

Lord Byron's heroic concept in his poem 'On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year'.

By: Dr. Faisal Al-Doori

## Introduction

### The Poem

This is an autobiographical poem which was written when the poet reached at 36 years old. In the first stanzas of the poem the speaker" represents himself as old in experience, as lonely, and as forsaken by those whom he has loved; he reminds himself, though, that this is not the time and place to lament his personal griefs, for he is engaged in a struggle for the liberty of an oppressed people. He will therefore forget himself and, not wishing to live longer, finds for himself a heroic death on the battle field." p. 487.

### Byron's Last Poem

By: Frederick L. Jones

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/4172248?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A7932ea1406a197f73c16fcea0cb798d3&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4172248?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A7932ea1406a197f73c16fcea0cb798d3&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

Actually, the speaker, or the poet himself feels dull, and his life with adventures of love is meaningless. So he decided to change the style of his life by sharing with great causes such as liberty. That great cause was the liberation of Greece which was under Turkey occupation. The speaker chose Greece because Greek civilization was the major source

for the Western renaissance. Also, the Spartan heroic pattern is so attractive for the speaker:

**“On this day I complete my thirty-sixth year” - Lord [Byron](#) and the Byronic hero**

On this day I complete my thirty-sixth year, was the last poem that Lord Byron wrote before he died at the age of 36, in Missolonghi.

He thinks it's time to die because, even though he always feels himself the same, he understands that isn't worth living regretting youth. He's like a volcanic island: all the fire, the passions, imprisoned in his person cannot longer be expressed as a time. He wants an honourable and memorable death, like a warrior so he decided to die as a hero fighting for the independence of Greek people (actually he died because of a disease).

The Byronic hero is at the same time the protagonist of the Byron's poem and the “persona” (in the Greek sense of the term), the mask that Byron created himself. The “Byronic Hero” is, the typical romantic hero, a young man fighting for lost causes (he already knows he will be defeated). Like Byron, he is a very handsome man, noble and mysterious: there is a secret in his past (a horrible sin, a fatal mistake, something unforgivable) but he [never](#) unveils it.

He is an outcast, solitary, inaccessible, a rebel (he didn't care the conventions). Everyone can feel the presence of a shade in his past and it's just this sense of melancholy which makes him so fascinating. No woman can resist him, while men either give him friendship or extreme hostility.

Destiny runs after him, and he becomes destiny for anyone he meets.

<https://www.skuola.net/letteratura-inglese-1800-1900/byron-lord-this-day.html>

driven to half-exile in Europe (mostly Italy) after an incestuous scandal and a divorce; favours nationalistic liberation movements in the wake of the French Revolution (e.g. in Italy and Greece) • plays the role of the romantic hero Æ "Byronic hero" • declares Pope his model Æ unites Romanticism with Neo-classicism (emphasis on satire; heroic couplet) • Byronic hero: displaced subject; dark, mysterious outsider of society; violation of social norms; follows his inner law without compromise Æ excessive individualism • Weltanschauung Æ public success (also: attraction of exoticism, eroticism and other taboos) • long verse epics (e.g. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, The Corsair) • satires (English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, A Vision of Judgment, Don Juan) • criticism of hypocrisy (aristocratic view against a bourgeois society) • scepticism; critique of excessive sentimentalism • Æ "enlightened Romanticism"

[https://www.uni-bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/split\\_lehrstuehle/englische\\_literatur/Materialien/Mueller/Poetry2/3\\_Wordsworth\\_Coleridge\\_SecondGeneration.pdf](https://www.uni-bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/split_lehrstuehle/englische_literatur/Materialien/Mueller/Poetry2/3_Wordsworth_Coleridge_SecondGeneration.pdf)

**romanticism in 'The Tyger' by William Blake, 'On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year' by Lord Byron and 'The World is Too Much with Us' by William Wordsworth.**

Romanticism With extensive reference to the text explore the romantic aspects of at least three of the poems in your collection. The three poems which I have decided to look at are: 'The Tyger' by William Blake, 'On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year' by Lord Byron and 'The World is Too Much with Us' by William Wordsworth. I have selected these three poems as I believe that they are the most rewarding in terms of romantic aspects. Every poem has several similar romantic aspects and several diverse romantic aspects. For example faith is an

matter in both 'The Tyger' and 'The World is Too Much with Us'. Nevertheless the differences can be revealed between 'The Tyger' which deals with faith among other aspects and 'On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year' which deals with heroic death along with other aspects. Every poem has strong romantic aspects which would be reviled by the Neo-Classicists. I will first of all talk about the romantic aspects of 'The Tyger' by William Blake. The poem is about God and how He was able to create the tiger. The tiger is not revealed as a good or bad animal, but like something amazing and frightening. [...read more.](#)

## **Middle**

During the second stanza he thinks that he is going to die and that 'the flowers and fruits of love are gone'. During the third stanza he thinks of himself as lonely and isolated 'Is lone as some volcanic isle; No torch is kindled at it's blaze - A funeral pile.' In addition he shows how he feels unloved and uncared for. By considering the first three stanzas you can notice that there are feelings which change all the time, this is a romantic aspect as Byron shows how he is thinking. He continues talking about how he is weighed down by love and how he is depressed. In the fifth stanza he remembers that he is in Greece and says he shouldn't think pessimistically in the land of heroism, soul and bravery: 'But 'tis not thus - and 'tis not here - such thoughts should shake my soul, nor now, where glory decks the hero's bier, Or binds his brow.' This is romantic as it refers to heroism and how heroic deaths are remembered. During the next stanza Byron mentions that he has glory, the battlefield of Greece and that he shouldn't be thinking about death: 'Glory and Greece, around me see!' In following stanza Byron speaks of Greece as the parent and the source of Western life and education: 'Awake!

## **Conclusion**

Wordsworth ends by saying how he might then be able to see images of ancient gods rising from the waves. The poet pictures 'Proteus rising from the sea' and 'Triton blowing his wreathed horn.' There are many romantic aspects throughout the poem, the most common and obvious being nature. Nature was a huge part of Wordsworth's life and he even worshipped it thinking that God was there in nature. In addition questioning faith and rejecting conventional feelings by saying that he wants to be a Pagan is a romantic aspect as writers looked inwards for God, not towards religious rituals. Moreover, ancient religion was of huge importance during the romantic period. Then there is also genuine, straightforward passion which would be rejected by classicists.

Wordsworth uses very simple words, portraying how passionate he is about nature and how important it is to him. The poem is a sonnet and is divided into two parts, an octave and a sestet. The rhyme scheme of the octave is ABBAABBA, and the sestet follows a rhyme scheme of CDCDCD. This shows some dramatic power which is romantic as it is unusual.

Overall all three of poems have firm connections with romanticism and are full of passion and unusual feeling. The three poems use language and thoughts which would have been detested by the classicists and are consequently very interesting. ?? ?? ?? ?? Romanticism 24th February 2005

<http://www.markedbyteachers.com/university-degree/linguistics-classics-and-related-subjects/romanticism-in-the-tyger-by-william-blake-on-this-day-i-complete-my-thirty-sixth-year-by-lord-byron-and-the-world-is-too-much-with-us-by-william-wordsworth.html>

George Gordon (a.k.a Lord Byron), who inherited wealth and a title at the tender age of ten, is considered the most notable example of the romantic self-projected hero. For two years he traveled various parts of the world, learning and finding inspiration for his later poetry. For years he made his living in London. But after a failed marriage, he left for Italy where he spent the remaining years of his life. There he wrote one of his most famous works, *Don Juan*, which had a cynical perspective on life. Byron is most noted for his invention of the Byronic hero, who the book

describes as a "remorseful but unrepentant rebel...rendered godlike, mysterious, grandly aloof - an anguished but arrogant figure of impenetrable thought...sullen, solitary sufferer...self-exiled, self-tormented, and eternally self-willed" (Horton 560, 561).

Notable works: *Don Juan* and *She Walks in Beauty*

*On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year* (analysis): In this poem, written on the morning of his thirty-sixth birthday, Byron speaks of the coming battle and his wish for an honorable death. In the first few stanzas he speaks of how his life is coming to an end: "My days are in the yellow leaf/ The flowers and the fruits of love are gone/ The worm, the canker, and the grief/ Are mine alone!" He goes on to speak of the upcoming battle in which he would be fighting with the Greeks: "The sword, the banner, and the field/ Glory and Greece, around me see!" He ends the poem saying he would wish to have an honorable death, that he would be able to leave this life in peace: "Then look around, and choose thy ground/ And take thy rest" (Horton 563)

Application: In the second-to-the-last stanza of the poem, Byron writes, "If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*" The obvious application from this quote is to spend my life doing things that are worth living for. I need to be spending my youth wisely, doing things that are profitable, things I want to do. Hopefully the things I want to do are the things that God would want me to do. I know that if I spend my youth, or my entire life, really, doing things that have eternal value, I will not regret it. One of my present goals is to focus more on relationships than on academics. Spending time with relatives, church family, and friends is more important than getting an A+ in all of my classes. Spending time with my youth group doing outreaches to the community is more important than wasting an afternoon at home on the computer. That is my application: to spend my time in a more profitable manner.

Horton, Ronald A., ed. *British Literature*. Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1992. 560-563.

<http://adriene004.blogspot.com/2009/02/george-gordon-lord-byron.html>

### Exploration

1. Lord Byron, the man known as an indefatigable lover, the revolutionary commander, is alone on the night of his birthday and he feels he is getting old, he is far from home – what do you think he will write about in this poem?

Make a list of 3 items, then check with your mates. Then read the poem slowly and check whether your guesses were right.

2. While you read check your predictions and say whether the following statements are true or false.

- a. Byron is loved by an unnamed girl
- b. He no longer has the strength to love
- c. It is not the right place or moment for gloomy thoughts
- d. Byron thinks he should not be bothered with love
- e. He is on the verge of suicide

### Analysis

3. Byron, the cynical, the satirist, the humorous writer is not to be found here. How would you define this poem?

Sad tragic despondent melancholic gloomy desolate

Check with the dictionary if you are not sure about the difference between these adjectives, then choose one (or more) and discuss your choice with the class.

4. How does Byron convey his feelings of bitter unhappiness? Analyse the text to find out.

- a. Put a + near each line dealing with life and passions. Put a – near those lines dealing with death and decay. Which ones prevail?

b. “To be or not to be?”: the question is the same as in *Hamlet*. Underline the reasons for continuing to live and circle the reasons that justify giving “away breath”. Which ones prevail?

5. This poem is a soliloquy: the poet is speaking to himself. Half of the poem is in the first person singular, as in all soliloquies. The second half – with a typical Romantic rhetorical device – changes the verb person. Where is the division between the two parts? What person does Byron use in part 2?

6. This is a self-addressed speech. Poems of this kind are usually simple and direct in language and style. Yet there are two great metaphors in this poem, one concerning old age and the other loneliness.

Find them.

Old age: stanza

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Loneliness: stanza

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7. The theme is very simple: summing up one’s life and considering one’s expectancies for the future – and accepting or refusing them, though this might mean death. Most probably you too have summed up your life on your birthday sometimes. Does Byron give voice to feelings similar to yours, although in a far more tragic way?

<http://englishlit-5.blogspot.com/2011/12/on-this-day-i-complete-my-thirty-sixth.html>

This is the last poem Byron wrote, on 22 January 1824. He had arrived at Missolonghi three weeks earlier, taking command of his “army of liberation” which would free Greece from the Turks. But he died of fever on 19 April, after railing against incompetent doctors who literally bled him to death.

<https://englishhistory.net/byron/poems/on-this-day-i-complete-my-thirty-sixth-year/>



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## On this Day

2002-10-28

Added by: Maddy

Byron wrote this poem at Missolonghi while fighting in the Greek War of Independence against Turkey. He died of a fever after distinguishing himself as a military leader. He was given a hero's funeral.

## Rhyme Scheme/Meter/Genre

2004-02-29

Added by: Duggal

Rhyme scheme: AB:AB

Meter: Iambic Tetrameter, which is simply unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable four different times.

Type and/or genre of poem:

Lyric: A lyric is a short poem which expresses the writer's personal feelings, and this poem since it is about the poem's desire to die in battle, it displays his feelings and thoughts.

<http://plagiarist.com/poetry/5949/comments/>

macbeth's saying: "my way of life is fall'n into the sere and yellow leaf"

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[https://www.jstor.org/stable/4172248?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A7932ea1406a197f73c16fcea0cb798d3&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4172248?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A7932ea1406a197f73c16fcea0cb798d3&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

