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Das Naturgefühl in Lord Byrons Dichtungen

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Unter den Vertretern der romantischen Schule außerhalb Deutschlands werden wir nicht leicht einen Dichter finden, dessen Empfindungsleben so unmittelbar beeinflußt war von der Natur, vor allem in ihren gewaltigen, den Menschen mit dem Bewußtsein seiner Ohnmacht und Kleinheit erfüllenden Erscheinungen und Wirkungen, wie das Lord Byrons, und unter denen, welche den Gefühlen und Empfindungen, die den Menschen beim Anblick der ihn umgebenden Natur bewegen, einen tief empfundenen dichterischen Ausdruck verliehen haben, wird Lord Byron gewiß stets eine hervorragende Stelle einnehmen.

Haben wir doch gerade bei ihm fast immer den lebhaften Eindruck, daß er das, was er als Dichter von der Natur in ihren mannigfaltigsten Beziehungen ausspricht, selbst auch im innersten Herzen und Gemüt wahr und tief empfunden hat und daß er sich zur Natur mit der ganzen Stärke seines feurigen, für alles Große tief empfänglichen und begeisterungsfähigen Temperaments hingezogen fühlte.

Dabei hatte der vielgereiste Dichter das so vielen seiner Genossen versagte Glück, Selbsterlebtes und Selbstgeschautes, verklärt durch die lebhaften Farben einer glühenden Phantasie, dichterisch zu gestalten, ohne, wie manche Vertreter der romantischen Richtung, in überschwengliche Phantastik und naturfremde Träumereien zu verfallen.

Ein Ton klingt in seinen Dichtungen stärker oder schwächer hindurch, der der pessimistischen Grundstimmung seines Wesens entspricht und der uns in seinem Hang zur Einsamkeit begegnet, die für ihn einen besonderen Reiz zu haben scheint; verzichtet er doch im Alleinsein mit der großen Natur gerne auf die menschliche Gesellschaft, die ihm für das unmittelbare Verhältnis, in das er überall zu jener zu treten sucht, nur eine unliebsame Störung bedeutet und ein Hindernis, zu einem vollen reinen Genuß derselben zu kommen.

Wir werden deshalb, wenn wir im folgenden versuchen, aus sämtlichen Werken Byrons eine Zusammenstellung der charakteristischen Stellen zu geben, die auf sein Verhältnis zur Natur ein Licht werfen, von vornherein erwarten dürfen, daß er wesentlich die Seiten des Naturlebens bevorzugt, bei denen der Mensch sich weniger als Glied der menschlichen Gesellschaft, sondern vielmehr als einen Teil des Naturganzen fühlt; daß er besonders gern dort verweilt, wo ihm ein Abbild der Unendlichkeit und der gewaltigen im Universum wirkenden ewigen Naturkräfte entgegentritt; daß er im allgemeinen mehr Sinn hat für das Großartige der Erscheinungen, für das Erhabene, als für das Liebliche und Idyllische, wenn sich gleich auch für dieses Beispiele auffinden lassen.

Er kennzeichnet sich eben auch hierin als echten Romantiker, wie denn, um ein Beispiel anzuführen, der Blick für die Schönheiten der Hochgebirgsnatur sich bekanntermaßen erst eigentlich seit dem Auftreten der romantischen Richtung in Poesie, Kunst und Wissenschaft entwickelt hat, während bei den Menschen früherer Generationen meist nur

ein erdrückendes Gefühl des Grausens und der Furcht ausgelöst wurde – eine Erscheinung, in die wir uns heute nur noch schwer hineinzudenken vermögen.

Für Byron kommt hier noch wesentlich in Betracht, daß er als Bewohner des meerumgürteten Inselreichs und durch seine zahlreichen Wanderungen in den schottischen Hochlanden von früher Jugend an eben mit den gewaltigen Erscheinungsformen der Natur sich vertraut gemacht hatte. Die tiefen Eindrücke, die er hier erhalten hatte, spiegeln sich vielfach in den Dichtungen seiner späteren Jahre wieder und lassen uns die Sehnsucht verstehen, mit der es ihn immer und immer wieder dorthin zog, wo sich ihm die Natur in ihrer höchsten Erhabenheit enthüllt.

Andererseits ergriff den Bewohner des nordischen Eilands besonders tief der Zauber des sonnigen Südens, der ihm Wunder offenbarte, welche die rauhere nordische Natur ihm versagte, und so viele glühende Schilderungen der von ihm bevorzugten Mittelmeerländer, Spaniens, Italiens, namentlich aber Griechenlands, dem sein Herz sich am meisten zugewendet hatte und wo der feurige Geist frühe sein irdisches Ziel finden sollte, legen hievon beredtes Zeugnis ab.

Das Bewußtsein, daß der Mensch selbst nur ein Teil der ihn umgebenden Natur ist und daß er, sich eins fühlend mit Berg, Wasser, Himmel, sich so auf ganz natürliche Weise zu dieser Natur hingezogen fühlt, der gegenüber alles andere ihm nichtig erscheint, spricht Byron z. B. aus in Childe Harold, wenn er sagt:

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these?

Und wie die Seele als ein Teil des Naturganzen in ihm ihren Ursprung hat, wird sie auch dorthin zurückkehren:

My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, air, stars, – all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the soul. (Don Juan)

Da der Verkehr mit der Gesellschaft die Menschen von diesem Gefühl des Verbundenseins mit der ganzen Natur abzieht, die Seele an ihrem hohen Flug hindert, empfindet der Dichter den Aufenthalt im Gewühl der Städte als eine Qual, und wenn er auch ein Glied der menschlichen Gesellschaft ist, erscheint ihm diese doch nur als eine lästige Fessel, der er entrinnen möchte, um sich an den Busen der Natur zu werfen:

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: I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be

A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain. (Childe Harold.)

Daß Byron dieses lebendige Naturgefühl wohl auch als religiöses Gefühl empfand, ersehen wir aus einer Stelle seines Tagebuchs, wo es heißt:

I am always most religious upon a sunshiny day, as if there was some association between an internal approach to greater light and purity and the kindler of this dark lantern of our external existence. Und weiter:

The night is also a religious concern, and even more so when I viewed the moon and stars through Herschell's telescope, and saw that they were worlds.

Die Frage, welche Formen der menschliche Geist annimmt und wohin er gelangt, wenn er von seinen irdischen Fesseln befreit ist, beschäftigt den Dichter in einem Gedicht, wo er sagt:

When coldness wraps this suffering clay
Ah! whither strays the immortal mind?
It cannot die, it cannot stray,
But leaves its darken'd dust behind.
Then, unembodied, doth it trace
By steps each planet's heavenly way?
Or fill at once the realms of space,
A thing of eyes, that all survey? (Poems.)

Eine gütige Mutter ist ihm die Natur, deren Schönheit er vor allem da erkennt, wo sie noch in ihrer unberührten Ursprünglichkeit erscheint auch da, wo sie sich furchtbar zeigt:

Dear Nature is the kindest mother still
Though alway changing, in her aspect mild;
From her bare bosom let me take my fill,
Her never wean'd, though not her favour'd child.
Oh! she is fairest in her features wild,
Where nothing polish'd dares pollute her path:
To me by day or night she ever smiled,
Though I have mark'd her when none other hath,
And sought her more and more, and loved her best in wrath.
(Childe Harold.)

Die Natur bietet dem Dichter denn auch eine Gesellschaft, welche die Menschen ihm nicht bieten können, und in der ungestörten Einsamkeit der Wälder und des Meeres fühlt er sich nicht einsam; hier hält er Zwiesprache mit dem All und versenkt sich in Gefühle, für welche er in Worten nicht den richtigen Ausdruck finden kann:

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal. (Childe Harold.)

So hat es für ihn besonderen Reiz, fern von menschlichen Wohnstätten zu träumen, unbegangene Pfade zu wandeln, an Orten zu weilen, die der menschliche Fuß selten betritt. Hier ist er nicht allein und einsam; aber einsam und verlassen fühlt er sich im Gedränge und Getriebe der Menschen, die sich um das Wohl und Wesen des einzelnen so wenig kümmern:

To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forests shady scene,
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been;
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
With the wild flock that never needs a fold;
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean;
This is not solitude; 'tis but to hold
Converse with Natures charms, and view her stores unroll'd.
But 'midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
And roam along, the world's tired denizen,
With none who bless us, none whom we can bless;
Minions of splendour shrinking from distress!
None that, with kindred consciousness endued,
If we were not, would seem to smile the less
Of all that flatter'd, follow'd, sought, and sued;
This is to be alone; this, this is solitude! (Childe Harold.)

Dieser Zug zur Einsamkeit, die Flucht vor den Menschen, die den Dichter in den Staub niederziehen, wenn seine Seele sich über alles Enge und Niedere des Erdendaseins in kühnem Fluge erheben will, diese Art von Übermenschentum, das sich selbst genug ist, das nur in seiner eigenen Atmosphäre atmen kann, auf die übrige Menschheit deshalb auch herabsieht und jede Gemeinschaft mit ihr verleugnen möchte, eine Gesinnung, die schließlich zu Menschenverachtung und Menschenhaß führen muß — das ist auch in Byrons Manfred ausgesprochen, wenn dieser sich vernehmen läßt:

I said, with men, and with the thoughts of men
I held but slight communion; but, instead,

My joy was in the wilderness, to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insects wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new-breaking wave
Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.
In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look, list'ning, on the scatter'd leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one, —
Hating to be so, — crossed me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again.

Haben wir bisher die allgemeine Richtung des Naturgefühls bei Byron anzudeuten versucht, das einen stark subjektivistischen Charakter mit einem erheblichen Einschlag von Pessimismus aufweist, während es zugleich eine begeisterte Liebe zu den gewaltigen Werken der Schöpfung kundgibt, so wollen wir nun die Byronschen Dichtungen in ihren einzelnen Beziehungen zu den besonderen Naturerscheinungen ins Auge fassen.

Die früh geahnte Erkenntnis, daß die Menschen in bedeutungsvollem Sinne Kinder der Sonne sind, der unsere Erde das mannigfaltige Leben auf ihr verdankt, hat nicht bloß in den ältesten Religionen und Mythen, sondern ebenso in den Dichtungen aller Zeiten ihren poetischen Niederschlag gefunden.

Auch Byron bringt das bald scheue, bald begeisterte Gefühl der Bewunderung, mit dem das leuchtende Tagesgestirn, dessen Wesen so geheimnisvoll ist, den Menschen erfüllt, vielfach zum Ausdruck. So apostrophiert Manfred die scheidende Sonne, nachdem er den Entschluß gefaßt hat, seinem Dasein ein Ende zu machen, mit den Worten:

Glorious Orb! the idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons
Of the embrace of angels with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring spirits, who can ne'er return. —
Most glorious orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops, the hearts
Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they pour'd

Themselves in orisons! Thou material God!
And representative of the Unknown —
Who chose thee for His shadow! Thou chief star!
Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues
And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint af thee,
Even as our outward aspects; — thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look; thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature. He is gone:
I follow.

Das glänzende Licht und Farbenspiel, welches das Erscheinen der Sonne begleitet, die wundervollen Beleuchtungseffekte auf den Wolken am Himmel, wie sie der wechselvolle Kampf zwischen Licht und Finsternis hervorbringt, bald an wild zerrissene schneebedeckte Gebirge, bald an die lebhaft bewegten Wogen des Meeres erinnernd, die Wirkungen auf den Beschauer, der das gewaltige Schauspiel am Himmel in Beziehung setzt zu den Ereignissen auf der Erde — dies findet sich ausgesprochen in Byrons Sardanapal:

How beautiful in heaven!
Though varied with a transitory storm,
More beautiful in that variety!
How hideous upon earth! where peace and hope,
And love and revel, in an hour were trampled
By human passions to a human chaos,
Not yet resolved to separate elements —
'Tis warring still! And can the sun so rise,
So bright, so rolling back the clouds into
Vapours more lovely than the unclouded sky,
With golden pinnacles, and snowy mountains,
And billows purpler than the ocean's, making
In heaven a glorious mockery of the earth,
So like we almost deem it permanent;
So fleeting, we can scarcely call it aught
Beyond a vision, 'tis so transiently
Scatter'd along the eternal vault: and yet
It dwells upon the soul, and soothes the soul,

And blends itself into the soul, until
Sunrise and sunset form the haunted epoch
Of sorrow and of love; which they who mark not,
Know not the realms where those twin genii
(Who chasten and who purify our hearts,
So that we would not change their sweet rebukes
For all the boisterous joys that ever shook
The air with clamour) build the palaces
Where their fond votaries repose and breathe
Briefly; — but in that brief cool calm inhale
Enough of heaven to enable them to bear
The rest of common, heavy, human hours,
And dream them through in placid sufferance;
Though seemingly employ'd like all the rest
Of toiling breathers in allotted tasks
Of pain or pleasure, two names for one feeling,
Which our internal, restless agony
Would vary in the sound, although the sense
Escapes our highest efforts to be happy.

Das sieghafte Hervorbrechen des Tagesgestirns, vor dem die Nebel weichen und die Sterne verblassen, bis alles im Sonnenlicht flutet, schildert der Dichter im Mazeppa:

Some streaks announced the coming sun —
How slow, alas! he came!
Methought that mist of dawning grey
Would never dapple into day;
How heavily it roll'd away —
Before the eastern flame
Rose crimson, and deposed the stars,
And call'd the radiance from their cars,
And fill'd the earth, from his deep throne
With lonely lustre, all his own.

Auch die lebende Kreatur begrüßt den Aufgang der Sonne; mit ihr erwacht auch der Mensch zu neuem Leben und zu freudiger Betätigung seiner Kräfte:

— — 't is, no doubt, a sight to see when breaks
Bright Phœbus, while the mountains still are wet
With mist, and every bird with him awakes,
And night is flung off like a mourning suit
Worn for a husband, — or some other brute.
I say, the sun is a most glorious sight,
I've seen him rise full oft, indeed of late

I have sat up on purpose all the night,
Which hastens, as physicians say, one's fate;
And so all ye, who would be in the right
In health and purse, begin your day to date
From daybreak, and when coffin'd at fourscore,
Engrave upon the plate, you rose at four. (Don Juan.)

Die durch Regengewölk in bleichem Licht blinkende Sonne ist dem Dichter das Bild der Erinnerung, welche die glänzenden Bilder der Vergangenheit verblaßter in die Gegenwart zurückruft:

As when through clouds that pour the summer storm,
The orb of day unveils his distant form,
Gilds with faint beams the crystal dews of rain,
And dimly twinkles o'er the watery plain;
Thus, while the future dark and cheerless gleams,
The sun of memory, glowing through my dreams,
Though sunk the radiance of his former blaze,
To scenes far distant points his paler rays:
Still rules my senses with unbounded sway,
The past confounding with the present day. (Hours of Idleness.)

Die glühende Farbenpracht des Sonnenuntergangs in südlichen Breiten unter blauem Himmel am Gestade Griechenlands tritt uns entgegen in „The Curse of Minerva“:

Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run
Along Morea's hills the setting sun;
Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light;
O'er the hush'd deep the yellow beam he throws,
Gilds the green wave that trembles as it glows,
On old Aegina's rock and Hydra's isle
The god of gladness sheds his parting smile;
O'er his own regions lingering loves to shine
Though there his altars are no more divine.
Descending fast, the mountain-shadows kiss
Thy glorious gulf, unconquer'd Salamis!
Their azure arches through the long expanse,
More deeply purpled, meet his mellowing glance
And tenderest tints, along their summits driven,
Mark his gay course, and own the hues of heaven;
Till darkly shaded from the land and deep,
Behind his Delphian rock he sinks to sleep.

Ebenso das rasche Versinken der feurigen Sonne in südlichen Meeren in „The Island“:

The broad sun set, but not with lingering sweep,
As in the north he mellows o'er the deep;
But fiery, full, and fierce, as if he left
The world for ever, earth of light bereft,
Plunged with red forehead down along the wave,
As dives a hero headlong to his grave.

Der Sonnenuntergang endlich als Symbol des Todes, des Untergangs irdischer Herrlichkeit, findet eine farbenprächtige Schilderung im Sardanapal:

The sun goes down: methinks he sets more slowly,
Taking his last look of Assyria's empire.
How red he glares amongst those deepening clouds,
Like the blood he predicts. If not in vain,
Thou sun that sinkest, and ye stars which rise,
I have outwatch'd ye, reading ray by ray
The edicts of your orbs, which make Time tremble
For what he brings the nations, 'tis the furthest
Hour of Assyria's years. And yet how calm!
An earthquake should announce so great a fall —
A summer's sun discloses it. Yon disk,
To the star-read Chaldean, bears upon
Its everlasting page the end of what
Seem'd everlasting; but oh! thou true sun!
The burning oracle of all that live,
As fountain of all life, and symbol of
Him who bestows it, wherefore dost thou limit
Thy lore unto calamity! Why not
Unfold the rise of days more worthy thine
All-glorious burst from ocean! why not dart
A beam of hope athwart the future years,
As of wrath to its days? Hear me! oh, hear me!
I am thy worshipper, thy priest, thy servant —
I have gazed on thee at thy rise and fall,
And bow'd my head beneath thy mid-day beams,
When my eye dared not meet thee. I have watch'd
For thee, and after thee, and pray'd to thee
And sacrificed to thee, and read, and fear'd thee
And ask'd of thee, and thou hast answer'd — but
Only to thus much: while I speak, he sinks —
Is gone — and leaves his beauty, not his knowledge,
To the delighted west, which revels in

Its hues of dying glory. Yet what is
Death, so it be but glorious? 'Tis a sunset;
And mortals may be happy to resemble
The gods but in decay.

Aber nicht das helle Tagesgestirn ist es, das mit Vorliebe von der romantischen Poesie und so auch von Byron besungen wird, sondern das Nachtgestirn, der silberne Mond ist ein Lieblingsgegenstand, der so häufig in seiner Dichtung wiederkehrt. Die dunkeln ahnungsvollen Gefühle, welche die mondbeglänzte Zaubernacht in der menschlichen Seele auslöst, ist ja so typisch für die romantische Richtung der Poesie, daß dieser Gegenstand für die moderne Dichtung, welche jene Stimmung glücklich überwunden zu haben glaubt, fast verpönt erscheint.

Zahlreich sind jene Stimmungsbilder der Mondnacht auf dem Meere, die der Dichter auf seinen häufigen Fahrten in sich aufgenommen hat; so in Childe Harold:

The moon is up; by Heaven a lovely eve!
Long streams of light o'er dancing waves expand;
Now lads on shore may sigh, and maids believe;
Such be our fate when we return to land!

Eben dort auch der Eindruck des zauberhaften Mondlichts, das die Küste, an der das Schiff vorüberfährt, in geheimnisvollen Umrissen erkennen läßt:

How softly on the Spanish shore she plays,
Disclosing rock, and slope, and forest brown,
Distinct, though darkening with her waning phase;
But Mauritania's giant-shadows frown,
From mountain-cliff to coast descending sombre down.

Unwillkürlich wird die Seele abgezogen von der Außenwelt und überläßt sich sanften Träumereien:

Thus bending o'er the vessel's laving side,
To gaze on Dian's wave-reflected sphere,
The soul forgets her schemes of Hope and Pride,
And flies unconscious o'er each backward year. (Childe Harold.)

Gestalten aus alter Vergangenheit werden da wieder lebendig:

But when the rising moon begins to climb
Its topmost arch, and gently pauses there;
When the stars twinkle through the loops of time,
And the low night-breeze waves along the air
The garland-forest, which the grey walls wear,
Like laurels on the bald first Caesar's head;

When the light shines serene but doth not glare,
Then in this magic circle raise the dead:
Heroes have trod this spot — 'tis on their dust ye tread. (Childe Harold.)

Die griechische Landschaft mit ihren erhabenen Denkmälern einer entschwundenen großen Zeit gewinnt im Mondlicht für den Dichter besondere Reize, wie er es ausspricht in „The Curse of Minerva“:

But lo! from high Hymettus to the plain
The queen of night asserts her silent reign;
No murky vapour, herald of the storm,
Hides her fair face, or girds her glowing form.
With cornice glimmering as the moonbeams play,
There the white column greets her grateful ray,
And bright around, with quivering beams beset,
Her emblem sparkles o'er the minaret:
The groves of olive scatter'd dark and wide,
Where meek Cephissus sheds his scanty tide,
The cypress saddening by the sacred mosque
The gleaming turret of the gay kiosk,
And sad and sombre 'mid the holy calm,
Near Theseus' fane, yon solitary palm;
All, tinged with varied hues, arrest the eye;
And dull were his that pass'd them heedless by.
Again the Aegean, heard no more afar,
Lulls his chafed breast from elemental war;
Again his waves in milder tints unfold
Their long expanse of sapphire and of gold,
Mix'd with the shades of many a distant isle,
That frown, where gentler ocean deigns to smile.

Auch die Welt des ewigen Schnees und Eises im Hochgebirge nimmt, vom Monde bestrahlt, besonders phantastische Formen an, die uns plötzlich zu Eis erstarrte, wild bewegte Meereswogen vortäuschen:

The moon is rising broad, and round, and bright;
And here on snows, where never human foot
Of common mortal trod, we nightly tread,
And leave no traces; o'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam,
Frozen in a moment — a dead whirlpool's image:
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,

The fretwork of some earthquake — where the clouds
Pause to repose themselves in passing by —
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils. (Manfred.)

Neben dem Mond sind es die Sterne, die ewigen Rätsel, die am Himmel blitzen, die in ihrer stillen unwandelbaren Majestät den Dichter mit dem Gefühl der Unendlichkeit erfüllen. So gibt er in Childe Harold den Eindruck einer Sternennacht wieder:

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven,
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires, — 'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty, and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.
All heaven and earth are still — though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep: —
All heaven and earth are still: — From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain — coast,
All is concenter'd in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

Die große Vergangenheit der ewigen Stadt kommt dem Dichter beim Anblick der gewaltigen Zeugen ihrer einstigen Größe in einer Sternennacht besonders lebendig zum Bewußtsein:

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains. — Beautiful!
I linger yet with Nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn'd the language of an other world.
I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering — upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum's wall,
Midst the chief relies of almighty Rome;
The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars

Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watchdog bay'd beyond the Tiber; and
More near from out the Caesar's palace came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time — worn breach
Appear'd to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot — where the Caesars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through levell'd battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth; —
But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!
While Caesar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay. —
And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which soften'd down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,
As 'twere anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old! —
The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns. — (Manfred.)

Das Gefühl der Kleinheit des Menschen, die Überzeugung von den ewigen Schranken seiner Erkenntnis gegenüber diesen Wundern der Schöpfung, vor deren überwältigender Schönheit er sich in Demut beugt und darauf verzichtet, ihr innerstes Wesen zu ergründen, ist ausgesprochen im Sardanapal:

I love to watch them in the deep blue vault,
And to compare them with my Myrrha's eyes;
I love to see their rays redoubled in
The tremulous silver of Euphrates' wave,
As the light breeze of midnight crisps the broad
And rolling water, sighing through the sedges
Which fringe his banks: but whether they may be
Gods, as some say, or the abodes of gods,
As others hold, or simply lamps of night,

Worlds, or the lights of worlds, I know nor care not.
There's something sweet in my uncertainty
I would not change for your Chaldean lore;
Besides, I know of these all clay can know
Of aught above it, or below it — nothing.
I see their brilliancy and feel their beauty —
When they shine on my grave I shall know neither.

Endlich gibt der Dichter der ungestillten Sehnsucht, die die Seele zuweilen erfaßt, in die letzten Rätsel des Alls einzudringen, angesichts des grenzenlosen Äthers und der unendlichen Sternenwelt, einen tief empfundenen Ausdruck im Cain:

Oh, thou beautiful
And unimaginable ether! and
Ye multiplying masses of increased
And still increasing lights! what are ye? what
Is this blue wilderness of interminable
Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden?
Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye
Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
Through an aërial universe of endless
Expansion — at which my soul aches to think —
Intoxicated with eternity?
Oh God! Oh Gods! or whatsoe'er ye are!
How beautiful ye are! how beautiful
Your works, or accidents, or whatsoe'er
They may be! Let me die, as atoms die
(If that they die), or know ye in your might
And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour
Unworthy what I see, though my dust is:
Spirit! let me expire, or see them nearer.

Dem Luftmeer mit seinen Bewegungen, vom sanften Windeshauch bis zum tosenden Sturm, begegnen wir natürlich mannigfach in Byrons Dichtungen. So in Childe Harold:

Here winds of gentlest wing will fan his breast,
From heaven itself he may inhale the breeze:
The plain is far beneath — oh! let him seize
Pure pleasure while he can; the scorching ray
Here pierceth not, impregnate with disease.
Then let his length the loitering pilgrim lay,
And gaze, untired, the morn, the noon, the eve away.

Das Mienenspiel vergleicht er mit dem Spiel des Windes auf der gekräuselten Oberfläche des Wassers oder in der leisen Bewegung des Herbstlaubs im Sardanapal:

— — again the play of pain
Shoots o'er his features, as the sudden gust
Crisps the reluctant lake that lay so calm
Beneath the mountain shadow; or the blast
Ruffles the autumn leaves, that drooping cling
Faintly and motionless to their loved boughs.

Den schauerlich schönen Anblick der entfesselten Elemente in einer Sturmnacht beschreibt er in Childe Harold:

Most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight, —
A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again 'tis black, — and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquakes birth.

Ebenso in Childe Harold:

Then let the winds howl on! their harmony
Shall henceforth be my music, and the night
The sound shall temper with the owlets' cry,
As I now hear them, in the fading light
Dim o'er the bird of darkness' native site,
Answering each other on the Palatine
With their large eyes, all glistening grey and bright,
And sailing pinions.

Mazeppas Ritt durch die Steppe vergleicht er mit den am Himmel dahinfliegenden Meteoren:

We sped like meteors through the sky,
When with its crackling sound the night
Is chequer'd with the northern light:
Town — village — none were on our track,
But a wild plain of far extent,
And bounded by a forest black. (Mazeppa.)

Wind und Wetter im Gebirge, für den Dichter auch ein Bild der in der eigenen Brust tobenden Stürme, finden eine lebendige Schilderung in Childe Harold:

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way
The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:
For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunderbolts from hand to hand,
Flashing and cast around: of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills hath fork'd
His lightnings, — as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as desolation work'd,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurk'd.
Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless! if I rest.
But where of ye, oh tempests! is the goal
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

Mit den Wolken will er zu den Alpen ziehen, deren schneegekrönte Spitzen mit ihnen zusammenfließen:

The clouds above me to the white Alps tend,
And I must pierce them, and survey whate'er
May be permitted, as my steps I bend
To their most great and growing region, where
The earth to her embrace compels the powers of air. (Childe Harold.)

Im „Deformed transformed“ vergleicht der Dichter die zum Sturm auf Rom anrückenden Massen mit einem Erdbeben, das die Felsen zu Staub zermalmt:

Near — and near — and nearer still,
As the earthquake saps the hill,
First with trembling, hollow motion,
Like a scarce awaken'd ocean,
Then with stronger shock and louder,
Till the rocks are crush'd to powder, —
Onward sweeps the rolling host!

Nicht leicht wird man einen Dichter finden, der mit den Schönheiten und den Reizen des Meeres so vertraut war und der den mannigfaltigen Empfindungen, die sein

Anblick in der Ruhe, der regelmäßigen Bewegung und dem wechselnden Farbenspiel seiner Wellen, oder im wilden Aufruhr der vom Sturm gepeitschten Wogen erweckt, so packenden Ausdruck zu geben gewußt hätte wie Byron. Als Sohn des meerumrauschten Eilands von frühster Jugend auf an den Anblick des Meeres gewöhnt, als kühner Schwimmer seine Freude daran findend, seinen Wellen Trotz zu bieten und seine Gefahren mutig zu überwinden, faßte er eine leidenschaftliche Liebe zu ihm, die durch seine Seereisen noch gesteigert wurde. Zum Meer zog es ihn immer wieder hin, und er wird nicht müde, seinem dichterischen Empfinden immer wieder neue Worte zu leihen, die in uns die lebhafteste Vorstellung erwecken, daß der Dichter uns hier Selbstgeschautes, wahr und tief Empfundenes zu bieten hat. Wir erinnern hier wohl billiger Weise zuerst an jene bekannte wundervolle Hymne an den Ozean in Childe Harold, die wie mit Orgelton daherbraust und die sich würdig jeder dichterischen Schilderung gewaltiger Naturerscheinungen anschließen dürfte, die sich in der Weltliteratur findet:

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 with the shore; — upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own.
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Whithout a grave, unknell'd uncoffin'd, and unknown.
His steps are not upon thy paths, — thy fields
Are not a spoil for him, — thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay
And dashest him again to earth: — there let him lay.

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed — in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving; boundless, endless, and sublime —
The image of Eternity — the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made: each zone
Obeys thee: thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

Die geschützte Bucht, in der die Meereswogen zur Ruhe kommen, ein Bild friedlicher Stille:

Where lone Utraikey forms its circling cove,
And weary waves retire to gleam at rest,
How brown the foliage of the green hill's grove,
Nodding at midnight o'er the calm bay's breast,
As winds come whispering lightly from the west,
Kissing, not ruffling, the blue deep's serene:
Here Harold was received a welcome guest — — (Childe Harold.)

Welch frisches Lebensgefühl empfindet der Schiffer, der auf der sanft bewegten See dahinsegelt:

He that has sail'd upon the dark blue sea
Has view'd at times, I ween, a full fair sight:
When the fresh breeze is fair as breeze may be,
The white sail set, the gallant frigate tight;
Mast, spires, and strand retiring to the right,
The glorious main expanding o'er the low,
The convoy spread like wild swans in their flight,
The dullest sailor wearing bravely now,
So gaily curl the waves before each dashing prow. (Childe Harold.)

Das Meer mit seinem unbegrenzten Horizont erweckt in der menschlichen Seele das Gefühl der Freiheit und des stolzen Selbstbewußtseins:

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire, and behold our home!
These are our realms, no limits to their sway —
Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey. (Corsair.)

Wer je in enger Felsenklamm einen Wasserfall herabstürzen sah, wird sagen müssen, daß das Bild eines solchen, welches uns Byron ebenfalls in Childe Harold malt, bis in die kleinsten Einzelheiten der Natur abgelauscht ist:

The roar of waters! — from the headlong height
Velino cleaves the wave-worn precipice;
The fall of waters! rapid as the light
The flashing mass foams shaking the abyss;
The hell of waters! where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture; while the sweat

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

Mit wie wenigen Strichen zeichnet dagegen z. B. Schiller den Meeresstrudel im Taucher! wobei natürlich der Unterschied zwischen dem knapperen Balladenstil und dem breiten epischen der Byronschen Dichtung wesentlich ist.

Ein hübsches Bild knüpft der Dichter an die bekannte Erscheinung, daß das Ohr in einer Muschel fernes Meeresrauschen zu vernehmen glaubt, in Island:

The Ocean scarce spoke louder with his swell,
Than breathes his mimic murmurer in the shell,
As, far divided from his parent deep,
She sea-born infant cries, and will not sleep,
Raising his little plaint in vain, to rave
For the broad bosom of his nursing wave —

Einen tiefen Eindruck hat Byron vom Genfer See empfangen, wo er so gerne weilte, wenn er freilich dort die Einsamkeit nicht fand, die er suchte:

Lake Leman woos me with its crystal face,
The mirror where the stars and mountains view
The stillness of their aspect in each trace
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue:
There is too much of man here, to look through
With a fit mind the might which I behold;
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew
Thoughts hid, but not less cherish'd than of old,
Ere mingling with the herd had penn'd me in their fold. (Childe Harold.)

Hier entzückt ihn die idyllische Ruhe und das leise Lied der Wellen ebenso wie ihn vorher das Tosen der Meereswogen gewaltig ergriff:

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.
(Childe Harold.)

Zum See und an die Ufer des ihm entströmenden Flusses zieht es den Dichter immer wieder aus dem Lärm der Menschenwelt zurück:

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake! —
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,
Than join the crushing crowd, doom'd to inflict or bear! (Childe Harold.)

Das Bild von Fluß und See, deren Gewässer sich bald vermischen, bald sich trennen, schwebt ihm wieder vor im Don Juan:

They moved like stars united in their spheres,
Or like the Rhone by Leman's waters wash'd,

Where mingled and yet separate appears
The river from the lake, all bluely dash'd
Through the serene and placid glassy deep,
Which fain would lull its river-child to sleep.

Den Vergleich menschlicher Lebenswege mit Zwillingsströmen, die, aus einer Quelle fließend, nach getrenntem Lauf sich endlich im Meer wieder vereinigen, finden wir in Hours of Idleness:

As when one parent spring supplies
Two streams which from one fountain rise,
Together join'd in vain;
How soon, diverging from their source,
Each, murmuring, seeks another course,
Till mingled in the main!
Our vital streams of weal or woe,
Though near, alas! distinctly flow,
Nor mingle as before:
Now swift or slow, now black or clear,
Till death's unfathom'd gull appear,
And both shall quit the shore.

Auch das Bild des sanft murmelnden Bachs, der munter plätschernd dem Meere zueilt, findet sich in Island:

A little stream came tumbling from the height,
And straggling into ocean as it might,
Its bounding crystal frolick'd in the ray,
And gush'd from cliff to crag with saltless spray;
Close on the wild, wide ocean, yet as pure
And fresh as innocence, and more secure,
It silver torrent glitter'd o'er the deep,
As the shy chamois' eye o'er looks the steep,
While far below the vast and sullen swell
Of ocean's alpine azure rose and fell.

Wie vom Meer, so hat Byron auch von den gewaltigen Erhebungen der Erdoberfläche, vom Hochgebirge, die stärksten Eindrücke empfangen. Zogen ihn zuerst auf der heimatlichen Insel namentlich die schottischen Hochlande an, die er mit besonderer Vorliebe durchwanderte und deren landschaftlichen Reize seiner eigenen Gemütsstimmung, seinem Hang zur Einsamkeit so vielfach begegneten, so wirkte nachher um so mächtiger die erhabene Alpenwelt auf ihn ein, in der alles, was ihm am Gebirge so reizvoll erschienen war, ins Riesenhafte gesteigert sich darbot. Man hatte sich nun ja auch sonst gewöhnt, den Regionen des ewigen Schnees und Eises mit allen ihren Schrecken und dem

Leben drohenden Gefahren nicht mehr, wie früher, das bloß niederdrückende Gefühl der Furcht und des Grauens entgegenzubringen, sondern man gewann immer mehr ein Auge für die unvergleichliche Schönheit und Erhabenheit der Hochgebirgsnatur, die in dem Maße ihre Furchtbarkeit verlor, in dem es gelang, der Unnahbarkeit der felsgepanzerten Riesen zum Trotz siegreich den Fuß auf ihr Haupt zu setzen. Eben dieses Moment der stolzen Siegerfreude über die eigene Kraft und Energie, die die Tatenlust zu immer neuen Anstrengungen anspornt, ist auch bei Byron unverkennbar, wenn auch andererseits wieder das Bewußtsein der menschlichen Kleinheit und Nichtigkeit gegenüber den gewaltigen Kräften in der Natur ebenso wenig fehlt. Für beides hat er einen dichterischen Ausdruck gefunden, der sich zu hoher Schönheit erhebt und nicht verfehlt, auch den Leser auf ein höheres Niveau der Empfindung emporzutragen. Wir lassen wieder einige der bezeichnendsten Stellen folgen; in Childe Harold:

— — — Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche — the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.

Ferner in Manfred:

— — — My mother Earth:
And thou, fresh breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,
Why are ye beautiful? — — —
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance.

In Heaven and Earth:

Ye wilds, that look eternal! and thou cave
Which seems't unfathomable! and ye mountains,
So varied and so terrible in beauty!
Here, in your rugged majesty of rocks,
And toppling trees that twine their roots with stone
In perpendicular places, where the foot
Of man would tremble, could he reach them — yes
Ye look eternal! Yet, in a few days,
Perhaps even hours, ye will be changed, rent, hurl'd
Before the mass of waters;

— — — Shall yon exulting peak,
Whose glittering top is like a distant star,
Lie low beneath the boiling of the deep,
No more to have the morning sun break forth,
And scatter back the mists in floating folds
From its tremendous brow? no more to have
Day's broad orb drop behind its head at even,
Leaving it with a crown of many hues?
No more to be the beacon of the world,
For angels to alight on, as the spot
Nearest the stars?

Ewig unwandelbar erscheinen die Berge gegenüber dem wechselnden flüchtigen Dasein des Menschen im Prisoner of Chillon:

I saw them — and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame:
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high — — —

Ebenso in The Siege of Corinth:

— — — on the brow
Of Delphi's hill, unshaken snow,
High and eternal, such as shone
Through thousand summers brightly gone,
Along the gulf, the mount, the clime;
It will not melt, like man, to time;
Tyrant and slave are swept away,
Less form'd to wear before the ray;
But that white veil, the lightest, frailest,
Which on the mighty mount thou hailest,
While tower and tree are torn and rent,
Shines o'er its craggy battlement.

Die Sehnsucht des Dichters nach den Bergen der Heimat, von denen der Blick über das Meer hinschweift, hören wir aus den Versen in „Hours of Idleness“:

I would I were a careless child
Still dwelling in my Highland cave
Or roaming through the dusky wild,
Or bounding o'er the dark blue wave;
The cumbrous pomp of Saxon pride
Accords not with the freeborn soul,

Which loves the mountain's craggy side,
And seeks the rocks where billows roll.
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
Place me along the rocks I love,
Which sound to Ocean's wildest roar — —

Der Berggipfel, der die Mühe des Ersteigens lohnt, ist dem Dichter das Bild menschlichen Strebens nach hohen Zielen; Childe Harold:

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high above the sun of glory glow,
And far beneath the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rock, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

Auf den Höhen ist der Mensch, der die Einsamkeit liebt, der Welt entrückt und nur mit Widerstreben reißt er sich von dort los, um wieder im Weltgetriebe unterzutauchen; Childe Harold:

More blest the life of godly eremite,
Such as on lonely Athos may be seen,
Watching at eve upon the giant height,
Which looks o'er waves so blue, skies so serene,
That he who there at such an hour has been
Will wistful linger on that hallowed spot;
Then slowly hear him from the 'witching scene,
Sigh forth one wish that such had been his lot,
Then turn to hate a world he had almost forgot.

Verhältnismäßig selten ist die Pflanzenwelt bei Byron Gegenstand dichterischer Darstellung; im Zusammenhang mit der Hochgebirgsszenerie erscheint die Wetterfichte, die auf felsigem Boden über dem Abgrund den Stürmen trotzt; Childe Harold;

But from their nature will the tannen grow
Loftiest on loftiest and least shelter'd rocks,
Rooted in barrenness, where nought below
Of soil supports them'gainst the Alpine shocks
Of eddying storms; yet springs the trunk, and mocks
The howling tempest, till its height and frame
Are worthy of the mountains from whose blocks
Of bleak, gray granite into life it came,
And grew a giant tree;

Auch der Wald, der sonst so viel besungene, tritt in Byrons Dichtungen wenig hervor. Den düsteren sibirischen Urwald malt der Dichter in Mazeppa:

We near'd the wild wood — 'twas so wide,
I saw no bounds on either side;
'T was studded with old sturdy trees,
That bent not to the roughest breeze
Which howls down from Siberia's waste,
And strips the forest in its haste, —
But these were few and far between,
Set thick with shrubs more young and green,
Luxuriant with their annual leaves,
Ere strown by those autumnal eves
That nip the forest's foliage dead,
Discolour'd with a lifeless red . . . .

Ebenso benützt er die Tierwelt meist, um das Unheimliche zu verstärken, weniger zu freundlicher Belebung der toten Natur; so in Island:

A black rock rears its bosom o'er the spray,
The haunt of birds, a desert to mankind,
Where the rough seal reposes from the wind,
And sleeps unwieldy in his cavern dun,
Or gambols with huge frolic in the sun:
There shrilly to the passing oar is heard
The startled echo of the ocean bird,
Who rears on its bare breast her callow brood,
The feather'd fishers of the solitude.

Ferner in The Siege of Corinth:

The wild birds flew; the wild dogs fled,
And howling left the unburied dead;
The camels from their keepers broke;
The distant steer forsook the yoke —
The nearer steed plunged o'er the plain,
And burst his girth, and tore his rein;
The bull-frog's note, from out the marsh,
Deep-mouth'd arose, and doubly harsh;
The wolves yell'd on the cavern'd hill
Where echo roll'd in thunder still;
The jackal's troop, in gather'd cry,
Bay'd from afar complainingly,
With a mix'd and mournful sound,

Like crying babe, and beaten hound:
With sudden wing, and ruffled breast,
The eagle left his rocky nest,
And mounted nearer to the sun — — —

Eben dort vergleicht er einen Angriff mit dem Kampf von Wölfen mit dem Büffel:

As the wolves, that headlong go
On the stately buffalo,
Though with fiery eyes, and angry roar,
And hoofs that stamp, and horns that gore,
He tramples on earth, or tosses ou high
The foremost, who rush on his strength but to die.

In Heaven and Earth läßt er den Leviathan auftreten:

— — — as rippling foam,
Which the leviathan hath lash'd
From his unfathomable home,
When sporting on the face of thee calm deep,
Subsides soon after the again has dash'd
Down, down, to where the ocean's fountains sleep.

Der gefangene Falke, dem die Schwingen beschnitten sind, der vergeblich gegen die Stäbe seines Käfigs wütet, ist dem Dichter ein Bild der menschlichen Seele, die an ihrem Flug gehindert wird; in Childe Harold:

Droop'd as a wild-born falcon with clipt wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home:
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barr'd-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage, so the heat
Of his impeded soul would through his besom eat.

Den über die See fliegenden Schwalben vergleicht er seine ruhelosen Gedanken in The Siege of Corinth:

My thoughts, like swallows, skim the main,
And bear my spirit back again
Over the earth, and through the air,
A wild bird and a wanderer.

In begeisterten Tönen besingt Byron das Land der Sonne, die herrliche griechische Landschaft, zu der sich seine Seele mit unwiderstehlicher Sehnsucht hingezogen fühlt;

der ganze Zauber des Südens, die Pracht der Mittelmeerländer, über denen fast ununterbrochen der heitere Himmel lacht, spricht aus den Versen in The Bride of Abydos, die entschiedene Anklänge an das berühmte Göthesche Mignonlied zeigen:

Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime?
Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppress'd with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the Gardens of Gul in her bloom!
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute,
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of Ocean is deepest in dye;
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine
And all, save the spirit of man, is divine?
'Tis the clime of the East; 'tis the land of the Sun —

Eine ähnliche Schilderung dieser paradiesischen Natur findet sich im Giaur:

Fair Clime! where every season smiles
Benignant o'er those blessed isles,
Which, seen from far Colonna's height,
Make glad the heart that hails the sight,
And lend to loneliness delight.
There mildly dimpling, Ocean's cheek
Reflects the tints of many a peak
Caught by the laughing tides that lave
These Edens of the Eastern wave:
And if at times a transient breeze
Break the blue crystal of the seas,
Or sweep one blossom from the trees.
How welcome is each gentle air
That wakes and wafts the odours there!

Ein Bild der in Schutt und Trümmer liegenden Reste der einstigen stolzen antiken Welt, über die die schaffende Natur ein neues buntes Gewand gewoben hat, zeichnet er in Childe Harold:

Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower grown
Matted and mass'd together, hillocks heap'd

On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescos steep'd
In subterranean damps, where the owl peep'd,
Deeming it midnight — — —

Auch dem Reiz der von menschlichen Wohnstätten belebten Landschaft leiht er dichterischen Ausdruck in The Dream:

I saw two beings in the hues of youth
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green and of mild declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such,
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and corn-fields, and the abodee of man
Scatter'd at internals, and wreathing smoke
Arising from such rustic roofs; — the hill
Was crown'd with a peculiar diadem
Of trees, in circular array, so fix'd,
Not by the sport of nature, but of man.

Das ewig schöne, herrliche Schauspiel des anbrechenden Morgens erfüllt den Dichter mit dem wehmütigen Gefühl, daß einst ein Morgen kommt, an dem sein Auge für immer geschlossen ist, während die Sonne unbekümmert um menschliches Los die Erde zu neuem Leben weckt; Lara:

Night wanes — the vapours round the mountains curl'd,
Melt into morn, and Light awakes the world.
Man has another day to swell the past,
And lead him near to little, but his last;
But mighty Nature bounds as from her birth,
The sun is in the heavens, and life on earth;
Flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam,
Health on the gale, and freshness in the stream.
Immortal man! behold her glories shine,
And cry, exulting inly, „They are thine!"
Gaze on, while yet thy gladden'd eye may see,
A morrow comes when they are not for thee;
And grieve what may above thy senseless bier,
Nor earth nor sky will yield a single tear;
Nor cloud shall gather more, nor leaf shall fall.
Nor gale breathe forth one sigh for thee, for all;
But creeping things shall revel in their spoil,
And fit thy clay to fertilize the soil.

In eine wundervolle Morgenstimmung auf dem Meer, wenn die Nacht allmählig zu schwinden beginnt, werden wir versetzt in Island:

The quiet night, now dappling, 'gan to wane,
Dividing darkness from the dawning main;
The dolphins, not unconscious of the day,
Swam high, as eager of the coming ray;
The stars from broader beams began to creep,
And lift their shining eyelids from the deep;
The sail resumed its lately shadow'd white,
And the wind flatter'd with a freshening flight;
The purpling ocean owns the coming sun, — — —

Ebenso, auch wieder mit dem oft wiederkehrenden schwermütigen Gedanken an die Begrenztheit des irdischen Lebens in Childe Harold:

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb, —
And glowing into day — — — —

In lebhafte Farben getaucht, von Nebeln umwallt, erscheinen am Morgen die Spitzen der griechischen Berge; Childe Harold:

Morn dawns; and with it stern Albania's hills,
Dark Suli's rocks, and Pindus' inland peak,
Robed half in mist, bedew'd with snowy rills,
Array'd in many a dun and purple streak,
Arise; and, as the clouds along them break,
Disclose the dwelling of the mountaineer — — —

Häufiger noch versenkt sich der Dichter in den sanften Zauber der Abendstimmung, die in ihm besonders verwandte Empfindungen auslöst, so in Monody on the Death of Sheridan:

When the last sunshine of expiring day
In summer's twilight weeps itself away,
Who hath not felt the softness of the hour
Sink on the heart, as dew along the flower?
Witn a pure feeling which absorbs and awes
While Nature makes that melancholy pause,
Her breathing moment on the bridge where Time
Of light and darkness forms an arch sublime,
Who hath not shared that calm so still and deep,

The voiceless thought which would not speak but weep.
A holy concord — and a bright regret,
A glorious sympathy with suns that set?
'Tis not harsh sorrow — but a tenderer woe,
Nameless, but dear to gentle hearts below,
Felt without bitterness — but full and clear,
A sweet dejection — a transparent tear,
Unmix'd with worldly grief or selfish stain,
Shed without shame — and secret without pain.

Ebenso im Don Juan:

'Tis sweet to see the evening star appear;
'Tis sweet to listen as the night-winds creep
From leaf to leaf — — — —

Von dem wunderbaren, wechselnden Farbenspiel am abendlichen Himmel durch alle Phasen hindurch, bis alles in einförmigem Grau versinkt, entwirft er ein tief empfundenes Bild in Childe Harold:

The moon is up, and yet it is not night —
Sunset divides the sky with her — a sea
Of glory streams along the Alpine height
Of blue Friuli's mountain; Heaven is free
From clouds, but of all colours seems to be, —
Melted to one vast Iris of the West, —
Where the Day joins the past Eternity;
While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest
Floats through the azure air — an island of the blest!
A single star is at her side, and reigns
With her o'er half the lovely heaven; but still
Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains
Roll'd o'er the peak of the far Rhaetian hill,
As Day and Night contending were, until
Nature reclaim'd her order; — gently flows
The deep-dyed Brenta, where their hues instil
The odorous purple of a new-born rose,
Which streams upon her stream, and glass'd within it glows.
Fill'd with the face of heaven, which, from afar,
Comes down upon the waters; all its hues,
From the rich sunset to the rising star,
Their magical variety diffuse:
And now they change; a paler shadow strews

Its mantle o'er the mountains; parting day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new colour as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till — 'tis gone — and all is gray.

Ebenso versetzt er uns in das Leben der Natur beim schwindenden Tag in Parisina:

It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard;
It is the hour when lover's vows
Seems sweet in every whisper'd word;
And gentle winds, and waters near,
Make music to the lonely ear.
Each flower the dews have lightly wet,
And in the sky the stars are met,
And on the wave is deeper blue,
And on the leaf a browner hue,
And in the heaven that clear obscure,
So softly dark, and darkly pure,
Which follows the decline of day,
As twilight melts beneath the moon away.

Wieder ist es die griechische Landschaft in der magischen Beleuchtung nach Einbruch der Nacht, die er uns vorführt im Corsair:

But lo! from high Hymettus to the plain
The queen of night asserts her silent reign.
No murky vapour, herald of the storm,
Hides her fair face, nor girds her glowing form;
With cornice glimmering as the moonbeams play,
There the white column greets her grateful ray,
And, bright around with quivering beams beset,
Her emblem sparkles o'er the minaret:
The groves of olive scatter'd dark and wide
Where meek Cephissus pours his scanty tide,
The cypress saddening by the sacred mosque,
The gleaming turret of the gay kiosk,
And, dun and sombre 'mid the holy calm,
Near Theseus' fane yon solitary palm,
All tinged with varied hues, arrest the eye —
And dull were his that passed them heedless by.
Again the Aegean, heard no more afar,
Lulls his chafed breast from elemental war;

Again his waves in milder tints unfold
Their long array of sapphire and of gold,
Mix'd with the shades of many a distant isle,
That frown — where gentler ocean seems to smile.

Der wundersame Reiz der tiefen, schweigenden Sternennacht am Ufer des still dahingleitenden Stroms findet einen stimmungsvollen Ausdruck in Lara:

It was the night — and Lara's glassy stream
The stars are studding, each with imaged beam;
So calm, the waters scarcely seem to stray,
And yet they glide like happiness away;
Reflecting far and fairy-like from high
The immortal lights that live along the sky:
Its banks are fringed with many a goodly tree,
And flowers the fairest that may feast the bee;
Such in her chaplet infant Dian wove,
And Innocence would offer to her love.
These deck the shore; the waves their channel make
In windings bright and mazy like the snake.
All was so still, so soft in earth and air;
You scarce would start to meet a spirit there;
Secure that nought of evil could delight
To walk in such a scene, on such a night!

Die geheimnisvolle Wirkung der Stille der Nacht auf die menschliche Seele deutet der Dichter an im Don Juan:

There is a dangerous silence in that hour,
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all istelf, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self-control;
The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
Sheds beauty and deep softness o'er the whole,
Breathes also to the heart, and o'er it throws
A loving languor, which is not repose.

Und endlich noch eine Schilderung der Mitternacht am südlichen Meeresstrand, bei der der Dichter wieder die menschliche Sehnsucht ausspricht, die sich Flügel wünscht, um die Erde zu verlassen und zu den Sternen emporzuschweben, in The Siege of Corinth:

'Tis midnight: on the mountain brown
The cold round moon shines deeply down;

Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright;
Who ever gazed upon them shining,
And turn'd to earth without repining,
Nor wish'd for wings to flee away,
And mix with their eternal ray?
The waves on either shore lay there,
Calm, clear, and azure as the air:
And scarce their foam the pebbles shook,
But murmur'd meekly as the brook.

Von der beruhigenden Wirkung der Nacht, welche die Stürme des menschlichen Herzens zum Schweigen bringt, gibt der Dichter ein Bild in Marino Faliero:

Around me are the stars and waters —
Worlds mirror'd in the ocean, goodlier sight
Than torches glared back by a gaudy glass;
And the great element, which is to space
What ocean is to earth, spreads its blue depths,
Soften'd with the first breathings of the spring;
The high moon sails upon her beauteous way,
Serenely smoothing o'er the lofty walls
Of those tall piles and sea-girt palaces — — — —
How sweet and soothing in this hour of calm!
I thank thee, Night! for thou hast chased away
Those horrid bodements which, amidst the throng,
I could not dissipate: and with the blessing
Of thy benign and quiet influence, —
Now will I to my couch, although to rest
Is almost wronging such a night as this — — —

Während so Byron den verschiedenen Stimmungen im Wechsel der Tageszeit den mannigfaltigsten dichterischen Ausdruck gibt, finden sich wenige Beispiele, die uns in die verschiedenen Stimmungen versetzen, die der Wechsel der Jahreszeiten mit sich bringt. Ein Lied zum Preis des Frühlings und des lieblichen Frühlingsboten findet sich in The Deformed Transformed:

The spring is come;
The bride and her lover
Have sought their home:
They are happy, we rejoice;

Let their hearts have an echo in every voice!
The spring is come; the violet's gone,
The first-born child of the early sun:
With us she is but a winter's flower,
And she lifts up her dewy eye of blue
To the youngest sky of the self-same hue
And when the spring comes with her host
Of flowers, that flower beloved the most
Shrinks from the crowd that may confuse
Her heavenly odour and virgin hues.
Pluck the others, but still remember
Their herald out of dim December —
The morning star of all the flowers,
The pledge of daylight's lengthen'd hours;
Nor, midst the roses, e'er forget
The virgin, virgin violet.

Das Naturgefühl Byrons, das diese Proben, in welchen fast seine sämtlichen Dichtungen vertreten sind, illustrieren, macht durchweg einen echten gesunden Eindruck, ohne falsche Sentimentalität, ohne bombastische Übertreibung; wir gewinnen die Überzeugung, daß der Dichter in der Tat mit der Natur in innigem Verkehr gestanden ist, daß er sie leidenschaftlich liebte, und die angeführten Stellen zeigen auch, daß er über die dichterische Kraft verfügte, dieses Naturgefühl in entsprechende Worte zu kleiden, und daß ihm die mannigfaltigsten Töne zu Gebot standen; und so wollen wir mit einem Wort aus Manfred schließen, das wir in anderem Sinne auf Byron selbst anwenden: Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds are at thy beck and bidding — — —

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