CHAPTER I.

THE ART OF POETIC NARRATION AND
THE NARRATIVE ART OF BYRON.
"We have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand," said Coleridge of the unpoeitic mind of the ordinary man. For the common man there is but one world, the world of physical reality; for the poet there are two; in addition to the physical world there is the world of spiritual reality for him. The function of poetry is to present the two worlds before us and to attune our sensitivity to such a pitch that gives us the eyes and the feelings to see and enjoy the two worlds. In the world of the poet, however, there are not two worlds, but one, or rather, his function is to blend and fuse these two worlds into one organic whole. And that poet is great who can blend and fuse these two worlds with such artistry that we do not see either of them isolated from the other in the finished creation.

It is obvious then, that the poet must set his eyes on both these spheres of human existence and must not do with the one without the other. A mere presentation of the physical world, however, will make it appear photographic and superficial, having little aesthetic value, and if the artist moves only in the world of spiritual reality it will appear vague and shapeless. It is a

question of temperament and leanings of the individual that make a narrative poet or a lyric poet. The one who moves more in the world of men and things becomes a narrative poet and the one who moves more in the world of thought and feeling becomes a lyric poet.

All poems are descriptions. It either describes human affairs and human conditions of the world with living characters in it when it becomes a narrative; or it describes the poet's own feelings and thoughts of the world or, what he imagines the world to be, when it becomes a lyric. So the description of a battle is a narrative, the description of a period of time containing living characters, is a narrative, for they become stories. But the description of the poet's thoughts and his ideas of the lifeless objects of nature is not a narrative for it does not contain a story; for the objects do not create anything by themselves as living characters do. It is the description of an idea or a feeling, an abstract and airy thing, and it becomes a lyric.

A lyric poem is essentially subjective and individualistic and appeals to the individual reader, whereas a narrative poem is essentially objective and here the appeal is rather collective. In the former the poet appeals to the imagination of the individual reader to understand him. He has got to say something and there
is in it a tone of urgency, expressed in the form of a strong emotion. In a narrative poem, on the other hand, the poet must always bear his readers or the audience in mind, whose interest in the story must be kept alive throughout the work. Here the appeal is not as much to his power of imagination as to his power of appreciation of a well-told story.

A narrative poem is necessarily longer and this factor makes it vulnerable to the weakness of dullness produced by monotony. Unless the artist is constantly aware of what he is about, the work will become flat and insipid. Hence lyrics are more spontaneous and narratives more conscious and controlled. A lyric poet, when he lets go his imagination, may vanish beyond the horizon, but a narrative poet always makes his presence felt everywhere. A lyric is more an art than a craft, a narrative is more a craft than an art; a lyric moves by the association of thoughts and feelings, a narrative moves by the association of events and their interactions. The success of a lyric poem depends on the interweaving of the associated thoughts, effected by the poet's imagination, imagery and music, produced by sound combination; the success of a narrative depends on the poet's ability to successfully weave the story in a way which keeps the readers asking, 'what then' ? 'And then ?' But events don't move by themselves, it is the characters
acting in certain situations that move them. The successful creation of gripping situations and the responses of the characters to them are important elements of narrative poetry. The individual character's success or failure do not matter so long as he responds to it and makes it living. So if we call the lyric poet a poet of dreams and contemplation, we should call the narrative poet a poet of action.

A narrative poem is therefore a poem of action and it must have a story to tell. The origin of narrative poetry must be sought in pre-history. It sprang from the chanting of myth relating to rituals in worship or religious festivals. The two fundamental types are epics and ballads. The narrator of an epic might have been a single individual, a priest or magician, a ballad would have been performed by a dancing group with a choral leader.

"Vestiges of this earlier mythic connection of narrative poetry can be seen in: (a) the very fact that the story is told in verse, and not in prose; for the rhythms of verse are associated with 'magic' effectiveness (not, as is often stated, because verse is easier to remember than prose); (b) the pervasiveness of alliteratives and associated techniques in epic, which are also associated with incantation; (c) the structure of the commonest stories, which coincides with the structure of myths;
(d) the association of the singing of epics with religious festivals; and (e) the tradition that the bard is a seer".2

Narrative art is essentially a reader-conscious art. The narrator is something like a public speaker who holds the stage demanding the attention of the audience. But a story can be told in verse as well as in prose with equal ease and fidelity. The necessity of telling a story in verse was felt because firstly it was oral and done either in the form of chanting or incantation, secondly the alliterations and assonance, for sound effect, used in its composition had a magic effect upon the audience. The frequent use of this device had been continued so long as poetry was oral and retained as a technique in composition and then as a mere convention when it began to be written down. "This technique later loses its overt magical function, but is preserved first as a device to aid in composition, and later as a convention".3 The poet was a seer, a man, possessing more than ordinary human powers and ability at which the people looked with wonder and awe. The idea that the poet is a seer is the source of the theory of divine inspiration in poetic composition. Prose narration did not

exist because it could not do what poetic narration could, to cast the spell of magic upon the ignorant audience. Modern narrative poetry is a distant descendant of the original oral narrative poetry, which has undergone all sorts of changes to suit the taste of the times. Though the appeal of a narrative poem is collective yet a modern reader can read and enjoy it individually, there is no need of the 'magic effect'. With the spread of education the spell of 'magic' is lost and stories and novels are pushing narrative poetry out of the stage.

In those distant days, when oral narrative poetry originated, society was war-like, not only because life itself was a grim struggle but there were constant wars between different tribes - "they gloried in battle, exulted in celebrating war's grimness, lusted in mighty deeds. They were never more themselves than when they cried, 'Let slip the dogs of war'. 4 The heroes of these exploits were invested with almost the equal prowess of the Gods of myths and the poetry recording their great feats gave rise to the tradition of Heroic poetry. Gods and demons, the forces of good and evil, who were supposed to sway human destiny, played very important roles in their life and hence they occupy very important positions in these works. "At the start is Shamanistic poetry in

which the chief character is the magician, and magic is 
the main means of success. This is touched by the new
spirit of a man-centred universe which appearing sepa­
tely in panegyric and lament, then invades narrative and 
produces a heroic poetry in which gods and men both take
part*.

After a lapse of time this heroic tradition turned to a new direction. This time narrative poetry began 
to record the love-interest and daring adventures of the 
heroes of the old tradition, giving rise to another, 
the Romance. Here we are led to admire not so much the
daring of the heroes and their human qualities as the 
wonderful inventions of the poet who takes us to an en­
chanting land of enchanting people with their enchanting 
feats. Now it becomes more subjective and personal.

"Stories, which in earlier versions may well have been 
straightforward accounts of heroic actions are re-written 
in the new spirit (adventure, exploitation of the marve­
llous). This spirit is combined with the cult of love, 
and the heroic poem becomes the poem of romance".6

This tradition had continued throughout the 
history of narrative poetry till the heroic tradition 
fell in disuse by the end of the middle ages. But Romance

continued to be in favour and gave rise to another great tradition, the Romantic literature which still holds the stage, though with some change of subject. Love, the eternal human passion, remains an important element, but the daring feats of the heroes of the Romance had to go. So the narrative poetry after 1750 assumed a quite different character. In a modern scientific society there is no place for these things. The quest of the heroes of the old Romance for adventure and the marvellous is now replaced by the quest of the modern romantic hero for something in the beyond, either externally in the objective world or, internally in his, often the poet's, own mind. The wonderland of the Gorgons and demons where princesses wait to be rescued now becomes the wonderland of the elemental beauty of Nature and more deeply, the wonderland of the inner soul of man. "What happens is that what has for long held its own as a philosophy of life and made all action look simple and easy to value, is abandoned for other claims which appeal to other elements in the human heart". The cultivation of the former, the objective world, produced Romantic narrative poetry, and that of the latter, that is, the hero's or the poet's own thoughts and feelings, produced Romantic

lyric poetry. Byron, who was more interested in the objective realities of life, falls in the first category; Shelley and others, who turned their mind inwards, fall in the second.

We are now in a position to skim over the history and development of narrative poetry in the European continent in particular, up to the Romantic age. Its first appearance is the Homeric epic, about 1000 B.C.; and the first written text of some length originated in Greece with the odes of Pindar, about 5th Century B.C. The Greek narrative poets took up myths as their subjects and hence paganism was an important element in them. But when the Romans took it up they began to treat history in their works. Virgil based his Aeneid on the Homeric model but there are historical overtones in it and in the 6th Book there is a brief description of Roman history. The tradition of written narrative poetry established by the Greeks and the Romans continued through the centuries to the present day. With the advent of Christianity there came a significant change in the subject matter. The paganism of the classical mythology was replaced by the new mythology of Christianity.

The early middle ages saw the appearance of the important branch of narrative poetry, the Romance. The 'Roman de Troie' by Benoit de Saint More, The 'Roman de la Rose' and the 'Chansons' are great examples of it.
In England we find the heroic narrative, Anglo-Saxon 'Beowulf' and the religious narratives, 'Genesis', 'Exodus', 'Daniel' etc. But even when oral texts began to be written down the tradition did not die. The tradition of oral narrative poetry was kept alive by the bards and troubadours and even to-day we find its relics in the folk-songs all over the world.

Boccaccio, of this period, is famous for his prose 'Decameron', and his 'Filostroto', in verse, on the story of Troilus and Criseide influenced Chaucer to write his narrative, 'Trollus and Criseyde'. In a way Chaucer stands midway between the middle ages and the modern times. Allegory has been in use in narrative poetry for a very long time, but in 'Canterbury Tales' Chaucer does not use this old machinery. He tells his stories in a straightforward manner with a wonderful sense of humour and homely realism. He is the first narrative poet who tells us about his own people and society. His interest in man, the common man, makes him the pioneer of the great democratic tradition of modern poetry. "Here allegory bows to realism as the first person convention does to the proper third person of narrative". Between Chaucer and the Romantics we must mention Spenser who, in the 16th Century became the greatest exponent of the allegorical narrative.

The eye of the democratic tradition of narrative poetry pioneered by Chaucer was picked up by the Romantic poets of the 19th Century, particularly by Wordsworth and Byron. Meanwhile, however, the Augustans broke new grounds by introducing new subjects and a change in style. But though they changed the subject and style they did not change the form. So the satires of Dryden and Pope, poured into a classical mould, are good and dignified poetry, leavened with polished irony, but little else. Since they belonged to the social elite themselves, they did not touch their own skin and could not come down to the street level. Poetry still remained a food for the intellectual elite. But the changed society in the Romantic age, caused by the changed economic, social and political conditions, made Wordsworth and Byron the champions of the downtrodden, the enslaved and the suffering masses. "A new interest in narrative poetry began to grow from about the middle of the 18th century, no longer a neo-classical movement (which seemed pretty well exhausted) but a movement in the direction of songs of the common people". The genial humour of Chaucer is turned into satirical humour in the hands of Byron. The type characters of Chaucer become the products of an organised society, a system, in the times of Byron. So

where Chaucer shows us the foibles of the types with a
smile, Byron attacks the system with his pungent satire,
first angrily, then with a cynical humour. Wordsworth,
however, remained contented with expressing his heart-
felt sympathy for the underdogs but never took up his
cudgel against the condition that made them that. This
passive sympathy invites Byron's ridicule, "Wordsworth
unexcised, unhired who then / Season'd his pedlar poems
with democracy". (D.J./III/93). The heat was too much for
him and he took shelter under the shade of Nature.

The Romantic age was prolific in lyric poetry and
its fame mainly stands on this. Yet all the poets of the
time wrote narrative poetry at one time or the other.
It was only Byron, however, who wrote narrative poetry
consistently. In all their poems we find the poet's own
peculiar flavour, Wordsworth moves in his pastoral world
and expresses his democratic ideals; Coleridge in his
world of the supernatural; Keats in his world of senses
in search of Beauty; Shelley in his world of dreams and
visions; but, Byron in his world of stark reality. Except
Byron the others are so much involved in their own philo-
sophy that it becomes difficult for the reader to get
at the story. They are more moved by their philosophy
and other aesthetic beauties of poetry than by the story
itself, the notable exception is Keats. Byron did not
aim deliberately either at any spiritual philosophy or
any aesthetic beauty in his poems. He rubbed shoulders with life proper and had no illusions about it. His characters are more full of life's energy; they live passionately, die passionately and respond to life's turmoils passionately. This passion and zest for life and his rebellious stand against all forces that try to destroy it, is his philosophy and this gives him his unique position among his contemporaries, and here also he differs from the 18th Century Augustans whom he admired. His satires differ from that of the Augustans in respect of language, style, composition and fundamentally, in the central theme, his attack on the 'establishment'. His melodramatic 'Tales' of the middle period, as we have mentioned earlier, are the results of his extrovert romanticism and not exactly an escape of the ego. When he cooled down and began to write seriously he became something quite different, and his 'Don Juan' becomes a Compendium in which he raises his passionate voice against injustice in all its forms.

Yet Coleridge's "Rime of the ancient Mariner" and Keats' 'The Eve of St. Agnes' are wonderful narratives with excellent qualities. The Ancient Mariner is a story of crime and punishment, and redemption through suffering; the religious theme of fall and redemption.

The poet is able to grip the attention of the reader by creating an urgency and eagerness in the
Mariner to tell his story. The wedding guest may miss his banquet but the story must be heard. But after this first brilliant move the story gets moving merely by descriptions which but for the power of Coleridge would have made it dull and monotonous. There is also a perfect harmonizing between the descriptions and the mariners' states of mind.

The characters are, however, all passive. Even the Mariner himself acts practically thrice in the whole poem, - in shooting the Albatross, in blessing the water-snakes and in biting his own arm to suck blood to wet his parched throat. But in the first two cases the Mariner acts unawares and without volition, only in the last he acts deliberately. Here the poet is able to bring a dramatic touch in his story. This only deliberate act plunges the Mariner into further misery when all his comrades die cursing him and he alone survives - a cruel anti-climax to his great effort. With the blessing of the water-snakes starts his repentance and his consequent redemption. We now understand his urgency to tell his story to the wedding guest. It is a confession of his sin that relieves him and brings his salvation. The stanzas with rhymed couplets have a wonderful rhythmic sound effect and the number of lines are varied to avoid monotony. The old technique of assonance and alliteration are used frequently.
Most of Shelley's poems were intended to serve the end of liberty in human society. But though he fought for such a concrete thing he did not fight concretely. Hence even his narratives have a dream-like quality, the involved imagery and lyrical fervour only reveal the inner world of the fervid visionary. It is necessary for us to understand this before we read his narratives. Most of his subject matters sprang from his imaginary ideals and it is difficult for us to follow the story with certainty. The subject matter of 'The Masque of Anarchy' which we are going to look into, is however, very earthly. The notorious Peterloo massacre took place on August 16, 1819, when Shelley was in Italy. When he heard of this he was indignant and poured fourth his indignation into this poem.

There is, however, hardly any direct reference to the incident in the poem, so it is difficult to connect the two. But it is not difficult to follow the administration of Castlereagh, Lord Eldon and Sidmouth, the only real characters mentioned in the poem.

I met murder on the way —
He had a mask like Castlereagh —
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him:
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloaks he drew.
Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown.
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stone as they fell.
And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

Sidmouth, symbolising hypocrisy, rides a crocodile and the rear is brought up by Anarchy riding a blood-splattered white horse, 'Like Death in the Apocalypse'. Hope, in the form of a maid, looking more like Despair, lies prostrate in the path of Anarchy, expecting, Murder, Fraud and Anarchy to trample over her.

Then midway between Hope and Anarchy rises an image of mist; first weak and frail then, 'a shape arrayed in mail / Brighter than the viper's scale'. It is the spirit of England who, like a mother, calls forth to her children,
Men of England, heirs of Glory
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurserings of one mighty mother,
Hopes of her and one another;
Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you -
Ye are many - they are few.

This is followed by a long recounting of the intolerable sufferings of the people, their potential strength and how they should win their ultimate victory against the tyrants. But even when Shelley remembers this violent incident he is unshakeable in his faith that it is love and forgiveness which will win over all tyranny in the end. So he insists on passive resistance to fight all violence and injustice.

With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.

and then there will be a change of heart of the tyrants,
Then they will return with shame
And the blood thus shed will speak
To the place from which they came,
In hot blushes on their cheek.

This is Shelley's dream, not a story, for the incident against which he raises his voice becomes incidental. It is no story proper for there is no interaction of characters and events. It is not even the narration of the incident which it was intended to focus, for that we have to refer to history. In fact, if we withdraw the three characters, who are also presented symbolically, the story loses all connection with reality. It can be treated as the poet's reaction to any tyranny followed by a suggestion which is general, not particular.

Keats' 'The Eve of St. Agnes' is a wonderful specimen of a narrative poem where a story is told with due care and craftsmanship. The story is based on a popular superstition.

Before the story actually begins the poet prepares the setting for the coming narrative. The first three stanzas are devoted to this and an atmosphere of intense cold is created with a few telling images. The character of the beadsman is also introduced here.

"St. Agnes' Eve - Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl for all his feathers was all cold"

(1/1-2)

As he walks along the chapel aisle he looks at the sculptured figures of mailed knights on the walls and wonders, "his weak spirit fails / To think how they ache in icy hoods and mails". (II/17-18); the sense of chill is driven home. The Beadsman is not very intimately connected with the story except that on this holy St. Agnes' Eve he, "all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve". (III/27), and helps to make an opening for the next stage of the story. As he walks along he hears the sound of music and revelry coming through the open doors of the hall where we shall find our heroine.

We now enter into the second stage and into the story itself. After a very brief description of the Pageantry in the hall the poet introduces his heroine straightaway. "These (the.pageantry) let us wish away,/And turn, sole - thoughted, to one lady there" (V/41-42). Her mind is preoccupied with the story of the superstition which is told in the next stanza, the 6th. Her anxiety for the coming hour is told briefly but tellingly, "She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,/Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short /The hallow'd hour was near at hand" (VIII/64-66).
The time is now ripe for the introduction of the hero, Porphyro, and with his entrance an element of suspense is also introduced. Porphyro is an enemy in the house of Madeline's - the heroine's family. "For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes, /Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords, /Whose very dogs would execrations howl/ Against his lineage; not one breast affords/ Him any mercy", (X/85-89). We have the inevitable go-between in the old Beldame who first sternly warns Porphyro of the dire consequences if he is found out. But she ultimately yields to his pleadings and hides him in a closet in Madeline's room. These warnings and pleadings go on for nearly 81 lines. This apparently undue length is necessary to emphasise the urgency of Porphyro's desire and the equal danger if he persists in his mad venture. This also increases the element of suspense and the reader waits with Porphyro with a throbbing heart for the climax. After preparing dainty dishes for Madeline - a logical step, for she is on fast - Porphyro proceeds to wake her up, for time is running out. Madeline opens her eyes but is still half-asleep and she thinks Porphyro to have been sent by St. Agnes in her dream. A wonderful conversation follows, between Porphyro and Madeline in her dreamy state. Ultimately she wakes up and the lovers flee the house for their new home.
Here is a narrative which has a beginning, a middle, and a logical end. There is nothing redundant and the poet unwaveringly proceeds to his goal. The images are embedded into the central mood of the poem and are not just embellishments. Porphyro, thinking hard how to meet Madeline without being seen, hits upon a plan. This is expressed, "Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose, Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart/Made purple riot"; (XVI/138-139). Even details are not missed. The reason for the guarded door remaining unguarded, allowing the lovers to fly, is, "There lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,/ With a huge empty flagon by his side" (XLI/363-364).

A flimsy superstition is brought back to life. As a narrative it is extremely well-knit, the poem proceeds logically to a pre-conceived end. He does not let his imagination run away with him and lends a concrete character to the superstition by mentioning the already existing love of Porphyro and Madeline which makes the superstition only incidental.

Wordsworth’s "Michael" is a well known narrative depicting the life of a shepherd. The poem has two aspects, it tells us about the poverty-stricken life of

12. Text is quoted from "The poetical works of Wordsworth", Ed. Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford University Press, 1939.
the shepherd and the central theme is filial affection; a father dies of broken heart because the son does not live upto his expectations.

The character of the poet, "a pastoral poem" is made clear by the poet himself. The setting is typically Wordsworthian; among the hills, in a green valley, in the midst of winds, storms and the blue sky, lives Michael in a house, called 'The Evening Star'. With his small family, his wife Isabel, his only son Luke and two sheepdogs, he ekes out a poor existence with unending toil. His small inheritance of land was burdened when he got it and at the end of long seventy years of hard labour when he just relieved it, misfortune struck. He had stood surety for his brother's son who now failed in his means and Michael is required to pay the penalty. He thinks of selling the land but cannot brook it - it was his life long dream. He decides to send his son to a wealthy relative and expects that by his honest labour he will be able to relieve his father. But Luke falls in evil ways and has to leave the country to escape the long arms of the Law. A few years later Michael dies, stricken with grief.

Apart from portraying the poor life of the Shepherd the major portion of the poem is used to build up the deep and tender love that Michael bore to Luke;
how he did 'female service' to him when he was a baby, how he gave him his first Shepherd's staff when he was ten and, how he saw him grow up to be a strong lad of eighteen when he could take much of the work out of Michael's hands. Before Luke leaves, Michael asks him to lay the corner-stone of the sheepfold - another life-long dream of Michael. Michael hopes that Luke will return and live on the land, a simple hard working life, as his forefathers did for generations. So when Luke fails to come back, a world falls apart for Michael that makes his death quite logical. The misfortune of the penalty for standing surety gives a dramatic turn to the story, and the necessity of the land to be sold or alternatively to send Luke away to earn and meet the burden - both of which were nearest to Michael's heart - lend pathos to it. All these make the story very homely and extremely humane which are its chief interest.

The poem is, however, plain narration. All things happen to Michael, he causes nothing to happen that move the story. Isabel appears twice, speaks once, does nothing; Luke appears twice, speaks nothing, does nothing. There is hardly any development of character. Michael's reaction to the crisis only shows his deep love for his land and his son, nothing else. In the absence of any action the movement of the story becomes sluggish. The language is, however, plain, simple and direct like the people of whom it speaks.
Byron's reactions to the contemporary situations however, made him a narrative poet altogether different from his contemporaries. Whether in the choice of subjects or in the manner of composition and style, he stands quite apart from them. These short discussions of the narrative poems of Byron's contemporaries should serve as foils to set in relief how and in what respects Byron differs from them.

The plots of Byron's narratives are mostly based on historical facts and even when they spring from his imagination like those of The Corsair, The Bride of Abyrnes, Lara, etc. they never seem unreal or go beyond the limits of probability. And of his 'Lara' - a psychological study - he is quite apologetic, "- my last and most unpopular effervescence; passing by its other sins, it is too little narrative, and too metaphysical to please the greater number of readers". The characters live and die in this world and are one of us. Here there is no mental excursion into an unreal supernatural world, no philosophising on imaginary ideals, no stories based on a flimsy myth, no concoction of a story to express his personal philosophy. He will not concede to the 'willing suspension of disbelief' as Coleridge does in 'Ancient Mariner' to sustain his poem, he will not touch a subject like 'St. Agnes' Eve', and 'The Masque of Anarchy' would have been quite different in his hands. 

He hardly ever writes anything of which he has no personal experience. "The Giaour" comes from his knowledge of the Turkish practice of throwing unfaithful women into the sea, stitched up in a sack, which made him indignant. In his poems the reader is never required to walk off the ground. "He does not, like Mr. Wordsworth, lift poetry from the ground, or create a sentiment out of nothing." He never takes his readers to places or creates situations, of which they have to form a mental picture by stretching their imagination to the limit and beyond and never wastes his energy on irrelevant matters.

In all poems descriptions occur naturally. But whereas in a lyric descriptions express a mood or the mental state of the poet, in a narrative poem they relate only to the facts of the story. In a narrative poem descriptions are never used for their own sake. They always add something to the story and become an integral part of it.

There is a long description of the storm in Canto II of 'Don Juan', the resulting ship-wreck, the plight of the survivors set adrift in the sea, the cannibalistic orgy and the ultimate death of all except Juan. This serves as a turning point in the story for,

with the ship-wreck Juan is physically cut off from his past and the story logically moves into the next leg. It also develops the hero's character who does not lose his head in the predicament, and enables him to tackle a critical situation and survive it. The danger does not unman him, it makes him more of a man and he grows in stature. Threatened by death and starvation he refuses to take human flesh and survives by sheer pluck and will power.

Byron, being a romantic narrative poet, he sometimes uses descriptions to express a mood of a character of the story. The hero of 'The Siege of Corinth' is a renegade Christian who has embraced Islam with the sworn purpose of destroying his Christian enemy. But he is in deep love with his enemy's daughter. He is torn between these two extreme impulses and suffers from a terrible depression before the day of the battle which he has sworn to fight. There is a long description where there is a perfect blending of the mental state of the hero and the general atmosphere of the battle field. F.N.

Here the description of the natural scene and the general climate and that of the battle ready camps

F.N. The Siege of Corinth, 1. 242 - 251 and 260 - 277
create a bleak and cheerless atmosphere which completely blends with the mental state of the hero. The moon is 'cold' and shines 'deeply down'; the deep silence is broken only by the shout of the guards and the weighing of the chargers; the Muezzin's prayercall does not evoke any sense of hope - it is prophetic for one camp and ominous for the other; the call of the stars creates despair for it remains unanswered.

In short poems where there is little scope for the development of characters by the interaction of events, detailed descriptions are used for their portrayal. This he adopts in, 'The Corsair', 'The Giaour', 'Lara', etc. He also uses detailed description to bring home the intensity of a situation, as in 'The Siege of Corinth'.

"And he saw the lean dogs beneath the wall
Held o'er the dead their carnival,
Gorging and growling o'er sarcass and limb;
They were too busy to bark at him:
From a Tartar's skull they had stripped the flesh;
As ye peel the fig when the fruit is fresh;
And their white tusks crunched o'er the whiter skull,
As it slipp'd through their jaws, when their edge grew dull,
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,
When they scarce could rise from the spot where they fed". (454-463).
These are terrible details and most poets will sidestep them revolted by nausea. This is the scene of a battlefield after a battle and Byron is not to be daunted by any finer sensibility if he has to state what actually happened. Details in a narrative bring it closer to life and make it more substantial and Byron always wants his poems to be true to life.

Action is a very important element in a narrative. Because of its length a narrative invariably gets dull if something physical does not happen in it. All the epics of the old are full of the stories of battles and wars and the rise and fall of empires and nations. The Romances also contain great actions, the adventures of the heroes and their exploits. The actions are the warp and woof of a narrative and they knit the events with one another. In the absence of any action the poet has to depend on some other mechanics to keep alive the interest of the reader, as we find in 'The Ancient Mariner', 'The Masque of Anarchy' and 'Michael'. The appeal of the last is humanitarian, where the poet wants the reader to grieve for the grief of Michael.

Byron's narratives are full of physical actions interspersed with descriptions which are relevant to the story. His stories are a series of events, the latter being the logical consequence of the former. The long
16 cantos of 'Don Juan' are a chain of events which moves the story forward and in all of which the hero takes a prominent role. His characters live and act with energy and passion which give a dynamic character to the story that is not always found in the works of his contemporaries. Byron always moves in the 'Present' as if he wants the readers to be physically present before the stage. He takes his readers by the hand, as it were, and leads him along, 'talking' of such interesting things and in so entertaining a manner that they never allow them to get bored. Most of the early narratives of Byron are about adventure, battle, tragic love, manly courage in face of danger, etc., and the actions in them make them savoury and compelling. His characters are never passive; they do not cringe even under the blows of fate, they live fighting and fall fighting; they die but do not surrender. "Old men! 'tis not difficult to die", are the last words of Manfred to the Abbot. (Manfred. Act III. Sc.IV. 1. 151) 'Childe Harold' is a little different. It is purely a travel poem in which the interest lies not so much in the action, for, there is but little except the travel, as in the descriptions of the places and the author's comments on them.

We have seen Byron's preference for action to 'scribbling'. In his personal life he loved action and his poetry is a transcript of that kind of life; it is
a by-product of a life of action and not a goal in itself. So he chooses his subject deliberately which involves energetic physical action. Because of this insistence on action his narratives are never languid or dull. This gives his poems a masculine character and makes him an anti-romantic in a romantic age.

Suspense is a very powerful device in the hands of the story-teller. It is embedded in the story and its chief function is to keep the reader's attention glued to the story. The reader faces two or more alternatives about the consequences of a certain event and is kept guessing what is going to come next. The poet first of all creates a certain situation or atmosphere, he then sets it against some other adverse situation and the reader is kept in the dark as to where the story will lend in the next phase. By using this device the poet is able to add speed and momentum to his story and it acquires a self-generating motion and energy.

In 'The Corsair' the pirate chief, Conrad, is informed by his spy that the Pasha is determined to destroy him by a direct attack on his island. The reader is made to know that in a straight fight, the pirates are sure to lose, for they will be hopelessly outnumbered. So when Conrad prepares for his pre-emptive strike on the Pasha's harbour the reader waits to know what will be the result of such great daring. The poet builds a
soft corner in the reader's mind for Conrad by telling him of his ascetic life, his fierce personality, his ability as a leader and his enigmatic detachment from life. So, when he is taken, the reader is anxious to know if he will perish in the hands of his implacable enemy or make good his escape. At night when Gulnare, the wife of the Pasha, suggests that Conrad should kill the Pasha in his sleep, the reader is aghast. Will Conrad swallow the bait, slough off his noble quality and behave like an ordinary brigand to save his skin? The answer must come later.

In the 'Bride of Abydos', Zuleika, the daughter of the Pasha, is in love with his cousin Selim which none has expressed to each other. When the Pasha arranges her marriage with one Osman Bey, Selim is in despair and is in a pensive mood until Zuleika assures him, "Years have not seen, Time shall not see, /The hour that tears my soul from thee" (Canto - I 321 - 322). Reassured, Selim answers, "To night Zuleika, thou shalt hear / My tale, my purpose, and my fear / I am not, love! What I appear" (Canto - I, 480 - 483). What is his tale? What is his purpose? and what is his fear? and what he means by his ominous last line? The reader must wait until the time ripens.
In 'Don Juan' Juan is picked up in an unconscious state after the ship-wreck by Haidee, the only daughter of the local pirate chief. Haidee dares not take Juan home being afraid of her formidable father and hides him in a cave. The reader is made aware of the fact that Juan is in an unfriendly place except for Haidee and runs the risk of life if he is found out. His anxiety increases when he is told something of the father's ferocious nature. He loves his motherless daughter so intensely that he will brook no rival in this. The suspense increases as the father surprises them by his sudden arrival and the story reaches a climactic pitch when he aims his pistol at Juan. The fate of the hero hangs in the balance but Haidee stands between the two and the hero survives to continue the story.

Digression is a device which Byron uses frequently in his narratives. It relieves the reader from being with the facts of the story continuously. It acts as a sort of interlude in the story and diverting the attention of the reader to something else relieves the pressure for the time being, so that he can start with a refreshed mind when the story will start again. Its connection with the story is very slender, virtually nonexistent, and serves no overt purpose but to relieve the reader and is a calculated device to keep the story interesting. It, however, serves one important purpose,
it tells us about the poet's opinions of the things he talks about. It reveals the poet's personality and temperament and the reader becomes interested in the poet himself and through him, in the story. "All the digressive passages are, of course, in some degree personal - they imply attitudes which help to build up, stroke by stroke, the 'persona' of the narrator". 15

For obvious reasons digressions occur more frequently in his longer poems than in the short ones. In the course of his story he comes upon a thing, or even a word and using it as a spring board he moves off tangentially and tells us not what he knows about it, but what he thinks about it.

In the 3rd Canto of 'Don Juan', Juan and Haidee are grandly enjoying the absence of the pirate father. In the assembly of guests there is one poet. Coming to him Byron first tells us the type of poet he is,

"For some years his lot had been o'ercast
By his seeming independence in his lays,
But now he sung the Sultan and the Pasha
With truth like Southey, and with verse like
Crashaw". (III/79).

If there is any doubt about the comparison with Southey he makes it clear in the next stanza, "He lied with such a fervour of intention - /There was no doubt he earn'd the laureate pension". (III/80). Southey was the poet laureate in Byron's time. The guest-poet thinks that in that lonely island he can speak truth for once,

"Without any danger of a riot, he
Might for long lying make himself amends;
And singing as he sung in his warm youth,
Agree to a short armistice with truth".

(III/83)

Byron then tells us what kind of poems the poet - a time server - will write in different countries. In France he will write a 'Chanson', in England 'a six-santo quarto tale'; in Spain a 'Ballad or a Romance' etc. and coming to the country or rather the word Greece, Byron writes a 16 stanza poem of 6 lines each on Greece; her past glory, present debasement and her potential strength, a favourite subject of Byron.

He is not finished with the poets yet and comes to the poets of his own country.

"Milton's the prince of poets - so we say;
A little heavy, but no less divine
An independent being in his day -
Learned, pious, temperate in love and wine".  

(III/91).
Of Southey and Wordsworth he has more to say,

"Their loyal treason, renegade rigour,
Are good manure for their more bare biography.
Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger
Than any since the birthday of typography;
A drowsy, frowzy poem, called the "Excursion",
Writ in a manner which is my aversion.

(III/94).

This digression continues unabated for 23 octave stanzas apart from the short 16 stanzas on Greece when he ends it by comparing his contemporaries with his favourite Augustans,

" 'Pedlars' and 'Boats', and 'Waggons'!.
Oh! ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss Floats scumlike uppermost". (III/100).

In Canto III of 'Childe Harold' the serene beauty of Lake Leman triggers off a digression in which Byron plunges into himself and tries to analyse his relation with the world of man vis-à-vis the world of Nature. His alienation with the society is only physical not mental,

"To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind: /All are not fit with them to stir and toil" (CH/III/69) and Byron
is one of them. In the struggle of life men strive heroically, may be sometimes vainly, to reach the safe port of relief and happiness, but Byron is an eternal wanderer who has nowhere to go for a rest. This digression, intimately personal, continues for 7 Spenserian stanzas and has got nothing to do with the narrative itself; yet it is relevant, for it helps us to understand the poet better. We know why he writes what he writes. This is quite romantic and there is a wonderful fusion of the lyrical with the narrative. He speaks plainly and candidly of some truth about himself.

In the previous chapter we tried to show how Byron's ancestry and the various social forces of his time shaped his temperament as a man and also moulded his poetic ideals which are reflected in his works. Inspite of its obvious weakness of an unpolished wit and its chief stimulant being a bad temper, 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' is a sure pointer to the character of his future works. As time passed he began to nourish and nurse an uncompromising attitude to all time-worn conventions and social institutions and sought to fight these out to the end. "I was born for opposition" (D.J./XV/22). To achieve this goal, to translate this intransigence into reality he uses a language which is daringly unconventional and a manner of composition that gives his poems a tremendous motive power.
When he describes an object he does not allow his reader to pause and think but proceeds untiringly to the end until it is over and done with. Sentences are made very long so as to form the image or a section of it, complete as a single unit. The reader does not get the image in bits and pieces to be joined together, like a jig-saw puzzle, afterwards. But the bits and pieces are already fitted together and the image is revealed before the reader in its totality, as a single whole; and the language is always in tune with the object described.

"The roar of waters! - from the headlong height
Velino cleaves the wave-worn precipice;
The fall of waters! rapid as the light
The flashing mass foams shaking the abyss;
The hell of waters! Where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture; while the sweat
Of their great agony, wrung out from this
Their Phlegathon, curls round the rocks of jet
That guard the gulf around, in pitiless horror set,

And mounts in spray the skies, and thence again
Returns in an unceasing shower, which round,
With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
In an eternal April to the ground,
Making it all emerald! - how profound
The gulf! and how the giant element
From rock to rock leaps with delirious bound,
Crushing the cliffs, which, downward worn and rent
With its fierce footsteps, yield in chasms a
fearful vent!
To the broad column which rolls on, and shows
More like the fountain of an infant sea
Torn from the womb of mountains by the throes
Of a new world, then only thus to be
Parent of rivers, which flow gushingly,
With many windings, through the vale: Look back!
Lo! where it comes like an eternity,
As if to sweep down all things in its track,
Charming the eye with dread, - a matchless cataract,
Horribly beautiful! but on the verge,
From side to side, beneath the glittering morn,
An Iris sits, amidst the infernal surge,
Like Hope upon a death-bed, and, unborn
Its steady dyes, while all around is torn
By the distracted waters, bears serene
Its brilliant hues with all their beams unshorn;
Resembling, 'mid the torture of the scene,
Love watching Madness with unalterable mien'.
(CH/IV/Stanzes 69-72).

This is the description of a cataract and this
36 line-description is made up of two sentences. The
effect is as expected, we get the image of the object
in its totality. The lines rush on just as the falling waters and end where the falls end, at the bottom, in a permanent rainbow.

Byron chooses his words with great care and deliberation to suit the mood of the poem. Words and images are also chosen with an eye to brevity and concentration. The adjective 'head long' serves a dual purpose; it brings the image of a great height as well as that of the great force of the rushing waters that never look back. 'Wave-worn precipice' also serves the purpose of indicating a great height and the force of the waters that cut through the rocks. The word 'hell' in 'the hell of waters' personifies the cataract and tells us, of its intolerable suffering by its fall from a great height. The fine spray at the bottom is likened to 'Sweat' brought out by its agony of suffering. The image 'eternal April' followed by the word 'emerald' tells briefly but vividly the effect of the falling spray upon the surrounding grounds. The juxtaposition of the two words of opposing characters 'horribly beautiful' is not a rhetorical stunt, it is deliberately used for brevity and also to represent the precise image of the cataract in the mind of the viewer - the immensity of its beauty and the awe that it inspires. The rainbow at the bottom, likened to 'Hope' and 'Love', becomes a symbol of quiet
serenity and anxiety. The suicidal dive of the cataract is wonderfully told by the image 'Death-bed' and hardly anything can better express the tearing surge of the waters and its awful death-play, but 'Madness'. The words are plain and the imagery is simple and unambiguous and, so much by so little.

Sometimes condensation of an image is carried to its logical extreme and the events happening over a long period is frozen into a few lines.

"One hour beheld him since the tide he steam'd, -
Disguised, discovered, conquering, taken,
Condemn'd -
A chief on land, an outlaw on the deep -
Destroying, saving, prizon'd, asleep"

(Corsair'/II/388-391)

Sometimes again the condensation is effected in a different manner. In the siege of Ismail in 'Don Juan', Canto VII, Byron speaks of the Russian general,

"Suwarrow chiefly was on the alert,
Surveying, drilling, ordering, jesting, pondering
For the man was, we safely may assert,
A thing to wonder at beyond most wondering;
Hero, buffoon, half-demon and half-dirt,
Praying, instructing, desolating, plundering".

(D.J./VII/LV).
He uses the verbs in the continuous tense and the result of such use of tense is that, the reader feels that the events are happening before his eyes.

In his satires where Byron 'laughs at all things', he often uses anti-climax to get his effect.

"And she bent over him, and he lay beneath,
Hush'd as the babe upon its mother's breast,
Droop'd as the willow when no winds can breathe,
Lull'd like the depth of ocean when it rest,
Fair as the crowning rose of the whole wreath,
Soft as the callow cygnet in its nest;"

This is beautiful poetry and fine rhetoric. But he uses these six lines like a Trojan horse to build a very soft image of Juan lying in an unconscious state after the ship-wreck with Haidee looking at him. Having done this he comes out with his assault troops in the last two prosaic lines that knock the reader out of his trance.

"In short, he was a very pretty fellow,
Although his woes had turned him rather yellow."

(D.J./II/148).

Sometimes he uses anti-climax for satirical purposes which is at the same time humorous.

"He learned the art of riding, fencing, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress – or a nunnery"

(D.J./I/38).
Sometimes it is used just to ridicule,

"Still I have no dislike to learned natures,
For sometimes such a world of virtues cover.
I knew one woman of that purple school,
The loveliest, chastest, best, but — quite a fool". (D.J./IV/III).

This is perhaps a reference to his humourless, mathematical wife Annabella Milebank. The deliberate placing of the word 'fool' after the three superlatives completely deflates the whole image, and the adjective 'purple' and the pause after 'but' greatly enhances the effect.

Lofty ideas go hand in hand with lofty humours.

Speaking of Adeline's married life in 'Don Juan'.

"She had nothing to complain of, or reprove,
No bickerings, no connubial turmoil:
Their union was a model to behold,
Serene and noble, — conjugal, but cold".

(D.J./XIV/86).

Adeline is planning Juan's marriage and she has a number of girls on her mind, one of whom is Miss Millpond,

"There was Miss Millpond, smooth as summer's sea,
That usual paragon, an only daughter
Who seemed the cream of equanimity,
Till skimmed — and then there was some milk and water". (D.J./XV/41).
And he climbs down from the sublime to the prosaic
without batting an eyelid.

"He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,
And heard a voice in all the winds, and then
He thought of wood-nymphs and immortal bowers,
And how the goddesses came down to men:
He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,
And when he looked upon his watch again,
He found how much old Time had been a winner—
He also found that he had lost his dinner."

(D.J./I/94).

"Dreading that climax of human ills
The inflammation of his weakly bills"

(D.J./III/35).

about the economical habits of Haidee's father. When he
is in a hurry he does not pause to elaborate his image
but places the words in juxtaposition which produces a
strikingly humorous effect, "So Juan following honour
and his nose, /Rush'd where the thickest fire announced
most fogs". (D.J./VIII/32)

Pun is not a very good rhetorical device and Byron
uses it rarely, mostly for satirical purposes, "Still he
excels that artificial hard / Labourer in the same vineyard
and, though the vine / Yields him but vinegar for
his reward" (D.J./XI/53). This is about Scott's poetry
compared with the other romantic, and hence 'artificial',
poetry of his time. Though a romantic, Scott's awareness
of history made his poems more relevant to life but he
did not get his due and was given 'vinegar' as his reward
- a Jibe at the critics.

When the anger and passion are subdued there is
only pity and contempt and his thrusts become devious
and subtle with innuendoes. He describes some of the
guests in Lord Henry's party in 'Don Juan',

"Judges in very formidable ermine
Were there, with brows that did not much invite
The accused to think their lordships would
determine
His cause by leaning much from right to left:
Bishops, who had not left a single sermon;
Attorneys - general, awful to the sight,
As hinting more (unless our judgements warp us)
Of the 'Star Chamber' than of 'Habeas Corpus' "
(D.J./XII1/69).

But sometimes he leaves off in the middle and asks the
reader to guess the rest,

"Olden she was - but had been very young:
Virtuous she was - and had been, I believe;
But without saying what he believes he hints, "Although the world has such an evil tongue / That - "and keeps the sentence hanging (O.J. /XII/43). The reader is not, however, put to great trouble to guess what Byron is driving at; the Phrase 'The evil tongue of the world' is a sufficient hint for him.

The character of a poem determines the character of its imagery. It is also determined by the poet's attitude to life, in other words, his poetic ideals. Unlike his contemporaries Byron's attitude to life is always logical and concrete. So in his narrative poems Byron is always concrete and direct in the formation of his imagery. They are mostly straight similes and the objects of comparison are picked up from the ordinary things of life, things of ordinary experience, and the reader is not required to stretch his imagination too far to dig up a meaning. Imagery are mostly of sight and sound for they are the most immediate and active compared with the other sense organs.

The character of his imagery also changes with the development of his poetic genius. In the poems of his early period they have a romantic flavour and a dash and daring which are seldom found in the satirical poems of his last period. Imagery formed by rhetoric other than plain similes like personification, innuendoes, metaphors
etc. are naturally a little more involved and hence they are mostly found in his early tales. In 'The Giaour',

"Who thundering comes on blackest steed,
With slackened bit and hoof of speed?
Beneath the clattering iron's sound
The caverned echoes wake around"

In lash for lash, bound for bound; (1.180-184)

The intensity of the image is effected by the carefully chosen words with an eye to their sound effect and the participles lend dash and speed to the speeding image.

In 'The Corsair' the pirates speak of themselves and their carefree adventurous life, "O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea, /Our thoughts as boundless,
Our souls as free" (Canto I/1-2); their abhorrence for a life of domestic peace and love for a life of action, "Ours - the fresh turf, and not the feverish bed" (I/1.30)
But the rhetoric is simple and they speak for themselves.

Romantic imagery with a lyrical flavour have a dash of the grandeur. In 'The Bride of Abydos' when Zuleika assuages Selim of her undying love his spirit is rekindled with a new fire,

"His trance was gone, his keen eye shone -
With thoughts that long in darkness dwelt;
With thoughts that burn - in rays that melt
As the stream late conceal'd"
By the fringe of its willows,
When it rushes reveal'd
In the light of its billows;
As the bolt bursts on high
From the black cloud that bound it,
Flash'd the soul of that eye
Through the long lashes round it.

But even the bursting bolt and the flashing soul is too soft for Byron hence he turns to,

"A war horse at the trumpet's sound,
A lion roused by heedless hound,
A tyrant waked to sudden strife
By graze of ill-directed knife
Starts not to more convulsive life
Than he," (I/329 - 345).

These tales of Byron were immensely popular. The seafaring, adventurous, anglo-saxon blood of the English found a vicarious pleasure in the adventures of the heroes. Apart from the wonderful Eastern setting and their hero-villain characters, it is the rhetorical grandeur that is chiefly responsible for their popularity. The great mass of the reading public, who had not much imagination, were too tired and bored by the 'milk and water' poetry of the Romantics. Here they saw the other facet of Romanticism that looks out, not in.
When we come to his satires we enter into a new field of excursion. The romantic radiance is quite gone, the fire is subdued, giving place to a cynical and general humour. But the passion and energy are as strong as ever and the basic character of the imagery, its logicality and concreteness, does not change.

In 'The Vision of Judgement' Southey stands before the gate of heaven guarded by St. Peter and seeks to defend his works. He proposes to Satan and Michael that he will write their lives and assures them that, "there is no ground, for fear, for I can choose my own reviewers" (Stanza 99). When both decline the offer Southey brings out an MS and begins to read. At the third line everyone of the assembly, ghosts, spirits, devils, angels, run out of the room pell mell. At the fifth, the poet is knocked down by St. Peter with his keys and he falls into his 'Lake'. Then comes the climax,

"He first sank to the bottom-like his works,  
But soon rose to the surface - like himself,  
For all corrupted things are buoy'd like corks,  
By their own rottenness, light as an elf,  
Or wisp that flits o'er a morass: he lurks,  
It may be, still, like dull books on a shelf."

(Stanza - 105)
The imagery is simple yet forceful; brief yet deep; unambiguous yet compelling, and it is humour and entertainment at its highest.

He describes the fickle and unpredictable nature of women,

"What a strange thing is man! and what a stranger
Is woman! What a whirlwind is her head,
And what a whirlpool full of depth and danger
Is all the rest about her! Whether wed,
Or widow, maid, or mother, she can change her mind like the wind;
Whatever she has said or done, is light to what she'll say or do;
The oldest thing on record, and yet new"

(0.J./IX/64)

By dropping the word 'thing' after 'stranger' Byron imparts a double meaning to it. He not only compares women with men but means to say that they are unknowable. The words 'Whirlwind', 'whirlpool', 'wind' are of ordinary experience, but they are highly energetic and amply illustrate the unpredictable nature of women. The use of the word 'light' in the 7th line and the contradictory words 'old' and 'new' bring the image to a climax. The past actions of women are no yardstick to measure their future ones; and the contradictory words are intensely factual and meaningful.
He observes upon the Romantic poets of his time,
"No solemn, antique gentleman of rhyme,
Who having angled all his life for fame,
And getting but a morsel at a time,
Still fussily keeps fishing on, the same
Small 'Triton of the minnows', the sublime
Of mediocrity, the furious tame,
The echo's echo, usher of the school
Of female wits, boy bards, - in short, a fool".

(Stanza - 73)

Striving for fame is compared to the very prosaic 'angling'
whose result is uncertain. The striking satirical effect
is gained by the use of adjectives like, 'small', 'sublime',
'furious', 'female', 'boy', etc. which deflates the nouns
that follow immediately.

We have tried to show above that in his narratives
Byron uses a set of imagery formed by words and images
of ordinary, everyday experience and which are expressive
of his temperament and attitude to life in general. It
is because of this that his poems are so near to us, so
full of life and so entertaining. "His imageries do not
inquire and yet they are vivid because the language is
used in a forceful manner. This insatiable qualities of
Byron's imagery make it very suitable for drama and
narrative." They are so brief and yet so full of meaning and so homely that one wonders if it is not here, them in what else, lies Byron's genius - to say extraordinary things in the most ordinary manner.

Byron himself is the best expositor of his own style, "Carelessly I sing,/But Phoebus lends me now and then a string" (O.J./VIII/138). This is, of course, more true of his satires than of his romantic tales. He never took life seriously and judged by conventional standards, his style of writing poetry is least serious. Here he is careless, indisciplined and prosaic, a heathen in that holy land. "For I was rather famous in my time,/Until I fairly knocked it up with rhyme" (O.J./XIV/9) To write poetry involving fantasy and imagination, having the conventional aesthetic value current in Byron's time, was not in his nature. "I don't pretend that I quite understand/My own meaning when I would be 'very' fine;/But the fact is that I have nothing planned" (O.J./IV/5). This unplanned and careless manner of writing poetry he confesses openly, "I write what is uppermost, without delay" (O.J./XIV/7), and what came 'uppermost' to him pleased only too few. For he says with passion, "it should be no bar/To this my plain, sworn, downright detestation/

Of every despotism in every nation" (D.J./IX/24). He not only detested and fought despotism at all levels of human society, he fought 'despotism' even in the field of poetry. He not only 'knocked up' his fame by his so-called immorality and irreverence in his works, he knocked down and out all the traditional and respected cults of poetry of all times. This iconoclasm is neither a pose nor a defence mechanism to hide his sense of loneliness, but came from a firm personal conviction. In his satires he spares none - kings and queens, statesmen and greatmen, poets and philosophers, religion and politics, hypocrisy and injustice in general, - all and everything come under his guillotine. His letters and journals, as we have already shown, also carry this stamp of conviction.

"And I will war, at least in words (and - should My chance so happen - deeds), with all who war With Thought; - and of Thought's foes by far the most rude" (D.J./IX/24), and he carried out his war both as a man and as a poet to his own bitter end. The unique unpoetic character of his poetry largely depends on three factors: choice of words, colloquialism and a speech-like quality of narration.

In the instances shown above we have tried to show how Byron chooses words of everyday experience to form his imagery. Of this he says himself, "but note or
Because of his prosaic temperament the words that naturally come to him are prosaic. The use of these ordinary words with a careless ease gives his poems a homely character and they also seem quite effortless.

"No dearth of bards can be complained of now, The loaded press beneath her labour groans, And printer's devils shake their weary bones; While Southey's epics cram the creaking shelves."

(English Bards. 1-124-127).

When he wants his thrusts to be direct he hits hard and words become hard by their particular use. Of Southey in "The Vision of Judgement",

"He said - (I only give the heads) - he said, He meant no harm in scribbling; 'twas his way Upon all topics; 'twas, besides, his bread, Of which he buttered both sides."

(Stanza - 96).

When he is in passion the words also become passionate. The scene is the arena in the Coliseum in Rome, in 'Childe Harold'.

"But here, where Murder breathed her bloody steam; And here, where buzzing nations choked the ways,
And roar'd and murmured like a mountain
Stream
Dashing or winding as its torrent strays;
(IV/142).

Apart from using ordinary words Byron also uses
words which are extremely colloquial. If ordinary words
make the poems homely, the use of colloquial words make
them forceful and entertaining.

"- it will one day be found,
With other relics of' a former world',
When this world shall be 'former', underground,
Thrown topsy-turvy, twisted, crisped, and curl'd,
Baked, fried or burnt, turn'd inside -out or
drown'd,

Like all the worlds before". (D.J./IX/37)
The verbs used in the past tense give the lines
a peculiar toughness and their colloquial character
and their use in unrelenting succession give the stanza
an unrelenting speed.

The use of slang is also not infrequent,
"Where's Brummel ? Dish'ld. Where's Long
Pole Wellesley ? Diddled.
the Third ?
Where is his will ? (That's not so soon unriddled)
And where is 'Fum' the Fourth, our 'royal bird'?
Gone down, it seems, to Scotland to be fiddled
Unto by Sawney’s violin, we have heard:

"Caw me, Caw thee", - for six months hath been

hatching

This scene of royal itch and loyal scratching”.

(D.J./XI/78).

No one wrote poetry in this language, before or since, no poet ever subjected his language to such breaking stress.

Words which are unprintable, words which no poet will ever think of using, have a place in Byron’s vocabulary. Byron had little regard for the ‘effeminate’ poetry of his great contemporaries, ‘usher of the school of female wits’, and though he admired the Augustans, his temperament could not digest their refinement and polished dignity and they left him cold. He believed that by living in their own idealized worlds the Romantics had cut themselves off from reality and hence had distorted truth. For such kind of poetry travelling on ‘winged steed’ and for such distortion of facts he has one word sufficient to shock any one.

"Such be their meed, such still the just reward

Of prostituted muse and hireling bard”

(English Bard”.l. 181-182)

For the great Catherine the Great of Russia he has tucked away a special word,
"Whose victories had recently increased
In Catherine's reign, whom glory still adores.
As greatest of all sovereigns and w[h]orse[s].

D.J./VI/92.

The insolent office clerks whom Juan meets in the course of his diplomatic service in England are, "Like lap-dogs, the least civil sons of [bastards]". (D.J./XI/41).

The liberty and the license that he takes with words and the way in which he puts them to use make his poems daringly unconventional.

The other interesting feature of Byron's narratives is their speech-like quality. Reading Byron is an exercise in conversational poetry. It will seem that he does not write poetry but talks poetry.

"God help us all! God help me too! I am
God knows, as helpless as the devil can wish,
And not a whit more difficult to damn,
Than is to bring to land a late-hooked fish,
Or to the butcher to purvey the lamb;
Nor that I'm fit for, such a noble dish,
As one day will be that immortal fry
Of almost everybody born to die".

(The Vision of Judgement'.
Stanza - 15).

It is not simply the use of colloquial words like 'whit' or phrases like, 'late-hooked fish', 'immortal fry' etc.
that bring the poem closer to us, it is also the effortless manner in which the whole thing is told. In this he not only anticipates the Victorian Dreaming but also the poets of modern times.

In the course of his narration, particularly after a digression, he sometimes pretends to have forgotten what he was talking about.

"The coast - I think it was the coast that I was just describing - yes, it was the coast".

(D,J./II/181).

"But to my subject - let me see - what was it? Oh! the third Canto - and the pretty pair".

(D,J./III/81).

This device dovetails so naturally into the body of the story that the reader feels that he is not reading poetry but listening to the poet himself.

"If people contradict themselves, can I help contradicting them, and everybody, even my voracious self? But that's a lie; I never did so, never will - how should I?"

(U.J./XV/86).

We may note that in the instances shown above the poet uses the first person. By making himself a participant in his narrative the author gains one very important point in the art of story-telling. The reader feels that the narrator is physically present before him.
This atmosphere of reality created by the author's participation in the story is enhanced by making the reader a participant in it.

"For talk six months with the same lady, 
And you get the wedding dress ready.

Perhaps you'll have a letter from the mother 
To say her daughter's feelings are trepann'd; 
Perhaps you'll have a visit from the brother, 
All strut, and stays, and whiskers, to demand 
What 'your intentions are?' - one way or other 
It seems the virgin's heart expects your hand 
And between pity for her case and yours, 
You'll add to Matrimony's list of cures". 
(D.J./XII/59-60).

Sometimes he demands immediate attention of the reader and addresses him directly,

"Remember, reader ! you have had before / The worst of tempests and the best of battles" 
(D.J./XII/88)

"Grim reader ! did you ever see a ghost ?/ 
No; but you have heard -" (D.J./XV/95).

Judging by the standards of the use of language and vocabulary, rhetoric and manner of composition, we may classify the narratives broadly into two groups, The Romantic Tales and the Satires. Whereas the dramatic
elements like realistic background, action, suspense, etc. are to be found in all of them, the rhetorical devices like anti-climax, pun, innuendo, sarcasm etc. are, for obvious reasons, to be found in his satires. Like the consummate story-teller that Byron is, he uses the mechanics of narrative for a particular purpose as the necessity arises. Beautiful Similes and grandiose metaphors abound in his Tales, but in his satires, words and images are twisted, curbed, bent, baked and sizzled till they serve his purpose.

So, from the earliest times in literary history there have been narrative poems of various types and descriptions, but upto the coming of the Neo-classicals they followed a certain traditional pattern; techniques and forms virtually remained unchanged. Byron's contemporaries were essentially lyric poets having definite poetic ideals and personal philosophies which can be seen even in their narratives. Writing narrative poems was for them, either a pastime or they were used to express their own poetic ideals and philosophy. Hence they did not make any attempt to evolve any particular narrative technique. But Byron was different. He was remarkably sociable, keenly interested in all the varied aspects of life and he absorbed life's experience at all levels, "I have passed
many a fatiguing but never a tedious moment ... I have lived with the highest and the lowest, I have been for days in a Pacha's palace and have passed many a night in a Cow-house. All these helped to develop in him a temperament eminently suitable for writing narratives. Hence he evolved his own narrative techniques to express his views about the contemporary situation and his experiences. We shall now try to see how his mechanics of narrative as discussed here have been applied to the individual poems.