Napoleon Unbound: How Byron Reconfigures Napoleon as a Promethean Figure through "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte"

Hap Burke

"Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know": Lord Byron and Percy Shelley

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Signed:

Byron was undeniably a man of great extremes whose larger-than-life personality impressed many of his contemporaries. Among his many eccentricities, Byron famously dubbed himself the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme in his satirical *Don Juan* (XI). His assertion is undeniably grand, unsurprisingly arrogant, and certainly in character: Byron was ostensibly obsessed with the great French emperor. His interest in Napoleon is well-documented. Throughout his poetic career Byron wrote five poems dedicated to or concerning Napoleon—"Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," "From the French," "Napoleon's Farewell," "Ode on the Star of The Legion of Honour," and "Ode (From the French)" (Clubbe 46). Furthermore, he wrote about the emperor with great frequency in his letters and journals. Byron often remarked that he felt a deep connection with Napoleon—and, indeed, he was certainly aware of their many similarities. Both rose to fame as young adults, both fell from public grace and entered exile, both had beloved sisters and estranged wives, both claimed an inheritance from great historical figures, both were extremely superstitious—the list goes on (Clubbe 44). John Clubbe notes further that Byron likened his own poetic successes with Napoleon's political and military triumphs (44). Byron certainly had plenty of reason to identify with the emperor, and he thought his connection with Napoleon was so deep that he considered their two destinies to be intertwined. Byron's obsession and identification with the emperor is certainly not unique: Napoleon was important to many Romantic-era writers, as authors such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Byron used the emperor to define their self-image as well as engage with current political and social debates (Bainbridge 2).

Byron's attitudes towards Napoleon, however, seem to vacillate greatly in his writings—at times, Byron practically worships the emperor; other times, he is ostensibly bitter and critical. Critics have puzzled over Byron's ever-shifting attitude towards Napoleon. Daniel Westwood

argues that Byron's relationship with Bonaparte was simply utilitarian—Byron used the emperor in his writings to develop and explore a potential alternate version of himself (125). Other critics have followed this line of thought. John Clubbe remarks that Byron recreated himself under the guise of Napoleon to explore the connection between the two men, for Byron believed Napoleon controlled the very rhythms of his life (47). "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" is identified by many critics as particularly indicative of Byron's complex attitudes towards Bonaparte, and therefore has become a site of extensive discussion. Examining "Ode," Clubbe contends that Byron rejected Napoleon as a double once he linked Napoleon with the figure of Prometheus—Napoleon does not show Promethean heroism in defeat, so Byron dissociates with the emperor (48). Andrew Nicholson and Andrew Burkett agree with Clubbe in many points. Nicholson argues Byron ultimately discovers Napoleon to be a failed Promethean figure who saves his own life in abdication at the expense of his dignity (71). Burkett suggests that Byron initiates a comparison between Napoleon and Prometheus for the sole purpose of revealing the cowardice of the former against the bravery of the latter (132). Christina Root, also examining "Ode," posits that Byron rejects Napoleon not because of his failure to live up to mythic expectations as Burkett, Nicholson, and Clubbe suggest, but rather because of his real-world failure to impart a lasting political and societal change (156). However, not every critic reads Byron's attitude towards Napoleon as frustrated and bitter. Simon Bainbridge is one such dissenter. He argues that though Byron is assuredly critical and disappointed in tone, Byron never rejects Napoleon but rather reconfigures the idea of the hero to redeem Napoleon (150). Byron, Bainbridge argues, finds in "Ode" a new heroic model in Prometheus and transforms Napoleon's abdication from an act of surrender into an act of defiance. Critical consensus lacking, we must ask the question:

what is Byron's attitude towards Napoleon as revealed in "Ode"? Moreover, how does Byron configure Napoleon through "Ode," and what ultimate end does this configuration serve?

I agree with Bainbridge to a point: to say that the culmination of Byron's attitude towards Napoleon was his rejection of Napoleon as a failure is far too simplistic. Byron certainly finds failure in Napoleon in his succumbing to seductive temptations while in power, and Byron reveals this failure through the creation of damaging and dreadful doubles—especially by connecting Napoleon with Jupiter. However, Byron redeems and transforms Napoleon-in-exile into a heroic figure by envisioning a new, Promethean Napoleon. I will examine "Ode to Napoleon" to uncover and chart Byron's complex attitude towards Bonaparte.

Though Byron had temporarily resolved to stop writing in early 1814, he broke his silence by publishing *Ode to Napoleon*—a return inspired by the concurrent defeat and abdication of Napoleon Bonaparte (Pack 42). Initially published anonymously, the Ode was nevertheless quickly identified as Byron's, and later printed editions definitively attribute the poem to him (Pack 44). "Ode to Napoleon" is dense with references, evoking persons and deeds from Charles V of Spain to *Paradise Lost*'s Satan. Byron's strategy in referencing so many historical and mythical figures is purposeful. Though Bainbridge suggests that Byron's evocation of these potential Napoleonic doubles dramatizes Napoleon in a role that is both historical and literary on a world stage surrounded by classical rulers and tragic heroes (136), I believe that Byron establishes certain figures as profane doubles to Napoleon to reveal that pre-abdication Bonaparte was destructive, anti-human, and anti-Promethean. Ultimately, Byron at first connects the enthroned Napoleon with Jupiter and must abandon any and all profane doubles to redeem Napoleon-in-exile.

Byron first expresses dissatisfaction in Napoleon by tone. Indeed, Paul Cantor notes that after Napoleon's abdication, a despairing Byron found emptiness in political matters (394). "Ode to Napoleon" is immediately mourning: it begins "'Tis done—but yesterday a King!" (1) The reader's first encounter with Byron's Napoleon is certainly not impressive. Byron terms Bonaparte a "nameless thing" (3) who brought ruin by strewing earth with "hostile bones" (6). Napoleon is forthrightly identified as an antagonistic force who defiles nature in his search for power—an identity made certain when Byron connects the fall of Napoleon with the fall of Satan. Byron writes: "Since he, miscalled the Morning Star, / Nor man nor fiend hath fallen so far" (8-9). Napoleon's fall from power is not just reminiscent of Satan's fall—no other fall in history can compare as well to Satan's as Napoleon's. Byron thus establishes Satan as a mythic double for Napoleon. This first example of doubling in "Ode" establishes a pattern that Byron will follow for the rest of the poem. Byron evokes historical or mythical figures as doubles for Napoleon to reveal details about Napoleon's character that may only be realized through such a comparison. In this instance, we realize that, like Satan, Napoleon has fallen from the highest position to the lowest—a fall from grace only paralleled, Byron asserts, in the *Paradise Lost* narrative. Satan is but one of several revealing historical and mythic doubles Byron creates around Napoleon. Napoleon is later likened to the Greek Milo of Croton. Milo was an athlete who, despite his age and weakness, tried to split an oak tree with his bare hands and, failing to do so, accidentally encased one of his hands within the trunk of the tree ("Milo"). Milo as a Napoleonic double shows Napoleon to be contrary to nature, for nature itself constrains and opposes Milo in punishment. Milo—and, therefore, Milo's double, Napoleon—is "chained by the trunk [that] he vainly broke" (48). Both Napoleon and Milo are anti-nature—Milo by being

encased by a tree, Napoleon, we might infer, by committing crimes against nature through waging war.

Byron also establishes profane Napoleonic doubles to imagine a potential redemption for Napoleon in defeat. Byron compares Napoleon to the historical and failed emperors Sulla—"the Roman" (55)—and Charles V—"the Spaniard" (64). Byron emphasizes for both the absolute desolation they encountered in defeat. Sulla was left to "such a doom" (61); Charles would have been better had "he neither known / A bigot's shrine, nor despot's throne" (71-72). Byron clearly defines each downfallen emperor as miserable and wretched. However, he admits some small amount of redeeming goodness to Charles. Once defeated and dethroned, Charles becomes free from the quickening spell of the "lust of sway" (64) and thus redemptively trades his "crowns for rosaries" (66). This lust of sway that Byron describes here means the allure of influence—in more contemporary language, lust for power ("Sway," def. 5). Charles as a Napoleon double poses a route for Napoleon to be redeemed in defeat. However, Byron quickly finds this attempted double to be failed. Napoleon is not the same as Charles, for "too late [did Napoleon] leav'st the high command / To which thy weakness clung" (75-76). Napoleon does not escape the allure of power—his weakness—like Charles does. Nevertheless, Byron still reveals the absolute desolation Napoleon has found in abdication by creating these two doubles.

By establishing Napoleon in terms of such perverse initial counterparts, Byron describes Napoleon as contrary to nature and desolate by weakness. True enough, Byron uses terms that Nicholson deems sexual, religious, and political (70). Byron envisions in "Ode" "Pagod things" (26) that lead men astray, "rapture of the strife" (29), and the "lust of stray" (64)."Ode to Napoleon" describes power seductively, and Napoleon's ambitious quest for influence illuminates his weakness of desire (70). Other phrases from "Ode" support this reading. Byron

calls Napoleon an “ill-minded man,” therefore envisioning Bonaparte as infected (10). Byron establishes an inverse nature for this infected vision of Napoleon. Victory—the goal of Napoleon’s ill ambition—is described in destructive terms. “The earthquake voice of Victory / To thee the breath of life” (30-31). Napoleon’s very livelihood depends on so destructive an entity. As Byron attempts to understand Napoleon the former conqueror after Napoleon’s defeat, he discovers Bonaparte to be paradoxical. Byron bemoans:

> The Desolator desolate!
> The Victor overthrown!
> The Arbiter of others’ fate
> A Suppliant for his own! (37-40)

If Napoleon is indeed a conqueror, then a conquered Napoleon does not make sense. Indeed, Byron draws attention to the paradoxes that arise from Napoleon’s abdication to reveal the necessity of reimagining perceptions of Napoleon. The traditional image of Napoleon no long makes sense—thus, Napoleon must recreate an image of Napoleon through doubling. Simon Bainbridge notes that Napoleon, seen as the embodiment of the heroic figure by the Romantics, called notions of heroism into question when he fell from power (2). Napoleon certainly questions Napoleon’s nature in this stanza of dejection.

While exploring destructive doubles for Napoleon, Byron discovers an ultimate and truly un-Promethean double—Jupiter. Byron notes that “from [Napoleon’s] reluctant hand / The thunderbolt is wrung” (73-74). Command of the thunderbolt, a destructive element of nature mythically ascribed to Jupiter, is here ascribed to Napoleon. When describing Bonaparte in exile, Byron writes that the sea “ne’er was ruled by [Napoleon]” (121). Moreover, the “Earth is now as free” as the water, for Napoleon cannot command it either (124). This account of Napoleon in exile further promotes a comparison between Napoleon and Jupiter. Just like Jupiter, Napoleon

has no sway over the ocean or the earth. A Jovian Napoleon is cut off from nature—the sea and the earth are rebellious against his touch. Elsewhere, Byron notes that Napoleon was "worshipp'd," by men (16). Again, Byron invites a Jupiterean comparison: both Napoleon and Jupiter were worshipped as emperors. Just a few lines later, Byron recalls that Napoleon's charisma "led [men] to adore / Those Pagod things of sabre sway" (25-26). Napoleon has inspired pagan-esque worship, further affirming the connection between himself and Jupiter. Even the names Byron gives Napoleon are reminiscent of Jupiter: Byron calls Napoleon the "Desolator," the "Victor," and the "Arbiter of others' fates" (37-39). Napoleon is described in omnipotent and awesome language fit to describe a heavenly tyrant. Byron thus establishes Jupiter as an ultimate profane double of Napoleon. This final profane double for Napoleon complicates Bonaparte's character when he is later compared to the most interesting and important double established in the poem: Prometheus.

The success of whether or not Napoleon might be a Promethean double is critical. If Napoleon is indeed Promethean, Byron can save Napoleon from a disgraced exile and restore him with dignity—if not, the poem has exhausted its search for doubles, and Napoleon is truly defeated. Many critics have pointed out that Napoleon becomes a failed Promethean figure at the end of the "Ode." At a glance, an easy comparison between the two figures can be made—both Napoleon and Prometheus were heroic figures who fell from mighty power to complete defeat. As noted earlier, John Clubbe contends that Byron made such a comparison and expressed violent displeasure with Napoleon towards the end of "Ode" because Napoleon did not show heroism in defeat but rather accepted a dishonorable exile over an honorable death (Clubbe 48). Similarly, Andrew Burkett argues that Byron only enters a comparison between Prometheus and Napoleon to reveal the courage of the former in contrast with the cowardice of the latter (132).

Simon Bainbridge, on the other hand, claims that Byron uses the transformative powers of myth to reevaluate Napoleon, not as a Shakespearean tragic hero, but rather as a successful mythic hero (146). Napoleon's surrender does not mean failure but can be reread as an act of defiance—therefore, Napoleon is redeemed as a hero (Bainbridge 149). These critics all bring up fair points, but I believe Byron's positioning of Napoleon with Prometheus is much more nuanced. After unsuccessfully searching through history for a satisfying Napoleonic double, Byron turns to myth and the figure of Prometheus. Though Napoleon is certainly un-Promethean when he is enthroned, in exile Napoleon finds the power to transform anguish into redemptive, Promethean suffering.

Before I determine how Napoleon is and is not Promethean, I must first establish what it means to be Promethean in "Ode to Napoleon." Byron invokes Prometheus in a very unique manner. Rather than name Prometheus directly, as he did with Timour a few lines earlier, Byron calls him the "thief of fire from heaven" (136). Prometheus is first established not as a hero, but rather as a thief. Byron therefore directs the reader's attention towards Prometheus' crime—and act of defiance—against Jupiter. If Napoleon is indeed a double of Jupiter, Prometheus is thus positioned immediately antithetical to Napoleon/Jupiter. Byron paradoxically commands Bonaparte to emulate his supposed opposite: Napoleon is to "withstand the shock" like Prometheus (138). To become Promethean, Napoleon must go against his nature as a Jovian double. In other words, to become Promethean, Napoleon cannot be Jupiterean. Byron offers little incentive for Napoleon to undergo this trans-personal transformation. Prometheus' exile is not an exile that enables the exiled to gaze upon the sea and run his hand over the earth as Napoleon might in 119-24. Rather, Prometheus' realm has "his vulture and his rock" (139). Interestingly, it could be argued that to be Promethean, then, is to be united with nature—

Prometheus is placed in possession, rather than in subjugation, of the vulture and the rock. Byron soon adds that Prometheus might in fact be more fortunate than Napoleon. In his defeat, Prometheus has "preserved his pride" (143). He accepts his punishment with dignity—thus, Prometheus transforms his arena of punishment into an arena of exultation. Prometheus, then, outlines a model of redemptive suffering. Though he is chained to a rock, he is not desolated, but rather is dignified and proud. If Napoleon can follow a Promethean path, as Bainbridge suggests he might, then Napoleon's fall and subsequent exile might be reclaimed as saving acts for the despot emperor.

Napoleon, however, is not entirely Promethean or not Promethean—Byron rather charts out a complex model of Napoleon as both like and unlike Prometheus. Tellingly**,** in the Promethean stanza of "Ode," Napoleon is contradictorily Promethean and non-Promethean. Byron describes Napoleon as "Foredoom'd by God" (140). Napoleon in defeat has taken on at least one Promethean characteristic by being rejected by a divine figure—and, indeed, the juxtaposition of this text with the invocation of Prometheus in the lines immediately above furthers this idea. However, Byron turns quickly away from Napoleon as Promethean: he describes Napoleon in the words directly following as "by man accurst" (140). Indeed, the divide is sharp—Byron employs an em-dash as a cesura to separate Napoleon foredoomed by God and Napoleon accursed by man. Herein lies a critical difference between Napoleon and Prometheus: while both fallen heroes are certainly cursed and cast down by omnipotent figures—Prometheus by an enraged Jupiter, Napoleon by a foul turn of his fate—Prometheus is not held in disregard by man. Prometheus, rather, is a mythic benefactor of mankind, for he created man and woman out of clay and enlightened humanity by bearing fire ("Prometheus"). Indeed, it is for this gift of fire he gave for the betterment of mankind that Prometheus suffers on his rock. To be

Promethean, then, is to be sympathetic to mankind. Since the Promethean stanza is short, to truly understand the limits of Napoleon as Promethean or non-Promethean we must turn to the rest of the "Ode."

Napoleon is most non-Promethean in "Ode" when he is enthroned, for when enthroned he is described as antithetical towards his fellow man. Byron clearly disconnects Napoleon from the rest of mankind by placing Napoleon at the top of a power structure under which the remainder of mankind is subjugated. Byron remarks that, before Napoleon's exile, the "earth was Gaul's—Gaul [Napoleon's]" (146). A chain of command when Napoleon was enthroned is thus discovered: all of earth is subservient to France, and all of France to Napoleon. Napoleon is set above all else. Indeed, one of the key attributes that Byron ascribes to Napoleon is "that sway / Which man seem'd made but to obey" (32-33). Napoleon's charisma is used to subjugate and control man. In fact, Napoleon is so powerful a force that mankind seems created just to obey him. This raises an interesting comparison to Prometheus—Byron endows Napoleon with a sense of a God-like creative force. Prometheus, as stated earlier, was the mythic creator of mankind. Napoleon, however, is not a Promethean creator in this couplet. The emperor exerts force over mankind via his charismatic sway and subjugates man into a master-slave relationship that one might expect from Jupiter, not Prometheus. The chain of command that Byron describes thus places Napoleon as master over an enslaved human race. Byron recalls this power dynamic just a few lines later when he names Napoleon the "Arbiter of others' fate" (39). Again, Byron endows Napoleon with God-like powers—in this instance, Napoleon is the master of fate. Although Bonaparte may be a "Suppliant for his own [fate]," he is nevertheless more powerful than "others" (40). Byron thus places an empowered Napoleon apart and above mankind.

Pre-exile Napoleon, himself a privileged figure distinct and apart from the rest of mankind, does not use his power for the benefit of humanity—rather, Byron describes the enthroned Napoleon as explicitly anti-human. Byron notes that the "Earth hath spilt her blood" for Napoleon (82). Napoleon's power is qualified in terms of human capital—blood. Moreover, we can safely infer that pain is associated with the spilling of blood, and thus that Napoleon's power is asserted at a cost of human suffering. Byron reaffirms this idea a few lines later by saying Napoleon's "evil deeds are writ in gore" (91). Again, Napoleon's actions are defined in terms of human woes—in this case, with the especially violent word "gore." Napoleon's very history is tied to violence, for his actions are recorded through the gore of human suffering. In both instances, Byron writes in the past tense. When Napoleon was in power, his deeds were intrinsically connected to violent accounts of suffering. Thus, Byron pits Napoleon against mankind very precisely as he places the emperor on top of a power structure enforced by human suffering. An enthroned Napoleon cannot be Promethean—Prometheus was the champion of mankind, suffering on behalf of humanity rather than letting humanity suffer. Napoleon, on the other hand, brings pain to mankind in order to assert his power.

Byron uses other details to envision a non-Promethean Napoleon. Byron notes that Napoleon in "[his] weakness clung" (76) to his command. "Clung" is vivid and aggressive—Napoleon exerted great and desperate might to retain his control. He does not grasp at power altruistically—rather, it is from weakness that the emperor seeks to stay in command. While Prometheus withstands punishment through great personal strength, Napoleon clutches at power out of vice. Just as Nicholson notes, Byron describes Napoleon's efforts for power in a language that reveals the insatiable appeal and ultimate consequences of ambition (70). Byron's description of Napoleon clinging to power seems desperate and empty. Indeed, Napoleon's

desire for power ultimately reveals him to be weak rather than strong. There is little heroic or Promethean in Napoleon in this moment. Though Byron once thought that Napoleon was the culmination of the heroic (Bainbridge 2), he recognizes his own failure of optimistically understanding Napoleon as an otherworldly hero-figure. Byron writes, "But yet methought the living great / some higher sparks should animate / to dazzle and dismay" (104-06). Byron's voice is in the past tense—he *thought* that Napoleon belonged to a higher class of humans animated by a higher power. The past tense voice reveals that Byron's optimistic view is outdated and has changed, perhaps implying that Byron recognizes his former idealism is broken. Cheryl Giuliano agrees with this. She argues that Byron realized the failure of his idealistic image of Napoleon once Napoleon entered exile, for Napoleon could not live up to the high standards of resistance set by the Promethean myth (4). Indeed, Napoleon in exile can appear to be very un-Promethean. When Byron first mentions Napoleon's state post-defeat, he describes Napoleon as a "Suppliant for his own [fate]" (40). Though Napoleon is admittedly "overthrown" (38) as Prometheus was, Napoleon nevertheless contrasts sharply with an exiled Promethean figure. Prometheus, as Byron later in "Ode" recalls, "[withstood] the shock" (137) of defeat. Though chained to a rock—thus bound in a space against his will by a force greater than him, just as Napoleon in exile is—Prometheus remains dignified and rebellious. Napoleon, on the other hand, is not the same. Although he is immediately before described as a fate-arbiter, in exile Bonaparte has become a "Suppliant for his own [fate]" (40). Napoleon has become an intercessor to a power greater than himself—his misfortunate Fate. In a sense, Napoleon in defeat has become object within the lower bound of his power structure. Through intercession rather than arbitration, he has become just as any other human being formerly beneath him as emperor. Thus, Napoleon has transformed in character from who he was when still enthroned. Unlike Prometheus, the

steadfast protestor of outside influence, Bonaparte has abandoned his former omnipotence and become a powerless and disenfranchised being.

However, to say that Byron envisions Napoleon as non-Promethean both on the throne and in exile is incorrect. Rather, Byron reimagines Napoleon as Promethean by connecting Bonaparte to Promethean images and revealing the Promethean effects of Napoleon's exile. Though the emperor Napoleon was undeniably Jovian, the very first line of "Ode" invites us to imagine that a Napoleonic transformation has occurred. "'Tis done—but yesterday a King!" (1). The line, of course, is short and to the point. Byron invites his reader to realize that Napoleon is no longer in command, though "yesterday" he was. Indeed, "'Tis done" could even refer to the end of Jovian Napoleon—Napoleon is now dethroned, so his time as emperor and overlord above mankind is over. However, Byron's first motion of Napoleon away from a kingly position is subtle—Byron does not mean for anyone to forget that Napoleon has been until recently quite kingly. Now not an emperor, the new Napoleon is "a nameless thing / So abject—yet alive!" (3). Byron transforms Napoleon across the first three lines from formerly kingly to wholly humbled. He calls the humbled Napoleon "nameless." Sure enough, Byron does not call Napoleon by name once throughout the entire "Ode." In doing so, Byron invites his reader to disassociate the exiled Bonaparte from the enthroned Bonaparte by abandoning the most potent signifier of Napoleon—his name. No longer is Napoleon proud—rather, now he is humble. No longer is Napoleon even Napoleon—now he is nameless.

Byron thus moves the exiled Napoleon into a new position that markedly different from Napoleon's former nature. Indeed, Byron is so effective in his Napoleonic transformation that he barely recognizes the former emperor. He asks if this new, humbled figure is the same man as the formerly glorious Napoleon: "Is this the man of thousand thrones, / Who strew'd our earth

with hostile bones, / And can he thus survive?" (5-7) Byron recalls the violent and anti-human nature of pre-exile Napoleon by evoking an image of a Napoleon who spread earth with bones. We must remember, however, that Napoleon in exile is not the same Napoleon as the enthroned and Jovian emperor. In fact, Napoleon in exile has transformed so drastically that Byron must confirm with his reader the exiled Napoleon is still Napoleon in the above question. Thus, Byron distances Napoleon post-abdication from his violent and non-Promethean kingship. In ascribing the new Napoleon only two characteristics—abject and alive—Byron calls special attention to these aspects of Napoleon's character. *Abject*, here, most likely means cast off or expelled ("Heavy," def. 1). By calling Napoleon rejected, Byron implies that the emperor was removed from his former Jovian position of power by force of others—a point that is certainly historically true. Indeed, the word is passive. Napoleon did not reject his command, but rather was rejected. "Abject," then, is subtly Promethean—Napoleon has lost his former mighty agency and is acted upon. His position, too, is Promethean: Napoleon has been ejected from a position of great power. Interestingly, the only other word Byron chooses to define exiled Napoleon at this initial depiction is "alive." Perhaps Byron means the characteristic to read as a saving qualification. Byron says "—yet alive!" and we are meant to think "Napoleon may be defeated, *but at least he is alive*." Byron thus reminds his reader that Napoleon has not died in defeat. This, too, is subtly Promethean, for Prometheus too is alive though defeated. The language of the line further invites the reader to envision a potential future for Napoleon. Byron offers no definite path for Bonaparte to follow in exile—rather, by only qualifying Napoleon as alive, Byron keeps his language broad and vague. Indeed, the reader could imagine a future in which Byron becomes more and more Promethean, as Bainbridge suggests (149). Sure enough, as the "Ode" progresses, Byron reveals more possible connections between the despot French emperor and the

enchained titan that suggest a route through which Byron might "transform Napoleon's abdication [from] an act of surrender into one of defiance" (Bainbridge 149).

Byron reimagines Napoleon as Promethean through evoking and connecting Promethean images to Bonaparte. After describing how Earth had spilled blood for Napoleon, Byron turns phrase and remarks that "Monarchs bow'd the trembling limb, / And thank'd [Napoleon] for a throne!" (84-85) The couplet invites multiple readings. On the one hand, Byron might be describing Kings as suppliant to Napoleon, therefore reaffirming a Napoleon-Jupiter comparison. These monarchs pay tribute to Napoleon by bowing and giving thanks. This thanks could be given, one might image, because Napoleon has enabled the monarchs to rule. After all, whatever monarchs were left on their throne during and after the Napoleonic wars were spared from dethronement by Napoleon. Napoleon, then, would clearly be responsible for the blood earth hath spilled—Byron is most likely referring to the Napoleonic wars fought among European monarchs immediately before Napoleon's abdication. However, this is not the only possible reading of the couplet. Byron notes that the monarchal limbs are trembling—Napoleon, the reader might infer, inspires fear in the monarchs. Such an image is potentially Promethean. Napoleon, having fought against so many nations in the Napoleonic wars, is not a friend of European monarchs—thus, one could imagine Napoleon inspires fear and dread in them. Napoleon, then, can be reimagined not as a monarch-enabler, but rather as anti-king. Napoleon also deemphasizes of these bowing monarchs by employing synecdoche. The monarchs bow "trembling limbs" rather than their whole bodies. Byron belittles these kings and transforms them into frightened body parts. Napoleon, therefore, disenfranchises monarchs and belittles them. Prometheus, similarly, is anti-monarch—he defies the commands of Jupiter in his fire-

bearing act. Thus, when Napoleon becomes anti-monarchical—a position emphasized when Napoleon literally becomes a non-monarch in abdication—he is connected to Prometheus.

Napoleon as a Promethean double becomes clearer when examining how Byron defined Napoleon post-defeat. In some moments, the Promethean double is merely a subtle suggestion. Byron observes that "hero dust / Is vile as vulgar clay," thus connecting fallen—or dead—heroes to clay (100-01). This comparison might initially suggest that a heroic man is just the same as an unheroic man in death. However, a closer reading reveals more: Byron evokes the Promethean creation narrative through his term "vulgar clay." Prometheus, in common Greek myth, formed man and woman from clay and breathed life into them ("Prometheus"). Napoleon, connected to clay by being a hero in defeat, is therefore connected to the Promethean creation narrative. Byron emphasizes this connection by employing a rare-in-the-poem enjambment in the couplet. By splitting the sentence between "hero dust" and "is vile as vulgar clay," Byron maintains the dignity of heroic remains by placing them quite literally above vulgar clay on the page. However, by including hero dust and vulgar clay in the same sentence, Byron ensures a connection all the same. Thus, Napoleon is carefully linked to Prometheus as the creator, and Byron ensures potential dignity a hero may still have though defeated.

Having thus connected Prometheus and Napoleon as potential doubles, Byron, at last, reveals the ultimate power of this Promethean doubling: through his exile, Napoleon might transform what was Jovian into Promethean, and thus redeem himself and others though he is defeated and dethroned. Byron further evokes Promethean imagery in his stanza on Marie Louise, Napoleon's second wife:

> And she, proud Austria's mournful flower,
> Thy still imperial bride;
> How bears her breast the torturing hour?

> Still clings she to thy side?
> Must she too bend, must she too share,
> Thy late repentance, long despair… (109-14)

The stanza is fraught with Promethean phrases: "mournful," "torturing hour," "long despair." Marie Louise certainly suffers in a Promethean way when Napoleon is exiled. Napoleon, then, is the impetus for this Promethean response—because of Bonaparte's exile, Marie Louise is enabled to suffer like Prometheus. Napoleon inspires Promethean action—an idea made all the more radical by remembering that Marie Louise was formerly a Habsburg royal. Though once kingly as a member of a ruling family, Marie Louise has been transformed into a suffering Prometheus though Napoleon's exile. Byron connects her suffering to Napoleon in his next couplet: "If still she loves thee, hoard that gem,— / 'Tis worth thy vanish'd diadem!" (116-17) Byron urges Napoleon to hold on to Marie Louise. Though Byron's language may be violent—hoard is not a pretty word—his plea is certainly earnest. Byron demands that Napoleon realize the transformative power of his exile, for through Napoleon's abdication Marie Louise has transformed from a monarch into a Promethean sufferer. Byron further assures Napoleon that his suffering wife is worth more than his former kingship—Promethean suffering, thus, is evaluated as greater than Jovian rule. Thus, Byron realizes that Napoleon's exile might be used as an impetus to transform what was formerly Jovian into something Promethean.

In another instance, Byron writes that "By gazing on thyself grown blind / [Napoleon] taught'st the rest to see" (12-13). Byron immediately evokes Prometheus, for Prometheus mythically took a teaching role by bringing fire to and thus quite literally enlightening mankind. Like Prometheus chained to a rock, Napoleon in this couplet is placed in an unprivileged position—he is blinded by his defeat. However, much like Prometheus, Napoleon's suffering is not unredeemable. Though he himself may be disadvantaged, Napoleon has become a teaching

agent to literally teach the world to see. Napoleon in defeat has thus become a Promethean enlightener, and the Promethean double is assured. Interestingly, Napoleon as a Promethean enlightener in defeat might even surpass the teaching abilities of Prometheus himself. Napoleon can teach the world to see while he is defeated, while Prometheus is powerless to do anything in his confining punishment. In a strange way, Napoleon post-abdication goes beyond Promethean limitations. Sure enough, Byron writes "Thanks for that lesson—it will teach / To after-warriors more / Than high Philosophy can preach" (19-21). Napoleon as a teaching figure has taught lessons through his defeat that are beyond even philosophy itself.

Byron, then, in establishing and fulfilling a Promethean double with the figure of Napoleon in defeat, has described an incredible transformation. Napoleon has changed from the Jovian scourge of mankind doubled with profane and destructive historical and mythic figures when enthroned into a Promethean double that both inspires Promethean action and enlightens mankind when he is defeated. Sure enough, Byron's apparent attitudes towards Napoleon may appear to vacillate. Giuliano, perhaps, says it best when she notes that Byron forever held "passionate regard and disregard for Napoleon" (4). However, Byron's disappointed and critical language need not mean that Byron thought Napoleon post-abdication was a failure and thus worthy of rejection. Rather, Byron carefully reimagines Napoleon through doubling in "Ode" from a Jupiterean emperor to a Promethean sufferer and enlightener. By assuming a Promethean position, Napoleon has become redemptive and enlightening in his suffering, and Byron need not reject him.

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