereas Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-92) rejected Byron both as a man and as a poet, Thackeray accused Byron of being insincere as a writer: "That man *never* wrote from his heart."[10] In Jerome McGann's opinion, Byron's lyrical dandyism contributed to his disappearing from "the most serious forms of academic and professional attention", even though Byron had dominated the European literary scene in the nineteenth century.[11] Instead, twentieth-century academics catalogued him as the "poet of Regency high life, poet of sentimental love, Satanic poseur, king of light verse and depthless adventure narratives set in exotic

[1] Byron, *Detached Thoughts* cited in Graham, Peter W., 1999: p. 26
[2] Ibid., p. 115
[3] Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 798
[4] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 95
[5] Ibid., p. 95
[6] Ibid., p. 95
[7] Ibid., p. 100
[8] Ibid., p. 100
[9] Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 11
[10] William Makepeace Thackeray cited in Wilson, Frances, 1999: p. 8
[11] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 7

places."[1] The "Lake Poets", in his own day, and the Victorians afterwards felt that Byron was "mad, bad, and dangerous to know."[2]

4.2.3 The Byronic Hero

4.2.3.1 The Literary Tradition of the "Bandit-Hero"

Byron's most famous poetic persona, the Byronic hero, embodied the poet's darkest side: the recollection of his absent father without any moral scruples, the legacy of his murderous great-uncle and infamous ancestors, the image of his abusive Calvinistic nursemaid, his conviction to be predestined to commit crimes like Satan, his identification with the biblical figure Cain, and his fascination with the Gothic tales of horror. The Byronic antihero was not only a creation of Byron's imagination, but also an archetype that belonged to the spirit of the age, and that was the outcome of a long literary tradition. In his *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*, the French writer Chateaubriand accused Byron of plagiarism because Byron's most important poetic characters – Childe Harold, the Giaour, the Corsair, Lara, and Manfred – resembled Chateaubriand's own literary creation René:

> If it were true that René counted for something in the composition of unique characters presented under various names in *Childe Harold*, *the Corsair*, *Lara*, *Manfred*, and *The Giaour*; or if, by chance, Lord Byron had nourished my life with his, would he have been so weak as never to mention me? Was I then one of those contemporaries one disowns on achieving power?[3]

The foremost French critic of the nineteenth century, Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-69), however, leapt to Byron's defence, remarking that great poets like Chateaubriand and Byron

> did not need to imitate one another; they found within themselves and in the spirit of the times sufficient inspiration which they appropriated and modelled in their own way . . . All those types [Childe Harold, René and their ilk] emerged in Germany, England, France, in a same breeze, in a same spirit of age that stirred the world soul at that moment.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 114

[2] Lady Caroline Lamb cited in Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 340

[3] Chateaubriand, François de. "Mémoires d'Outre-tombe Book XII." Trans. A.S. Kline. 2005. 10 Apr. 2006 < http://www.tonykline.btinternet.co.uk/ChateaubriandMemoirsBookXII.htm>; orig. French: «S'il était vrai que René entrât pour quelque chose dans le fond du personnage unique mis en scène sous les noms divers dans Childe-Harold, Conrad, Lara, Manfred, le Giaour; si par hasard lord Byron m'avait fait vivre de sa vie, il aurait donc eu la faiblesse de me jamais nommer? J'étais donc un de ces pères qu'on renie quand on est arrivé au pouvoir?» (Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 69).

[4] Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve cited in Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 70; orig. French: «Ces grands poètes n'ont pas eu besoin de s'imiter l'un à l'autre; ils ont trouvé en eux-mêmes et dans l'air du siècle une inspiration suffisante qu'ils ont chacun appropriée et figurée à leur manière . . . Tous ces types sont éclos en Allemagne, en Angleterre, en France, sous un même souffle, sous un même courant atmosphérique général qui tenait à l'état du monde à ce moment.» My translation.

The closing years of the eighteenth century witnessed a general malaise within intellectual Europe, following the publication of Emmanuel Kant's (1724-1804) *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and Friedrich Hölderlin's (1770-1843) definition of "human tragedy".[1] Kant undermined the eighteenth-century self-confidence by declaring that "space and time [were] grounded in the experiencing subject", and that the "thing in itself" was completely unknowable to the subject because "the thing must always be filtered through [the subject's] sense of time and space".[2] This new knowledge brought European youngsters to the brink of despair, sensing that "an immense and fearsome ennui is what is left to us now".[3] Around the same time, Hölderlin defined "the essence of tragedy" as a lack of immediate experience because the subject could impossibly draw "the object of thought" nearer, even through knowledge, but "this attempt to bring closer, always causes the 'thing' to withdraw."[4] These new theories left a feeling of alienation and failure, which governed "the spirit of the times" in Sainte Beuve's words, and inspired Byron and his contemporaries to create nihilistic "bandit-heroes".[5] Those characters with a burdened conscience were also the outcome of a long European literary tradition that reached its perfection on the British Isles. In *The Romantic Agony*, Mario Praz traces back the origins of the Byronic hero to William Shakespeare's plays *Julius Caesar* and *Richard III*.[6] Like the Byronic hero who only smiles bitterly, Cassius in *Julius Caesar* rarely smiles: "Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort/ As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit/ That could be mov'd to smile at anything."[7] The Giaour, one of the first Byronic heroes after Childe Harold, only finds pleasure in human misery and checks himself whenever he spontaneously laughs:

> Not oft to smile descendeth he,
> And when he doth 'tis sad to see
> That he but mocks at misery.
> How that pale lip will curl and quiver!
> Then fix once more as if for ever;
> As if his sorrow or disdain
> Forbade him e'er to smile again.[8]

[1] Lutz, Deborah. "Love as Homesickness: Longing for a Transcendental Home in Byron and the Dangerous Lover Narrative." *Midwest Quarterly* 46 (2004): p. 34
[2] Ibid., p. 34
[3] Enst August Friedrich Klingemann, alias Bonaventura, cited in Coblence, Françoise, 1988: p. 25; orig. French: «il ne règne plus qu'un immense et effrayant ennui». My translation.
[4] Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 34
[5] Ibid., p. 34 and Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 69
[6] Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 62
[7] William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* cited in Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 62
[8] *The Giaour*, ll. 850-56 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 194

In much the same way as the horror Byron's antihero inspires is "not unaccompanied by a certain degree of pity", Richard III pleas the readers to sympathy with him:

> There is no creature loves me;
> And if I die, no soul shall pity me:
> Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself
> Find in myself no pity to myself?[1]

Byron also drew creative inspiration from John Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* (1667). The former overtly expressed his fascination for Milton and his work in a letter to Thomas Medwin: "I am too happy in being coupled in any way with Milton, and shall be glad if they find any points of comparison between him and me."[2] According to Jerome McGann, Milton's influence on Byron's work is most noticeable in his dramatic poem *Manfred* (1817) because Manfred's unnamed crimes are marked on his face, clearly visible to everyone: "on his brow/ The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye/ Glares forth the immortality of hell".[3] Likewise, Satan's once beautiful face is stained with the marks of sin:

> . . . but his face
> Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek, but under Browes
> Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride
> Waiting revenge . . .
> . . . his baleful eyes
> That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
> Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate.[4]

In both *Paradise Lost* and *Manfred*, hell – or rather the construction of it in one's own mind – plays a prominent role. Milton's Satan cries that, "Which way I fly is Hell: myself am Hell" and "The mind is its own place, and in itself/ Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."[5] This theme of self-destruction is echoed in *Manfred*:

> By thy delight in others' pain
> And by the brotherhood of Cain,
> I call upon thee! And compel
> Thyself to be thy proper Hell![6]

Two acts later, there is another reference to Milton's binary opposition of heaven and hell:

> The innate tortures of that deep despair,

[1] Ibid., p. 62
[2] Byron cited in McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 19
[3] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 29 and *Manfred*, Act III, Scene IV, ll. 76-78 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 504
[4] John Milton's *Paradise Lost* cited in Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 57
[5] John Milton's *Paradise Lost* cited in Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 31 and McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 29
[6] *Manfred*, Act I, Scene I, ll. 248-51 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 471

> Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
> But all in all sufficient to itself
> Would make a hell of heaven . . . .[1]

"The Byronic hero acts . . . on his own free will," Deborah Lutz explains in her essay on Byron's wandering antihero,

> [o]ne reason why the Byronic hero exiles himself from society is that his consciousness creates the world as a mirror of his own hellish mind; the world is an interior space where all is decimated of meaning. He restlessly circles this world of his own making, this infinite mindscape. The world can provide no relief or change because of the immutable script in his mind.[2]

The Byronic hero's immediate forebears were the late eighteenth-century "Gothic villains" who haunted, for example, the first Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole, William Beckford's mystical oriental tale *Vathek* (1782), Byron's favourite novel *Zeluco* (1786) by John Moore, Matthew Lewis's sensational novel *The Monk* (1796), and Mrs Ann Radcliffe's runaway success *The Italian* (1797).[3] The Gothic tradition was a fantastic reaction to "a century or more where rationalism, empiricism and classicism were the dominant ideological forces."[4] "These thrillers were intended for an English Protestant middle-class reading public," explains Northrop Frye, "consequently their horrid surroundings were normally Continental, Catholic and upper class, though Oriental settings also had a vogue."[5] In the latter half of the eighteenth century, there was a socio-political tension between the old aristocracy and the burgeoning middle class that spilled over in the Gothic novels.[6] The middle class adopted a rather ambiguous attitude towards the nobility: "on the one hand, many looked with awe at the titles and traditions of the landed gentry; on the other hand, rivalry, competition and sheer hard-nosed business acumen ensured aristocratic excess was frequently caricatured and despised."[7] For the first time in history, a large reading public also had access to literature, more particularly to novels, because literature in the form of poetry had been a privilege restricted to the aristocracy in the preceding centuries.[8] The Gothic novels were sensational in the sense that their central characters were "misanthropic, misunderstood, and solitary" villains "with strong diabolical overtones" who shocked their public with horrifying acts of "sadism and masochism"

[1] *Manfred*, Act III, Scene I, ll. 70-73 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 495
[2] Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 31
[3] Stevens, David. *The Gothic Tradition*. Cambridge: The Cambridge UP, 2000: p. 9, 28, 30
[4] Ibid., p. 29
[5] Northrop, Herman F., 1986: p. 56
[6] Stevens, David, 2000: p. 16
[7] Ibid., p. 16
[8] Ibid., p. 10

and incest.[1] In Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian, or The Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797), the description of Schedoni, the main character of the novel, shows us that the Catholic monk is the immediate ancestor of the Byronic hero:

> His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost superhuman. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, increased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror. His was not the melancholy of a sensible and wounded heart, but apparently that of a gloomy and ferocious disposition. There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that can not easily be defined. It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated. An habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance; and his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice.[2]

Like Ann Radcliffe's anti-hero, the Byronic hero's appearance would fascinate, even terrify others, his emaciated figure wrapped in a monk's habit, his brooding gaze, and his ghastly paleness would strike them as unnatural.

4.2.3.2 Description of the Byronic Hero

Both the Gothic villain and the Byronic hero have obscure origins but are "suspected to be of exalted birth and decayed fortunes".[3] In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, for example, the narrator refuses to disclose Childe Harold's true identity but insinuates that Harold is of noble birth:

> Childe Harold was he hight: – but whence his name
> And lineage long, it suits me not to say;
> Suffice it, that perchance they were of fame,
> And had been glorious in another day . . . .[4]

Since the conscience of both the Gothic villain and the Byronic hero is burdened with the remorse of hideous, unnamed crimes, they are particularly fond of "unconquerable silence", melancholic solitude, "frequent penances", and endless wandering.[5] In consequence of a crime too hideous to be ever named, the Byronic hero goes into voluntary exile to escape the pangs of remorse for what he has done. According to Deborah Lutz, there are two other reasons as to why the Byronic hero lives in a self-

[1] Northrop, Herman F., 1986: p. 56 and Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 71
[2] Radcliffe, Ann. *The Italian, or The Confessional of the Black Penitents*, 1797 cited in Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 61
[3] Praz, Mario, 1970: p. 61
[4] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto I, Stanza III, ll. 19-22 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 62
[5] Praz, Mario: p. 70

imposed exile: on the one hand, "his ideals are too pure to be sullied by the common race of men", and on the other, the Byronic hero wants to "escape from his own consciousness".[1] Lara, for instance, "stood a stranger in this breathing world,/ An erring spirit from another hurl'd", while the Corsair's "soul was changed, before his deeds had driven/ Him forth to war with man and forfeit heaven."[2] Although the Byronic hero might be past redemption in his own mind, he tirelessly searches for a chance to redeem himself either in death, forgetfulness, madness, or in the love of a woman.[3] When Manfred cannot forget his crime through oblivion, only madness and death can alleviate his guilty conscience, but his attempt to commit suicide fails:

> . . . – I have prayed
> For madness as a blessing – 'tis denied me
> I have affronted death – but . . .
> . . . – the cold hand
> Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
> Back by a single hair, which would not break.[4]

Love also proves to be impossible. Childe Harold, for instance, "had sigh'd to many though he loved but one,/ And that loved one, alas! could ne'er be his", the Corsair's beloved, Medora, dies when she believes that he is dead, and Manfred's Astarte perishes because of his unnamed sin.[5] When the Giaour discovers that Leila has been murdered by her master Hassan, he laments that Leila "was my Life's unerring Light:/ That quenched – what beam shall break my night?"[6] Once Manfred has realised that redemption through love is impossible, he flights in "intense study, insomnia and anorexia."[7] "The lamp must not be replenished, but even then," Manfred urges his servant,

> It will not burn so long as I must watch.
> My slumbers – if I slumber – are not sleep,
> But a continuance of enduring thought,
> Which then I can resist not . . . .[8]

With the pangs of remorse, the Byronic hero's beauty has withered: his face looks emaciated, his cheeks hollow, his ghastly eyes sunken, and sorrow has added to his

[1] Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 31
[2] *Lara*, Stanza XVIII, ll. 315-16 and *The Corsair*, Stanza I, ll. 251-52 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p.325 and p. 258 respectively
[3] Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 26
[4] Ibid., p. 26 and *Manfred*, Act II, Scene II, ll. 133-39, p. 483
[5] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto I, Stanza V, ll. 39-40 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 62 and Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 27
[6] *The Giaour*, ll. 1145-46 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 202
[7] Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 36
[8] *Manfred*, Act I, Scene I, ll. 1-5 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: pp. 463-64

pallor.[1] On his noble forehead, a mark of sin is burned: "She [Leila] died – I dare not tell how," the Giaour tells, "But look – 'tis written on my brow!"[2] Time has no effect on the Byronic hero, for he is still young, even though he has been wandering for ages and "has experienced more in his short life than most will in a whole long life."[3] The Giaour's drifting existence has decimated every meaning of time and mortal life:

> But in that instant o'er his soul
> Winters of memory seemed to roll,
> And gather in that drop of time
> A life of pain, an age of crime.
>
> Though in time's record nearly nought,
> It was eternity to thought!
> For infinite as boundless space
> The thought that conscience must embrace,
> Which in itself can comprehend
> Woe without name, or hope, or end.[4]

According to Jerome McGann, Byron's narrator portrays these sinful antiheroes in such a way that the reader feels obliged to sympathise with them because they are the creatures of extenuating circumstances.[5] Lara, for example, is such a problematic Byronic hero because despite his sin, the reader can still detect a "capacity for love" bigger "than earth/ Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth, /His early dreams of good outstripped the truth,/ And troubled manhood follow'd baffled youth".[6] The Byronic heroes are so ambiguous that the reader "must always remain behindhand with solutions", even though he "understands the nature and causes of the detailed situation".[7] These pitiable villains were ideal poetic personae for Byron because they questioned the "reader's schemes for moral order" and challenged "the comforts of undemanding and conventional ethics".[8] Unlike ordinary men who protected themselves against grief and suffering with cant and hypocrisy, the Byronic heroes saw "the true complexities of good and evil".[9] Byron carefully constructed these literary artefacts in order to wage war on cant.[10]

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[1] Praz, Mario: p. 70
[2] *The Giaour*, ll. 1056-57 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 199
[3] Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 33
[4] *The Giaour*, ll. 261-64, ll. 271-76 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 175
[5] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 24
[6] *Lara*, Canto I, Stanza XVIII, ll. 321-24 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 325
[7] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 25
[8] Ibid, pp. 25-26
[9] Ibid., p. 26
[10] Ibid., p. 26

Nevertheless, Byron, who shared his "sardonic and ribald wit" with fellow dandies, grew tired of his own literary creations because they lacked the humour and irony that had become so important in the last years of his life.[1] In *Don Juan*, his most sophisticated and talented work, he undermined the Byronic hero, parodying and satirising the literary creation that had made him once so famous.[2]

4.2.3.3 Descendants of the Byronic Hero

Among the many nineteenth-century descendants of the Byronic hero, the central character of Emily Brontë's (1818-48) awe-inspiring novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Heathcliff, and the hero of Charlotte Brontë's (1816-55) *Jane Eyre* (1847), Mr Rochester, stand as the most famous nineteenth-century Byronic heroes who have "transcended [their] literary origin to become part of popular culture."[3]

Apart from the Bible, the Brontë children read everything that came within their reach and that stayed beyond the reach of their peers: "contemporary newspapers and magazines", comedies by Shakespeare, and Byron's poetry.[4] They eagerly devoured *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of his Life* (1830), Thomas Moore's biography of Lord Byron that, together with Byron's poetry, formed the fountainhead of the Brontë children's "invented kingdoms of Angria and Gondal".[5] Charlotte Brontë and her brother Branwell (1817-48) created mythic Angria where Alexander Percy, Earl of Northangerland, earned acclaim for his heroic deeds, and the Duke of Zamorna was as infamous for his "aristocratic bad behaviour and dark erotic power" as Lord Byron had been in real life and as his poetic personae had been in fiction.[6]

The fantasy Emily and Charlotte Brontë used in their imaginative worlds spilled over into their novels and particularly in the case of Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, made them seem strangely at odds with the contemporary "industrial novels" by Charles Dickens (1812-70), George Eliot (1819-80), and Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65) because Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* stood in direct relation to "earlier works, more notably [to] the Gothic novel of the late eighteenth century and the poetry of the Romantics."[7] In the tradition of the Gothic novel, *Wuthering Heights* creates an enclosed and isolated world

[1] Northrop, Herman F., 1986: p. 57
[2] Ibid., p. 61
[3] Nestor, Pauline. Introduction. *Wuthering Heights*. London: Penguin Books, 1995: p. xx
[4] Nestor, Pauline, 1995: p. xviii
[5] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 556
[6] Ibid., p. 556
[7] Nestor, Pauline, 1995: p. xix

in the barren Yorkshire Moors where darkness, violence, and crime reign.[1] With the work of the Romantics, *Wuthering Heights* shares "a preoccupation with the authority of the imagination and emotion, a concern for the formative influence of childhood and for man's relation to the nature world."[2]

In *Jane Eyre*, Mr Rochester decides to rove the Continent in the misanthropic style of the Byronic hero, after he has discovered that his young bride is a madwoman and that he has been lied to:

> I transformed myself into a Will-o'-the-wisp . . . I pursued wanderings as wild as those of the Marsh spirit. I sought the Continent, and went devious through all lands . . . Disappointment made me reckless . . . I tried dissipation . . . in a harsh, bitter frame of mind, the result of a useless, roving, lonely life – corroded with disappointment, sourly disposed against all men . . . .[3]

Heathcliff, the main character of *Wuthering Heights*, is a cuckoo that soils another bird's nest, a "dirty, ragged, black-haired child", a "gypsy brat" found "starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool".[4] Just like his Byronic forebears – Childe Harold, Lara, the Giaour, and the Corsair – and some Dickensian characters, Heathcliff has obscure and enigmatic origins that puzzles Nelly Dean, the housekeeper of Wuthering Heights, so much that she invents a past for her young charge in which the Byronic tales are clearly echoed:

> Who knows, but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would have high notions of my birth . . . .[5]

Fit for a "changeling" thrust on the mercy of the "good" Earnshaws, Heathcliff repays good with evil: "he lurks around the margins of society with his rough, brutal, demon-like appearance and actions".[6] Heathcliff's physical appearance is conveyed in much the same way as the Byronic heroes': "deep black eyes", a bitter smile, "ghastly paleness", but awkwardly handsome.[7] Catherine Earnshaw, the daughter of Heathcliff's benefactor, refuses to marry Heathcliff because "[it] would degrade me to marry [him]",

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[1] Ibid., p. xix
[2] Nestor, Pauline, 1995: p. xx
[3] Brontë, Charlotte. "Jane Eyre." *Literature.org, The Online Literature Library*. 1999. Knowledge Matters. 12 Apr. 2006 < http://www.literature.org/authors/bronte-charlotte/jane-eyre/>: Ch. XX
[4] Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Ed. Pauline Nestor. London: Penguin Books, 1995: Vol. I, Ch. IV, p. 36; Vol. I, Ch. IV, p. 37 and Vol. I, Ch. IV, p. 37
[5] Brontë, Emily, 1995: Vol. I, Ch. VII, p. 58
[6] Lutz, Deborah, 2004: p. 28
[7] Brontë Emily, 1995: Vol. II, Ch. XX, p. 330

even though she is passionately in love with him.[1] These words could also have been those of the proud Mary Ann Chaworth who rejected Byron because of his degrading lameness.[2] When Heathcliff's beloved Catherine marries Edgar Linton, the rich and refined owner of Thrushcross Grange, instead and subsequently dies in childbirth, Heathcliff's destructive wrath is unleashed, and he restlessly wanders across the moors, haunted by Catherine's ghost. Just in the same way as Byron's Manfred turns into an insomniac after Astarte's death, Heathcliff can no longer find peace in his sleep: "I closed my eyes, she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child. And I must open my lids to see. And so I opened them a hundred times a night."[3] Nelly Dean describes Heathcliff as a person "going blind with loss of sleep", and in the end, she no longer recognises him: "His forehead, that I once thought so manly and I now think so diabolical, was shaded with a heavy cloud; his basilisk eyes were nearly quenched by sleeplessness".[4] Only in death, Heathcliff finds redemption: "she had disturbed me, night and day, through eighteen years – incessantly – remorselessly – till yesternight – and yesternight, I was tranquil. I dreamt I was sleeping the last sleep, by that sleeper, with my heart stopped, and my cheek frozen against hers."[5]

Nowadays, the Byronic hero has become synonymous with impossible and passionate love and the suffering it involves. In the chapter *La révolte des dandys* (*Dandies in Revolt*) of his book *L' homme révolté* (1951) (*The Rebel*), the French author and philosopher Albert Camus discusses Byron's dandyism, romanticism, and the Byronic hero. Camus's poignant definition clearly echoes the revolt of both Milton's Satan – who made from heaven a hell in his own mind – and Byron, who refuses to live a plain life but suffers instead. According to Camus, the Byronic hero, who is

> incapable of love, or only capable of impossible love, suffers from "le spleen". He is alone, languid, his condition exhausts him. If he wants to feel that he is alive, he has to live in a frantic exaltation of a short and devouring action. To love something we shall not see twice is to love fiery and painfully because we burn ourselves. We only live in that moment and for that moment, for "that union short but lively/ Of a tormented heart united with torment".[6]

[1] Ibid., Vol. I, Ch. IX, p. 81
[2] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 68
[3] Brontë, Emily, 1995: Vol. II, Ch. XV, p. 290
[4] Ibid., Vol. II, Ch. XX, p. 333 and Vol. II, Ch. III, p. 180
[5] Ibid., Vol. II, Ch. XV, p. 289
[6] Camus, Albert. *L'homme révolté*. Paris: Gallimard, 1951: p. 73; orig. French: «Le héros byronien, incapable d'amour, ou capable seulement d'un amour impossible, souffre de spleen. Il est seul, languide,

Capable of great suffering and guilty of an unnamed crime, the Byronic hero stands apart from society, revealing the futility of the moral values with which ordinary people protect themselves against evil. In Nietzsche's parlance, he is a nihilistic rebel who bears his mission with pride, a feeling he shares with the Promethean Man.

4.2.4 The Promethean Man

In his introduction to a collection of essays on Lord Byron, literary critic Harold Bloom points out that Byron's poetic persona Prometheus incarnated what concerned the poet deeply: the human ambition to stand head and shoulders above the rest through creation and political ambition.[1] In her character sketch of Byron, Annabella Milbanke noted how she had observed that her husband's imagination was "too exalted – and when he cannot do good on the vast scale which it presents, he does not descend to perceive the lesser opportunities of common existence."[2] Unlike Anabella Milbanke who understood Byron's anxiety but could not name it, Benita Eisler calls this deep frustration "the Promethean tragedy of Byron's moral ambitions".[3] Byron sensed that only intellectual freedom and artistic creativity could save him from plain mediocrity and a scattered life. On an imaginary scale of dandyism, Byron's Promethean Man was furthest removed from Brummell's pure dandyism because of its political commitment. Unlike Brummell who never showed much ambition whatsoever, Byron aspired to a political or military career rather than an artistic one. His education at Harrow College and Cambridge University, for example, was aimed at a political career. From the moment he inherited his aristocratic title, Byron "had visualised himself in the House of Lords, persuading his fellow peers with eloquence and style."[4] His failure to convince the Lords of his political stance in controversial issues, such as the Frame Bill or the Catholic Emancipation, dealt a severe blow to his political ambitions and was never mentioned in any of his letters or journals.[5]

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sa condition l'épuise. S'il veut se sentir vivre, il faut que ce soit dans la terrible exaltation d'une action brève et dévorante. Aimer ce qu'on verra deux fois, c'est aimer dans la flamme et le cri pour s'abîmer ensuite. On ne vit plus que dans et par l'instant, 'pour cette union courte mais vivante/ d'un cœur tourmenté uni à la tourmente'» My translation.

[1] Bloom, Harold. Introduction. *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986: p. 2

[2] Annabella Milbanke quoted in Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 474

[3] Eisler, Benita, 1999: p. 474

[4] Ibid., p. 83

[5] Ibid., p. 349

4.2.4.1 Promethean Fire

In Greek mythology, Prometheus, whose name stood for "forethought" and "looking or planning ahead" in ancient Greek, was a Titan who pitied human beings and therefore stole fire from the gods, gave it to Man, and taught him many useful arts and sciences.[1] In revenge, Zeus created Pandora, the most beautiful woman ever seen, and sent her to earth where her box, once opened, revealed the evils – "Old Age, Labour, Sickness, Insanity, Vice, and Passion" – that have plagued mankind ever since.[2] Prometheus, who had gone too far in sympathising with mortal beings, was chained to a mountain peak where an eagle pecked away at his liver, which was only to grow again at night.[3] This punishment was not only cruel but also had a symbolic meaning, for the ancient Greeks believed that the liver contained the sensual, passionate, and creative part of the human soul.[4] The Greek tragedian Æschylus (525 BC-456 BC) was the first to turn myth into literature, staging Prometheus as the hero of his play *Prometheus Bound* (ca. 430 BC): "I took from man expectancy from death . . . I planted blind hope in the heart of him . . . Moreover, I conferred the gift of fire . . . and [man] shall master arts thereby."[5] When Byron was a schoolboy at Harrow, he translated lines from Æschylus's tragedy, and the figure of Prometheus strongly influenced Byron's later work.[6] "Of the Prometheus of Æschylus I was passionately fond as a boy," Byron wrote in later years.[7] "It has always been so much in my head – that I can easily conceive its influence over all or anything that I have written."[8] Prometheus turned into a cardinal Romantic figure, for Percy Shelley composed "Prometheus Unbound" (1820) and Mary Shelley (1797-1851) added the subtitle "The Modern Prometheus" to the title of her famous novel, *Frankenstein* (1818).

4.2.4.2 The Promethean Man in Byron's Poetry

The poem "Prometheus" (1816) was a stirring ode to this mythological figure Byron composed in the disastrous year of 1816 in which his life abruptly changed course.[9] The motive behind Prometheus' giving the fire of the gods to mortal beings was his

[1] Van De Braak, Hans. "Promethean Passion." *Mythological Europe Revisited, Humanism and the Third Millennium III*. Ed. Fons Elders. Brussels: VUB UP, 2000: p. 35, 37, 38, 40
[2] Ibid., pp. 40-41
[3] Timmer, Maarten. *Van Anima tot Zeus*, Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, 2001: p. 608
[4] Ibid., p. 608
[5] Aeschylus. "Prometheus Bound." *Textkit Greek and Latin Learning Tools*. 2002-2005. 3 Jan. 2006 <http://www.textkit.com/files/prometheus_bound.pdf>.
[6] Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 798
[7] Ibid., pp. 798-99
[8] Ibid., pp. 798-99
[9] Ibid., p. 798

sympathy with their sufferings: "To render with thy precepts less/ The sum of human wretchedness,/ And strengthen Man with his own mind".[1] "What was thy pity's recompense?" Byron wondered. Not only visible tortures like "[t]he rock, the vulture, and the chain" were inflicted upon Prometheus but also an inner agony, a "suffocating sense of woe", which only proud men felt.[2] According to Byron, both Prometheus and mortals triumph over gods even in death because mortality offers them an escape from a miserable existence. "Thou [Prometheus] art a symbol and a sign," Byron muses,

> To Mortals of their fate and force;
> Like thee, Man is in part divine,
> A troubled stream from a pure source;
> And Man in portions can foresee
> His own funereal destiny . . . .[3]

Harold Bloom extensively discusses the theme of Promethean fire in the Byronic narrative poems *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Manfred*, in the poem "Prometheus", and the play *Cain* (1821). In the first and second cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron's Romantic hero, the "Promethean Man", appears for the first time and reaches his culmination as Childe Harold in the third canto and "as Manfred and Cain, and [is then] replaced by Don Juan," Harold Bloom points out.[4] The emergence of the "Promethean Man" in Byron's work is the poet's attempt to justify the theft of the creative fire from the gods because with its aid Byron the artist was able to create and to give sense to his shattered life.[5] He never forgot, though, "that precisely such creation intensifie[d] the original Promethean 'Godlike crime'."[6] Byron's "inspiration [was] both glorious and sinful, and his creation glorifie[d] human aspiration (and his own) and increase[d] human culpability," Harold Bloom concludes.[7]

At the beginning of the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron bids his infant daughter Ada farewell in such a way that the reader clearly perceives the poet's utter despair.[8] The reader soon finds out that the only way to alleviate his pain and to restore his offended soul is to create, overtly identifying his self-image as Promethean. Only creation and the ambition to transcend petty mediocrity can help to make Byron's shattered life bearable. Harold Bloom calls this conviction Byron's "therapeutic

[1] "Prometheus", ll. 36-38 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 395
[2] "Prometheus", ll. 6-10 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 394
[3] "Prometheus", ll. 44-50 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 395
[4] Bloom, Harold, 1986: p. 2
[5] Ibid., p. 7
[6] Ibid., p. 7
[7] Ibid., p. 8
[8] Ibid., p. 3

aesthetic idealism".[1] According to Harold Bloom, the narrator subsequently identifies himself with Byron's one-time idol Napoleon Bonaparte whose ardent and megalomaniac ambition to conquer Europe led him to his eventual downfall at Waterloo.[2] Besides Napoleon, "Conquerors and Kings", "Founders of sects and systems", and "Sophists, Bards, Statesmen" are Byron's kindred spirits, fellow "Promethean Men" whose aspirations to transform the world were misunderstood by the ignorant masses.[3] The narrator pauses then to muse about their grim fate, defining to us how the "Promethean Man" is torn apart inside.[4] Despite all despair, however, the narrator refuses to give up because man has at his disposal intellectual freedom and "aesthetic immortality" – "like the remember'd tone of a mute lyre".[5] In the narrator's opinion, the task of the artist is not an enviable one and more of a yoke than a bless because the Promethean "gift of creative energy" is illicit: "And if it be Prometheus stole from Heaven/ The fire which we endure, it was repaid/ By him to whom the energy was given."[6] Although Byron credits the artist with "Promethean energy", he is too sceptical to think that a timeless work of art is human because the force that inspired it is not human but divine.[7] Human creation raises false hopes that human beings can achieve immortality.[8]

Byron was one of the first poets in whom political ambition and art fused, and who had a profound influence on future political generations, especially on those of the

[1] Bloom, Harold, 1986: p. 3: " 'Tis to create, and in creating live/ A being more intense, that we endow/ With form our fancy, gaining as we give/ The life we image, even as I do now./ What am I? Nothing: but so art thou,/ Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,/ Invisible but gazing, as I glow/ Mix'd with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,/ And feeling still with thee in my crush'd feelings dearth." (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III, Stanza IV, ll. 46-54)

[2] Ibid., p. 4

[3] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III, Stanza XLIII, ll. 379-82 in Byron, George Gordon Noel, 1996: p. 428

[4] Bloom, Harold, 1986: p. 4: "But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell, /And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire/ And motion of the soul which will not dwell/ In its narrow being, but aspire/ Beyond the fitting medium of desire;/ And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,/ Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire/ Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,/ Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore." (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III, Stanza XLII, ll. 370-78)

[5] Bloom, Harold, 1983: p. 5: "My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,/ And my frame perish even in conquering pain;/ But there is that within me which shall tire/ Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;/ Something unearthly, which they deem not of,/ Like the remember'd tone of a mute lyre,/ Shall on their soften's spirits sink, and move/ In hearts all rocky now the late remorse of love." (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, Stanza CXXXVII, ll. 1125-33)

[6] Bloom, Harold, 1986: p. 6; *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, Stanza CLXIII, ll. 1459-61

[7] Bloom, Harold, 1986: p. 6

[8] Bloom, Harold, 1986: p. 6: "With an eternal glory – which, if made/ By human hands, is not of human thought;/ And Time himself hath hallow'd it, nor laid/ One ringlet in the dust – nor hath it caught/ A tinge of years, but breathes the flame with which 'twas/ wrought." (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, Stanza CLXIII, ll. 1463-68)

Continent.[1] In an unpublished poem, Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863) called Byron a "poète-conquérant".[2] It was Giuseppe Mazzini, though, who played a major role in the political myth-making of Lord Byron. "Never did 'the eternal spirit of the chainless mind' make a brighter apparition amongst us," Giuseppe Mazzini testified much in the style of Byron's poem "Prometheus".[3]

> He seems at times a transformation of that immortal Prometheus, of whom he had written so nobly; whose cry of agony, yet of futurity, sounded above the cradle of the European world; and whose grand and mysterious form, transfigured by time, reappears from age to age, between the entombment of one epoch and the accession of another; to wail forth the lament of genius, tortured by the presentiment of things it will not see realised in its time. Byron, too, had the "firm will" and the "deep sense"; he, too, made of his "death a victory".[4]

By the time the 1848 Revolution broke out in the streets of Paris, Byron's rebellious political legacy was still very much alive.[5] One of the many French youngsters who had taken his place at the barricades that year was Charles Baudelaire. In his essay *Le peintre de la vie moderne* he gave the most satisfactory definition of rebellious dandyism.

4.3 Charles Baudelaire: The Emergence of Rebellious Dandyism

Although the cultural Anglomania had faded somewhat by the time Charles Baudelaire appeared on the literary scene in the 1840s, the French poet's fascination with Byron's eventful life had not waned, and Byron's controversial work motivated Baudelaire to baffle the lethargic nineteenth-century French public even more. When the French author and critic Jules Janin (1804-74) questioned the artistic value of Byron's work and the poet's integrity, Baudelaire leapt to his defence: "Are you fully aware, Sir, that you speak disdainfully of Byron? He had your talents and defects; – a great abundance, a great flood, a great loquacity, – but also, that what makes a poet: a diabolical personality."[6] Baudelaire celebrated Byron' satanism because he considered Satan and Byron two kindred spirits who waged war on the middle class he despised so much.[7] In a letter to his mother, Baudelaire wrote that he did not want a "trustworthy and vulgar

[1] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 553
[2] "poet-conqueror"; Alfred de Vigny cited in McCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 546
[3] Giuseppe Mazzini cited in MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 553
[4] Ibid., p. 553
[5] Ibid., p. 553
[6] Baudelaire cited in Pichois, Claude, et Jean-Paul Avice, 2002: p. 92; orig. French: «Savez-vous bien, monsieur que vous parlez de Byron trop légèrement? Il avait votre qualité et votre défaut; – une grande abondance, un grand flot, une grande loquacité, – mais aussi, ce qui fait les poètes: une diabolique personnalité.» My translation.
[7] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 101

reputation; I want to crush people's mind, I want to bedazzle them in the same way as Byron, Balzac and Chateaubriand did."[1]

"There are two ways of becoming famous," Baudelaire pointed out in his *Salon de 1845*, "by piling up successes year after year or by bursting on the world in a clap of thunder. The second way is assuredly the more original."[2] More than a decade later his prophecy was fulfilled, when he published his masterpiece *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil) (1857). As a poet, Baudelaire cherished burning ambition:

> This book, whose title is *Fleurs du Mal*, – says everything, assumes, you shall see, a sinister and cold beauty; it has been made with passion and patience. Anyway, the proof of its good value is in the slander people spread about it. The book enrages people. I scorn all those fools, and I know that this collection, with its merits and defects, will pave its way in the memory of the lettered public, along with the best poetry of V[ictor] Hugo, T[héophile] Gautier, and even Byron.[3]

According to Jerome McGann, Baudelaire wrote *Les Fleurs du Mal* "under Byronic signs" for several reasons.[4] First of all, Baudelaire's poems "engage[d] an aesthetic of dandyism that Baudelaire studied in Byron's lyric work", which Baudelaire announced in the closing verses of the poem "Au lecteur" (To the Reader): "Hypocrite reader, – my likeness, – my brother!"[5] The relationship based on sincerity and trust between the poet and the reader that the Romantic poets had meticulously constructed was annihilated once more in Baudelaire's poem "Au lecteur".[6] "Poet and reader are no longer permitted to imagine themselves saved by imagination," Jerome McGann explains.[7] "Rather, it is simply to confront the reader with his damnation, to plunge him into the hell he has imagined he has *not* chosen and does not inhabit."[8] Poet and reader are both hypocrite and resemble each other, if they think that creation and imagination will save them from ruin. According to Jerome McGann, Byron created the myth of the "poète maudit"

[1] Baudelaire, Charles. *Correspondance*. Ed. Claude Pichois. Paris: Gallimard, 1973: p. 451; orig. French: «Je ne veux pas une réputation honnête et vulgaire; je veux écraser les esprits, les étonner, comme Byron, Balzac ou Chateaubriand.» My translation.
[2] Hemmings, F.W.J, 1982: p. 140
[3] Baudelaire, Charles, 1973: pp. 410-11; orig. French: «[C]e livre, dont le titre: *Fleurs du Mal*, – dit tout, est revêtu, vous le verrez, d'une beauté sinistre et froide; il a été fait avec fureur et patience. D'ailleurs, la preuve de sa valeur positive est dans tout le mal qu'on en dit. Le livre met les gens en fureur. Je me moque de tous ces imbéciles, et je sais que ce volume, avec ses qualités et ses défauts, fera son chemin dans la mémoire du public lettré, à côté des meilleures poésies de V. Hugo, de Th. Gautier et même de Byron.» My translation.
[4] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 94
[5] McGann, Jerome, 2002: pp. 93-94 and Baudelaire, Charles. "Au lecteur." Fleursdumal.org. 2006. 8 Apr. 2006 <http://fleursdumal.org/poem/099>; orig. French: «Hypocrite lecteur, – mon semblable – mon frère!»
[6] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 94
[7] Ibid., p. 94
[8] Ibid., p. 94

because "in Byron's texts the poet literally tells the tale of his damnation, including the damnation of his poetry."[1] Unlike the Romantics whose measure was sincerity, poets like Byron and Baudelaire based their poetry on theatricality: they were poets of "masks and poses" and "manipulator[s] of [their] own subjectivities", writing "in the (paradoxically) cold style of the dandaical poet, who pursues every range of feeling – pain and pleasure, benevolence and cruelty."[2] Baudelaire called this style "le poésie lyrique anonyme", the anonymous lyrical poetry.[3] Byron's poetry was written with such "physic coldness", moving from one extreme of emotional experience to another with "a kind of indifference of consciousness", that it seemed anonymous.[4]

Although Baudelaire dedicated "Le voyage", one of the poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, to his friend Maxime Du Camp (1822-94), the poem clearly echoes Byron's life and work: Promethean fire, wandering across continents and oceans, Byron's self-imposed exile after his divorce and numerous scandals, and his satiety. In a letter to his friend, Baudelaire writes about the poem: "If the systematically Byronic tone of this little poem displeases you, if, for example, my jokes about progress, or the fact that the Voyager admits that he has seen anything but commonplace, or anything else shocks you, please let me know; I will make something else for you with equal pleasure."[5] Here is one stanza from the poem that clearly alludes to Byron's life and work:

> We leave one morning, brains full of flame,
> Hearts full of malice and bitter desires,
> And we go and follow the rhythm of the waves,
> Rocking our infinite on the finite of the seas:
>
> Some happy to escape a tainted country . . . .[6]

Four other poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal* bear the title "Spleen", which was Baudelaire's poetic word for "ennui" or satiety.[7] In a neurotic letter to his mother, Baudelaire clearly linked his spleen with "a sense of sin and personal guilt" and with apathy:

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[1] Ibid., p. 103
[2] Ibid., pp. 94-95
[3] Baudelaire, Charles, *L'esprit et le style de M. Villemain* cited in McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 94
[4] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 161
[5] Baudelaire, Charles, 1973: pp. 554-55; orig. French: «Si le ton systématiquement byronien de ce petit poème vous déplaisait, si, par exemple, vous étiez choqué de mes plaisanteries contre le progrès, ou bien de ce que le Voyageur avoue de n'avoir vu que la banalité, ou enfin de n'importe quoi, dites-le-moi sans vous gêner; je ferai pour vous une autre chose avec tout autant de joie.» My translation.
[6] Wagner, Geoffrey. *Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire*. NY: Grove Press, 1974. *Fleursdumal.org*. 2006. 14 Apr. 2006 < http://fleursdumal.org/poem/231>; orig. French: «Un matin nous partons, le cerveau plein de flamme,/ Le cœur gros de rancune et de désirs amers,/ Et nous allons, suivant le rythme de la lame,/ Berçant notre infini sur le fini des mers:/ Les uns, joyeux de fuir une patrie infâme . . . .».
[7] Baudelaire, Charles. *Les fleurs du mal*. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1972: pp. 64-66

> At school I worked from time to time, I read, sometimes I cried, sometimes I fell into a rage; but at least I was alive, which is more than I am now, I'm lower than a snake's belly, and bad, bad, and no longer bad in a pleasant way. If only this painful insight into myself could force me to effort some radical change – but no, instead of that energetic spirit that used to impel me sometimes towards good, sometimes towards evil, there is nothing now but lassitude, glumness, and boredom.[1]

Baudelaire's spleen was not only sheer laziness, but it had also an existentialist character. In his biography of Baudelaire, F.W.J. Hemmings lists some features of Baudelaire's spleen: "the sense of irretrievable passage of time", the anxiety that "he would never achieve what was in him to achieve", "self-tormenting, sterile, sado-masochistic mood[s]", and "the conviction that he belonged to the damned."[2] Spleen was also evil in both senses of the word: "as one says an evil smell (affecting one disagreeably), and an evil thought (leading one to sin)."[3] According to Hemmings, this ambiguous meaning of the word "evil" inspired the title of Charles Baudelaire's famous collection of poetry.[4] "The flowers or poems demonstrated how the magic of poetry could turn evil (that is, sin, ugliness, cruelty, decrepitude) into a thing of beauty," Hemmings explains, "but the title also implied that the poetry was a kind of blossoming of evil."[5]

4.3.1 "His Eminence Monsignor Brummell": Baudelaire's Dandyism[6]

Unlike Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, Charles Baudelaire did not identify himself with the aristocrats, whom he considered "barbarians", nor did he with "the Bohemian artistic world in which he lived."[7] Théophile Gautier (1811-72) commented how Baudelaire seemed "a dandy lost in bohemia" who preserved "his rank and his manners and that cult of self which characterises the man imbued with the principles of Brummell."[8] "In the Bohemian world the very cleanliness of his linen, the presence of a rug on the floor of his apartment, the formality of his speech and the old-fashioned politeness of his manner were conscious anomalies," Ellen Moers points out in her study on nineteenth-century dandies, "they expressed his belief in an aristocracy of spirit, which dissociated itself equally from extravagant affectations and negligent disarray."[9] While Byron

[1] Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 28
[2] Ibid., p. 143
[3] Ibid., p. 143
[4] Ibid., p. 143
[5] Ibid., p. 143
[6] "His Eminence Monsignor Brummell" was Baudelaire's nickname in Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 272
[7] Ibid., p. 273
[8] Théophile Gautier quoted in Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 273
[9] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 273

inspired Baudelaire's poetry, "Beau" Brummell's ascetic dress style guided his everyday dandyism. He was as "clean as a cat" and "dressed as neatly as a secretary at the British embassy".[1] He led a bohemian life but was "a dandy to boot, a dandy above all, with the whole theory of elegance at his finger-tips."[2] Baudelaire dressed entirely in black because there was no reason to be cheerful in mid nineteenth-century France:

> What a miracle that black suit was, always the same, no matter what the season or the time of the day! The dress coat, so gracefully and generously cut, its lapels constantly fingered by a carefully manicured hand; the beautifully knotted cravat; the long waistcoat, fastened very high by the top button of the twelve [buttons] and negligently gaping lower down to reveal a fine white shirt with pleated cuffs, and the corkscrew trousers fitting into a pair of immaculately polished shoes.[3]

According to Gautier, Baudelaire tried to imitate the "phlegmatic deliberation of an English gentleman" in his speech.[4] "He talked in measured terms," Gautier remembered, and

> used, in conversation, the choicest vocabulary, and articulated certain words in a special way as though to emphasize them and as though he attributed to them some mysterious significance. One could almost hear the italics and capital letters in the modulations of his voice. As a conversationalist, he did not go in for witty remarks or verbal humour, but he looked at everything from a particular point of view which altered the perspective, as if taking a bird's eye view or worm's eye view of the world, and he picked up connections which no one else would have noticed and which struck everybody by their irrational rationality. The few gestures he made, never flinging his arms about, were slow and sober, for he hated the violent gesticulations of the southerner.[5]

Artificiality in dress and manner was not only a key component in Baudelaire's dandyism but had been a main feature of the dandy doctrine from the very beginning, that is to say, from Brummell's pure dandyism on. "Beau" Brummell, for example, grew so tired of the Romantic raving about the outstanding natural beauty of the Lake District that he responded indifferently to a visitor's question which lake was his favourite because he could not care less for natural beauty. Instead of replying himself, Brummell addressed his butler:

> "Robinson."
> "Sir."
> "Which of the lakes do I admire?"
> "Windermere, sir," replied that distinguished individual.
> "Ah yes, – Windermere," repeated Brummell, "so it is, – Windermere."[6]

[1] Baudelaire's school friend Le Vavasseur cited in Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 33
[2] Another school friend, Charles Cousin, quoted in Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 33
[3] Charles Cousin quoted in Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 33
[4] Gautier cited in Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 64
[5] Gautier cited in Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 64
[6] Captain William Jesse quoted in Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 18

Baudelaire's literary alter ego was the dandy Samuel Cramer in his short story *La Fanfarlo* (1847). Samuel Cramer was Baudelaire's physical mirror image: "Samuel's brow is noble, unlined, his eyes gleam like two drops of black coffee, his nose twitches in a teasing, sarcastic manner, his sensuous lips curl impudently, his square chin is borne arrogantly, and he wears his hair in a pretentiously Raphaelesque style."[1] A female admirer of Samuel Cramer describes his dandyism as "the English way of life".[2] "The exclusive care of his person and the dandyism he affected struck me first of all . . . I wanted to be like him, to be even more beautiful than him, that is to say, coquettish, coquettish for him, like he was for the world."[3] Samuel Cramer's female beauty, which is generally considered to be awkward for men, struck the observer as unnatural beauty that she had never seen in other men before. Baudelaire's dandyism was in fact "an unnatural ethic", designed to control and to suppress the "natural impulses" he so much abhorred.[4] Throughout his literary career, Baudelaire tried to formulate a definition of his dandyism, his personal ethic.

4.3.2 Towards a Precise Definition of Dandyism

4.3.2.1 The Intimate Journals: *Mon cœur mis à nu* and *Fusées*

On a bright summer morning in August 1867, Charles Baudelaire passed away peacefully in his mother's arms, listening to the fading tones of Wagner's music. A life dedicated to literature, balancing between "l'Ideal" and "le Spleen", had come to a close, and he left behind worldly worries of syphilis, debts, and excessive use of drugs. Among his scarce possessions, a pile of hand-written pages was found, on which hasty remarks, personal anecdotes, and intimate thoughts were scribbled. *Mon cœur mis à nu* (My Heart Laid Bare), written from 1859 till his death in 1867, and *Fusées* (Missiles), jotted down between 1855 and 1862, were posthumously published under the name of *Journaux Intimes* (Intimate Journals). Although one might wonder if those intimate writings were ever intended for publication, Baudelaire would certainly have rejoiced in their publication because through them he could directly, brutally, and unequivocally vent his spleen. "This book will be a book of revenge," he wrote to his mother in 1861.[5]

[1] Baudelaire, Charles. *La Fanfarlo* cited in Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 86
[2] Baudelaire, Charles. *La Fanfarlo* cited in Chenoun, Farid, 2003: p. 58
[3] Baudelaire, Charles. *La Fanfarlo* cited in Chenoun, Farid, 2003: p. 58; Orig. French: «la vie anglaise . . . Le soin exclusif de sa personne et le dandysme qu'il affecta me choquèrent tout d'abord; il est évident que je n'étais pas l'objet. Je voulais faire comme lui, être plus belle, c'est-á-dire coquette, coquette pour lui, comme il l'était pour le monde.» My translation.
[4] Hemmings, F.W.J., 1982: p. 100
[5] El Khiati, Azziz. "Charles Baudelaire." n.d. 12 Nov. 2005 <http://baudelaire.litteratura.com>; orig. French: «Ce livre sera un livre de rancune.» My translation.

Baudelaire described the advantages of haphazardly writing in the first entry of his *Mon cœur mis à nu*: "(I will be able to begin *Mon cœur mis à nu* wherever I want, and however I want, and continue writing from day to day, adapting myself to the inspiration of the day and of the circumstances, on condition that inspiration is creative.)" [1] In addition to *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, a study on the painter Constantin Guys (1802-92) in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1867, his art criticismss, and some letters to his mother, Baudelaire's intimate journals are essential to understand his personal interpretation of dandyism. On various occasions, Baudelaire, who had attentively read Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*, wondered what dandyism was, and how a dandy could be recognised. Two entries of *Mon cœur mis à nu* read as follows: "The eternal superiority of the Dandy. What is the Dandy?" and "Dandyism. What is the superior man?"[2] In about the same time of his writing these entries, he associated dandyism with the principle of concealment, a kind of defence mechanism, "[a way] to conceal almost everything I think".[3] In his intimate journals, Baudelaire summed up different elements of dandyism that eventually re-appeared in *Le dandy* (The Dandy), the tenth chapter of *Le peintre de la vie moderne*.

Baudelaire clearly linked dandyism to his ideal of beauty: on the one hand, the sad, seductive face of a beautiful woman with her cold, melancholic, weary, and resentful gaze. On the other, the most noticeable trait in the face of a young Adonis was his "revengeful insensibility", which was also the ideal of the dandy.[4] Another entry from Baudelaire's *Fusées* shows how his ideal of beauty coincided with the artificial pose of the dandy:

> The charming airs, those in which beauty consists, are:
> The blasé, The imperious,
> The bored, The capricious,
> The empty-headed, The naughty,
> The impudent, The ailing,

[1] *Mon cœur mis à nu*, 1 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 89; orig. French: «(Je peux commencer *Mon cœur mis à nu* n'importe où, n'importe comment, et le continuer au jour le jour, suivant l'inspiration du jour et de la circonstance, pourvu que l'inspiration soit vive.)» My translation.
[2] *Mon cœur mis à nu*, IX in Baudelaire, Charles, 1975: p. 408; orig. French: «Éternelle supériorité du Dandy. Qu'est-ce que le Dandy?» My translation; and *Mon cœur mis à nu*, XX in Baudelaire, Charles. *Œuvres complètes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975: p. 413; orig. French: «Dandysme. Qu'est-ce que l'homme supérieur?» My translation.
[3] Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: pp. 591-92; orig. French: «[une manière de] cacher presque tout ce que je pense» My translation.
[4] *Fusées*, 16 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p.7; orig. French: «insensibilité vengéresse» My translation.

The frigid, The feline – a blend of childishness, nonchalance and malice.[5]
The introspective,

In this treasure chest of poses, each dandy would have found his favourite air. "L'air blasé", for instance, would have suited Brummell perfectly, Byron always struck a pose of pure boredom, and Barbey d'Aurevilly's favourite was the ailing air. On Nadar's (1820-1910) photographs, Baudelaire was determined never to smile but to stare impudently to the camera. Another aspect of Baudelaire's ideal of beauty was elegance, which he inextricably associated with his mother. Being an only child – Baudelaire only had an elder half-brother from his father's previous marriage – he had a very intimate relationship with his mother, especially after his father had died in 1827.[2] His mother consequently remarried General Aupick, whose rigid and narrow-minded character sharply contrasted with the artistic-minded Joseph-François Baudelaire, Baudelaire's father.[3] During the revolution of 1848, Baudelaire was seen running through the streets with a gun in his hand, exhorting the crowd to shoot General Aupick.[4] His mother, on the contrary, had a large impact on his entire life. In January 1865, he wrote to her, "My principal duty, even my unique duty, would be to make you happy."[5] The mature Charles Baudelaire remembered how his mother's elegance dazzled his little boy's mind, and he associated her elegance with his dandyism. "The precocious taste of women," he remembered, "I used to confuse the scent of fur with the scent of a woman. I loved my mother for her elegance. So I was a precocious dandy."[6] Baudelaire also described dandiacal ideal of beauty as the"[w]orship of oneself . . ., in the viewpoint of health, hygiene, toilet, spiritual nobility and eloquence."[7] In Baudelaire's eyes, dandyism was an elitist brotherhood whose "excessive delight in clothes and material

[5] Feldman, Jessica, 1993: p. 104; orig. French:
Les airs charmants et qui font la beauté sont:
L'air blasé, L'air de domination,
L'air ennuyé, L'air de volonté,
L'air évaporé, L'air méchant,
L'air impudent, L'air malade,
L'air froid, L'air chat, enfantillage, nonchalance et malice mêlées.
L'air de regarder en dedans,
(*Fusées*, 17 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 76)
[2] El Khiati, Azziz. "Charles Baudelaire." n.d. 12 Nov. 2005 <http://baudelaire.litteratura.com>
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.; orig. French: «Mon principal devoir, mon unique même, serait de te rendre heureuse.» My translation.
[6] *Fusées*, 18 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 78; orig. French: «Je confondais l'odeur de la fourrure avec l'odeur de la femme. J'aimais ma mère pour son élégance. J'étais donc un dandy précoce.» My translation.
[7] *Fusées*, 17 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 76; orig. French: «[d]u culte de soi-même . . ., au point de vue de la santé, de l'hygiène, de la toilette, de la noblesse spirituelle et de l'éloquence» My translation.

elegance" symbolised their aristocratic superiority. [1] In *Mon cœur mis à nu*, Baudelaire determined a strict military or monastic code, which every dandy had to obey: "The Dandy must aspire to be perpetually sublime; he must live and sleep in front of a mirror".[2] Baudelaire's dandyism was a new kind of asceticism or stoicism that had been deemed lost. In a rule, the dandy devoted himself and his entire life to the construction of his own self through sublime style and self-worship. His own mirror-image taught him never to show emotion and to avoid every spontaneous or natural, hence vulgar behaviour. The concept of spiritual nobility, rather than of hereditary nobility, was the basic building unit of Baudelaire's definition of dandyism. In Baudelaire's viewpoint, the dandy was the founder of a new aristocracy that was unshakeable and rose far above the perishable hereditary peerage, for it was based on "the best in human pride, of that need, too rare in the modern generation, to combat and destroy triviality", on a "doctrine of elegance and originality", and on "spiritualism and stoicism".[3]

Baudelaire's dandyism was also the result of his deep pessimism about the era in which he was born. He always sensed that he had been born too late because modern times were the remnants of a once high civilisation.[4] In mid nineteenth-century France, the middle class had defeated the aristocracy as a ruling class and finally emerged as the dominant class, not only economically but also politically and ideologically. This new powerful class had made its fortune through industry and trade and was demanding political power that corresponded to the amount of taxes it paid. The nineteenth-century revolutions of 1830 and 1848 disrupted the traditional society, and no restoration, comparable to the one after the French Revolution in 1789, was able to cope with those eruptions of street riots. In a capitalist society, power was no longer based on land but on the large profits, which were drawn from continuous wars, overseas trade, mills, and speculation. The burgeoning middle class firmly believed in technological progress as a way to modernise society. Gaslights in the streets chased darkness away, steamers and trains made people physically and socially mobile, and time was no longer measured by

[1] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles. *Critique d'art suivi de Critique musicale*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976: p. 370; orig. French: «goût immodéré de la toilette et de l'élégance matérielle» My translation.
[2] *Mon cœur mis à nu*, 5 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 90; orig. French: «Le dandy doit aspirer à être sublime sans interruption; il doit vivre et dormir devant un miroir.» My translation.
[3] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 371; orig. French: «le meilleur de l'orgueil humain, de ce besoin trop rare chez eux d'aujourd'hui de combattre et détruire la trivialité» My translation; *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 371; orig. French: «doctrine de l'élégance et de l'originalité» My translation; *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 370; orig. French: «spiritualisme et stoïcisme». My translation.
[4] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p.371

the crowing of the cock but by the shrill factory whistle and thumping steam engines. Barbey d'Aurevilly, for example, hated trains because they "levelled out the mind in the same way as in which the railroad construction had levelled out the landscape."[1] The atmosphere in French society was then dominated by social utilitarianism, a new British form of liberalism that had crossed the Channel. In 1789, the same year of the French Revolution, the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham bended over his desk to write down his "principle of utility" that would rule social life for the next century. He argued that, "just as the individual wanted to maximise pleasure and to minimise pain, so the business of state should be to facilitate 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'."[2] Charles Baudelaire absolutely loathed utility, and so he wrote in *Mon cœur mis à nu*: "To be a utile man has always seemed to me something quite hideous," and "A Dandy does anything. Do you think that a Dandy would ever address the rabble, except to scoff at it?"[3] Reacting against the middle class that had economically acquired its capital, Baudelaire argued that money was "indispensable to those who [made] an exclusive cult of their passions", but that the dandy ignored the existence of money and ascribed it to be one of the mob's obsessions.[4] Alex de Jonge, one of Baudelaire's biographers, concisely explains Baudelaire's discontent with his age:

> Baudelaire [was] the product of an age which had witnessed the collapse of established guidelines to truth and morality. It was a period when the leadership traditionally provided by monarchy, aristocracy and the church was spiritually bankrupt. Art had begun to take over the functions these elements had once fulfilled, it became both [a] religion and political creed.[5]

In the eyes of Charles Baudelaire, progress was the doctrine of lazy people, more precisely of Belgians and Americans.[6] Compared to France, Belgium was a fairly new nation because it had only gained its independence in 1830. Debt-ridden, consumed with the first symptoms of syphilis and with the effects of excessive drug abuse, Baudelaire fled Paris in 1864 and moved into a Brussels hotel. He vented all his spleen and disgust of his new home country in his pamphlet *Pauvre Belgique!* (1864) and later

[1] Barbey d'Aurevilly quoted in Van Nieuwenborgh, Marcel. "De stille kracht van de gekleurde das, Den Haag eert "de dandy" met een tentoonstelling." *De Standaard* 9 and 10 Aug. 1997.
[2] Gilmour, Robin, 1993: p. 152
[3] *Mon cœur mis à nu*, 9 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 93; orig. French: «Être un homme utile m'a paru toujours quelque chose de bien hideux.» My translation; *Mon cœur mis à nu,* 22 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 97; orig. French: «Un Dandy ne fait rien. Vous figurez-vous un Dandy parlant au peuple, excepté pour le bafouer?» My translation.
[4] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 370; orig. French: «indispensable aux gens qui se font une culte de leurs passions» My translation.
[5] Alex de Jonge cited in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 60
[6] *Mon cœur mis à nu,* 15 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 93

in the unpublished *Amoenitates Belgicae*.[1] In an article on the American writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), Baudelaire reproached the Americans for being "optimistic creature[s], conceited because of [their] industrial force".[2] Baudelaire's pessimistic worldview and disbelief in any progress are striking in one of the entries of his *Fusées*: "The world is coming to its end. The only reason why it might continue is because it exists . . . Because, supposing that it would continue to exist materially, would that be an existence, worthy of that name and of an entry in the historical dictionary."[3] Baudelaire inherited this "prophetic pessimism" of Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), an eighteenth-century contra-revolutionary arch-catholic who, for example, recommended the Pope as leader of the world.[4] In Baudelaire's view, however, not the Pope but the dandy, the leader of a new aristocratic class based on merits rather than on money or aristocratic titles, could rule the world and save it from its downfall: "Human imagination can effortlessly conceive republics or other community nations [nations composed of several communities], worthy of some glory, only if they are governed by sacred men, by certain aristocrats". [5] Baudelaire received his literary and intellectual legacy not only from de Maistre but also from Chateaubriand and Poe, whose work he translated into French. In *Fusées*, Baudelaire concluded that it were de Maistre and Edgar Allan Poe who had taught him the art of reasoning.[6] Dandyism had been their way of reasoning well away from all kinds of blind obedience to the dominant thought of their era. Baudelaire had inherited their legacy of "aristocratic thought" that challenged the humanitarian utopias that had become commonplace in Baudelaire's age, the eighteenth-century unquestioning belief in determinism, and the profound influence of Voltaire (1694-1778), the great thinker of the Enlightenment and French Revolution, whom Baudelaire – under the influence of de Maistre –condemned as the archenemy of poetry.[7]

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[1] El Khiati, Azziz. "Charles Baudelaire." n.d. 12 Nov. 2005 <http://baudelaire.litteratura.com>.
[2] Baudelaire, Charles. *L'art romantique: littérature et musique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1968: pp. 114-15
[3] *Fusées*, 22 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 82; Orig. French: «Le monde va finir. La seule raison pour laquelle il pourrait durer, ce qu'il existe . . . Car, en supposant qu'il continuât à exister matériellement, serait-ce une existence digne de ce nom et du dictionnaire historique.» My translation.
[4] Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: pp. 591-92 and "Joseph de Maistre." *L'encyclopédie de L'Agora*. 21 Oct. 2005. 10 Nov. 2005 <http://agora.qc.ca/mot.nsf/Dossiers/Joseph_de_Maistre>.
[5] *Fusées*, 22 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 83; Orig. French: «L'imagination humaine peut concevoir, sans trop de peine, des républiques ou autres états communautaires, dignes de quelque gloire, s'ils sont dirigés par des hommes sacrés, par des certains aristocrates» My translation.
[6] Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 86; Orig. French: «De Maistre et Edgar Allan Poe m'ont appris à raisonner.» My translation.
[7] Pichois, Claude, et Jean-Paul Avice, 2002: p. 286

Dandyism was essentially Baudelaire's poetic quest against mediocrity and egalitarianism of his time.[1] On various occasions, Baudelaire wanted to write an extensive study on literary dandyism with Chateaubriand, de Maistre, and Barbey d'Aurevilly as prototypical dandies in the way Barbey d'Aurevilly had used George Brummell to commit his interpretation of dandyism to paper.[2] The project was called "Dandysme littéraire" (Literary Dandyism) or "Le Dandysme dans les lettres" (Dandyism in Literature), but it was cancelled until Baudelaire found his dandy prototype in the painter Constantin Guys.[3] Baudelaire was a great admirer of Barbey d'Aurevilly's literary work and especially of the latter's essay on Brummell's dandyism. In his art criticism *Salon de 1846*, Baudelaire drew his readership's attention to the remarkable study on dandyism: "Rereading the book of Dandyism, by Mr Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, the reader will clearly see that dandyism is something modern and partakes of totally new causes."[4]

4.3.2.2 Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe

When Baudelaire was twenty-six, he discovered the work of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe and instantly knew that he had found a kindred spirit.[5] Consequently, he discussed Poe's work in several art criticisms and translated the books of his idol.[6] In *Notes Nouvelles sur Edgar Poe* (1857) (New Notes on Edgar Poe), Baudelaire defended the "savage" whom "Chateaubriand [had] found in the woods and on the shores of the new world."[7] The idea that North American "savages" were the descendants of an ancient society that had fallen into ruin reinforced his conviction that the European civilisation had been magnificent once, but that he was unfortunately living in a time of decadence, and that only debris rested of what had once been great. Nevertheless, there was one spark of hope: the dandy. "What kind of faults do we dare to reproach the savage?" Baudelaire indignantly asked.

> He has the priest, he has the wizard, he has the medicine man. What do I say? He has the Dandy, supreme incarnation of the idea of beauty transposed into material life, the one who dictates conventions and rules manners. His clothes, his fineries,

[1] Ibid., p. 286
[2] Ibid., p. 50
[3] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 369, note 2
[4] *Salon de 1846* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 154; orig. French: «En relisant, le livre du Dandysme, par M. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, le lecteur verra clairement que le dandysme est une chose moderne et qui tient à des causes tout à fait nouvelles.» My translation.
[5] El Khiati, Azziz. "Charles Baudelaire." n.d. 12 Nov. 2005 <http://baudelaire.litteratura.com>.
[6] Ibid.
[7] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 369

> his arms, his pipe show us an inventive mind that has abandoned us a long time ago.[1]

Baudelaire had taken this imagery from an article by Barbey d'Aurevilly, for the latter considered it to be a most sad philosophical outcry that "summarises everything I wanted to say about this subject: 'Civilised people who incessantly cast the stone at savages, ere long you will no longer even deserve to be idolatrous!'."[2] This imagery also appears in Baudelaire's *Fusées* where he wrote: "Civilised people, who are always talking foolishly about *savages* and *barbarians*, ere long, as d'Aurevilly says, you will be *no longer worth it to be idolised*."[3] The binary opposition between savagery and civilisation was also a key element in Baudelaire's definition of dandyism. Having gathered enough elements, Baudelaire was ready to formulate the most plausible definition of dandyism in *Le peintre de la vie moderne*.

4.3.2.3 Le peintre de la vie moderne

4.3.2.3.1 "The Dandy"

Whereas Barbey d'Aurevilly inextricably connected dandyism with the historical figure of "Beau" Brummell and with the historical era of the British Regency, Baudelaire interiorised dandyism and stripped it of all historical and geographical bounds.

From a historical point of view, dandyism went a long way back because Caesar (100-44 BC), Catiline (108 BC?-62 BC), and Alcibiades (ca. 450 BC-404 BC) provided Baudelaire with excellent pioneers of dandyism in the classical antiquity. Charles Baudelaire visited the Salon of 1859 at the Parisian Palace of Fine Arts, where he discovered a contemporary painting of Julius Caesar, whom he praised in his art criticism *Salon de 1859*:

> Julius Caesar! What a sunset splendour this name sheds upon the imagination! If ever a man on earth has resembled a God, it was Caesar. Powerful and charming, courageous, learned and generous! He had all power, all glory, and all elegance!

[1] Baudelaire, Charles, 1968: p. 181; orig. French: «Quelle lacune oserons-nous lui [l'homme sauvage] reprocher? Il a le prêtre, il a le sorcier, et le médecin. Que dis-je? Il a le Dandy, suprême incarnation de l'idée du beau transportée dans la vie matérielle, celui qui dicte la forme et règle les manières. Ses vêtements, ses parures, ses armes, son calumet, témoignent d'une faculté inventive qui nous a longtemps désertés.» My translation.

[2] Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly cited in Pichois, Claude, et Jean-Paul Avice, 2002: p. 50; orig. French: «qui résume tout ce que je voudrais dire à ce sujet: 'Peuples civilisés qui jetez sans cesse la pierre aux sauvages, bientôt vous ne mériterez même plus d'être idolâtres!'» My translation.

[3] *Fusées*, 22 in Baudelaire, Charles, 1986: p. 80; orig. French: «Peuples civilisées, qui parlez toujours sottement de *sauvages* et de *barbares*, bientôt, comme dit d'Aurevilly, vous ne vaudrez *même plus assez pour être idolâtres*.» My translation.

> [I]t is by no means unwise to recall that the dictator took as much care of his person as the most refined dandy.[1]

In his opinion, Julius Caesar possessed all defining characteristics of a dandy. As a dictator he was powerful, yet at the same time, seductive, brave, wise, generous to his legions, glorious in battles against savages, and above all, he combined all these virtues with elegance. Being a scion of a prominent and wealthy Athenian family and boasting bravery, eloquence, and elegance, Alcibiades was fitted by nature to become Athens's statesman.[2] The young Adonis also had a very capricious spirit; one day he appointed himself as the protector of the Athenian democracy, but the following day, he would sell off Athens to the highest bidder.[3] "Alcibiades is dandylike in all his personal characteristics," explains Jessica Feldman, for

> [h]e is aristocratic, wealthy, elegant, brave, skilled in oratory. More striking are his chameleonic powers of self-demonstration. Protector of the Athenian democracy, he is also its nemesis, ready to deceive Athens for personal gain or even for personal entertainment. He is insolent, given to his outrageous behaviour, and dissolute, yet the wisest man in Athens loves him. A hoaxer on grand scale, he is in the end – whatever his form, whatever his rhetoric – a challenger of hierarchies and systems. Of the long list of accusations lodged against him in his lifetime, the most serious involved his breaking of images and profaning of mysteries.[4]

Charles Baudelaire sympathised with the cruel fate that befell Catiline. The latter's reputation was blackened in *The Catiline Orations* by Cicero (106-43 BC) who accused him of conspiracy. Baudelaire felt sympathy for Catiline because he was a member of a decaying patrician family whose fortune he was determined to revive. Charles Baudelaire concluded that dandyism was not historically determined, but that it was a pose of all times.

From a geographical and an anthropological point of view, dandyism was a wide-spread phenomenon because Chateaubriand had found dandies among the "savages" of the New World who peacefully lived in the woods and on the shores of the lakes. These North American tribes were the remnants of lost civilisations that had been grand once

[1] *Salon de 1859* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: pp. 301-302; orig. French: «Jules César! quelle splendeur de soleil couché le nom de cet homme jette dans l'imagination! Si jamais homme sur la terre a ressemblé à la Divinité, ce fût César. Puissant et séduisant! brave, savant et généreux! Toutes les forces, toutes les gloires et toutes les élégances! [I]l n'est pas puéril, d'ailleurs, de rappeler que le dictateur avait autant de soin de sa personne qu'un dandy raffiné.» My translation.
[2] Feldman, Jessica, 1993: p. 4
[3] Ibid., p. 4
[4] Ibid., p. 4

but had unfortunately fallen into decay and decadence. Therefore, "dandyism is the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages".[1]

From a political point of view, dandyism was "an institution outside the law, with a rigorous code of law by which all its subjects are strictly bound".[2] The dandy was a kind of "Übermensch" – in Nietzsche's words – or a Byronic hero who lonely moved along the cracks in the polished surface of nineteenth-century society, and who crossed the borders between different genders, times and peoples. Therefore, dandyism was timeless and universal. Although the dandy might have been an outlaw, he was certainly not a revolutionary who broke rules, but he defied existing rules in order to establish ascetic regulations of his own. Dandies tailored tough and therefore almost unachievable rules concerning their facial expression, their pose, their appeal to the other, their taste in art, fashion and music, their slang, their elegance, their sexuality, their relationships, their outlook on life, and their conception of the world. Dandyism was a gravely serious matter; it was a matter of life and death. Some dandies chose for life and repudiated dandyism, while others swore by dandyism and died an untimely death. Dandies were reunited in a "dandihood" that Baudelaire called "a kind of religion" and a "doctrine of elegance and originality, which imposes upon its ambitious and humble sectarians . . . the terrible precept: *Perinde ac cadaver*!"[3] "Perinde ac cadaver!" is Latin for "be like a corpse".[4] According to Baudelaire, the "Dandiacal Sectarians" – in Thomas Carlyle's words – vowed unquestioning self-abnegation, even if they faced a gruesome fate. In addition to the precept of "Perinde ac cadaver!", Baudelaire added three more rules.

First of all, the dandy was expected to create a personal form of originality, both in style, conversational wit, and intelligence. Baudelaire hastened in adding that the

[1] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 371; orig. French: "[l]e dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroïsme dans les décadences, les débris de grandes civilisations disparues.» My translation.
[2] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 369; orig. French: «une institution en dehors des lois, à des lois rigoureuses auxquelles son strictement soumis tous les sujets . . . .» My translation.
[3] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 371; orig. French: «doctrine de l'élégance et de l'originalité , qui impose . . . à ses ambitieux et humbles sectaires . . . la terrible formule: *Perinde ac cadaver!*» My translation.
[4] "Perinde ac cadaver" was the motto of the strict monastic order of Jesuits founded by Ignatius de Loyola in the sixteenth century, who demanded loyal and silent obedience and self-abnegation of his disciples. Nowadays, the meaning of this phrase has broadened and refers to all unquestioning obedience to authority. Definition based on Bourdet, Claude. "Qui étions-nous?" *Le Monde.Fr*. 30 Sep. 2005. 14 Nov. 2005 <http://lucky.blog.lemonde.fr/lucky/2005/09>.

creation of originality had to fit within the external limits of social conventions.[1] He considered originality the antipode of the mediocrity and the triviality that had pervaded the world in the nineteenth century. Although dandies were prepared to risk their lives in opposing and destroying triviality, Baudelaire knew that fighting for Beauty was a lost cause. In *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, he sighed that dandyism was "a setting sun; like the declining star, it is magnificent, without heat and full of melancholy."[2] The flicker of dandyism was doomed to fade in France where "the rising tide of democracy" had invaded society and had swept ancient aristocratic mores.[3]

Secondly, Baudelaire considered dandyism a cult of the ego that survived the search of happiness in others, especially in unreliable women, and that even permitted the dandy to escape all illusions inextricably connected with mortal life.[4] This rule reflects Baudelaire's profound pessimism and limited nineteenth-century world view.

Finally, the dandy had to surprise the others, without being caught in the act of self-inspection or without exhibiting his inner self.[5] Since dandyism was a lonely and ascetic existence, it came close to spiritualism and stoicism.

In a nutshell, Baudelaire saw dandyism as a recurring symptom of deeper political changes. The dandyism of Native American tribes was a proof that there had once been a great civilisation. The cycle of glory and downfall had been eternally and universally repeated, and it was only natural that French society had fallen prey to mediocrity. At the same time, dandyism united a group of new aristocrats whose power and allure were based on gifts that were imperishable in contrast to the traditional forms of governing society that were falling apart and had not yet been replaced by new political systems.

> Dandyism appears especially in those periods of transition when democracy has not yet become all-powerful, and when aristocracy is only partially weakened and discredited. In the confusion of such times, a certain number of men, not belonging to any social class, disenchanted and leisured, but all of them richly endowed with native energy, all the more difficult to break down because it is established on the most precious, the most indestructible faculties, on the divine gifts that neither work nor money can give.[6]

[1] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 370
[2] Ibid., p. 372; orig. French: «un soleil couchant; comme l'astre qui décline, il est superbe, sans chaleur et plein de mélancolie» My translation.
[3] Ibid. p. 372
[4] Ibid., p. 370
[5] Ibid., p. 370
[6] Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 371; Orig. French: «Le dandysme apparaît surtout aux époques transitoires où la démocratie n'est pas encore toute-puissante, où l'aristocratie n'est que partiellement chancelante et avilie. Dans le trouble des ces époques quelques hommes déclassés, dégoûtés, désœuvrés, mais tous riches de force native, peuvent concevoir le projet de fonder une espèce nouvelle d'aristocratie, d'autant

In his *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, Charles Baudelaire not only set the tone of dandyism, but he also defined Decadentism, the literary and artistic movement that dominated the cultural life in fin-de-siècle Europe.

plus difficile à rompre qu'elle sera basée sur les facultés les plus précieuses, les plus indestructibles, et sur les dons célestes que le travail et l'argent ne peuvent pas conférer». My translation.

4.3.2.3.2 "In Praise of Cosmetics"

"Éloge du Maquillage" (In Praise of Cosmetics) is a section of *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in which Baudelaire exposed his definition of beauty and in doing so, laid the foundation for the Decadent Movement both in France and England. Unlike his contemporaries, Baudelaire rejected "Nature" because it "teaches us nothing, or practically nothing", and "Nature can counsel nothing but crime . . . Crime . . . is natural by origin."[1] In Baudelaire's view, beauty was not natural but artificial – "the product of some art" – everything that is "the result of reason and calculation."[2] "External finery", such as fashion or cosmetics, is "one of the signs of the primitive nobility of the human soul" which could be still found in the savage or the innocent child.[3] Baudelaire considered fashion "a permanent and repeated attempt at the reformation of nature", even though "artifice cannot lend charm to ugliness and can only serve beauty."[4] "Nature is not to be copied, but to be exalted by art," the dandiacal narrator of *Pelham* spelled out to dandies who aspired to become aristocrats of taste, rather than of money or land.[5] Oscar Wilde, for his part, taught young men that "The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible", that their "really well-made buttonhole" was "the only link between Art and Nature", and that they "should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art."[6] In a way, Charles Baudelaire acted as an intermediary between two different eras and schools, that is to say, between the Regency personified in the figure of "Beau" Brummell and the fashionable novels he inspired and the Decadent aestheticism of fin-de-siècle England. Nineteenth-century dandyism came full circle.

[1] Pine, Richard, 1983: p. 21; orig. French: «la nature n'enseigne rien, ou presque rien», «la nature ne peut conseiller que le crime . . . Le crime . . . est originellement naturel» (*Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 375)
[2] *Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 375; orig. French: «le produit d'un art», «le résultat de la raison et du calcul» My translation.
[3] Pine, Richard, 1983: p. 21; orig. French: «la parure . . .un des signes de la noblesse primitive de l'âme humaine.» (*Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 375)
[4] Ibid., p. 22; orig. French: «un essai permanent et successif de réformation de la nature», «l'artifice n'embellissait pas la laideur et ne pouvait que servir que la beauté.» (*Le peintre de la vie moderne* in Baudelaire, Charles, 1976: p. 377)
[5] Bulwer-Lytton, Edward, *Pelham* cited in Pine, Richard, 1983: p. 70
[6] Wilde, Oscar. "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young." *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1987: p. 1113-14

5. Epilogue: The Decadence of Dandyism in Fin-de-Siècle England

The closing years of the nineteenth century elapsed in much the same way as the opening years so many years before. In her study of the dandy, Ellen Moers points out that "Victorian values and vitality" crumbled away in the same way as the eighteenth-century ideals once had to make place for those of the Regency.[1] At the end of the nineteenth century, England, for instance, saw its art, literature, and attitudes once more influenced by the Continent, and the habits of the Regency revived.[2] The British journalist, writer and publisher Holbrook Jackson (1874-1948) called the final decade of the nineteenth century the era of "New Dandyism".[3] Much to the disapproval of his mother Queen Victoria (1819-1901), Edward, the Prince of Wales (1841-1910), entertained high society in the lavish tradition of his great-uncle, George IV.[4] Prince Edward's aristocratic guests dressed in an elegant way and behaved irresponsibly.[5] A frequent guest to Prince Edward's court was Oscar Wilde, the most famous man of the decade, a successful playwright, an aesthete, and a dandy. In his biography *The Importance of Being Oscar* (1963), Micheál mac Liammóir calls Wilde five times a dandy: "dandy of dress, dandy of speech, dandy of manner, dandy of wit, dandy even of ideas and intellect".[6] In fact, Oscar Wilde was not only the last dandy of the nineteenth century and the most famous dandy today, but he was also a complete dandy in whom "thought, appearance and behaviour" of the preceding dandies harmonised with each other, "rescuing the dandy from accusations of mindless foppishness and re-asserting the intellectual discipline which distinguishes the heraldic from the purely sartorial."[7] To which extent did nineteenth-century dandies like "Beau" Brummell, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, Lord Byron, and Charles Baudelaire influence Oscar Wilde's "complete dandyism"?

The pure Regency dandy, "Beau" Brummell, influenced Oscar Wilde only in an indirect way because the fashionable novels he inspired exerted a strong influence on the playwright. As a child, for example, Oscar Wilde could not stand the realism in Charles Dickens's novels but was fond of the glitter and glamour of Regency London and the

[1] Moers, Ellen, 1960: p. 287
[2] Ibid., p. 288
[3] Ibid., p. 288
[4] Ibid., p. 288
[5] Ibid., p. 288
[6] Micheál mac Liammóir, *The Importance of Being Oscar* cited in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 15
[7] Ibid., p. 15

aristocratic life, depicted in the fashionable novels by Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Benjamin Disraeli.[1] As a reviewer for the magazine *Woman's World*, Oscar Wilde ran Lady Munster's *Dorinda*, one of the many fin-de-siècle fashionable novels, into the ground: "The fashionable and brilliant young dandies, in whom Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton took such delight, have been entirely wiped out as heroes of fiction by hard-working curates in the East End."[2] With "hard-working curates in the East End", Oscar Wilde probably alluded to Charles Dickens who famously described the bad living conditions in the East End of London to his middle-class readers and criticised the Regency dandy in his novels, for example, in *Hard Times* (1854). According to Richard Pine, Wilde's "own heroes – Dorian Gray, Lord Goring, Thomas Wainwright – superseded the 'fashionable and brilliant' qualities of Pelham and Vivian Grey in making a *philosophy* – that is a dandyism of *mind* – out of the extrovert sense of *morals*."[3] In the same way as Brummell, Disraeli, and Bulwer-Lytton had made their way to fame before him, Oscar Wilde resolved to become famous and to draw the attention of the high society with his clothes and wit.[4] His epigrammatic style of wit and his sense of paradoxical humour – his throw-away remark "To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance" is one of the many famous witticisms by Oscar Wilde – baffled and amazed his aristocratic public that was as bored as "Beau" Brummell's had been in the Regency.[5]

Both Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly and Oscar Wilde preferred a flamboyant sartorial style to the ascetic and austere dress sense that Brummell and Baudelaire had favoured. Another link between Barbey d'Aurevilly and Wilde can only been found in literature, more precisely in the English edition of Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Du dandyism et de George Brummell* that was published in 1897, the year in which Wilde left Reading gaol as a broken man and went into self-imposed exile.[6] In the preface of the 1897 English edition, the translator Douglas Ainslie's meticulous comment on the French writer and his work is drenched in the intellectual legacy of the great aesthetes Walter Pater (1839-94), William Morris (1834-96), John Ruskin (1819-1900), and Oscar Wilde.[7] Barbey d'Aurevilly's dandy, for example, was characterised by "sharp wit . . . a keen sense of

[1] Ellman, Richard, 1987: p. 25
[2] Oscar Wilde cited in Pine, Ricard, 1988: p. 70
[3] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 70
[4] Moers, Ellen, 1960, p. 288
[5] Ibid., p. 288
[6] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 18 and Ellman, Richard, 1987: p. 495
[7] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 18

social perspective . . . that rare faculty of classifying at a glance the members of a company . . . wide knowledge of human nature", and in his approach to "objets d'arts", the dandy "will behold them, as it were, in the palm of his hand, and by so doing, add to them a particular lustre, an elegance all his own. Dandyism may be taken as the art of selection, practised by a lover of the visible world".[1] This description does not befit neither "Beau" Brmmell nor Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly but is an ode from Ainslie to the shining example of the "critic-as-artist", Oscar Wilde.[2]

When Oscar Wilde was at Oxford, he was so fond of Byron and his poetry that he modelled his poem "Ravenna" (1878) after *Child Harold's Pilgrimage* and Byron's rebellious lifestyle, and received the 1878 Newdigate Prize for the poem.[3] Wilde saw Byron as "a second Anthony,/ Who of the world another Actium made".[4] With "Actium" Oscar Wilde referred to the Gulf of Actium in Greece where the naval battle between Mark Anthony and Octavian was fought.[5] It is significant, however, that Oscar Wilde associated Byron with Anthony because the latter suffered a crushing defeat in spite of his gigantic warships.[6] In Oscar Wilde's eyes, Byron was a dashing hero with the best intentions, but who reached nothing in the end. Much in the same way as portraits had been a way for Byron to present himself to the public, the series of photographs taken by Napoleon Sarony (1821-96) of Oscar Wilde during his 1882 American lecture tour shows the aesthete theatrically posing in "knee breeches and black velvet jacket" in front of a "fur rug placed on an Eastern carpet."[7] Oscar Wilde also inherited Byron's dramatic sense of exaggeration, which is obvious in an account of his American success: "I am torn in bits by Society. Immense receptions, wonderful dinners, crowds waiting for my carriage. I wave a gloved hand and an ivory cane and they cheer . . . Rooms are hung with white lilies for me everywhere."[8] In the defiant style of Byron, Wilde was accompanied by a black servant – "who is my slave" – and prided himself on having behaved "*dreadfully*" during sittings to artists.[9] In the same way as Byron had used masks to manipulate his audience and to introduce dandyism in

[1] Douglas Ainslie quoted in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 18
[2] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 18
[3] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 564
[4] Oscar Wilde's "Ravenna" cited in MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 565
[5] "Battle of Actium." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 10 Apr. 2006. 2 May 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/battle_of_Actium>.
[6] Ibid.
[7] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 565
[8] Oscar Wilde quoted in MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 565
[9] "I give sittings to artists, and generally behave as I always have behaved – *dreadfully*." quoted in MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 565

his poetry, Oscar Wilde concealed his true intentions behind carefully crafted masks both in real life and in his work. The central themes in Wilde's most famous play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, first performed in 1895, are confusion, mistaken identity, eventual recognition and self-knowledge, and most importantly, truth or the absence of it. Wilde built in traps, masks and mirror images and made clever use of dual characters. In his essay *The Truth of Masks* (1891), he pointed out that "all art is at once surface and symbol . . . A truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true."[1] In real life, Wilde also led a Jekyll-and-Hyde existence, for he was married to Constance Lloyd and had homosexual affairs at the same time.[2] The contemporary critic Robert Buchanan accused Wilde of deliberate insincerity and hypocrisy, for which Byron was also blamed by his contemporaries.[3] Today, the Wilde scholar Richard Pine regrets Wilde's flamboyant dandyism because it highlights "the very triviality which he [Oscar Wilde] condemned".[4] To the present day, though, Wilde's dandiacal pose "obscures the genuinely sincere and profound views on the relationship of art and society behind a mask which [gives] . . . the impression of nonchalance, frivolity and epigrammatic wit," Richard Pine argues.[5] When the Queensberry scandal broke loose and Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years of hard labour, his dandyism died "five years before he died as a man."[6] Wilde suddenly "abandoned his pose, the mask of craftsmanship and accepted disillusion and oblivion", which was not likely for dandies to do.[7] Brummell, for example, refused to give up his dandyism, although the miserable conditions in which he lived his final years obliged him to, and Byron was determined to die a hero on the Greek battlefield, a pose in which political ambition and theatricality intermingled. In *De Profundis*, Wilde took distance from his dandyism in the following way:

> I amused myself with being a *flâneur*, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret

[1] Wilde, Oscar, *The Truth of Masks – A Note on Illusion* quoted in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 73
[2] Ellman, Richard, 1987: p. 251
[3] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 64
[4] Ibid., p. 68
[5] Ibid., p. 68
[6] Ibid., p. 69
[7] Ibid., p. 70

> chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetop. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility.[1]

Oscar Wilde compared his dire fate to that of Byron who had been hounded from England for his war on hypocrisy and cant. Byron's commitment, however, was one he, Oscar Wilde, could not approve of because Byron was a mere "rebel", a rebel without a cause.[2] "Byron was never able to give us what he might have given us", Wilde sighed in his essay on socialism *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891) because his "personality, for instance, was terribly wasted in its battle with the stupidity, and hypocrisy, and Philistinism of the English."[3] Along with Percy Shelley, Robert Browning (1812-89), Victor Hugo (1802-85), and Charles Baudelaire, Byron had been one of the privileged "few men who had private means of their own" so that they "were able to realise their personality more or less completely."[4] Although Oscar Wilde sensed that Byron and he were both men who were symbolically connected with their time, there was still a clear difference between the two of them. "I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art of culture," Wilde wrote in *De Profundis*, "Byron was a symbolic figure, but his relations were to the passion of his age and its weariness of passion. Mine were to something more noble, more permanent, of more vital issue, of larger scope."[5]

Oscar Wilde and with him all other fin-de-siècle Decadents like Walter Pater, Algernon Swinburne (1837-1909), Max Beerbohm, John Symonds (1840-93), and Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) owed their artistic and intellectual legacy to Charles Baudelaire, whose *Les Fleurs du Mal* was introduced in England in 1862.[6] In the preface of the first English edition, poet Algernon Swinburne wrote that,

> Not the luxuries of pleasure in their simple first form, but the sharp and cruel enjoyments of pain, the acrid relic of suffering felt or inflicted, the sides on which nature looks unnatural, go to make up the stuff and substance of this poetry . . . even of the loathsome bodily putrescence and decay he can make some noble use; pluck out its meaning and secret, even its beauty.[7]

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[1] Wilde, Oscar. "De Profundis." *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1987: p. 857
[2] MacCarthy, Fiona, 2002: p. 565
[3] Wilde, Oscar. "The Soul of Man under Socialism." *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1987: p. 1023
[4] Ibid., p. 1022
[5] Wilde, Oscar. "De Profundis." *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1987: p. 857
[6] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 63
[7] Algernon Swinburne cited in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 63

Indeed, Baudelaire considered himself an artist who exposed beauty underneath "the filth and brutality".[1] In return, however, he "saw himself calumniated as 'decadent' in the sense of 'degenerate' although [his] own purpose [was] one of revival, of *re*-generation in a degenerate world."[2] The idea of art revealing beauty in unexpected places was not entirely Baudelaire's because it had already been formulated by the French art critic Désiré-Gabriel Laverdant in his *De la mission de l'art et du rôle des artistes* (On the Mission of Art and the Role of Artists) (1845): "Art, the expression of society, manifests in its highest soaring, the most advanced social tendencies: it is the forerunner and the revealer. To lay bare with a brutal brush all the brutalities, all the filth, which are at the base of our society."[3] According to Baudelaire, "afterthought" and "reflection" were the main characteristics of his decadence, along with "the virtue of meditation upon life, its emotions and incidents; the vice of over-subtlety and affectation."[4] Richard Pine adds other features, such as the artist's "morbid introspection", his "narcissistic nostalgia", self-defeating nature, and "passion for artificiality".[5] In the post-Wilde era, the Welsh poet Arthur Symons (1865-1945) preferred Symbolism and discarded Decadence as

> an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilising refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity . . . a new and beautiful and interesting disease. Healthy we cannot call it, and healthy it does not wish to be considered. For its very disease of form, this literature is certainly typical of a civilisation grown over-luxurious, over-inquiring, too languid for the relief of action, too uncertain for any emphasis in opinion or in conduct. It reflects all the moods, all the manners, of a sophisticated society; its very artificiality is a way of being true to nature.[6]

In the 1950s, the Anglo-Irish poet and playwright Lawrence Durrell (1912-90) accused the English Decadents of insincere, hollow-sounding poetry, for their life had not been "raw" enough as Baudelaire's life had been.[7] "Baudelaire's subject-matter, despite its garish presentation, is always real experience, real anxiety," Durrell observed.[8] "His writing connects with his life at all points, while his dandyism is a genuine expression of both . . . This must be compared with the [English] decadents whose dandyism as a

[1] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 61
[2] Ibid., p. 61
[3] Laverdant, Désiré-Gabriel, *De la mission de l'art et du rôle des artistes* quoted in Pine, Richard, 1988: pp. 60-61
[4] Charles Baudelaire cited in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 15
[5] Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 15, p. 42
[6] Symons, Arthur, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* quoted in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 79
[7] Durrell, Lawrence, *Key: The Key to Modern Poetry* cited in Pine, Richard, 1988: p. 82
[8] Ibid., p. 82

code of behaviour could only offer a watery hedonism to put against their gentlemanly world-weariness."[1]

Unlike Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire whose dandyism thrived on the Continent and inspired other artists, the three British dandies "Beau" Brummell, Lord Byron, and Oscar Wilde have in common that their dandyism was never taken seriously, and that their personality and work were severely criticised. They were blamed for their untrustworthiness, lack of sincerity, deliberate and blatant hypocrisy, and their irritating insistence on cutting a figure in the eye of the public. "Beau" Brummell was a trifler who put the world upside down, turning matters of importance into trifles and spending a fastidious amount of time and care to, for example, the tying of a cravat, which seems a mere trifle nowadays. Lord Byron gave his readership the impression that he was sincere in his poetry, for example, in "Fare Thee Well!", the farewell ode he directed to his wife Annabella Milbanke, even though the autobiographical elements he integrated in the poem did not render it more genuine but more ambiguous. Although this poem is generally thought of as Byron's most sentimental love poem, as an outcry from a man with a broken heart, Jerome McGann thinks it "a *bad* poem" because it was "intentionally designed to hurt his wife personally and damage her in public."[2] Oscar Wilde, finally, both the man and the artist, was a paradox, and like other dandies, he consciously crafted his own paradox, amusing and bewildering his public as he impersonated different selves. In a letter on the *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Wilde's only novel and the magnum opus of the Decadent Movement in England, he commented how he identified himself with the character Basil Hallward, the talented artist who painted Dorian Gray's ill-fated portrait: "Basil Hallward is what I think I am. Lord Henry [Wotton] what the world thinks of me. Dorian [Gray] what I would like to be – in other ages, perhaps . . . In so vulgar an age as this we need all masks."[3] In essence, dandies like "Beau" Brummell, Scrope Davies, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, Lord Byron, Charles Baudelaire, and Oscar Wilde were all individuals whose discontent with the age in which they lived and with its widespread mediocrity inspired their dandyism. Each dandy, without exception, moved consciously through controlled phases, adopting poses, creating and manipulating masks.

[1] Ibid., p. 82
[2] McGann, Jerome, 2002: p. 100
[3] Oscar Wilde cited in Pine, Richard, pp. 54-55

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