

2011

“Curse Him Not”: Disobedience, Creativity, and Freedom in Byron’s Cain

Christopher Troise
chtroise@vassar.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone

Recommended Citation

Troise, Christopher, “Curse Him Not”: Disobedience, Creativity, and Freedom in Byron’s Cain” (2011). *Senior Capstone Projects*. 40.
http://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone/40

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Window @ Vassar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Window @ Vassar. For more information, please contact library_thesis@vassar.edu.

“Curse Him Not”:

Disobedience, Creativity, and Freedom in Byron’s *Cain*

Christopher Troise

Professor Darlington

Fall 2010

Vassar College

Acknowledgements

Here, I take a moment to reflect on my gratitude in words, and in so doing I hope to be able to better work this bold feeling in the world: To B.E., R.K., and A.P. for their time and support throughout the semester. To R.K. and A.P. for their editorial counsel on syntax, logic, and diction, without which I would surely have been at great loss. To my adviser, B.D., for her eagerness, enthusiasm, and organization in guiding me on this project, and especially for her faith in me. Her mentorship and friendship throughout my four years at Vassar uplifted me when I struggled most. And to my parents for their unending compassion that has balanced my own thinking, over thinking, and imaginative mind.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter I: Guilt & Isolation 2

- Eve suppressing the imagination
- The familial burden
- Cain and Abel's inheritance
- Tracing the source of guilt
- Killing Abel & coming to consciousness
- Lucifer and the inner world
- Adah & Compassion
- Balancing guilt
- Cain, Adah, & the world of love

Chapter II.: Authority & the Self 18

- The myth's roots in Genesis
- The curse of blood
- The omission of God
- Eve's divisiveness
- Abel's forgiveness
- Reorienting authority from the parents to Cain

Chapter III: Cain as a Savior 28

- The mark as protection
- The mark as a symbol of consciousness realized
- Cain fully accepts Adah's companionship
- Lucifer, Adah, and Abel as facets of Cain's personality & being
- Empathizing with Cain
- Cain's psychological growth
- Cain as a Byronic Hero, and Savior figure

Chapter IV: Retelling the myth 39

Conclusion 45

In 1821, Lord Byron published his retelling of the Cain and Abel myth, *Cain: A Mystery*, told from the perspective of Cain, the first murderer, who learns the value of life and companionship. In his retelling, Byron shifts the focus of the Genesis tale from Cain's punishment to the humanizing of Cain. He shows how a murderer could possibly love and feel compassion, moreover, he demonstrates how disobedience is fundamentally creative regardless of its consequences, but tempered with love can create wondrous things—children, cities, and culture.

Lord Byron's life was fraught with conflicting thoughts about companionship, isolation, and his fluctuating temper. Byron imbues Cain with thoughts of depression, suicide, nihilism, apathy, existentialism, anxiety, and guilt reflecting the themes which arise in Byron's personal writing. Cain becomes a Byronic Hero who must either fail or succeed in his individuation; his struggle to understand and enjoy life. To the myth Byron adds Lucifer, and names Cain's wife, Adah, in order to depict Cain's inward nature as external presences confuse and help him, respectively. Byron excludes the presence of the Lord in order to suggest the divinity within man, as well as Cain's ability to govern his existence from within and act based on his balance of temper, love, and creativity.

In Byron's retelling Cain accidentally becomes the first murderer who strikes his brother down with a flaming brand in his frustration with life. With Lucifer's words and Adah's compassion, Cain comes to realize that he is his brother's keeper, and must bring Abel's spirit forth into the world. Cain and Abel are two halves of a whole: the rebel and the conformer. Cain and Adah are two halves as well: the thinker and the empathizer. These pairings represent the divided self, with which Cain must either come to terms by

recognizing that guilt, forgiveness, and compassion all exist with him, or fail to reach this realization and so destroy himself.

When Cain allows Adah's compassion to balance his burden, he internalizes his suffering, and consciously keeps Abel's forgiving spirit with him. Leaving Adam and Eve behind, Cain, Adah, and their children depart with their balance of ideals to inform their future actions. Byron implies that such a balance is necessary for the Biblical Cain to found a city and a culture, tempered by, and also fueling, love. His disobedience is fundamental in his redemption; his realization of culpability for killing his brother brings a new perspective to his conception of himself in the world. Adah eases his guilt, so that Cain's analytical mind can shift the focus from his own insular emotions to a broader perspective of how to interact with others. Cain contributes to social, cultural, and imaginative propagation and metamorphosis; *Cain* implies that possibilities exist everywhere, that especially in the most dejected state of human existence, creativity and compassion can flourish.

Chapter I: Guilt & Isolation

Cain must learn, experience, and suffer before he can create. His first line in the drama is in response to his father's question "wherefore art thou silent?" to which he says, "Why should I speak?"¹ Cain's angst—which is the product of bitterness and repressed anger—sets the tone for his dialogue for the majority of Act I. His ruminations on life multiply as he tries to understand the contradiction the Lord has bequeathed to his family: "knowledge is good / And life is good; and how can both be evil?" Though Cain laments his state throughout the drama, here he acknowledges that life is actually quite

¹ Lord Byron, *Cain*, 1821, *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) I.i.22-23.

good. However, Eve scolds him for asking the question at all, saying: “My boy! thou speakest as I spoke in sin.”² Eve tries to suppress Cain’s thoughts and emotions, perhaps because she recognizes the imaginative trait her son shares with her. She commands her son to disregard reality, to consciously suppress his wondering mind. In obtaining knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve freed themselves of ignorance; but Eve now agonizes over the loss of Eden and of eternal life, such that she perceives the world negatively. Eve interprets Cain’s accurate perceptions of the world as sinful thinking and she neglects to consider, as Milton’s Satan reflects, “The mind is its own place and in itself / Can make a Heaven of hell, a hell of Heaven.”³

Cain perceives correctly how his parents have tortured themselves over their loss of Eden, believing themselves to be worse off than before. In describing his parents to Lucifer, Cain criticizes them, saying, “My father is / Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind / Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk / Of an eternal curse.”⁴ Because Eve has lost the imagination that inspired her to eat of the fruit and she can no longer imagine what it is to question and disobey, she tries to deny Cain his imagination. She tries to tame him by stigmatizing his impulse to question as sinful, but he resists and instead nurses his budding existentialism. Cain wonders if he can trust his parents and believe that God is good in His role as creator and judge:

How know I that?
Because he is all powerful must all-good, too, follow?
I judge but by the fruits – and they are bitter –
Which I must feed on for a fault not mine⁵

² Cain I.i.37-39.

³ John Milton, Paradise Lost, 1667, ed. David Scott Kastan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2005) I.254-5.

⁴ Cain I.i.179-82.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I.i.76-9.

In creating an imperfect creature—whose actions and thoughts are not directly controlled by God—the Lord proves Himself to be an imperfect creator, yet still expects man to obey and pray to Him.. Man is, after all, created in God’s image—“God said: / Let us make humankind, in our image, according to our likeness!”⁶—and Cain recognizes his “shape like to the angels.”⁷ Cain does not question the source of his creation; rather he questions God’s morality: can an omnipotent being be good if he lays down laws which forbid, and then doles out punishment for transgressors?

Cain assumes that God can be qualified as moral or immoral. He rationalizes his relationship with God and with his family in the context of the Fall. Cain grounds his emotions using the language of the earth, from which he was born; he asks, “why do I quake?”⁸ Byron writes Cain as a curious child who feels and imagines, who understands that he exists but does not have a reason for being. Cain can imagine, but he is still an innocent child—he does not have experience that would flesh out his existence and help him better understand his purpose in the world.

Nonetheless, Cain bemoans the burden of life, and the inherited guilt of his parents’ fall:

And this is
Life!—Toil! And wherefore should I toil?—because
My father could not keep his place in Eden.
What had *I* done in this?⁹

⁶ The Five Books of Moses, trans. Everett Fox (New York: Schocken Books, 1995)
Genesis 1:26.

⁷ Cain I.i.80.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I.i.82.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I.i.64-7.

Cain scoffs at life, and complains that he must work because of his parents' Fall; he does not understand his role within his own family. Eve was the first human to transgress the word of God, and Adam followed suit; Cain and Abel both share inherited traits from their parents, reflecting these attitudes. Cain has inherited the archetype of the rebel from his mother, which he demonstrates through his questioning of and transgression against God, both in his half-heartedness in sacrifice, and in killing his brother. Cain's role as a rebel manifests in his profession as a farmer; he works with the soil and so creates crops by his hands, though it is the Lord's duty to create. As mentioned, this spark of creativity Eve recognizes in Cain, and so tries to quench it. Abel has inherited the archetype of the follower from Adam, which he exhibits in his unquestioning acceptance of what his parents do and say, and by extension what God commands. Abel's role manifests literally in his profession as a shepherd, because he tends to the animals of the earth, and then brings death to them. It is ironic then, that Cain, the son who creates life, kills the brother who sacrifices the animals he tends.

In keeping with his obedient nature, Abel's first lines in *Cain* praise God:

God! who didst call the elements into
Earth—ocean—air—and fire, and with the day
And night, and worlds which these illuminate
Or shadow, madest beings to enjoy them,
And love both them and thee—all hail! all hail!¹⁰

His words reiterate God's creation of light and earth; Abel follows his family's convention of honoring God in this postlapsarian world. As discussed earlier, Cain's first lines—"Why should I speak?"¹¹—question the inherent value of existence. Cain asks about the value of his speech, thoughts, and existence, while Abel respects the practice of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I.i.9-13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I.i.23.

adhering unquestioningly to the word of God. Cain's inquisitive mind undermines the status quo. His willingness to ask the question "why" is valuable because its asking and answering can lead to psychological and creative progress.

Cain questions the value of life in his search to understand his world, his family, God, and most importantly, himself:

I live,
 But live to die: and, living, see no thing
 To make death hateful, save an innate clinging,
 A loathsome and yet all-invincible
 Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I
 Despise myself, yet cannot overcome—
 And so I live. Would I had never lived!¹²

Cain feels depressed as he considers the false choice between death and living a meaningless existence; he has Man's first existential crisis. Cain aptly recognizes—because he *feels*—that he has an instinctual desire to live. However, he may hate himself because of his inherited guilt, Eve's controlling efforts, or even because he feels limited in what he can understand or do in the postlapsarian world. It may be that he does not abhor himself after all, but that his hate is merely misplaced discontent or anger. In Myth and Guilt, Theodor Reik states that "the child who traces the guilt feeling back to a feeling of oneself and the language of another has gone the right way."¹³ Reik suggests that maturity can develop from the child's realization that guilt is an internal feeling resulting from one's interaction with the world. Thus far, Cain has pointed his finger at his parents for the guilt he feels: "My father could not keep his place in Eden."¹⁴ Cain

¹² *Ibid.*, I.i.109-115.

¹³ Theodor Reik, Myth and Guilt: The Crime and Punishment of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957) 12.

¹⁴ Cain I.i.66.

casts all blame on his parents and takes no responsibility for himself. At this time he has not yet had an experience that would allow him to transcend his innocence.

Cain can only answer the questions he has about life by experiencing death. And so, Cain's involvement in Abel's death facilitates his maturation. Cain does not blame anyone else when he kills Abel. After Cain has struck his brother, he cries, "*My hand! 'tis all red, and with— / What?*"¹⁵ His emphasis on "my" is key. Not knowing what he has done, he takes responsibility for his action. By his hand he slew his brother—neither God, his parents, Lucifer, nor even the Fall are to blame. Cain's psychological journey ranges from external blame and internal hatred in Act I to internal blame and internal acceptance in Act III. After the murder he does not hide what he has done, but accepts accountability, first incredulously: "I smote / Too fiercely, but not fatally."¹⁶ Then, in response to Abel—"What's he who speaks of God?"—Cain names his deed, admitting he is: "Thy murderer."¹⁷ Thus, Cain realizes that he has murdered, and for the first time he internalizes culpability. Abel's murder inaugurates death into the first family and into the world. Cain experiences the world's first death firsthand; he asks rhetorically, "Who makes me brotherless?"¹⁸ Psychologically, the internal acceptance of his deed will allow Cain to move beyond his anger and frustration.

Cain recognizes the death of his brother as an internal loss:

'Tis blood—my blood—
My brother's and my own; and shed by me!
Then what have I further to do with life,
Since I have taken life from my own flesh?¹⁹

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III.i.321-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, III.i.327-8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, III.i.333-4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, III.i.336.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, III.i.345-8.

Cain locates the guilt of his deed in his and Abel's shared lineage, referring to their shared blood and flesh. He makes the connection between his external deed and his internal shame, saying "Then what have I further to do with life." Cain loses part of himself with Abel—his innocent self—and with this loss Cain gains an awareness of self, as well as guilt attached to a precise event. As Reik proposed, Cain correctly traces the guilt feeling back to himself. Through disobedience he learns that "brethren / Smite not each other."²⁰ As Reik discusses, "The apparent disobedience against the divine commandment is nothing else but turning away from instinct."²¹ Whereas in Act I Cain recognized his instinct to live, here he turns away from the rhythmic routine of his parents to experience something new: death. Cain is no longer the depressed child, and so becomes conscious, retrospectively commenting on the madness of his previous condition: "I am awake at last—a dreary dream / Had madden'd me:—but *he* shall ne'er awake!"²² He also addresses Abel's literal inability to transcend innocence—he "shall ne'er awake" because he has died—but moreover Abel was unquestioning and so could never become conscious.

What specifically inspires Cain's coming to consciousness? Cain feels his regret, but Lucifer allows him to introspect with positive results. Byron's friend and fellow Romantic, Percy Shelley was a potential influence on Byron's considerations of the fallen angel. In a letter written on April 11, 1822, Shelley discusses that he and Byron were corresponding while Byron worked on *Cain*: "Amongst other things, however, Moore, after giving Lord B, much good advice about public opinion, &c. seems to deprecate my

²⁰ *Ibid.*, III.i.354-5.

²¹ Reik 93.

²² *Cain* III.i.378-9.

influence on his mind on the subject of religion, and to attribute the tone assumed in *Cain* to my suggestions.”²³ Shelley probably composed his essay “On the Devil, and Devils” between 1820 and 1821 while Byron was working on *Cain* during the time of their correspondence. Shelley writes, “To suppose that the world was created and is superintended by two spirits of a balanced power and opposite dispositions, is simply a personification of the struggle within ourselves, and which we perceive in the operations of external things as they affect us, between good and evil.”²⁴ Byron executes this principle in *Cain* by internalizing Lucifer and the divinity within Cain. Cain’s struggle is the human struggle to understand the forces at war within him.

Byron chooses “Lucifer”—or “bringer of light”—to represent the fallen angel, because Lucifer helps Cain realize that his consciousness is fertile. Lucifer begins a dialectic game with Cain, whose purpose is not even to win against the troubled Cain, but simply to confuse, disorient, and undermine his instinctual feeling. He tells Cain that “all things are / Divided with me; life and death—and time— / Eternity—and heaven and earth.”²⁵ Lucifer is the divider because he does not understand love, which is a force that unites. While Cain talks about Adah’s love, Lucifer asks whether Cain will still love Adah when she is no longer beautiful. Lucifer does not understand the purpose in loving something that will become less beautiful and eventually die; he lives completely without love. Nonetheless, Cain resists his ploy: “I’m sorry for it; but / Cannot conceive my love

²³ Peter Cochran, “The Correspondence Between Byron and Percy and Mary Shelley,” 1 Jan 2010, Peter Cochran’s Website: Film Reviews, Poems, Byron... (5 Dec 2010) <<http://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/byron-and-the-shelleys.pdf>>, 44.

²⁴ Percy Bysshe Shelley, “On the Devil, and Devils,” The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, Vol. 7 (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1930) 87.

²⁵ Cain l.i.547-9.

for her the less.”²⁶ His unconditional love for Adah will save him from deteriorating into an extreme existential crisis, represented by the stagnant Lucifer.

Despite Lucifer’s twists and turns of phrase, he offers some helpful advice as he exits the drama:

*One good gift has the fatal apple given—
Your reason:—let it not be over-sway’d
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
‘Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:
Think and endure,—and form an inner world
In your own bosom—where the outward fails;
So shall you nearer be the spiritual
Nature, and war triumphant with your own.*²⁷

Lucifer warns Cain not to be persuaded or ruled by Eve and people like Eve—those who have abandoned reason and creativity—who cannot imagine new possibilities. He suggests that when the world becomes too oppressive Cain can seek solitude in himself. By awakening his inner self, Cain can prevail even when external forces are against him; as earlier with Eve’s attempts to stifle his imagination. Cain connection’s to his imagination enables him to kill his brother, continue to live (albeit with guilt, balanced with love in Adah), and leave his parents behind—this familiar setting—to venture out into the world to create. Cain’s willingness to imagine is liberating; while Eve’s rejection of her imagination has restrained the family.

Reik suggests that “punishment itself can thus become the unconscious goal of instinctual drives and suffering can be evaluated as proof of being loved.”²⁸ In this way, wicked behavior leads to guilt; guilt in turn leads to internal suffering, and then to punishment. In hoping for redemption from a punished state through action, Reik

²⁶ *Ibid.*, II.ii.332-3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, II.ii.459-466.

²⁸ Reik 206.

proposes that “the guilt feeling originated in the fear of loss of love.”²⁹ Guilt arises in the fear of losing the love of one’s companions. When one does ill, one hopes for punishment as an avenue toward redemption to prove that one is still loved and valued by those one cares about. Thus, we continue to trespass so that we may be affirmed that we are still loved. Forgiveness by those we love can help to transcend the suffering of punishment. Cain’s trespass against the Lord incurs a permanent exile. Despite his punishment, Adah proves herself to be capable and willing of loving Cain.

Byron establishes Adah as the bastion of compassion in *Cain*; she exemplifies the model of unconditional love. While Cain traverses the abyss of space with Lucifer in Act II, Adah misses Cain when they are apart and she yearns for his companionship: “My brother, I have come for thee; / It is our hour of rest and joy—and we / Have less without thee.”³⁰ She is also intuitive and immediately perceives Lucifer’s divisive power, asking him, “Who / Art thou that steppest between heart and heart?”³¹ She recognizes that Lucifer lacks the heart and feeling that would make him akin to man: “he loves not.”³² Adah can sense Lucifer’s trickery immediately, and her concerns multiply when she speaks with him, as the following interactions shows:

Adah.	Cain! walk not with this spirit. Bear with what we have borne, and love me—I Love thee.
Luc.	More than thy mother and thy sire?
A.	I do. Is that a sin, too?
L.	No, not yet; It one day will be in your children.
A.	What! Must not my daughter love her brother Enoch?

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰ *Cain* I.i.335-7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, I.i.348-9.

³² *Ibid.*, I.i.422.

- L. Not as thou lovest Cain.
 A. Oh, my God!
 Shall they not love and bring forth things that love
 Out of their love?
 [...]

 In multiplying our being multiply
 Things which will love each other as we love
 Them?—And as I love thee, my Cain! go not
 Forth with this spirit; he is not of ours.³³

Adah and Lucifer converse for one-hundred thirty-seven lines total, interrupted by Cain twice, briefly, between lines 352 and 557 in Act I. Lucifer tries to mislead Adah so that she believes that sin will stain or paralyze her and her family, but she resists; indeed, he only succeeds in frustrating, but not confusing her: she exclaims, “Oh Cain! / This spirit curseth us.”³⁴ Adah attempts to direct Cain’s attention away from Lucifer, offering him compassion as an incentive to leave the fallen angel: “Bear with what we have borne, and love me—I / Love thee.” Before Cain can respond, Lucifer speaks and tries to force Adah to doubt herself, questioning whether she loves Cain: “More than thy mother and thy sire?” Adah introduces the concept of sin in her response, which Lucifer rephrases as a potential detriment to her children’s lives: “[Sin] one day will be in your children.” Adah deftly avoids his deceit, saying: “Shall they not love and bring forth things that love / Out of their love?” Though she poses the phrase as a question, she actually proposes a system of love: she will beget love through her lineage. Making such a proposition suggests—as Cain’s interactions with his mother indicated—that they do not currently live in such a system. In affirming her love for Cain—even if it is greater than that for her parents—she avoids Lucifer’s misdirection, and returns to her initial intention of extracting Cain from the situation: “And as I love thee, my Cain! go not / Forth with this spirit.” In so doing,

³³ *Ibid.*, I.i.361-76.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I.i.524-5.

she smartly predicts the cycle of life that will spring forth from her family: that great love will come into the world. Adah asks Cain to build this world with her, referring to their happiness as a unit, with one member affecting the other as she commiserates with Lucifer: “Thou seem’st unhappy; do not make *us* so / And I will weep for thee.”³⁵ She defines companionship with Cain as codependent: her happiness depends on Cain’s happiness. Furthermore, Adah demonstrates her seemingly boundless compassion, offering her empathy to an other-worldly being whom she does not trust, and has already recognized is “not of ours.”

Such is the true definition of compassion. Joseph Campbell breaks down the word “compassion” into its etymological components as “Suffering with. ‘Passion’ is ‘suffering,’ and ‘com-’ is ‘with.’ The German word really gives it in a clearer way: *mitleid*, ‘with’ (*mit*) ‘sorrow or suffering’ (*leid*).”³⁶ Adah proves herself to be the paragon of the compassionate companion in her actions and words towards Cain. She begs Cain not to go with Lucifer, but rather to stay with her to love their children, to create this world of love-begetting-love. She does not believe that Lucifer can contribute to this system, and she is right of course. Responding to Lucifer’s question about happiness in solitude, “And thou couldst not / *Alone*, thou say’st, be happy?” she replies: “Alone! Oh, my God! / Who could be happy and alone, or good? / To me my solitude seems sin.”³⁷ While Adah suffers to be alone, Lucifer believes his importance derives from his solitude: “I dwell apart; but I am great.”³⁸

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I.i.518-9, my italics.

³⁶ Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth: With Bill Moyers*, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Anchor Books, 1991) 241.

³⁷ *Cain* I.i.471-4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I.i.308.

Despite Adah's warning—"go not / Forth with this spirit"—she neither condemns or refuses Cain upon his return to the first family in Act III, as the following interchange reveals:

Adah. Why wilt thou mourn for Paradise?
 Can we not make another?
 Cain. Where?
 A. Here, or
 Where'er thou wilt: where'er thou art, I feel not
 The want of this so much regretted Eden.³⁹

Adah offers Cain a kind of celebration of homecoming, knowing that a world of love lies within the realm of possibility for their family. Here in Act III, Adah picks up where she had left off when she last spoke to Cain in Act I: "What else can joy be but the spreading joy?"⁴⁰ Her compassion will act as a catalyst to create a *new paradise*; she and Cain can simultaneously make and spread joy. She represents the archetypal mother: she bears love, compassion, and a fertile imagination. Thirty-seven lines after Lucifer left Cain with his sympathetic advice to create an "inner world / In your own bosom,"⁴¹ Adah reinforces the principle with empathy, telling Cain that love can nurture a new outer world, a new Eden.

Cain is not ready for this imagined world. Though he engages his imagination in his questioning, his introspective thinking prevents him from submitting to compassion and love. Cain's resentment toward the Lord and his mother impedes his ability to transcend his depressed, analytical thinking as the following dialogue reveals:

Luc. He is the second born of flesh,
 And is his mother' favorite.
 Cain. Let him keep

³⁹ *Ibid.*, III.i.37-40.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I.i.481.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II.ii.463-4.

Her favour, since the serpent was the first
 To win it.
 L. And his fathers?
 C. What is that
 To me? should I not love that which all love?
 L. And the Jehovah—the indulgent Lord,
 And bounteous planter of barr'd Paradise—
 He, too, looks smilingly on Abel.
 C. I
 Ne'er saw him, and I know not if he smiles.⁴²

Cain's resentment and jealousy of what Abel has—that is, the affection and attention of his Lord and parents—prevents him from recognizing the possibilities that exist with Adah. Indeed, Cain refuses to trust in Adah's compassion and understanding:

 but I thought alone
 This misery was *mine*. [...] and my Adah, my
 Own and beloved, she too understands not
 The mind which overwhelms me: never till
 Now met I aught to sympathize with me.
 'Tis well—I rather would consort with spirits.⁴³

This passage suggests that Cain does not understand the subtle difference between empathy and sympathy, which Lauren Wispé explains simply: “empathy is a way of ‘knowing.’ Sympathy is a way of ‘relating.’”⁴⁴ Empathy is when one imagines and then feels how someone feels, perhaps knowing how it feels to be in a certain situation; sympathy is when one reacts and relates to someone who feels an emotion, an emotional response—often pitying, or feeling sorrowful for—someone's condition. These grounding definitions help us to understand Lucifer's intent from Cain's perspective; Lucifer's third line in the play extends his sympathy to Cain: “I know the thoughts / Of

⁴² *Ibid.*, II.ii.342-350.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, I.i.178-191.

⁴⁴ Lauren Wispé, “The Distinction Between Sympathy and Empathy: To Call Forth a Concept, a Word is Needed,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50.2 (1986): 318.

dust, and feel for, and with you.”⁴⁵ As a result of his depression, resentment, and over-analytical thinking Cain’s mind becomes closed to the possibility that Adah feels what he feels.

Yet after Eve curses Cain for killing his brother, Adah proves herself capable of unconditional love, exclaiming:

Hold!
Curse him not, mother, for he is thy son—
Curse him not, mother, for he is my brother,
And my betroth’d.⁴⁶

Adah cites her bonds of love and blood as reasons enough to continue to love Cain. Her words align her with Cain, but alienate her from the family. In this moment, she essentially betrays the first family by remaining loyal to her fratricidal brother-husband. Cain asks her to leave him, but she will not: “Why, all have left thee,”⁴⁷ which harks back to her rejection of misery in solitude. Although she “shrink[s] from the deed [Abel’s murder],”⁴⁸ she will not abandon Cain in fear that he will deteriorate into a shade like Lucifer. Adah’s defense of Cain with love and kinship emphasizes Cain’s description of his relationship with her: “She is my sister, / Born on the same day, of the same womb.”⁴⁹ As fraternal twins, they share a connection that cannot be forsaken.

Cain acquiesces to Adah after he receives the mark of his deed on his forehead:

C. Think’st thou my boy will bear to look on me?
A. If I thought that he would not, I would—
C. [*interrupting her*]. No,
No more of threats: we have had too many of them:
Go to our children; I will follow thee

⁴⁵ *Cain* I.i.100-1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, III.i. 404-7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, III.i. 460.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, III.i.463.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I.i.330-1.

A. I will not leave thee lonely with the dead;
Let us depart together.⁵⁰

Cain feels shame, imagining that his children will love him less because he has been expelled from the first family. Adah tries to console him, but he interrupts her. For the first time in the play, and with the internal balance of thinking and feeling, Cain uses the imperative mood “Go to our children” and then the simple future tense, “I will follow thee,” to say that they must press on into a future that he previously thought uncertain and useless. Adah emphasizes that together the two will be able to overcome hardship, again referring to the two as a pair: “Let *us* depart *together*.”

Adah carries the mantle of compassion⁵¹: from her ability to suffer with Cain, she selflessly tells Cain that she “will divide thy burden with thee.”⁵² Contrasted with Lucifer’s ability to divide “heart and heart,” Adah will divide the suffering between herself and Cain, so that his burden is not as heavy as it would be in solitude. With Cain leading “Eastward from Eden will we take our way”—Adah tells him to “Lead!”⁵³ too—they will carry their children, and carry this model of love and compassion into the world. Where Wolf Hirst considers “the passive Adah and Abel”⁵⁴ together as a unit, I have shown Adah as an individual who allows others to think and make decisions for themselves, asking—not commanding—“Oh, Cain! choose love,”⁵⁵ and uses an active

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, III.i.523-8.

⁵¹ In my discussion of Adah, I have presented more material on her character than the scholarship I have consulted for my project. The dearth of critical attention to Adah—as to her purpose in *Cain*, or as an added character to the myth recounted in Genesis—concerns me because she plays a critical role in the retelling of the Cain and Abel myth.

⁵² *Ibid.*, III.i.551.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, III.i.552-4.

⁵⁴ Wolf Z. Hirst, “Byron’s Lapse into Orthodoxy: An Unorthodox Reading of ‘Cain,’” *Keats-Shelley Journal* 29 (1980): 156.

⁵⁵ *Cain* I.i.431.

imagination to divide suffering, as Eve in *Paradise Lost* imagines dividing work in Eden *before* the Fall: “Let us divide our labors, thou where choice / Leads thee or where most needs.”⁵⁶ As shown, Adah’s ability to love Cain and to suffer with him—through his depression, self-loathing, anger, jealousy, and over-analytical mind—saves him from the lonely, existential extreme represented by Lucifer.

Chapter II.: Authority & the Self

Commenting on the role of Lucifer in *Cain*, Byron says, on November 3, 1821, in a letter to John Murray: “the object of the demon is to *depress* him still further in his own estimation than he was before—by showing him infinite things—& his own abasement—till he falls into the frame of mind—that leads to the Catastrophe.”⁵⁷ Cain would not have been able to transcend Lucifer’s fate without Adah’s compassion and companionship to help him imagine new possibilities. Certainly Byron would not have included Adah in *Cain* if he thought that she would be a passive character. There would be no purpose to fabricating a flat character who is absent in the Genesis myth to include in his reinterpretation. Indeed, Byron adds two presences in his retelling who are nonexistent in the Cain and Abel myth: Adah *and* Lucifer. There is not even a snake or tempting creature, angel, or human compatriot to tempt—or torment—Cain as Byron’s Lucifer does.

When the brothers present their sacrifice in Genesis: “YHWH had regard for Hevel⁵⁸ and his gift, / for Kayin and his gift he had no regard. / Kayin became

⁵⁶ *Paradise Lost* IX.214-5.

⁵⁷ Lord Byron, *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979) Vol. 9 53-4.

⁵⁸ I will be using Kayin and Hevel to be consistent with Fox’s translation of Genesis that I am citing, and to not confuse their characterizations with Byron’s Cain and Abel.

exceedingly upset and his face fell.”⁵⁹ There is nothing in Genesis to suggest that Kayin offers his gift to the Lord begrudgingly. After the Fall, the first family received a new bond with the earth: “God, sent [man] away from the garden of Eden, to work the soil from which he had been taken.”⁶⁰ In this sense, when Kayin offers the Lord an honest gift for sacrifice, a “fruit of the soil,”⁶¹ he offers part of his being. Abel offers God a slain animal, and He approves but disregards Kayin’s. From this lesson, Kayin becomes “upset,” and rightfully so when his creator rejects gift that grows in the earth, the soil of Kayin’s own birth. When Kayin kills Hevel—as an attempt to appease God with blood, or seek revenge against his brother, or release his jealousy—God curses him through the earth from which he came, from which he brings forth fruit: “And now, damned be you from the soil, / which opened up its mouth to receive you brother’s blood from your hand.”⁶²

And so God sends Kayin into the world to wander, detached from the soil which “will not henceforth give its strength to you.”⁶³ Kayin responds that the burden of his deed—the “iniquity”⁶⁴—is too great a burden to bear. With his unnamed wife, Kayin bears a son: Hanokh who “became the builder of a city” (4:17), and the city takes the name of its founder. Genesis casts Kayin’s punishment and wandering in a purely negative light. Between the lines of the text, the myth asks: how does Kayin, the punished, lonely wanderer found the first city—the first collective, communal place of culture and resources? Byron attempts to answer this question in his retelling. Genesis

⁵⁹ Genesis 4:4-5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:23.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4:3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 4:11.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4:12.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:13.

juxtaposes Kayin's exile and the result of Kayin's deed within the same chapter, with no other plot points interrupting the two:

and [Kayin] settled in the land of Nod/Wandering, east of Eden.
 Kayin knew his wife;
 she became pregnant and bore Hanokh.
 Now he became the builder of a city⁶⁵

On October 15, 1821, a month after Byron had finished a draft of the three acts of *Cain*, he writes: "I sometimes think that *Man* may be the relic of some higher material being wrecked in a former world—and degenerated in the hardships and struggle through Chaos into Continuity—or something like it."⁶⁶ Byron reimagines the myth of Cain and Abel in order to speak to the "higher material" of mankind, using Lucifer (and Cain in his existential crisis) to exemplify how the humankind can be "wrecked," and using Adah to demonstrate that there is hope through the struggle and chaos.

In reimagining the myth, Byron omits the presence of the Lord from Cain's field of labor. Byron alters the focus of authority, shifting away from the Lord's divine authority toward the strictly mortal and parental authority of Eve. Cain does not have access to the Lord—indeed, his attempt to commune with Him in sacrifice fails—yet his parents remain bonded with their creator. Adam and Eve continue to suffer the consequences of the Fall; Byron binds Eve to her past, lamenting the Fall and the death of her son in one breath: "My best beloved, Abel! / Jehovah! this is punishment beyond / A mother's sin, to take *him* from me!"⁶⁷ Eve considers the Lord her authority, and believes there is no way to live except under the watchful eye of God. From Eve's perspective, for

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:17-8.

⁶⁶ Byron's Letters and Journals Vol. 9 46-7.

⁶⁷ Cain III.i.384-6.

anything that she or members of her family do or create, God must approve of the consequences that unfold, for good or for ill.

Regarding Adam and Eve's fall, Peter Pitzele writes, "In the garden consciousness was undivided and innocent of death; masculine and feminine were 'one flesh.' After the expulsion Adam and Eve are separate. They step into a different temporal reality, call it history, where time bears each life inevitably toward death."⁶⁸ Adam and Eve know what it is to separate and be divided; they have experienced the anguish of a forced expulsion. In this way, the Lord has entrenched the principle of division within Adam and Eve's mentality. Byron's Eve lacks the imagination that inspired her to disobey the Lord in Eden. When Eve discovers that Cain has killed the child she favored, she appeals to the Lord, but curses Cain herself:

Hear, Jehovah!
 May the eternal serpent's curse be on him!
 For he was fitter for his seed than ours.
 May all his days be desolate!⁶⁹

Here, Eve sows the seed of division. It is as if, as a result of the fall, Byron's Eve only knows how to divide. Byron uses Eve as an authority figure to expel her son from the first family: "All bonds I break between us, as he broke / That of his nature."⁷⁰ Eve severs the blood bond between her family and Cain; in this action she proves herself to be the matriarch of the family.

Adam briefly tries to reason with Eve, but he cannot dissuade her. Also invoking the Lord's doom for the first family, Adam suggests: "Let [our doom] be borne / In such

⁶⁸ Peter Pitzele, *Our Fathers' Wells: A Personal Encounter with the Myths of Genesis*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995) 52.

⁶⁹ *Cain* III.i.401-4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, III.i.410-1.

sort as may show our God, that we / Are faithful servants to his holy will.”⁷¹ Adam, perhaps ignorantly, suggests that they continue to bear their burden and press on with their work and hardship; Adam wants to maintain the status quo. He exhibits no imagination, just like Eve, desiring nothing more than to play servant to God, as their eternal scourge. He will soon confirm—and so double the power of—Eve’s curse: “Cain! get thee forth: we dwell no more together. / Depart! and leave the dead to me—I am / Henceforth alone—we never must meet more.”⁷² Following Eve’s example—as he did in Eden—Adam proves that he cannot escape the follower archetype which he shares with his late son; he acknowledges the loss of his fellow in Abel, saying that he is alone. Adam believes that he must carry his follower archetype into the world alone, neglecting to consider Zillah’s potential as a follower—indeed, she follows Adam and Eve when they rupture the family. Adam becomes shortsighted in his grief, forgetting the companions he has in Zillah and Eve.

Abel embodied the same archetype as Adam in a new generation, but Abel does manage to escape an entirely one-dimensional portrayal as a follower. In *Cain*, Byron alters the post-mortem response that Abel has to his own death. In Genesis, the Lord tells Kayin “your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil!”⁷³ Byron reiterates this text through the mouthpiece of the Angel, instead of the Lord: “The voice of thy slain brother’s blood cries out, / Even from the ground, unto the Lord!”⁷⁴; he omits the first person pronoun “me.” In the retelling, the Angel relates second-hand that Abel’s blood cries out to the Lord. With the absence of the Lord in *Cain*, one cannot so easily believe

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, III.i.416-8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, III.i.444-6.

⁷³ Genesis 4:10.

⁷⁴ *Cain* III.i.470-1.

that God has been offended. Abel's own response to his death further contextualizes his blood's cry.

As soon as Cain has struck Abel with the brand, Abel forgives his brother. Following the model his mother has ingrained in him, he appeals to God for Cain's sake: "Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what / He did.—Cain, give me—give me thy hand."⁷⁵ Abel demonstrates that he is capable of more than blind submission, more than the son of his God-fearing parents. Abel exercises Christ-like compassion when he forgives Cain, as Jesus forgives those who crucify him: "And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."⁷⁶ In forgiving his own murderer he proves himself to be the paragon of forgiveness. Five years before he would begin writing *Cain*, in 1816 Byron set to work on a metaphysical drama entitled *Manfred*, which he ends with Manfred saying: "Fare thee well— / Give me thy hand."⁷⁷ Where Manfred demands the priest's hand in his last moment of life, Abel stutters on the very same words "give me thy hand," as if to point out the equivalence of the statement and the disconnection between the different conditions under which they occur. Where Manfred abruptly—and begrudgingly—demands a moment of companionship with the priest after years of self-imposed solitude, Abel offers his hand to his murderer-brother as a sign of forgiveness and continued kinship with Cain, whom his family will curse. His cries that call out to Cain are of forgiveness, not condemnation. Byron's Abel "keeps" and cares for Cain, where the Biblical Hevel does not.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, III.i.318-20.

⁷⁶ "The Book of Luke." The New Testament: English Standard Version. 2001. . Biblos.com <<http://esv.scripturetext.com/luke/23.htm>>, 23:34.

⁷⁷ Lord Byron, Manfred, 1817, Lord Byron: The Major Works, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) III.iv.148-9.

In Genesis, the parents has no reaction to the murder—Kayin kills Hevel in the field, God proclaims punishment, and Kayin leaves to wander. Adam and Eve are entirely absent. In Genesis there is a sense that, after the first murder has been committed, Adam and Eve do not matter anymore; they are absent from the text between 4:3 and 4:24, entering again with “Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son [Shet].”⁷⁸ In Byron’s retelling, on the other hand, he not only includes the parents, but he imagines their reactions based on the characterizations he has established in Act I. Paralyzed in the shock and horror of what he has done, Cain essentially waits for an audience to receive his crime. Wolf Hirst and Leonard Michaels believe that Cain loses himself when he commits the accidental murder. Hirst states that Cain loses reason and love and “forsakes [Abel] momentarily when he is blinded by murderous frenzy,”⁷⁹ and Michaels writes that Cain “blunders trancelike into murdering Abel.”⁸⁰ As previously argued, Cain knows not what he does in striking his brother, and immediately feels sorrow for what he has done; Abel says, “he knew not what / He did”⁸¹ to confirm Cain’s ignorance and dispel the accusation that he acted maliciously. Cain recognizes his responsibility for his deed and then receives his family’s curse, and so comes to know his wrongdoing twice, first with an internal realization and then with an external response.

Eve cannot forgive or forget Cain’s transgression. She not only anticipates, but also preempts the Angel’s punishment for Cain:

May all the curses
Of life be on him! and his agonies
Drive him forth o’er the wilderness, like us

⁷⁸ Genesis 4:25.

⁷⁹ Hirst 160.

⁸⁰ Leonard Michaels, “Byron’s Cain,” *PMLA* 84.1 (1969): 74.

⁸¹ *Cain* III.i.318-9.

From Eden, till his children do by him
As he did by his brother!⁸²

The Angel, like Eve, sentences him to wander as “a vagabond on earth”⁸³; Byron’s characters reflect the Lord’s direct judgment for Kayin in Genesis: “wavering and wandering must you be on earth!”⁸⁴ from which he went and “settled in the land of Nod/Wandering, east of Eden.”⁸⁵ However, a significant difference between the human and divine punishments is the murder that Eve wishes upon Cain. Eve, seeking vengeance, wishes Cain’s own children to murder him as he murdered his brother—so invoking the law of Talion⁸⁶. Defying Eve’s curse, the Angel who visits Cain places upon him a seal of safety so that he cannot be slain.⁸⁷ Indeed, Cain gains “Exemption from such deeds as thou hast done,”⁸⁸ which proves Eve’s curse ignored by the divine presence.

Byron’s exclusion of the Lord from his retelling means that in the narrative, the Lord can ignore Eve simply because He is not present. Even the appearance of the Angel as a divine messenger of God is questionable. Just when Adah says that Cain’s deed is between him and God, Byron indicates with stage directions: “*A Voice from within exclaims / Cain! Cain!*”⁸⁹ Adah asks if Cain can hear the voice, then denoted as a character, the Voice within screams Cain’s name twice more. Adah points out—and we

⁸² *Ibid.*, III.i.421-5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, III.i.476.

⁸⁴ Genesis 4:12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:16.

⁸⁶ “An eye for an eye.”

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, III.i.494-5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, III.i.499.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, III.i.466.

already know how perceptive she is—“It soundeth like an angel’s / Tone.”⁹⁰ As if giving form to the specifically-denoted *internal voice*, the stage directions indicate that the

Angel of the Lord enters, and speaks with Cain:

Angel. Where is thy brother Abel?
 Cain. Am I then
 My brother’s keeper?
 Angel. Cain! what hast thou done?⁹¹

Byron imagines Cain’s conscience in the form of a divine being. The manifested representation of Cain’s inner world is divine in itself. As Cain’s personified conscience, the Angel asks Cain where his brother has gone. If Cain converses with himself, the addition of “then” to the infamous question “Am I my brother’s keeper” transforms the statement into a rhetorical question in which Cain realizes his responsibility for his brother.

In disowning Cain for his brother’s murder, Adam and Eve effectively lose two sons, a daughter, and two grandchildren. They forcibly divide their family—break down the bonds of love—as God divided Adam and Eve in the Fall. The two choose to become more like Lucifer, “the divider,” who is forever alone; in their inability to imagine, they have no compassion or forgiveness to offer Cain, and so they self-isolate, rejecting more than half of their family. Adam and Eve will live alone with Zillah—whom Byron never mentions as having children with Abel. Adam and Eve take on the dejected disposition that Cain demonstrated in Act I; they remain in stagnation with their widowed daughter, mourning their son, while Cain will wander with Adah and their two children, and raise city of love.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, III.i.467-8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, III.i.468-9.

Byron's removal of God as an authority allows Cain himself to supplant the position of authority in the text. Having recognized the nature of his deed, he lays claim to himself: "That which I am, I am"⁹² using the same phrasing as the Lord to Moses: "I-Am-That-I-Am" from the Hebrew "'Ehyeh-'Ahser-'Ehyeh."⁹³ Still, Cain reiterates his guilt, speaking to Abel's body: "But if *thou* see'st what *I* am, / I think thou wilt forgive him, whom his God / Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul."⁹⁴ Cain feels remorse for his deed, but believes there can be no forgiveness for himself, internally or externally. Cain has already recognized the melancholy within himself, as well as the compassion in accepting Adah as his companion; he has recognized the aspects of Lucifer and Adah that are part of himself, but he has not yet realized that he is the keeper of his brother's spirit, and thus his forgiveness. Cain understands that brother should not kill brother, but he does not understand that he is the spiritual retainer of his brother's forgiveness, if he will allow himself to be.

Though the authority of the Lord determines the structure and narrative of the Five Books of Moses, Genesis is not God's text; the text is made by and for mortal man. Byron's elimination of the Lord emphasizes that this myth is not about God's punishments for man but about the achievements of humanity in hardship; indeed, Cain's voice from within emphasizes the divinity in man. Everett Fox says that: "No major character in Genesis achieves success without depending fully on God, and the standards that are held up to them ultimately seen as God's own, to be imitated by imperfect

⁹² *Ibid.*, III.i.509.

⁹³ Robert Alter, The Five Books of Moses, trans. Robert Alter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004) Genesis 3:14.

⁹⁴ Cain IIIi.531-3.

humankind.”⁹⁵ Though Fox suggests that no character in Genesis succeeds without depending upon the Lord and His rules for mankind, Kayin/Cain challenges this assertion. Kayin founds the first city without the Lord’s commission, consent, or condemnation, and he is successful. It is from Kayin’s kin that humanity flourishes under the established first cultural center.

Chapter III: Cain as a Savior

Byron alters the Biblical tradition once more when he marks Cain on the forehead. In this part of the myth, Genesis indicates an abstract sign of punishment, but does not ascribe a physicality to the mark: “So YHWH sets sign for Kayin, / so that whoever came upon him would not strike him down.”⁹⁶ Genesis suggests that the “sign” may be symbolic: Kayin’s exile is a spatial separation marking him as “other” and not to be killed. After all, if Kayin leaves the first family behind, the only other people who exist who are capable of murdering Kayin are his descendants. In Byron’s retelling, the Angel specifically marks Cain’s brow, which protects Cain from Eve’s vengeful curse. In the context of the first family, the Angel provides Cain protection not only from murder by future relatives, but from the family he leaves behind. Eve has bloodlust in mind when she curses her son—“till his children do by him / As he did by his brother!”—and she becomes more like Lucifer, dividing the family and destroying the connections of love. The traits presented in Cain—Abel and Adah, forgiveness and compassion, respectively—must combat Eve’s antagonism. While Genesis focuses on Cain’s exile as punishment, Byron’s retelling rejects the notion that murder and vengefulness have value;

⁹⁵ Everett Fox, “On the Book of Genesis and Its Structure,” The Five Books of Moses. trans. Everett Fox (New York: Schocken Books, 1995) 5.

⁹⁶ Genesis 4:15.

they are the result of extreme solitude and melancholy. Cain's strength arises in his ability to forgive and love himself, as his siblings teach him, and in his ability to stave off the forces of solitude that confront him internally and externally.

Cain's mark indicates vision, placed at the location of the third eye. In discussing the use of bodily metaphor in Genesis, Robert Alter states,

A good deal of this concrete biblical language based on the body is what a linguist would call lexicalized metaphor—imagery, here taken from body parts and bodily functions, that is made to stand for some general concept as a fixed item in the vocabulary of the language (as 'eye' in English can be used to mean 'perceptiveness' or 'connoisseur's understanding.')

The omission of a definite physical mark in Genesis minimizes Kayin's punishment and makes it ambiguous. In connecting the mark to Cain's physicality, Byron suggests that the mark is indeed a metaphor: the mark protects Cain from murder and allows him to see possibilities. It represents the completion of Cain's coming to consciousness. Cain's inner world opens to the outer world, which allows him to finally appreciate Adah's compassionate hand, and to acknowledge that he carries Abel within himself. Leo Strauss discusses Cain's coming to consciousness represented in the Fall: "Man was denied knowledge of good and evil, i.e., the knowledge sufficient for guiding himself, his life. While not being a child he was to live in child-like simplicity and obedience to God."⁹⁸ In this second fall, Cain struggles through child-like complaints and depression into isolation, and emerges with Adah's help into the vision of compassion and forgiveness.

⁹⁷ Robert Alter, Introduction, The Five Books of Moses, trans. Robert Alter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004) xix.

⁹⁸ Leo Strauss, "The Beginning of the Bible and Its Greek Counterparts," Modern Critical Interpretations: Genesis ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986) 30-1.

Byron uses parallel structure to imagine Cain and Adah's plan to leave east of Eden to create their world of love-begetting-love, which mirrors Adam and Eve's reaction to Abel's murder. Eve takes action first in response to the murder, and Adam adds to her proposition and thus divides the family. Adah also takes first action, proposing to Cain to divide their burden, to which Cain agrees: "Eastward from Eden will we take our way."⁹⁹ Cain uses the first-person plural "we" to indicate that Cain accepts Adah as his companion, in the first instance of Cain referring to himself and Adah as a unit. He embraces her compassion—which aids him—but he nonetheless feels the guilt of his deed:

Cain. And *he* [Abel] who lieth there was childless. I
 Have dried the fountain of a gentle race,
 Which might have graced his recent marriage
 couch,
 And might have temper'd this stern blood of mine,
 Uniting with out children Abel's offspring!
 O Abel!

Adah. Peace be with him!

Cain. But with *me!*—¹⁰⁰

Cain laments the end of Abel's lineage, but not his grief for the deed itself. Cain, for the first time, demonstrates compassion for another being. He shows foresight, too, reflecting upon how his brother's family might have influenced his own "stern blood." He hypothesizes a union that could have been, with their two families together in the world. Cain rephrases Adah's prayer of "Peace" for Abel to refer to himself. Cain wants peace for himself; he wants to temper his guilt. Inherent in the exchange is Cain's recognition that Abel is "with [him]" and so he will be able to carry that spirit into the world.

⁹⁹ *Cain* III.i.552.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, III.i.556-61.

Byron's Cain carries the spirits of Lucifer, Abel, and Adah within him, represented in his potential for solitude and analysis, forgiveness, and compassion respectively. The archetypes represented in Lucifer, Abel, and Adah are each reflected in Cain, such that his connections to each of the characters represents his ability to elicit the trait specifically associated with each one. It is easy to relate to Byron's Cain because he represents the potential for many conditions, emotions, and mental states. Robert Davidson asserts that "Adam is not the first man who lived at a particular place and time in human history; he is 'Everyman', the 'Everyman' in us."¹⁰¹ Davidson thus points to the ease of identification that humanity can make with the first man, citing that he is all of us. However, in the context of Genesis—and Byron's *Cain*—Davidson's statement falls short of specificity and accuracy. Byron's retelling models Adam on how he was led by Eve in Genesis: "She took from its fruit and ate / and gave also to her husband beside her, / and he ate."¹⁰² Complaining how easily Eve persuaded him, Adam comments to the Lord: "The woman whom you gave to be beside me, she gave me from the tree, / and so I ate."¹⁰³ Adam receives his punishment for his blind following: "To Adam he [the Lord] said: / Because you have harkened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying: you are not to eat from it! / Damned be the soil on your account."¹⁰⁴ Byron's Cain is the true everyman, because he has the capacity for creativity, solitude, reflection, self-analysis, forgiveness, and compassion, whereas

¹⁰¹ Robert Davidson, "The meaning of myth," The Cambridge Bible Commentary (New English Bible): Genesis 1-11, ed. P.R. Ackroyd, A.R.C. Leaney, and J.W. Packer (Cambridge: University Press, 1973) 11.

¹⁰² Genesis 3:6.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3:12.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:17.

Adam—whether in Genesis or *Cain*—appears as a simpleton, incapable of making decisions, following only what others tell him to do.

By contrast, at the end of the drama, Cain has a definitive plan to venture into the world, and he asks for peace. He pleads—with himself, with Adah, with Abel, perhaps—to bear with life, rather than wishing to end his suffering as he did earlier: “Would I had never lived!”¹⁰⁵ Wolf Hirst comments on Cain’s psychological growth in his summation of Byron’s drama:

Cain’s ironic reversal from self-imposed loneliness to enforced exile teaches him that man forsakes the dictates of sympathy and companionship at his own peril. No amount of stoicism, rationalistic argument, or Faustian aspiration will compensate for denial of feeling. Redemption can be brought about only by wedding the understanding to love [...] and if reason clashes with love, man is to choose the affections of the heart over the meddling intellect.¹⁰⁶

Hirst correctly frames *Cain* as a cautionary tale that demonstrates the danger of abandoning love and seeking isolation. Byron accomplishes this by emphasizing the consequences of Cain’s deed through reorienting the division of the first family. Though Cain leaves his parents to wander, his punishment does not include loneliness or solitary confinement out of necessity; he is essentially free to roam wherever he desires on earth. Cain’s parents condemn him—indeed, more harshly than the divine presence—yet their words do not affect him. Byron divides Cain from his parents and Zillah in such a way that the narrative forces him to live with the people who love him most.

Hirst concludes his argument by saying that: “The spirit pervading *Cain* represents an extreme in the Byronic canon, not of the ‘Satanic’ viewpoint, but of a Job-

¹⁰⁵ *Cain* I.i.115.

¹⁰⁶ Hirst 155.

like rebellion and silence in the face of Divine mystery.”¹⁰⁷ Hirst emphasizes the exile as a *punishment* rather than as a possibility, because he believes that *Cain* ends with its hero silenced by the Lord. He fails to read Cain’s mark as a coming to consciousness, which actually empowers Cain, and allows him to wander East of Eden away from his parents and from the Lord. Cain depart with the freedom to enact his will. Describing the typical Byronic Hero, Jerome McGann states: “[Byron’s] Satanic heroes are all properly self-destroyed.”¹⁰⁸ Cain, however, is an exception. Regarding the evolution of Cain’s disposition, Byron says, “His subsequent remorse is the natural effect of looking on his sudden deed—had the *deed* been premeditated—his repentance would have been tardier.”¹⁰⁹ Byron confirms the previous assertion that Cain’s deed is accidental—“sudden,” the precise word here—and that his regret and self-imposed guilt save him from the typical fate of a Byronic Hero.

Over the course of the drama, Cain feels the stress of his burdens: he laments his state and blames his labors on his parents; he self-isolates and wonders if life is worth living when death is inevitable, and he feels guilt for murdering his brother. His traits characterize him as a Byronic Hero, which Peter Thorslev describes as a “bigger than life [...] by virtue of his intellectual powers, his personal dignity, and his capacity for feeling—and all of them are certainly activated by a very self-conscious pride, even in their suffering.”¹¹⁰ It is tempting to emphasize the influence Byron had on the birth of his Byronic hero, yet scholars do not agree that such a connection can be definitively

¹⁰⁷ Hirst 172.

¹⁰⁸ Jerome McGann, *Don Juan in Context* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976) 27.

¹⁰⁹ *Byron’s Letters and Journals* Vol. 9 53-4.

¹¹⁰ Peter L. Thorslev, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962) 187.

made. Nonetheless, it is difficult to ignore a passage from Byron's letter to John Murray on September 20, 1821: "I am not sure that long life is desirable for one of my temper & constitutional depression of Spirits—which of course I suppress in society—but which breaks out when alone--& in my writings in spite of myself."¹¹¹ Byron suggests that he tries to suppress his true spirit from the public, yet he brands his writing with that which he tries to hide.

On February 18, 1814, Byron writes in his journal: "the idleness is troublesome; but I can't see so much to regret in the solitude. The more I see of men, the less I like them. If I could but say so of women too, all would be well. Why can't I?"¹¹² Byron rejects companionship, yet also recognizes its necessity. He realizes, because of his melancholy, that compassion is important. The titular character of *Manfred* rejects companionship in the world in favor of isolating himself within the guilt of his life:

whate'er
I may have been, or am, doth rest between
Heaven and myself.—I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator.¹¹³

Manfred does not believe that human relationships can improve his state, and he would rather die than deal with what he feels. He only gives in to the abbot when he is near death, and he extends his hand to the old man. On April 14th, 1817, Byron writes to John Murray, admitting his temperament's influence on his writing:

The third act is certainly d—d bad--& [...] has the dregs of
my fever—during which it was written.—It must on *no*
account be published in its present state; I will try & reform
it—or re-write it altogether—but the impulse is gone—& I
have no chance of making anything out of it. I would not

¹¹¹ Byron's Letters and Journals Vol. 8 216-7.

¹¹² Byron's Letters and Journals Vol. 3 243.

¹¹³ Manfred III.i.52-5.

have published it as it is on any account.—The speech of
 Manfred to the Sun is the only part of this act I thought
 good myself—the rest is certainly as bad as bad can be--& I
 wonder what the devil possessed me¹¹⁴

Here it is apparent that Byron's struggle with solitude mingled with the writing of this drama—the “fever” of his passions came through. Manfred becomes fired up with guilt and grief because his love “killed” Astarte. Responding to his emotions, Manfred isolates himself as a kind of punishment. Perhaps Byron struggled with the ending because he knew that *Manfred's* end could neither unravel into further solitariness, nor ascend into recovery. At the end of the month, Byron continued to struggle, following up with another letter to Murray on April 26: “I have done nothing at *Manfred's* third act—you must wait—I'll have it in—in a week or two—or so.”¹¹⁵ In *Cain*, Byron attempts to resolve the central dilemma he discovered and struggled with in *Manfred*: that of the character's self-imposed solitude, and how one could possibly recover from such a state.

Byron demonstrates the slightest glimmer of necessity for human interaction when Manfred speaks to the Abbot in the last lines of the drama, “Fare thee well— / Give me thy hand.”¹¹⁶ Throughout Byron's published letters and journals, he compares his new writing project *Cain* to *Manfred* in style, form, and subject. The importance of this comparison should not be glossed over. On January 28th, 1821 he writes, “Pondered the subjects of four tragedies to be written (life and circumstances permitting) to wit, Sardanapalus, already begun, Cain, a metaphysical subject, something in the style of Manfred, but in five acts, with the chorus.”¹¹⁷ Seven months later, on September 10, 1821

¹¹⁴ Byron's Letters and Journals Vol. 5 212.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹¹⁶ Manfred III.iv.148-9.

¹¹⁷ Byron's Letters and Journals Vol. 8 36-37.

he writes, “By this post I send you three packets containing ‘Cain’ a Mystery—(ie a tragedy on a sacred subject) in three acts.—I think that it contains some poetry—being in the style of ‘Manfred.’”¹¹⁸ Byron had unfinished business with the themes suggested in *Manfred* which he had hoped to resolve in *Cain*: how an insular, lonely character might improve his psychological state? The answer would come: through compassion and creation.

Alone, Cain cannot be saved. Adah tempers his guilt with her compassion, but her empathy cannot save him from a Byronic destruction unless he accepts her help. In Byron’s narrative, Cain’s quest begins with refuting the ways of his parents when he criticizes the way they pray to God without conscious reflection. Cain rejects the tradition of his parents as he rejects the Lord and Lucifer. Though Cain adopts Lucifer’s advice about an inner world, he knows better than to follow the model of Lucifer’s entirely loveless life. When Lucifer remarks, “I pity thee who lovest what must perish,” Cain answers, “And I thee who lov’st nothing.”¹¹⁹ Cain insults and rejects Lucifer’s life condition; he recognizes that living a loveless existence is worthless, and so dismisses the fallen angel. This rejection of Lucifer’s solitary life saves Cain from the fate of the typical self-destructive Byronic Hero, like Manfred. Cain recognizes Lucifer’s faults as undesirable and destructive, and acts on the knowledge, instead of ignoring it, which would have caused him to fail and succumb to a fate akin to Lucifer’s.

If Cain exhibits the typical traits of a Byronic Hero—nihilism, analytics, and solitude—yet does not fall to their destructive fate, what exactly he *is* becomes more complex. Reik proposes that repressed guilt and aggression can lead to violence:

¹¹⁸ Byron’s Letters and Journals 205.

¹¹⁹ Cain II.i.337-8.

People are caught in that trap between the instinctual gratification and the inner tension owing to repressed aggressiveness. In the intervals between eruptions of violence, wars, pogroms, bloody persecutions, crusades, inquisitions, and gas chambers, an increasing discomfort and dissatisfaction pervaded our civilization.¹²⁰

Reik asserts here that chaos and destruction can occur when one's instinctual drive to live clashes with unresolved guilt feeling. In this way, Cain is on the verge of self-destruction, and would fail if he did not confront his guilt feeling with the help of Adah. In a short essay commenting on *Cain*, Goethe writes: "we must not forget that through the whole piece there runs a kind of presentiment of the coming of a Saviour."¹²¹ If Byron's Abel represents Christ-like forgiveness, and Cain embodies the spirits of forgiveness and compassion, then Cain represents the rebirth of these traits; he lives through the experience of death which informs his actions and perspective. Cain, then, is his brother's keeper and savior. He bears the traits of love, compassion, and forgiveness into the world, and Adah helps him to uphold them. Byron establishes Cain as a new redeemable kind of Byronic Hero; he is a Savior who breaks his fetters of self-imposed solitude through compassion, thus avoiding the archetypal self-destruction of the Byronic Hero through the recognition of his own guilt.

Byron does not retell the entirety of Cain's story; he stops when Cain accepts his fate to wander, bringing Adah, his children, compassion, and forgiveness with him. Though Byron's retelling ends before Cain founds the first city, he imagined his tale in the context of Genesis: "I trust that the Rhapsody has arrived—it is in three acts, and

¹²⁰ Reik 417.

¹²¹ Goethe, quoted in "The Opinions of Byron's Social and Literary Circle," Lord Byron's Cain: Twelve Essays and a Text with Variants and Annotations, ed. Truman Guy Steffan (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968) 328.

entitled ‘A Mystery,’ according to the former Christian custom, and in honor of what it probably will remain to the reader.”¹²² In a tongue-in-cheek statement, Byron says that his *Cain* may remain a “mystery” to its readers, as he comments perhaps on his work’s dense composition. It is possible that Byron’s own intentions in writing *Cain* may never be known—despite his extant writing, he may never have documented his reasoning in retelling the Cain and Abel myth. Nevertheless, ending the drama with Cain wishing for peace implies that his future actions will be fueled by love. Ending before the founding of the city—which Kayin lovingly names after his first-born son—demonstrates the ability of the mythical Kayin/Cain figure to feel compassion despite having murdered his brother.

Cain is Byron’s honest endeavor to show the possibility of transcending guilt, self-loathing, and isolation through responsibility, self-acceptance, and love. *Cain* demonstrates the fundamental necessity for companionship in the face of struggle, and the necessity, too, for humility when burdens are overwhelming. Byron’s life reflects these themes—in his writings he often laments and curses the state of his demeanor and personality. On January 16, 1814, he writes to Lady Melbourne of the fear of his temper while in a relationship:

What I want is a companion—a friend—rather than a sentimentalist—I have seen enough of love matches--& of all matches—to make up my mind to the common lot of happy couples.—The only misery would be if I fell in love afterwards which is not unlikely—for habit has a strange power over my affections—in that case I should be jealous—and then—you do not know—what a devil any bad passion makes me—[...] and I have more reasons than you are aware of for mistrusting myself on this point¹²³

¹²² Byron’s Letters and Journals Vol. 8 216.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4 34.

Despite his lamentations here, it may be impossible to point to direct influences his temper had on his writings, let alone *Cain*. However uncertain the intent behind his *Mystery* may be, the effect that *Cain* had on Byron's life seems evident and poignant. There seems a symbolism in his final actions before his untimely death: Byron puts his own guilt, remorse, and ego aside in joining the campaign to free Greece. Indeed, he strongly believed in the cause, as he expresses in a letter to Prince Alexander Mavrocordatos of Greece on October 1, 1823:

My fallen hope changes to dread when I think of the consequences that this discord can bring—of the advantages and of the opportunities that it can offer to those Barbarians your oppressors—to the coolness that it will produce in all those interested in your cause, that is, all friends of Enlightenment and Humanity—and to the pretexts that it might lend to the natural enemies of every liberty to meddle in Greek affairs, with the collapse of all the noble hopes of the good people. In spite of every deplorable circumstance, my feeling for your cause will certainly remain unchanged—and when the opportunity presents itself to me to be really useful to your country, I will not hold myself back from doing so because of dangers or sacrifices or for any other less noble reason.¹²⁴

Cain finds it difficult to accept compassion—the “suffering with”—but before his death, Byron finds what is important: the raising of a free-thinking, self-empowered civilization, tempered with the love for one's fellow man.

Chapter IV: Retelling the Myth

Byron highlights the parental influence on both Cain and Abel, indicating how Adam and Eve show favor for their younger son. The parents shape how their children believe in God, and so perhaps Adam and Eve's treatment of Cain differed from that of

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 11 38.

Abel, leading to the different dispositions of the two sons. Another reimagining of the myth might begin:

And Adam knew Eve his wife, she became pregnant and bore Cain. She said, I have begotten a man, like the Lord! She soon bore again—his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, as his father had done, and Cain became a worker of soil, taking over for his mother so that she could retire. As child labor, Abel would roam the meadows near Eden, tending his flock, while the older brother would till the soil in the heat of the sun from dawn till dusk. Cain grew jealous of his brother who could sleep until noon, while he himself had to rise and sleep with the motions of the sun. Abel would settle in bed earlier than Cain, so his parents always told him the stories of the foregone years. Abel learned about the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, the snake who tempted his mother to eat, and the Lord who sent them forth from their Paradise into the days of sweat, work, and blood. Cain would return home from the fields late, his arms filled with the potatoes he had harvested, and would prepare himself dinner, his parents already having gone to sleep. When he would collapse onto his bed, Abel would retell him the stories, but revised: he would tell of the one tree of life and knowledge, and how Cain should be afraid of the Lord who ousted his parents and made his mother bear him with such pain.

And so Abel misled his older brother and went to sleep easily, while Cain fell asleep with shame, fear, and the loneliness of the field still in his heart. In the morning, he asked his brother if, on his day off from the meadows, he would join him in the field to work, as Cain worked six of the seven days of the week and Abel worked only five. Abel, thinking the job would be fun, and not understanding the labor required, joined his

brother. He complained about the struggle it was to work the soil in the heat of day.

Cain, growing further frustrated with his brother, struck him down into the soil which he worked, and would work no more.

Genesis places great importance on the older brother's killing the younger, and not the reverse. Indeed, Byron continues this tradition in characterizing Cain as the tortured rebellious older brother, and Abel as the forgiving, if modest and conservative, younger brother who readily follows his parents. How would the myth change if the murder took place in the reverse?

Now it was, after the passing of days that Cain brought forth the fruit of the soil, a gift to the Lord, and as for Abel, he too brought the firstborn of his flock. The Lord had regard for Abel and his gift, for but Cain and his he had none. Cain became upset and his head hung low.. The Lord said to Cain, in the presence of his brother Abel: Why are you so upset? Why has your face fallen? Had you presented as honest a gift as your brother, I would have been appeased; if you are well-intentioned, let not the demon of sin crouch at your door. You can rule yourself, and thereby resist his lust.

And Abel said to his brother: You must do what the Lord tells you, else you will let evil reign amid our family again, as mother was tempted by the snake in Eden. Let us not fall farther, whither I dare not know, or ask to know! And Cain lifted his head to look upon his brother, and revealed his face wet with tears of shame and guilt for his poorly presented and received gift. He knew not how to please the Lord, as his brother did, and so felt great anguish for his failure. Cain replied: I am sorry, brother, for I know how much you give to our Lord and I am trying to do the same. I promise I will not let in the demon, or repeat our parents' error.

And Cain was honest, and sought not to enrage his Lord or his parents. But Abel grew fearful for their next sacrifice, fearing more and more to lose the life he knew; and so he followed his brother into the field for work and slew him before Cain could unknowingly doom them all like Eve had. The Lord said to Abel: Where is Cain your brother? Abel said: Here he lies, dead by my will. I am my brother's keeper, but I will not be responsible for the demons he might have unleashed upon our family—for he knew not his true nature. He said: What have you done! A sound—your brother's blood cries out from his soil, the field of his love and labor; you have sent him to his home, and from there shall you be cursed to wander the earth. All animals shall fear you, and none shall lend you their strength. Wavering and wandering will you be upon this earth.

Similar to this retelling, Byron transforms his Cain into a strong protagonist who feels the burden of existence and guilt. He does neither prescribe nor write morality into the Biblical tale. Through the reinterpretation of the Genesis text Byron presents the psychological motivations behind the characters such that the context of Cain's wandering and founding of a city—as a positive, progressive movement of society—becomes plausible. However, a generic tale with a happy ending might be implausible with the Cain and Abel story. How could Cain be transformed into a protagonist who can live a happily ever after?

The Lord drove his first people from paradise. Adam and Eve departed Eden in fits and arguments, each blaming the other for what they had truly done together against the Lord's will. And so they begrudgingly settled outside Eden—which was guarded by the ever-burning sword—for neither would take the others' life, not yet knowing what death would mean for either of them. And so the days passed as the two grew to hate

each other; yet their lust multiplied, and so Eve bore a son, Cain, who would come to till the earth to serve his parents fruit and vegetable. And they bore a second son, Abel, to herd the flocks, and to slay them for their meals. The days passed like this, Cain in the field and Abel in the meadow, both returning late from long days' work to prepare dinner for their good-for-nothing, lazy parents. The brothers fell asleep each night to the sounds of their parents' arguments, each taking turns to blame the other, and even their children for great misfortunes.

But it came to pass that one day, the serpent—now traveling the earth, eating the soil as he slithered upon his belly—slithered into the family's home. He came to Cain and Abel, and whispered to them: "Children, come with me and we shall flee this home wrought with bitterness and guilt. We shall imagine a new world and leave behind this place. The brothers agreed together, the two great friends united in their brotherhood, and left their home east of Eden with the serpent.

They spent their first days merrily, passing lakes and rivers, mountains and gorges, wondrous sights of the earth they had not seen before. By the third day, the three decided to settle on a cold mountain range. The brothers had come to trust the serpent, but soon the creature desired them to serve him much as their parents had commanded. The two spoke about abandoning the creature in the morning, and making their way further east. The night before their escape, the serpent came to Cain, and told him that his brother planned to leave without him; and that he must slay his brother because he could never trust him again. In the morning, the brothers went out to the field, and began their work. Cain rose against his brother and slew him, but Abel cried out Cain's mistake, and Cain hung his head. The Lord's voice spoke to Cain: What have you done!

And Cain said: I am my brother's keeper, and I have done him great wrong. The serpent had learned from the last time, and slithered off before he could get caught in the wrong.

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve, sad to lose their child-servants, had borne another child Adah, who would serve their every whim: she worked the soil and tended the flocks in place of her unknown brothers. When Cain returned to his parents, he discovered his younger sister, who appeared more beautiful than any creature on earth. He saved her from their parents, and he told her of the serpent who had led him astray. He took the blame himself, and she nurtured his heart, for it was laden with sadness for his loss, guilt for the deed, and shame for mistrusting his brother. The two wandered forth, east of Eden, away from their lazy parents, and the slippery serpent, ignoring the voice of the Lord henceforth; and Cain took his sister as his wife, in this the Land of Nod, and the two founded the city of Enoch, named for their happy child. And they lived happily ever after.

This retelling provides Cain with as happy an ending as one could imagine without diverging too far from the events of the myth. Cain can live to redeem his deed, as long he has the companion to balance his suffering. Byron does just this in *Cain*; he burdens the eldest brother with guilt, and Cain becomes entangled in analytics. Byron provides Lucifer to aid Cain in realizing that he has a private space within, and so Cain can take command of his existence and make of it what he will. Byron provides Cain with Adah, whose gentle hand offers him unending love in her willingness to divide his hardship. Byron's Cain and Adah venture into the real world, where guilt and grief are burdensome emotions, but with companionship, compassion, and forgiveness, are tolerable and even surmountable.

Conclusion

In *Cain* Byron enforces this theme, characterizing Cain as nihilistic and suicidal because of his self-imposed solitude. He does not allow the characterization to rely on this alone, however, as it would render Cain a rather flat, one-dimensional character. If Byron merely depicted Cain as the first depressed human being, he would not have diverged significantly from the Genesis myth. Instead, he begins the drama with an interaction between the members of the first family, highlighting conversation between Cain and his parents in which the son questions and criticizes the old order. Adam and Eve have fallen into a postlapsarian rut—a kind of depression of their own—as now they live in fear and anxiety that questioning, creativity, or innovation will be punished as was their deed in the garden of Eden. Byron’s Adam and Eve live in the shadow of their deed, and they are conscious of their own caution. Their interaction with Cain indicates that the two parents have lost the traits that made them trespass against the Lord, namely imagination. The conflict between Cain and his parents stems from Eve’s attempts to quell Cain’s imagination and his questioning as well.

In Act One Cain “feels” much, acknowledging that he knows he lives, but that he cannot understand existence or the purpose of external authority figures; he despises himself because he cannot understand. Cain’s frustration with his parents—represented by the suppression of imagination—and Cain’s internal struggle to understand his purpose culminates in his existential crisis. In speaking with Lucifer in Act One he distances himself from Adah and her love, which further (self-)alienates and confounds Cain.

In Act Two Cain and Lucifer travel through space and Hades. Lucifer attempts to manipulate and aggravate Cain's guilt and self-loathing in showing him the earth and its surroundings, as well as confusing him with his depressed philosophies. Cain resists Lucifer because he realizes that the fallen angel is not happy—indeed, Lucifer cannot know happiness, and nor does it seem that he would like to know. Adah saves Cain from afar; his thoughts return and remain on her until the conclusion of Act Two as he defends his unending love for her. Lucifer offers Cain advice, and so closes the act proclaiming the need to create an “inner world.” Lucifer advises Cain to retain a fertile imagination—an imagination such as his mother and father used to have, one that inspires creation and disobedience. Though Lucifer's (self-imposed) solitude cripples him, he understands the necessity for imagination better than Cain's parents.

When Cain returns from his magical mystery tour, Adah receives him back as if had not left at all. Adah, a significant addition to the myth, balances Cain's thinking and inwardness with love and compassion. She speaks honestly, knowing that Lucifer's philosophy can lead to ruin, and offers herself freely as an equal companion. Indeed, throughout the drama Adah tries to be her brother's keeper—if only he would allow her to be so. Cain resists her because he has not yet experienced a self-awakening. He needs to individualize himself by accepting responsibility for his actions, as well as acknowledging the personal authority that rests in his power. When he strikes down his brother, Cain experiences the first death, which precipitates a fundamental shift in his thinking. Where in Act One Cain blamed his parents for his existence and his familial guilt, when Abel dies Cain immediately recognizes he is at fault—even if he does not know immediately what he has done. Cain realizes that existence is difficult but

worthwhile with the love and companionship of Adah. Cain's balance of suffering and love departs vastly from the original myth.

Imagining beyond Genesis, Byron writes Abel to forgive Cain with his dying breath. Falling through experience into consciousness, Cain recognizes the necessary guilt of his deed without casting blame upon anyone but himself. With his visionary mark as his sign of protection, he accepts Abel's spirit as part of himself; the trait of forgiveness is essential to bring forth into the world. Adah offers Cain balance through her willingness to suffer with him. With Adah's selflessness and Cain's imagination, they will venture into the world with their two children to build their city of love—the first city—while Adam, Eve, and Zillah will stay behind in self-pity. The final image of the first man and woman that Byron gives us is that of Adam assigning responsibility to Cain as they go their separate ways: “I curse him not: his spirit be his curse.”¹²⁵ Cain and Adah, however, earn the opportunity to create without fear of an external authority, knowing that their actions will be tempered with creativity, compassion, and even the guilt of past deeds.

In reimagining the myth as he does, Byron shifts the focus from punishment to possibility. He removes the external divinity and replaces its authority with that of Cain himself. Imbuing Cain with personal agency allows him to interact with Lucifer, an addition to the myth, yet not be completely overwhelmed by his conniving ways. Byron gives name and character to Cain's wife, unnamed in Genesis, and allows her to share Cain's responsibility. Indeed, Cain transcends the isolated state of the typical Byronic Hero because he accepts Adah's love and ends the drama with compassionate words for

¹²⁵ Cain III.i.449.

his fallen brother. Byron's Cain is an imaginative, if disobedient, savior—whose coming to consciousness anticipates the rise of the first city.

Bibliography

- Alter, Robert. Introduction. The Five Books of Moses. Trans. Robert Alter. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004. ix-xlvi.
- Auerbach, Erich. "The Sacrifice of Isaac." Modern Critical Interpretations: Genesis. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 11-15.
- Bloom, Harold. Introduction. Modern Critical Interpretations: Genesis. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 17-21. 1-9.
- "The Book of Luke." The New Testament: English Standard Version. 2001. Biblos.com <<http://esv.scripturetext.com/luke/23.htm>>. 4 Dec 2010.
- Buber, Martin. "The Tree of Knowledge: Genesis 3." Modern Critical Interpretations: Genesis. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 43-8.
- Burke, Kenneth. "The First Three Chapters of Genesis: Principles of Governance Stated Narratively." Modern Critical Interpretations: Genesis. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 17-21.
- Byron, George Gordon. Byron's Letters and Journals. Ed. Leslie A. Marchand. 12 vols. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973-82.
- . Cain. 1821. Lord Byron: The Major Works. Ed. Jerome J. McGann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 881-938.
- . Manfred. 1817. Lord Byron: The Major Works. Ed. Jerome J. McGann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 274-314.
- Campbell, Joseph. The Power of Myth: With Bill Moyers. Ed. Betty Sue Flowers. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.

- Cantor, Paul A. "Byron's 'Cain': A Romantic Version of the Fall." The Kenyon Review 2.3 (1980): 50-71. JSTOR. Kenyon College. 10 Oct. 2010.
- Carter, Angela. The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories. New York: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Cochran, Peter. "The Correspondence Between Byron and Percy and Mary Shelley." 1 Jan 2010. Peter Cochran's Website: Film Reviews, Poems, Byron.... 5 Dec 2010. <<http://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/byron-and-the-shelleys.pdf>>.
- Davidson, Robert. "The meaning of myth." The Cambridge Bible Commentary (New English Bible): Genesis 1-11. Ed. P.R. Ackroyd, A.R.C. Leaney, and J.W. Packer. Cambridge: University Press, 1973.
- Dorris, Michael. "The Mark of Cain." The Threepenny Review 67 (August 1996): 10-11. JSTOR. 28 Oct. 2010.
- Fox, Everett. "On the Book of Genesis and Its Structure." The Five Books of Moses. Trans. Everett Fox. New York: Schocken Books, 1995. 3-7.
- Gilbert, Sandra. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Girard, René. Violence and the Sacred. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. Untitled Essay on Cain. "The Opinions of Byron's Social and Literary Circle." Lord Byron's Cain: Twelve Essays and a Text with Variants and Annotations. Ed. Truman Guy Steffan. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968. 309-329.

- Gunkel, Hermann. The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History. 1901. Trans. W. H. Carruth. New York: Schocken Books, 1964.
- Hirst, Wolf Z. "Byron's Lapse into Orthodoxy: An Unorthodox Reading of 'Cain.'" Keats-Shelley Journal 29 (1980): 151-172. JSTOR. Keats-Shelley Association of America, Inc. 10 Oct. 2010.
- Kolatch, Alfred J. Complete Dictionary of English and Hebrew First Names. Middle Village, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., 1967
- Loughead, Flora Haines. Dictionary of Given Names, with origins and meanings, 2nd ed. Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1958.
- McGann, Jerome. Don Juan in Context. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Michaels, Leonard. "Byron's Cain." PMLA 84.1 (1969): 71-78. JSTOR. Modern Language Association. 10 Oct. 2010.
- Milton, John. Paradise Lost. 1667. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2005.
- Parker, Graham Frederick. "Between Satan and Mephistopheles: Byron and the Devil." The Cambridge Quarterly 35.1 (2006): 1-29. Project MUSE. Oxford University Press. 27 Oct. 2010.
- Pitzele, Peter. Our Fathers' Wells: A Personal Encounter with the Myths of Genesis. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995.
- Reik, Theodor. Myth and Guilt: The Crime and Punishment of Mankind. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957.

- Schock, Peter A. "The 'Satanism' of Cain in Context: Byron's Lucifer and the War against Blasphemy." Keats-Shelley Journal. 44 (1995): 128-215. JSTOR. Keats-Shelley Association of America, Inc. 10 Oct. 2010.
- Sexton, Anne. Transformations. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "On the Devil, and Devils." The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck. Vol. 7. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1930.
- Strauss, Leo. "The Beginning of the Bible and Its Greek Counterparts." Modern Critical Interpretations: Genesis. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 23-42.
- Tannenbaum, Leslie. "Lord Byron in the Wilderness: Biblical Tradition in Byron's 'Cain' and Blake's 'The Ghost of Abel.'" Modern Philology 72.4 (May 1975): 350-364. JSTOR. University of Chicago Press. 27 Oct. 2010.
- The Five Books of Moses. Trans. Everett Fox. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.
- The Five Books of Moses. Trans. Robert Alter. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.
- The Qur'an: A new translation by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem. Trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; 7: 10-19; 94-5.
- Thorslev, Peter L. The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962.
- Wispé, Lauren. "The Distinction Between Sympathy and Empathy: To Call Forth a Concept, a Word is Needed." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 50.2

(1986): 314-321. Science Direct. American Psychological Association, Inc. 4 Dec 2010.

Withycombe, E. G. The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names, 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.