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# **But My Soul Wanders, I Demand It Back:**

**Lord Byron and Charlotte Smith's Poetry in Exile.**

TFG GRAU EN ESTUDIS ANGLÉSOS

Supervisor: Dr Carme Font Paz



Frederick Morgan, *The Emigrants' Departure*, 1875

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	1
<u>Introduction</u>	
Romantic <i>Émigrés</i> and Exiles .....	2
<u>Chapter 1:</u>	
Healing the Wounds: Byron and Smith's Coming to Terms with their Past.....	7
<u>Chapter 2:</u>	
Moving On: Delving into the Present as a Cure for the Future.....	15
<u>Conclusions</u>	
What Deep Wounds Ever Closed Without a Scar? .....	21
Bibliography .....	23

## Abstract

This TFG approaches the figure of the *émigré* as the key to understand the construction of Romantic heroism through the analysis of the emotional strains experienced by both Lord Byron and Charlotte Turner Smith during their time abroad. Exile is a refuge from the past they are both escaping, but they are unable to detach themselves from England. Their compositions allow us an insight into this internal fight. To accomplish the objective of analysing this struggle, I have chosen to undertake a close reading of Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1818) and Smith's *The Emigrants* (1793). Whereas for Byron the emigrant is a reactive character, aggressive and exclusive, constantly in search for a new 'Patria' to defend and live for, for Charlotte Smith emigration is inclusive, a social rather than a personal phenomenon that is also tied to symbols of femininity. However, these two seemingly divergent constructions of the figure of the *émigré* share in common their resentment towards the English nation rather than an exaltation of the receiving country.

## Introduction

### Romantic *Émigrés* and Exiles

In the context of eighteenth-century Europe, wanderlust became a fashionable experience among the aristocracy and the wealthy middle classes. Romanticism, with its affinity for exotic atmospheres and its emphasis on the individual genius of the artist, served as an inspiration for many to leave their native land and travel abroad. True to the Spirit of the Age, their travels prompted them to write in a variety of forms and genres that included published or unpublished prose and poetry, travel books, personal diaries or, most importantly, letters. A constant, and sometimes frantic exchange of letters created a network of influences that contributed significantly to the development of literary circles as well as European political thought.

The French Revolution had an undeniable influence on Romantic British poetry. If the first generation of Romantic poets were inspired by the ideals of freedom, equality, and social change, the second generation was brought up in the aftermath of the Revolution, facing its bloody reality and consequences.

Women writers of the first and second generation of Romantics have caught the critical attention of Feminist scholars for three decades now. Women, as well as male writers, formed a heterogeneous group of sensibilities and ideologies. Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams came into prominence when they published their accounts of the French Revolution in highly favourable terms for the most part. The monarchic Tory writer Hannah More did her best to counteract the effects of this same revolution in what Kathryn Sutherland coined as “counter-revolutionary feminism” (Sutherland 1991). Women of letters, as they have been described by contemporary feminist Romantic studies, did not necessarily share the same ideological

ground in matters of religion, politics or social concerns. Their essays, letters, poetry and fiction show their differences in opinion and sensibility. They travelled a lot, too. They visited France in its most critical moments, left England escaping from economical or familiar troubles, lived abroad, met each other, discussed their ideas, works, political allegiances, fed on each other's knowledge and experience. A very good example of these is Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806). Praised by her contemporaries not only as an equal but also as an influence, Smith was a firm supporter of the Revolution, and explored political, social and moral issues of her time. She was married to a man who brought both of them into prison because of his debts. She wrote to support herself and her children, but even under such pressure, she never forgot her allegiances and political agenda in her works. She moved to France escaping debtors, and upon her return she sheltered French émigrés. Smith never forgot the emotional consequences and desolation of this situation, which she poured out in the long poem *The Emigrants* (1793).

Lord Byron, Percy Shelley or John Keats, the three pillars of the second generation of Romantic poets, did not choose to distance themselves from politics, on the contrary: for them politics was the continuation of poetry through others means, and they were very critical of the political disenchantment from these ideals by older Romantics.

They also travelled widely for health reasons, to escape from debtors and parental control or to seek refuge from scandal and social reprobation. Travelling was something young men of wealth and good name were encouraged to experience after their college education. The famously named Grand Tour brought these young men to the continent with the aim to educate themselves by way of experience and to satiate their hunger for adventure. The young Romantics travelled to France, Portugal, Spain,

Switzerland, and in Byron's case as far as Albania. Their favourite destination was of course, right after Rome, Greece, where the remains of the classical tradition inspired writers to produce some of their best works.

For the purposes of this degree paper, the concepts of the emigrant, the exile and the traveller must be properly defined and put into context. It must be kept in mind after this clarification that in the works of Byron and Smith analysed here, these three concepts are regarded as synonymous and are used throughout both poems indistinctively.

As it has been already mentioned, travelling was very much *in vogue* for the families and individuals of the period who could afford it. Studies and biographies have been devoted to the European tours of many famous characters, especially in the case of Byron, whose adventures abroad are always described with a sensationalist taint. The British went abroad mostly in search for good weather, to perfect their artistic capacities in the European capitals, on tour or on the recommendation of their physicians, as in Keats's case. Nevertheless, the verb "to travel" appears to be a superficial denomination for what was behind many people's decision to leave their native land.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an exile is an individual who, for political, religious or economic reasons is barred from their homeland. Exile was first used in the sense we understand nowadays during the Romantic period. The line between an exile and an emigrant is quite blurry and sometimes impossible to establish. As Stabler says: "A systematic desynonymization of the categories of exile, refugee, expatriate, and émigré is impossible to sustain except in the most general terms, as their imaginative conditions overlap and run into each other" (Stabler 2013: 4). An example of this phenomenon is Charlotte Smith's poem *The Emigrants*, which deals with the sufferings of the French émigrés and discusses the issue of forceful exile. Monica Smith

Hart mentions this problematic and adds that “emigrants gain a new social persona: they are members of a public group called ‘exiles’” (Smith 2010: 317). She adds that “one’s public identity as exile constitutes a lack of public identity, since the ‘exile’ is by definition rooted to no place and to no characteristic other than of being place-less, homeless” (Smith 2010: 317). We can derive from this that the emigrant is intrinsically connected with the immigrant, that is, one emigrates from their country to be an immigrant in another land, whereas an exile is a perpetual wanderer. This latter remark is supported by Stabler, when she claims that “Romantic-period writers sought to identify themselves with historical and literary outcasts and aliens to forward political protest, but also to understand their own states of mind and to people their isolation.” (Stabler 2013: 4).

This interest in the psychological nuances of the homeless wanderer, the misery of the exile, the lack of roots and having no means or nowhere to go is profoundly Romantic. Romanticism explores the ‘self’ in its most intimate expression, the individual, held by reason alone, in connection with a Nature that is both destructive and familiar. The Romantic hero, the lonely, miserable, desolate exile is a product of the social context of the time, of the migratory currents to France, and of the emotional consequences of being an exile. Romanticism, with its interest in the struggles of the individual in asserting his place in the world and its evocation of emotionality and self-reflection, is the ideal framework for exiles to analyse their own feelings and sufferings. Scholarship has mostly discussed exiles in relation with politics, especially in the case of Lord Byron and his quest for a *Patria* to defend after he was banished from England.

However, my interest is less centred on the political sensibilities of exiles than it is on the emotional impact of being an exile. In what ways is the journey outward a necessary condition to move inwards and gain self-knowledge? I will try to avoid the



recurrent topic that a journey is a mirror of inner change by paying attention to the strategies of self-representation in the text and the emotional negotiations with their own past. My research will try to answer two main questions: how do Byron and Smith deal with the emotional struggles attached to their past? And, secondly, does the act of travelling bring peace to their inner struggles?

Even though they belong to two different generations of Romantics, both writers tried desperately to escape from their past. Byron is running from a life of debauchery and pleasure, from debts and from the pressure of English society over the scandal of his divorce. He will no longer be regarded with admiration as an eccentric, now he is a threat to morality. For her part, Smith is trying to leave behind her family, especially her drunkard and broke husband with mounting debts. She writes to escape from a loveless marriage which has ruined her youth and forced her to work relentlessly to support herself and her children. She wrote *The Emigrants* back in England, unlike Byron, who would never return. Both poets leave their native land, but not even by physically abandoning England can they detach themselves from it. Their writing allows us an insight into this internal fight, where a struggle of their displaced selves is enacted. Both of them loathe the society that has ruined them but at the same time they are yearning to go back to it.

I will be analysing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1818), by Lord Byron, as well as *The Emigrants*, by Charlotte Smith. Byron has been chosen because he is the most accurate representation of the emigrant figure, and the one who most clearly has trouble with adapting to his situation. As for Charlotte Smith, a personal interest in the issues of gender and the canon of Romantic women writers brought my attention to the similarities and differences in the representation of the Romantic figure of the "displaced" and "exile" in male and female writers who also belong to different

generations of Romantics. Underneath this examination there is a recurrent theme in many texts from the Romantic period: the representation of solitude. This issue also triggered my interest in exploring why the tradition of Romantic writers who are being read now tends to regard the work of Romantic male poets as canonical, while the poetry of most women at that time –albeit widely studied by scholars– is comparatively more marginal within the canon of Romantic readings. It may be regarded as a form of solitude that, as yet, grants women the status of exiles within the Romantic canon.

Smith belongs to an early generation of Romantics that anticipates the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge. It has been a wonderful discovery to learn about the similarities between her work and Byron's, which raises an obvious question: was Byron, whether he was aware of it or not, influenced by Charlotte Smith? However this is a question to be answered at a future time. It is my wish to integrate Smith in a comparative study rather than relegate her to an exclusively female sphere or an individual analysis of her biography and work.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Healing the Wounds: Byron and Smith's Coming to Terms with their Past**

It was April, 1816, when Lord Byron left England after his wife, Annabella Milbanke abandoned him. The whole of English society rose with a commotion over Byron's alleged misconduct towards Lady Byron and his presumed incestuous relationship with his half sister Augusta Leigh. What up to that moment had been seen as an amusing, exotic, unapologetic character was now unforgivable. Byron, haunted by scandal and debt, and ostracized by his fellow Englishmen, sailed for Belgium. He was never to return home. Home was not anymore. He had sold Newstead Abbey, his parents had

passed away, only few of his most loyal friends remained. During the following years, until his death in 1824, he would travel through Europe, from France to Italy and Greece, looking for something. He masked his unrest by forming romantic acquaintances, meeting fellow British to whom he showed his contempt, creating political allegiances with liberal nationalistic movements and writing. For Macleod, *Childe Harold* is an open letter to English society: “The act of writing for Byron needs to be understood in this context of exclusion and self-justification.” (Macleod 1991: 261). He writes so everybody knows what he has been made to go through.

*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was published in its complete form in 1818, two years after the beginning of Lord Byron's exile. However, the poet had started his composition as early as 1809, during his Grand Tour (1809-1811): “On the last day of October Byron began a frankly autobiographical poem concerning the adventures and reflections of Childe Burun, a name which he later changed to Childe Harold” (Marchand 1993: 73). The first two cantos were published in 1812, and with their release came Byron's sudden rise to the status of celebrity. He became famous overnight. Canto III was published in 1816 and canto IV in 1817. Nevertheless, the poetic persona and his disdain for English society and his past life of dissipation did not change through the years. Byron maintained the same disregard for his native land from 1819 to 1817, so we cannot consider it to be a reaction of the commotion in 1816.

Charlotte Turner Smith was born into a family of good means, which provided her with a good education. She was very young when she married a violent, abusive and reckless man. She wrote her first work in prison, where she had been condemned along with his husband because of his debts. With the publication of her early work, she paid for their release. This was nothing but the beginning of the tumultuous relationship between Charlotte Smith and money. After their release, the Smith family moved to

France (1783-1785), the two years in which Charlotte became an exile. When they came back to England, she left her husband and devoted her talent as a writer to support her children, always struggling to make ends meet. She kept moving from town to town escaping her creditors, never finding rest or somewhere to call home.

THE  
EMIGRANTS,  
A  
POEM,  
IN  
TWO BOOKS.

BY CHARLOTTE SMITH.

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.  
1793.

Charlotte Smith Turner,  
*The Emigrants* facsimile, 1793.

*The Emigrants* was published in 1793. The poem consists of two books and explores the vicissitudes of the French *émigrés* in the south of England during the French Revolution. Smith, a supporter of the Revolution's ideals sides now with the members of the aristocracy and the clergy who have been forced to leave their land. She not only questions and criticises what will become the Reign of Terror but also feels a connection with these displaced characters. As we shall see, she intertwines her own personal plight with these of the *émigrés*.

In her analysis of Smith's poetry Keane argues that "This [dominating trope of exile] can be attributed both to a "Romantic" preoccupation with a generalised condition of alienation and to the more particular impact of revolution and war on the discourse of national belonging." (Keane 1991: 89). In other words, what theme could be more Romantic than this of the exiled? It merges politics, social unrest, the achievement of freedom and the emphasis on the individual and their feelings. Alienation produces in the subject a profound sense of displacement, and with that, an outburst of emotions one can easily relate to the state of the world in the eighteenth century. National belonging is

another of the most recurrent themes in the Romantic circle. Byron seems to travel around Europe looking for a *patria* to call his own and to fight for.

The personal experiences Byron and Smith are trying to leave behind might be different, but both find in poetry a way to express their profound desolation at the feeling of un-wholeness that is inherently attached to the figure of the exile. In the words of Emerson, in relation to *Childe Harold*: “It is possible that Byron deliberately represents rather than resolves this conflict” (Emerson 1981: 374). Neither of them attempts to resolve their conflicts, but that does not mean that the expression of their feelings through the character of the wanderer (or exile) and their deeds and sorrows helped them to cope with them. Representation of the personal conflict was the trigger for writing, but they may have found in this exercise the solace they were looking for. We cannot be sure of the therapeutic effect poetry had on Lord Byron or Charlotte Smith, dwelling on it is nothing more but mere speculation. However, we know they indeed wrote about their alienating experiences, and the fact that they did reveals to us that this part of their lives was very important for them.

Through the mask of the wanderer, now in the poetic persona of Childe Harold, Lord Byron expresses in this manner his detachment from English society and the life he has led in the past: “He felt the fulness of satiety:/ Then loath’d he in his native land to dwell,/ which seem’d to him more lone than Eremite’s sad cell ” (Canto I 4:7-10), “And now Childe Harold was sore sick at heart,/ and from his fellow bacchanals would flee” (Canto I 6:1-2). He is satiated, tired of the pleasures he has experienced, they cannot fulfil him anymore, and he loathes everything that surrounds him, as well as the very soil he stands on, mostly his native land for representing everything he has grown tired of. Moreover, he feels alone and imprisoned, out of place. He continues: “Apart he stalk’d in joyless reverie,/ and from his native land resolv’d to go,/ and visit his

scorching climes beyond the sea” (Canto I 6:5-7). Childe Harold decides to leave home, where he feels out of place, to explore new territories across the sea and find new opportunities to regain his sense of wholeness and belonging. It is his decision to leave England, nothing in the poem points in any other direction, it is his own choice. The individual feels alienated within its own society: “I stood/ among them, but not of them” (III: CXIII), and this creates a feeling of unrest within them, a feeling that travel soothes. Byron never calls him an exile in the first canto, he is a traveller, but not a capricious one, as his creator may be accused of being. He wanders sorrowful and tormented. It was the year 1809 and Byron had already defined the myth that was to survive him to become one of the most reproduced tropes in our culture: the Romantic hero. As Macleod states: “What Byron wants to forget is ‘the weary dream’ of excessive egotism [...] and in order to set aside this egotistical world-weariness he needs ‘to create, and in creating live/ A being more intense.’ Writing will offer just that emotional intensity Byron needs to feel himself alive again.” (Macleod 1991: 261) Through the Romantic Hero that Childe Harold embodies, Byron will recover himself from the sufferings of his exile. This recovery comes from the opportunity poetry grants him so as to detach himself from the situation by placing his struggle within the story of an honourable, respected and wonderful hero. This allows him to explore his feelings from the viewpoint of the creator-poet.

Charlotte Smith does not dwell on the reasons that forced her to abandon England, she simply acknowledges the deep sorrow she remembers from being abroad, not knowing if she will ever come back. We know about these reasons through her biography, but they are not relevant for the poem’s main theme. We do not need the ‘why’, because all that matters is the ‘how’. Both authors make use of a different construct by means of which to convey their emotions. For Byron, this is Childe Harold,

an individualist, independent, and self-centred man. For Charlotte Smith, it is a group of individuals, none more important than the other, and each of them is given a voice. Her heroes are quite the opposite of Byron's: they are inclusive, seeking comfort in each other. Smith's characters are the French *émigrés*, and the appeal she makes is based on empathy. As Sodeman suggests: "Smith inscribes her sense of exclusion into her works through the exiles, emigrants, and wanderers that crowd her novels and poems" (Sodeman 2009: 138). They are not only somebody she can relate to but they also constitute "the other", they are the party farthest from her political affiliations. Smith has taken it upon herself to feel pity on them: "poor wand'ring wretches! Whosoe'er ye are,/ That hopeless, houseless, friendless, travel wide" (I:296-297). It is not only her own empathy towards them what she expresses, however. She also looks for and the reader's empathy towards both the *émigrés* and, perhaps, herself. Quoting Sodeman once again: "The speaker's experience and history is told partly through identification with the exiles" (Sodeman 2009: 139). She understands their trial because she, too, has looked at her own land from the opposite shore: "Ah! Who knows,/ from sad experience, more than I" (II:169-170), she claims. "I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known/ involuntary exile; and while yet/ England had charms for me, have felt how sad/ it is to look across the dim cold sea, / That melancholy rolls its fluent tides/ Between us and the dear regretted land/ We call our own" (I: 155-161). She acknowledges the differences between these –mostly members of the aristocracy and herself– but the class difference is obliterated because sorrow unites them all: "They, like me, /From fairer hopes and happier prospects driven,/ Shrink from the future, and regret the past" (II:15-16).

Smith makes a point of the fact that she missed England, but not English society: "How often do I half abjure Society,/ And sigh for some lone Cottage, deep embower'd/

In the green woods” (I: 42). As opposed to Byron, who despises England in its very core; in its people and in its soil, so much so he cannot think of returning there, Smith makes references throughout the poem to the maternal natural world where, in England, she wishes to remain and to find solace: “there do I wish to hide me; well content/ If on the short grass, strewn with fairy flowers, I might repose thus shelter’d” (I:48-50). These lines anticipate a Wordsworthian style and tone in their search for an emotional refuge in a simple, rustic nature that is no longer pastoral, but a place of blissful solitude where a true self can be found: “We ask anew, where happiness is found?/ Alas! In rural life, where youthful dreams/ See the Arcadia that Romance describes” (II: 176-178). Rogers argues that “Byron’s Childe Harold found an unfailing ‘pleasure in the pathless woods’ and solaced his troubles by mingling ‘with the universe’ [...] But Smith’s repeated conclusion, in her own person and through her characters, is that Nature cannot cure human misery”. (Rogers 1994: 74). Despite her desire to see the “Arcadia the Romance describes”, Smith’s characters are never cured by Nature, or sheltered from their pain by it.

Byron’s references to Nature are never linked to England, but to exotic spaces, mostly from the East. He uses Nature as a reflection of the self as much as a representation not of comfort, like Smith, but of the freedom he yearns for: “Oh! There is a sweetness in the mountain air/ And life, that bloated Ease can never hope to share.” (I: XXX) and “Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of pleasure plan,/ Beneath yon mountain’s ever beauteous brow” (I:XXIII). Besides, he feels part of it, part of this world he is discovering. Byron remarks his displeasure at human communities as opposite to the feeling of being one with Nature, separated from all: “I live not in myself, but I become/ Portion of that around me; and to me,/ High mountains are a feeling, but the hum/ Of human cities torture” (III: LXXII). Another clear example of



this communion with nature as part of the process of self-alienation are the famous and endlessly quoted lines: “There is a pleasure in the pathless woods...” (IV: CLXXVIII). Sometimes, Byron invoked nature, as the trope of the maternal character, a mother earth, home to return to: “Dear nature is the kindest mother still,/ Though always changing, in her aspect mild;/ From her bare bosom let me take my fill” (II: XXXVII).

In both poems, the personal past is transformed into a political past by means of social critique. As McGann says: “In *Childe Harold* (1812) Byron's itinerary takes him first to the very heart of the Peninsular events, where his initial mood of disgust at his English existence acquires its European dimensions” (McGann 2009:109) and he continues “When he moves to the East [...] his cynicism is confirmed: Greece, the very symbol of the west's highest ideals and self-conceptions, lies in thrall not merely to the military rule of the Porte but to the contest of self-serving political interests of the English, French, and Russians.” (McGann 2009:109). This discomfort with the current state of affairs in the world is also found in Smith, writing some ten years before Byron. In the words of the main voice in Charlotte Smith-related studies, Stuart Curran: “[Smith] confront[s] exile at home no less than abroad as a normative mode of being and the violation of one's rights as a pan-European phenomenon to be expected wherever one lives.” (Curran 1994: 74). Smith suggests that the fault of what she has been victim of lies in society, in Man: “Yet Man, misguided Man,/ Mars the fair work that he was bid to enjoy,/ And makes himself the evil he deplores” (I:32-34). The critique on society focuses later on in politics, the rulers of the world, who, in her view, are destroying Europe: “Wise politicians, are the schemes prepar'd,/ Which, to keep Europe's waver'g balance even,/ Depopulate her kingdoms, and consign/ To tears and anguish half a bleeding world!” (II: 321-324). She blames them for the anguish she is witnessing, an anguish she can relate to because Justice failed her repeatedly.

## Chapter 2

### Moving On: Delving into the Present as a Cure for the Future

In this second chapter, I shall turn my discussion to those elements in the exile of Byron and Smith that helped them overcome their past memories. I wish to find out what the texts tell us about the possible cathartic properties of poetic creation. What did they learn through their travels? How did they change because of it? I shall begin with a commentary on *Childe Harold*, and then move on to Charlotte Smith's ending of *The Emigrants*. I must establish, before continuing, that I have been struck with the realisation that the past, for our two poets, can never be healed due to their impossibility to disentangle themselves from their motherland.

Despite Childe Harold's desperate attempts to find a new *patria* to call his own he is never able to succeed. Emerson writes about Byron's reasons behind the composition of *Childe Harold*. He relies on Byron's correspondence to make his claim, seeing as there are connections between the mood in his letters and the claims in his poetry: "There is bitterness towards the cant of English 'society' which has excluded him. But there is also an intense desire to be readmitted to that society, or at least, to be justified in its eyes" (Macleod 1991: 261). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, by writing *Childe Harold*, Byron does not yield to the muses, he is following an agenda. I would not dare to say he wanted to be readmitted, because he would have never come back without less than the treatment of a national hero and the restitution of his properties and reputation, but he indeed writes seeking a justification that will amend society's rejection of his character. Byron still felt tied to England. Moreover, he has been unable to attach himself to any other place: "In his correspondence Byron echoes Polwhele when he writes, 'I have quite lost all local feeling for England without having acquired any local feeling for any other spot'" (Chalk 1998: 58). It is debatable whether

or not he had actually “lost all local feeling for England”, being as he was unable to let go of the issue of his exile. While I argue that the contrary is the case, he might think of England with regret and even hatred, but he thought of England, unable to detach himself. As Chalk writes: “The notion of ‘spot’ or of local ‘place’ is central to Byron, as well as being slenderly evocative of Burkean patriotism - the insistence on the patriot’s attachment to a national place” (Chalk 1998: 58). Edmund Burke, writing about English nationalism in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), regarded England’s society as a family of unbreakable ties, and the rules that regulate that family, a contract between three parties: the dead, the living and the yet to be born (Burke 1965).

That national place has rejected Byron, and thus he sails abroad to find another (he funded the Italian *Carbonnari* and was involved in nationalistic movements for Greece’s independence), but the self’s attachment to one’s home is something an exile can never escape from. “But my soul wanders; I demand it back” (IV:XXV). He has lost his sense of identity, and the farther he is from England, the stronger his need to attach himself to new nationalities, and the stronger his remembrance of England: “Nor is it harsh to make, nor hard to find/ A country with – ay, or without mankind;/ Yet was I born where men are proud to be,/ Not without cause; and should I leave behind/ The inviolate island of the sage and free,/ And seek out a home by a remoter sea.” (IV: VIII). The third and fourth lines contrast with the references in the third canto to Childe Harold’s loath towards the “Albion’s Isle”. What Byron the recent graduate thought of Britain has nothing to do with what Byron the exile feels about it. In conclusion, there is no closure possible for him, he is detached from Britain and anywhere else. He is, in his own words, alone on Earth: “What is the worst of woes that wait on age?/ What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow?/ To view each lov’d one blotted from life’s page,/ And

be alone on Earth as I am now” (II: XCVIII). The present has not brought him any soothing for his suffering.

The sea is often mentioned in *Childe Harold*. It is the space that represents hope for him, a liminal area between his past and his future, somewhere to return to at all times: “There woos no home, nor hope, nor life, save what is here.” (IV: CV). The ocean is to Byron pure freedom, an element unbound by Man, powerful, unattainable: “Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean- roll!/ Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;/ Man marks the earth with ruin- his control/ Stops at the shore [.]” (IV: CV). This quote belongs to the first of the three last stanzas of the poem:

And I have loved thee, Ocean! And my joy  
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be  
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward: from a boy  
I wantoned with thy breakers- they to me  
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea  
Made them a terror- t’was a pleasing fear,  
For I was as it were a child of thee,  
And trusted to thy billows far and near,  
And laid my hand upon thy mane- as I do here.

IV:CLXXXIV

Byron feels a connection with the ocean, a profound respect for its power and a certain affinity, so much so that he describes himself as “a child of thee”. In the following quote from the poem, the sea is also compared to a horse “and I laid my hand upon thy mane”, a magnificent creature, wild and untamed, bending its head to the poetic voice, accepting to ride with him. We cannot ignore the reference to the Sublime : “I wantoned with thy breakers- they to me/ Were a delight; and if the freshening sea/Made them a terror- t’was a pleasing fear.” In these lines we see how terror is

mingled with pleasure; the overwhelming beauty of the ocean, of Nature and of freedom are in a way terrifying. With regard to the Sublime, Burke wrote: “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to the sight, is sublime too.” (Burke 1965: 49). Byron’s space of pure freedom, understood as a space between nations, tied solely to the most independent and primal self is, by this same definition, a source of terror, of pain. But these feelings constitute the most purely Romantic experience, the Sublime, found here in the detachment from any national –and even physical– bond.



J.M.W. Turner, *Snow Storm*, 1842

In the closing lines of *The Emigrants*, Charlotte Smith leaves the *émigrés* apart to use once again her own voice and her own experience to make a plea. In the previous lines, Smith does not only criticize what, in her view, is to blame for the present state of affairs; she also gives arguments to such accusations, and she decides to finish her poem with an open appeal to the whole of Humankind: “May lovely Freedom, in her genuine charms,/ Aided by stern but equal Justice, drive/ From the ensanguin’d earth the hell-born fiends of Pride, Oppression, Avarice, and Revenge.” (II: 431), and, if Freedom and Justice succeed in governing society, they will “fix/ the reign of Reason, Liberty and Peace!” (II: 445), which are the ending lines. Wolfson, following a discourse rooted in gender issues, adds that “[she] hope[s], in the poem’s last line, for a renovated earth in an ungendered reign of “Reason, Liberty and Peace!” (Wolfson 2000: 512). Smith’s

invocation of the superior forces of Justice and Freedom can be read as a personal appeal in relation to the system that not only failed to protect her but also imprisoned her. It can also be read as a message directed to the French, a call to yield the arms and be faithful to their principles. Taking the first interpretation as the most interesting one for the purposes of this paper, I suggest that for Smith the past cannot be healed, but there is the possibility to gain a better future, a just new life where Reason, Liberty and Peace rule. Smith's work is a message to the world to stop injustice and suffering, a message taken from her own experience to Europe at large. Her poem is indeed intimate, but it is inclusive, she thinks bigger than Byron, she knows the struggle is not only hers: "Wandering, however isolating, carries with it for Smith an awareness of others' distress" (Sodeman 2009: 139). What is done is done, but Humankind will be so wise not to allow it to happen again.

As Wolfson suggests, Smith "infuses her final visionary hope with figures of female potency" (Wolfson 2000: 541). These figures are Freedom and Justice. I argue that Smith finds in female figures the capacity to return Europe to peace; as Wolfson puts it: "*The Emigrants* joins an evolving "female" poetry of condemning war as "patriarchal militarism" [however,] pacifism and militarism were not predictable or securely gendered discourses" (Wolfson 2000: 512). Therefore, connecting with Wolfson's argument in the previous lines, Smith is appealing to two symbolic female forces (Freedom and Liberty) to fight seemingly symbolic male forces (Pride, Oppression, Avarice and Revenge) to obtain an ungendered result: Reason, Liberty and Peace. Nevertheless, discussing Charlotte Smith in relation to gender and politics would be the topic for a lengthier study, and I cannot dwell further on it. Female bonding is central to Smith's poem. She resorts to these symbols at the end of *The Emigrants*, and they must entail, for her, the stability and primal link to Home, a bond impossible to

break through exceptional or constant exile. A clear example of this female bonding is how “Smith presents a terrified mother as the central fearful consciousness” (Wolfson 2000: 539). This terrified mother is none other than Marie Antoinette, who is described in the following terms: “Thy wretched Mother, petrified with grief,/ Views thee with stony eyes, and cannot weep!” (II: 152). As a mother, she can empathise with her, because for Smith the queen is a mother before she is a queen. She adds: “[...] Ah! Who knows,/ From sad experience, more than I, too feel/ For thy desponding spirit, as it sinks.” (II: 169). Social class, names, position... it all loses its value before pain. We are all made equal by it. I infer that Smith holds on to motherhood and symbolic female images to regain her sense of identity, shaken by her displacement from the native land.

It is worth mentioning that Smith published a short poem, *The Female Exile* (1797) that bears a connection with *The Emigrants*. Smith herself said that “this little Poem, of which a sketch first appeared in blank verse in a poem called ‘The Emigrants’, was suggested by the sight of the group it attempts to describe—a French Lady and her children” (Smith 1797). Smith gives in it her full attention to the female exile in distress, a focus of interest which becomes blurred in *The Emigrants*. In this little poem, she describes the suffering of the French *émigré*’s within the frame of her natural surroundings, which play at echoing the woman’s feelings. The first person voice of the author only appears in the very last stanza, with the same tone she resorts to in *The Emigrants* in which she compares herself and her struggle to the object of writing.

The trope of motherhood and femininity in association with both Nature and symbols of empowerment was widely exploited in the literature of the time. However, Smith and Byron make use of that trope in very different ways. While for Byron it is closer to a rhetorical device, for Smith it strengthens her ties to a collective, and

therefore it empowers her at the same time that she is empowering other women. For Byron femininity is closer to a stylistic device: “First Freedom, and then Glory- when that fails,/ [...] And History, with all Her volumes vast.” (IV: CVIII). These great symbols are embodied in female figures. As Eger argues, these symbols “inhabit an allegorical sphere of ideas in which the personification of abstract aesthetic categories is the primary device.” (Eger 2012: 35). Byron is following this tradition, whereas Smith is reinterpreting it in order to strengthen her sense of identity: “A wretched Woman, pale and breathless, flies!” (II: 258). And she continues as follows: [...] The desolate mourner; yet, in Death itself,/ True to maternal tenderness, she tries/ to save the unconscious infant from the storm/In which she perishes.” (II: 281). Her symbols are not allegorical figures; they are real women with real experiences, women Smith can relate to.

## Conclusions

### “What Deep Wounds Ever Closed Without a Scar?”

Exile as a single category of analysis has been comparatively less studied than other Romantic themes. Travel, emigration, exploration, self-discovery and wanderlust are often interchangeable in Romantic poetry. Lord Byron and Charlotte Smith suffered the emotional strain of forced exile. They chose to seek solace in their poetic writings, an example of which are *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *The Emigrants*. In this paper, I have explored the ways in which they processed their past and dealt with the emotionality attached to their condition of exiles. Both Byron and Smith use a construct by means of which they explore their feelings. In Byron's case, this is Childe Harold, a



true Romantic Hero, an individualist and self-centred character. For Smith, it is a group of French *émigrés*, inclusive, generous, seeking comfort in each other. Smith looks for the empathy of the audience while relating to her character's situation from her own experience. The personal past is mingled with the political past by means of a social critique against society in general and the government in particular. Nature is evoked in different ways. For Smith the English country represents an idyllic shelter, one, however, that cannot heal the past. For his part, Byron writes about eastern exotic locations, the only place where freedom can allegedly be found and the essence of the self regained.

No matter how much they tried, neither Byron nor Smith could detach themselves from England, and therefore, the past could never be truly healed. Smith accepts this, and envisions a better future, one in which society has learnt from their mistakes. There is no closure for Byron, he is detached and unable to completely distance himself from this motherland. He wanders in constant alienation. For him, the sea represents a space in-between, detached from humankind, a terrible beauty with which he bonds. Both use feminine symbols. While these symbols empower Smith and give her a sense of belonging, of community, for Byron they are closer to a stylistic device. In conclusion, for the two Romantic poets Lord Byron and Charlotte Turner Smith, poetry was a way through which they managed the heavy emotional consequences of their personal and social alienation. They come to terms with their reality by self-knowledge and establish the bases for a possible future through their works.

I would like to continue with my research in this degree paper, and pursue the topic of Romantic women writers and their strategies to deal with their emotional realities, especially at the time of the French Revolution. Besides, I consider it would be

very interesting to establish the extent to which the male Romantic circle was possibly influenced –or not– by the female writers of their time.

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