



GULNAR"AND"CONRAD": HEGELIAN MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTICS IN"THE CORSAIR"



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ABSTRACT

Published in 1814, "The Corsair" was one of the most well-known poetical works of Lord Byron after "The Child's Harold Pilgrimage". Being a narrative verse, it follows the tradition of Byron in the creation of the Byronic Hero as the manifestation of his individuality of mind and self and as the reflection of his romantic revisionary idealist spirit. The character which embodies such features is Conrad whose descriptions in terms of agony, suffering, pleasure seeking and remorsefulness, highly resemble Byron. On the other side, "Gulnar", an odalisque, the female character of this verse, contributes to the context of gender due to her role as a woman slave whose freedom is attained by Conrad. According to the theory of the Hegelian Master-Slave Dialectics, and, through consideration of the context of gender, the Byronic Hero is, primarily, the Master and the submissive female character is the slave of Sultan's Harem, in the first place and is assumed to be inferior to the pirates, afterwards. However, the close analysis of their interactions and communications shed light on an acute conclusion which presents the female character, Gulnar, as the superior, regardless of what gender specifications dictate. This reveals that the Byronic Hero is bonded. The present article attempts at elaborating this relationship through the three stages of confrontation, recognition and acceptance which are related to Master-Slave relationships and the three phases of thesis, antithesis and synthesis which are connected to the dialectical aspect of Master-Slave relationships.

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Contribution/ Originality

This study contributes in the existing literature about the Byronic Hero in presenting him as the Hegelian slave. Considering the context of gender in junction with the Romantic era and Lord Byron is significant in understanding the mentality, expectations and perspectives about women and their roles.

1. INTRODUCTION

The legend and phenomenon of the Romantic era, George Gordon Lord Byron, published the brilliant narrative verse of "The Corsair" which has been described as a shining, gloomy and wild romance, in 1814 (Bloom, 2009). As one of the Turkish tales, Byron in an advertisement said that those who have read "Lara" might have connected it to the "Corsair" though the stories and characters have been different (Turhan, 2004). It has been emphasized that the Grande Tour through which Byron spent some times in Eastern Europe played a pivotal role in creating the characters and the stories such as what we experience in "the Corsair" (Bone, 2005). Yet our expectation will not adhere to the

mere geographical or cultural differences due to Byron's amalgamation of notions about different matters and concepts which are concerned with individual and society. This narrative verse, in three cantos, is the gloomy story of Conrad, the pirate leader who reminds the readers of Giaour since both Conrad and Giaour confronted and fell in a battle with the Turkish Sultan, attempted at rescuing the damsel-in-distress and revealed the nostalgic, dark and passionate and brave character. As the dedication to Thomas Moore, Byron mentioned that "The Corsair" was to be his last production "with which I shall trespass on public patience, and your indulgence, for some years..." (Murray, 1850). Lord Byron's use of the heroic couplet, as he explained, is "the good of old and the new neglected" verse meter through which he called it the best measure for versification which was loved by Lady Caroline Lamb (Douglass, 2004). Having referred to the Spenserian stanza, Byron declared that "it is the measure most after my own heart..." (Cochran, 2012). Just like "The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", "Manfred" and "Giaour" and the other autobiographical verses, Byron's verses are a mixture of the social, political, adventurous and psychological description of the troubled life and experience of him (Bloom, 2009). He explains that the hero [the Byronic Hero] is "more perfect and amiable" and it is like a "drawing from self" (Murray, 1850). Despite the fact that the Byronic Heroes of Byron's works are discussed as the different versions of the hero; in this verse, the Byronic hero is Conrad who reminds the readers of Byron as "a brooding and restless figure of sexual allure, haunted by the transgression of the past" (Bone, 2005). While the prevalent focus has been on the Byronic Hero for extending the possible understanding of Lord Byron's mind and heart and the elaborately attractive characteristics, the female characters, are probably considered as the passive gender. Yet they embody significant presentation of meaning as in "the Corsair" there is "the shift from passive to active heroine figure" which by all means conveys "a transformation of the whole Byronic value system" (Bone, 2005). The Byronic hero's interaction with the Byronic Heroine in "The Corsair" is significant in terms of demonstrating the manner that each individual's consciousness develops and becomes self-consciousness. This is what the Hegelian Master-Slave Dialectics seeks to decipher since the biographical account of Byron's life would not be involved.

2. THE HEGELIAN MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTICS

The perplexing discussion concerned with the master and slave is regarded as one of the most profound section in Hegel's "The Phenomenology of Spirit" (1978) which is the account of two consciousness' struggle as they seek recognition from the other one. Hegel refers to self-consciousness as "a movement" and it has a "double object" which can be "completed in three moments" within the stages of confrontation, recognition and acceptance and phases of the thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Hegel, 1978). Master-Slave Dialectics marks the mutual twofold human relationship which determines the concept of domination and power that eventually leads to the attainment of self-consciousness. Within this relationship, the two individuals interact. Primarily, the master who possesses sense-certainty presents an immediate position of the one in power as the universal "I" (Hegel, 1978). The master "relates himself immediately to the bondsman through a being that is independent" because he holds the chain of bondage (Hegel, 1978). On the other side, the slave is another conscious being who serves the master and takes the orders. This first phase is called thesis where the master and slave have an immediate perception of each other which is based on the sense-certainty of the I. In addition, the master's first conscious perception is merely ironical due to the presence of the slave as another consciousness; hence his recognition is not considered as the true one. The services and commands performed and taken by the slave which come from the master are meaningful in dialectics since the slave finds his independence by performing them. The phase of the thesis is adapted to the stage of confrontation which is followed by the antithesis or the recognition part highlighting the negation. In this part, the slave finds himself unattached to the master reflecting master's awareness of the contradictions which implies that the slave is negating the power of the master which is the expression of his freedom. To elaborate this notion, we must see that the slave is giving the service and taking the orders and commands which are the things or the objects; so the master needs and desires that service which reveals his dependency on the slave to provide it which is the counter point of

the thesis and confrontation. The last phase is synthesis which is the acceptance stage through which the slave becomes self-conscious of his independency and freedom of bondage; and, the master becomes self-conscious of his dependency to the slave which makes him the slave of the slave.

3. CONRAD AND GULNAR IN "THE CORSAIR"

Conrad is an adventurous pirate who wanders and roams around the world. He is mysterious, gloomy and strong and similar to the other Byronic Heroes, he is apparently running away from the society forlornly. He is followed by the other pirates which presents him as a leader. He decides to set sail and to attack, his foe, the Sultan Syed Pasha. Conrad's consciousness is of the master who displays daring and independent traits. According to the Hegelian Master-Slave Dialectics, Conrad's natural consciousness of a master depends on his immediate surrounding "which will show itself to be only the notion of knowledge, or in other words, not to be real knowledge" (Hegel 1978). The sense-certainty, which Conrad is clinging to, is what he hosts in himself as the natural experience. His wife, Medora, tried to tempt him to keep him in their isle but fails since Conrad's spirit is not built for the domestic life, although Medora is the only light in his remorseful disillusioned life. Farrell (2009) credited Medora with calling her the "most faithful woman" who waits "patiently at home for the return of the poem's hero, Conrad" (Farrell, 2009). Rejecting to stay with Medora is the sign by which Conrad expresses his independency in a sense-certain way which implies that his consciousness is bound to here and this (Hegel, 1978).

Disguised as a spy and determined to invade and dominate Syed's region, Conrad goes to Syed Pasha and then his band attacks and defeats him. Within the first victory, Conrad intends to establish his conscious superiority and power. However despite the previous grand victorious battles, which mark his universal sense-certain lordship, this one does not last as his action is aborted and compromised during a rescuing mission. Then men are slaughtered to save Syed Pasha's women slaves and therefore, Conrad is seized and imprisoned. This attempt at rescuing the Harem women speaks about two points of view; one is about Conrad's chivalrous attitude with the image of saving 'the damsel in distress' and the other one is the notion that his determination is affected by this attitude. He is escaped from prison with the help of Gulnar, Sultan's favourite woman slave which foresees the challenge that he faces in connection with the woman character. This act of rescuing confused Conrad because she did not consider Conrad's universal role as a master. Conrad, experiencing ambivalent experiences, sails back to his island which leads him to find out the truth about Medora's death out of the misery of the broken heart.

Conrad in "The Corsair" is the Byronic Hero who is considered the hero of the narrative verse. He highly resembles Lord Byron since Lord Byron's life incidents have been, factually and fictionally, mirrored in his works through the Byronic Hero. He is a solitary man in spite of the fact that he has a wife, which makes him a man of the family, in addition to being the leader of a group of pirates. Being an outcast and an outlaw, Conrad is presented as a passionate regretful man who does not fear to do some heroically courageous actions. He is fighting against the convention because he was rejected by the society in his youth. These features demonstrate that Conrad positions himself according to the immediate and primary external perception of a lord considering the way he shows his superiority over Medora, the band and Syed Pasha.

"That man of loneliness and mystery
Scarce seen to smile, and seldom heard to sigh;
Whose name appeals the fiercest of his crew
And tints each swarthy cheek with sallower hue;
Still sways their souls with that commanding art
That dazzles, leads, yet chills the vulgar heart (I, VIII, 5-10)

He appears to be a rigid, stern and stubborn man whose face, as the mentioned lines portray, is affecting others in a fearful manner in so far as his servants would not ever complain or question his decision. They are always ready to be lead and commanded by him which undoubtedly itself signifies Conrad's masterhood. This description, in other

words, indicates that he possesses the unsubmitive nature of an "I" that have not challenged or negated (Hegel, 1978). Byron goes on and links Conrad with those who possess "power of thought" or "the magic of mind". Furthermore, Conrad is compared to the ancient heroes in the sense that though he does not possess some features similar to Hercules', his feature may impress others. He adds:

"There was a laughing Devil in his sneer,
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled, and mercy sigh'd farewell"(I, IX, 31-34).

Every aspect of him is highly dramatized by pointing to his marvelous gaze, "sun-bumt cheeks" and "high and pale" forehead, which even when they are recognizable, they cannot be defined and he would be despised of. Beside being powerful and fearful, the Corsair is described as being "doomed" and a "villain" and a "hypocrite" who pretends to be attentive and positive (I, XI). This would be the reason to his awareness of how much others detest him and how much they are afraid of him while he pretends to be affectionate. These characteristics make him the hero who displays the qualities which can be endlessly remembered and re-conceptualized.

The presence of women in Byron's works is the embellishing act of the verses with the feminine voice through whom the role of Byronic Hero is challenged and the general view towards gender is revealed. The notion of the role and place of women in Byron's time did not deviate from the traditionally accepted perspective which was the presentation of them as the inferior, illogical, insensible and weak gender whose productions could merely have been the children. Apart from this characteristics, there have been the qualities of monstrosity and madness attributed to them (Murray, 2008). Although there was the rise of the reading culture among females and the writing attempt of some female writers, they were refused to be recognized. Lord Byron was not an exception as he did not consider women worthy of writing and publication "unless anonymously and in a miscellany or periodical" (Murray, 2008). However, the creation of female characters in his works shows various female conceptualizations. There are two women in the story of "The Corsair" and each one plays an important role in revealing the Byronic hero's thought and traits. In fact, Byron's characterization of female characters in the Oriental tales, including 'The Corsair', is the revelation of his own standpoint which marks his precise and exact look in creating "the beautiful and steadfast female characters" based on his "feminine perspective" (Douglass, 2006). Once he said that these oriental, beautiful and young women are his idealized fancy about them which could not be realistic (Hull, 1978). Among all the oriental tales, "The Corsair" is said to illustrate "the complex role of the Byronic Heroine" who defies the convention (Hull, 1978). Although Gulnar, the second woman, is the point of focus of this master-slave pattern and interaction; but knowing Medora is beneficial in understanding Conrad. The first one named Medora, his wife, is fair and predictable who intends to make him settled down. But Byron leaves her in a quite touching feminine way implying Medora's role as a submissive woman. The lines which are about Medora and Conrad, in addition, are illuminating in connection with his strong feeling for Medora as the only positive emotional light. Her emotion towards Conrad is highly tender and she admits that she is afraid of the days that their love is colorless without any limit. However Conrad states that:

"Yet the same feeling which thou dost condemn,
My very love to thee is hate to them,
So closely mingling here, that disentwined,
I ceased to love thee when I love mankind..."(I, XIV, 62-65).

Medora tries to warm his heart so that he may stay with her as she offers food and sweet drink while "... the board is spread; our silver lamp/ is trimmed, and heeds not the sirocco's damp..."(I, XIV, 93-94). Conrad is leaving her and Byron describes him as being "stern" who does not look back as he left Medora (I, XVI, 2). What Conrad presents against Medora and what is expected is the masculine quality of being powerful, convincing, firm, active and proud and free. He possessed people as his guards who would perform any task for him. These factors reveal Conrad

to be, primarily, an independent while he depends on others to recognize him. He, as the Byronic Hero represents the quality of being a lord when he displays some conscious commands and decisions. He goes to meet Pasha and Pasha's reaction regarding Conrad, as a Pirate, reflects his fear. This establishes how Conrad has got power, yet he pretends to be submissive to the lord of that land by describing how safe and secure he is in Pasha's kingdom while having the plan to attack. His obvious attack shows his conscious power and decisiveness over what he intends which makes him the master. Conrad's confidence in his own power is not sustained because he loses the perspective and the reason beyond his attack. Pasha retreats; and then Conrad and his men burn the castle when suddenly they hear some women's crying from the Harem which makes the pirates save them and provide security for them. The one whom Conrad carries is Gulnar:

"But who is she? Whom Conrad's arms convey
From reeking pile and combat's wreck away
Who but the love of him he dooms to bleed?
The Haram Queen-but still the slave of Seyd!"(II, V, 26-29)

This would be called the confrontation phase as Conrad is in the position of power and master-hood while she is, by contrast, a slave-woman which, in fact, is her role a passive character. This is again what Byron plans to present that the woman of his verse is the weak gender but she can charm the Byronic Hero. In this case, there must be a specific attention to her character as an Eastern woman as she has got "black eyes" which is the presumed indication of the oriental features as being alluringly dark and mysterious. Gulnar says that Conrad as a robber is noticeably "gentler than Seyd in the fondest mood"(II, VII, 12) and that

"The Pasha woo'd as if he deem'd the slave
Must seem delighted with the heart he gave
The Corsair vow'd protection, soothed affright
As if his homage were a woman's right"(II, VII, 13-16)

By the mentioned lines, Gulnar is initially introduced as being political in terms of the way she speaks that establishes Lord Byron's point of reference to her as the "defiant Oriental heroine" (Sharifah, 2006). She lacks the beauty of appearance but as the narrative verse develops she is presented as being self-consciously independent and attractive. This independency comes from the service that she provides for Pasha which Hegel refers to it as a chain or a bondage through which Pasha relates himself to Gulnar (Hegel, 1978). In another sense, Conrad puts his life behind Gulnar's life which indicates that the woman's influence can be highlighted. Furthermore, the lines above reflect Gulnar intrinsic purpose of getting significance and freedom in time. Gulnar is not a simple woman of the Harem. Byron explains that she can move through different parts of the palace because she owns a ring which makes every guard obeys her without any questions. So when she enters Conrad's chamber, she states that she would be the one who can save him because she is the "one"(II, XIII, 15) and the fact that she possesses "power" over what Pasha decides(II, XIV, 1). Hence in a line Gulnar is, consciously described as "the queen of night" who "asserts her silent reign "and his power of commanding (III, I, 34).

Gulnar confronting the Byronic Hero marks the idea of binary opposition of feminine and masculine theme except for the fact that Conrad is confused while Gulnar, though experiencing many challenges, is certain and confident. She is self-conscious of what she has got and who she has been which makes her superior to Conrad. This manner of her implies Gulnar's adaptation of power of masculinity and rejection of her yielding feminine quality (Bridgwood, 2011). Even her speech with Pasha about releasing Conrad is highly and rhetorically intelligent in persuading him. She encourages Pasha to get Conrad's wealth and frees him which makes her being questioned. Yet, he must submit to Pasha in order to survive which would be another point in making her superior, as Hegel is mentioning that the slave's submission, as a matter of fact, implies her freedom as she can carry on performing what she does. On the other hand, it is Pasha, the master, who becomes a slave to what he solely thinks due to his sense-certainty of being a superior. Hegel comments that "the Lord is the consciousness that exists for itself" who

simultaneously “relates himself mediately to the bondsman...” (Hegel, 1978). In this regards, Gulnar and Conrad are both the “things” related to the master Pasha.

She helps Conrad in the keen and concise plan of fleeing as she confesses her profound passion for him and calls her feeling the slavery of the physical body because her heart and mind have never been in the chain. Conrad at first does not accept her jeopardizing her life for him but once he knows about his time of death, he accepts and obeys what she says. The act of Pasha being murdered by Gulnar is one of the main parts of the verse. While, on the one hand, she reveals her true emotions for Conrad as a strong and gallant man; on the other hand she attempts a murder in order to secure freedom for Conrad and her and to escape from the feminine slavery. So, when they are on the ship leaving the region, Conrad is confused “if rescued or betrayed” which hints at the way Conrad’s power of influence abates (III, XII, 11); Conrad

“veiled his face and sorrow’d as he passed;

He thought of all-Gonsalvo and his band,

His fleeting triumph and his failing hand;

He thought on her afar, his lonely brid:

He turn’d and saw-Gulnar, the homicide!”(III, XIII,8-12).

His confusion and inability to make a decision and his inefficient capability of thinking straightly is the sign of his weakness. Besides, he feels strongly weak when he compares himself to Gulnar as a woman. Hence when they are all on the ship, he is fearful of the situation in which his comrades find out about the strength of Gulnar which will make her “the queen” of the group. This thought is well-connected with the recognition and eventually with the acceptance phase. Considering the dialectics of the relationship between Conrad and Gulnar, one can see the “movement or...its experience” and that “the natural consciousness” becomes a history since Conrad’s position changes (Hegel, 1978). This change is entangled with the notion of self-consciousness because it can be achieved solely through the meeting of three moments, as Hegel acknowledges. According to him, defining an “I” as an immediate object, negating it through the challenge and finally attaining the recognition and the truth are steps, known as thesis, antithesis and synthesis, taken by an individual (Hegel, 1978).

4. CONCLUSION

To put it into words, Conrad realizes that he is inferior to Gulnar, which, based on the Hegelian Dialectics, indicates that he is a slave. As the Byronic Hero, in the beginning of the narrative verse, he was described as a courageous lord who was idolized. His thinking and perceptiveness seemed beyond the expected values but the hatred towards Pasha made him chained to such an emotion which turned out to be a real chain. His confrontation with Gulnar, though firstly heroic and gallant, put an end to his immediate sense-certainty. He was the master of the band of the pirates which overwhelmingly became an “unessential element” (Hegel, 1978). He recognised the fact that he was a slave to his own limitation. While thinking of Gulnar as an inferior gender, he faced the fact that she was highly firm and decisive. Conrad vanished as he found out Medora has left this world due to an unhappy married life and the hardship she has been emotionally through, according to Sharifah (2006).

Hence, within the context of gender, Gulnar is not the inferior character. The Hegelian Master-Slave Dialectics defines Gulnar’s position different from what the consciousness of the society dictates. She resembles a true valiant female rather than a fragile feminine frame. The Byronic Hero as the established male gender becomes self-conscious as he recognises how intensely he is bounded to the others for his plans and success and how significantly the other’s recognition of him can be determining for his identity. On the other side, Gulnar, as a slave, becomes the lord of her destiny by recognizing that she can be free by laying her will into motion. The end of the narrative verse refers to Conrad as being disappeared and Gulnar as a free self-conscious woman.

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