CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION
In the beginning of the 19th Century a kind of minute metamorphosis can be obviously seen in the various literary genres. Especially this transformation is traceable in the poetic genre. Poetry tended to become novelistic. The writings of the 19th Century poets showed some characteristic features of a novel. The writings of William Wordsworth, Crabbe and Lord Byron show the symptoms in this trend.

Wordsworth and his poem *The Prelude* are to be studied for casual observation as a testimony of this fact. Wordsworth had insights as a poet which revealed new possibilities for the novelists. His insights are into the nature of the human mind, into the development of the individual human being from infancy to maturity, into the relationship between states of mind and external world. There are also his sense of a living connection between the individual being and the universe, and generally, his sense of the mystery of things. These psychological, moral and religious insights had undoubtedly a deepening effect on the novel in the 19th Century and must have had to do with the greatness of the greater novels.
Wordsworth's poetry extended the conception of the nature of man as not simply the 18th Century 'rational' or 'social man' but as an imaginative, creative being and as having unexplored depths. In these respects we may justly recognize the poet Wordsworth as predecessor of George Eliot and Lawrance, both novelists. Some of the childhood and boyhood experiences recollected in The Prelude are in fact painful and disturbing - shocks, frights, the sense of being lost - and such as no one would wish to live through again, except imaginatively.

The child and the adolescent, the pains of growing up and of arriving at mature manhood or womanhood, are one of the main recurrent themes in the novels of the 19th Century, including the greater novels of Brontes, George Eliot and finally Lawrence. It is the same theme that the poets - Wordsworth, and before him Blake - had already begun to explore. It has to do with the 19th Century interest in the developing individual, the individual's struggle for liberation not only from external oppressions but from his own imprisoning states of mind.

Crabbe of his Verse Tales and Byron of Don Juan are at first sight more obviously than Wordsworth - are the poets of the periods who are
nearest to being, in their verse, themselves novelists. The novelist whom Crabbe may most readily be associated with is Jane Austen. In Crabbe as in Jane Austen there is a good deal of the 18th Century. In Crabbe's *Verse Tales*, as in Jane Austen's novels, there is also the developing 19th Century moral and psychological, analytical interest in the individual, to his or her family and whole society. This is the interest that is greatly developed in *Middle March* and a few other great novels of the 19th Century.

Byron is the third of poets because *Don Juan* is the one long poem of the period that is, at least in some ways, most like a novel in verse.¹ There are essential differences between *Don Juan* and either an 18th Century novel or an 18th Century poem. *Don Juan* is a highly personal work. It is different from anything by Byron's contemporaries and different from his own early work. Among the prose authors Peacock comes into mind (Headlong Hall - 1816, Nightmare Abbey - 1818) as offering some points of comparison, because of the lightness of touch, his sparkle and vivacity, as a humourous entertaining critic of the ideas and opinions, the intellectual fashions and interests of his time.
But above all, both as an expression of the developing individualism of the early 19th Century and as something like a novel in verse, there is clearly a relation between the new thing that Don Juan is and the whole 19th Century development from poetry into novel. Among the later 19th Century approximations to a novel in verse the most distinguished is Clough's *Amours de Voyage* (1849) which has some qualities anticipatory of James. But by then, as the great novelists occupied the field, poetry as a whole had taken a turn away from the novel.²

Byron is radically a 19th Century personality and Don Juan is a very personal expression of the poet's personality. In this way it is essentially an 19th Century poem. It is indeed much more completely and authentically an expression of Byron's personality, his whole complex personality. Don Juan is not merely an expression of personal rebellion and defiance, it is genuinely and gaily liberating in effect, a liberation of the human spirit from the mumbo-jumbo of rigidifying social and moral conventions and institutions (as they existed in the England and Europe of his time). Strangely
in this respect - the individual shaking himself free, bursting his bonds - we can readily associate Byron with Blake and Dickens.

In so far as the 'Comic Spirit' is based on a 'common sense' view of human life, we may agree that there is here, in Don Juan still a connection with the great 18th Century writers. But if so, it is a connection that goes back through the 18th Century to an older world, as in the line of the great comic authors through all the three Centuries. The radical difference from the 18th Century is that in Byron as in Burns 'good sense' is no longer equated with 'decorum'. On the contrary, conventions together with 'decorum' are observed to be often in practice absurdly at variance with human nature. In this respect again Don Juan proves to be more in accordance with the new (or renewed) interest in the individual human being.

John Galt, wrote of Don Juan at the time of its appearance, "It is professedly an epic poem, but it may more properly be described as a poetical novel." He goes on to describe it further, "Bold and buoyant throughout, it exhibits a free irreverent knowledge of
the world, laughing or mocking as the thought serves, in the most unexpected antithesis to the proprieties.\(^3\)

Some features of resemblance between Tom Jones and Don Juan are noticeable. Byron had great admiration for Tom Jones and Fielding himself thought of the work as a comic prose epic of contemporary ordinary life. But when we have noted these resemblances - the character and adventures (or misadventures) of the hero (or anti-hero), the humourous, sceptical but genial presence of the author as observer and commentator, the exposures of cant out hypocrisy - we are left with the ways in which Don Juan is different, a new invention in a new style, unlike anything else before or since.

II. Vision of the Hero

After viewing the poem Don Juan as a poem in verse with relation to some other important wirings of great writers, we are to make a study about the hero of the poem. Byron's poem clearly exhibits such emotions and experiences as found in The Prelude and some other poems and novels. His hero is like that of a hero in
a picaresque novel, a wanderer whose peregrinations take him all around the world. Juan undergoes all the changes - from a child to an adolescent, gradually grows into a young man well versed with the worldly wisdom that is expected of a young man. Here too he is under the stress and strains of chains like his mother's foolish love towards him, his systematic education and finally his love affair with Donna Julia, already wife of a lord Alfonso. After receiving severe jolts from his mother and on account of his foolish love towards a woman older than he is, he wants to set himself free and lead an individual life for himself not under the influence of any one.

His affair with Julia brings out two feelings. For Juan it is no more than an exciting experience. For Julia it is different. She goes to convent. Of all his contacts with women, the one with Haidee, the daughter of a Pirate lord is the most enchanting. It can be dare said that if chance had gone well, their love would have ended in happy fruition.

But Destiny did not propose it so. Haidee for Juan was a child of nature. Their love is said to
be ideal. But each case of love leads to disaster. Haidee dies of grief. Juan comes to know that men are incapable of real constancy and devotion. When Juan learns of Haidee's tragic death, he takes it lightly. After his affairs with Julia and Haidee he goes on his voyage using his natural charms to improve his worldly position. As his career proceeds he learns to exploit more fully his physical advantages. He yields to the demands of the Empress Catherine of Russia. The latter is a despot—which fact Juan loathed as his creator too did. She sends him to England with a secret mission. Still Juan obeys her words as she was for him, for sometime, in some ways, the guide to his achievement of his personal ends and a key figure in the stages of his growth into a finer young gentleman. Juan by this time is not an adolescent of the first episode. We may draw an inference that his amorous affairs with different women drove him from pillar to post, and made him realize his inertia.

Juan has reached a stage where he could assert himself and manage things single handed. At the many parties and functions he attends in England,
he comes across such women whom he had earlier encountered. He is no longer a slave to their viles. There is definitely growth in him. This growth can be turned as wisdom of the self.

The activities in which Byron involves his hero Juan are strikingly the very kind of adventures Byron himself wanted to have as his personal experiences. It may be argued that Juan is no more than a mouthpiece of Byron's feelings and emotions. Juan's existence does not stop here. He seems to be more matured than his creator wanted to. Moving in different circles, making satiric and caustic remarks, which are quite worthy and relevant taking into view the contemporary society which was highly hypocritical and immoral, Juan's stature grows like colossus. With the new guise as a perfect young gentleman, he can see through the world and its mean methods in the accomplishment of ends. As pronounced earlier, the whole world is hypocritical. He does not fall in line with the men and women he is moving with. Money and power are at one's door to obey one as is their nature.
Politics of his days is for him a replica of corruption and falsehood. In Canto XI, a comment to this effect can be heard. Politicians 'live by lies, yet dare not boldly lie', Juan develops in himself an aversion to such things. His wisdom of self leads him to greater things. He liberates himself from all such dishonest things and stands out as a patriot, shorn of all scandals. He grasps the gravity of the situation, ventures to take part in a battle and is ready to sacrifice his life at the altar of liberty. We are at a loss to know what happens afterwards, as the poem is incomplete.

With such a hero, with a new conversational type of stanza with the name Ottava rima and with a full expression of his thoughts and feelings of the world around him, his poem stands out remarkably as a fine piece of novel in verse. It is also an exquisite example of a good satire and a fine piece of dramatization of growth in the hero's personality.

A good deal of modern writing shows some of the aspects of Byron's later poetry. The Victorian and the Edwardian religion and literature were wedded
to the idea that society is more important than the individual. In modern writing the terms are reversed. The individual is more significant than the society. Moreover Eliot, Yeats, Joyce, Forster and Virginia Woolf and Auden in the thirties exploited the uses of wit associated with the poetry of Pope and the novels of Austen and Sterne. Sometimes the place of irony and wit are mild as in the case of Jane Austen and sometimes sharp and searching as in the case of Pope and Swift. It is these qualities of Byron's poetry that make the poetry interesting and readable.

We can sum up the point by quoting a very interesting and inclusive statement by Northrop Frye on Byron's influence. "Among English readers the reputation of the Romantic and sentimental Byron has not kept pace with his reputation as a satirist, but it would be wrong to accept the assertion, so often made today, that Byron is of little importance apart from his satires and letters. An immense amount of imitation and use of Byron, conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect has taken place in English literature, too, and nearly all of it is of the Romantic
Byron. Melville (whose Ishmael is in the line of Cain) Conrad, Hemmingway, A.E. Houseman, Thomas Woolfe, D.H. Lawrence, W.H. Auden - these writers have little in common except that they all Byronize". 4
REFERENCES:

1. Santayana, *Three Philosophical Poets*, in the Section on Goethe, also calls it so.

2. Pushkin's "Engene Onegin" might be said to have inaugurated the greater Russian novel and Pushkin's poem was partly inspired by Byron's *Don Juan*.

3. John Galt was himself was one of the most truly distinguished and original novelists of his periods. The *Entai* takes its place with *The Heart of Midlothian* as a Scottish novel of the period with qualities of greatness.