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The problem taken up in this study involves Emerson's presentation of an heroic figure to America in the mid-nineteenth century. The problem arises from the earlier heroic tradition, exemplified by Byron and Carlyle, which presented the hero in terms unacceptable to American democracy.

The publication of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Representative Men in 1850 both presents a more democratic heroic type, and also raises the problem of Emerson's method in his composition of this new heroic type. Emerson's new hero, the Representative Man, is an heroic type with limitations admitted by the author. This new Man, like the earlier Carlylian Great Man, is a composite of prominent historical figures evaluated in light of the particular author's standards of heroism.

What increases the intensity of the problem is Emerson's tendency to use, at times, the same historical personages as Carlyle for his models. Therefore, if Emerson does present a new figure, different from the Byron-Carlyle nineteenth century hero--and even uses some of the same models previously used by his friend Carlyle--the question of just how Emerson has created a newer heroic

type presents itself.

A method of evaluation common to the three writers is essential to determine Emerson's adherence to earlier heroic forms. If Emerson does present his new hero along the general guideline of traits which has formed earlier heroes, then the key to his new Man lies in a redefinition not of heroism, but of the traits or components which traditionally have described the hero.

Such a study of heroic traits yields the four heroic traits of social motivation, shared human responsibility, endorsement by nature, and personal sincerity. In the cases of Byron and Carlyle, the British heroes rely heavily on nature for their stature. This study holds that Emerson redefined the traditional role of nature in Representative Men and thus created a less directed hero who could also answer the demands of democratic performance.

EMERSON'S REDEFINITION OF THE LITERARY HERO IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY BY MEANS OF A REINTERPRETATION OF THE HEROIC TRAIT NATURE AS PRESENTED BY LORD BYRON AND THOMAS CARLYLE

by

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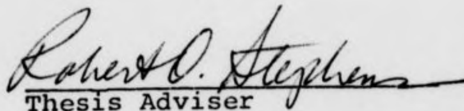

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CHAPTER I

A METHOD TO MEASURE EMERSON'S NEW HEROIC TYPE

A study of heroic greatness in the literary arena seems doomed by the wry, forthright statement of Ralph Waldo Emerson that "Every hero becomes a bore at last."[1] However, Emerson wrote of heroic greatness as he perceived it and as he gathered from history those models of greatness which could be distilled into tolerable examples of personal worth. In his Representative Men, he offered a collection of individuals who, in total, illustrated the better traits of what Emerson considered the human experience.

Emerson's characterization of the "hero" as a "bore" and his reluctance to bestow unqualified praises on his historical examples indicate a rather unconventional approach to the mythic quality which usually surrounds heroic literature. In order to appreciate the contrast between Emerson's treatment and that of the more traditional artists of the heroic in literature, one might note the standard practice in earlier forms of heroic writing of describing the hero in magnificent terms.

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[1] Representative Men (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), p. 27.

Repeatedly, the standard hero of literature will act as an irresistibly necessary force cast upon the earth to deal with a problem or set of problems facing mankind. Yet, for all his grandeur and necessity, the hero who pulls a sword from a lake, destroys a Cyclops, maims a Grendel or rides a tornado is naturally superior to and thus distant from his constituency of loyal followers. In Aristotelian terms he becomes as sterile and unappealing as the Greek philosopher's logical view of God: The prime mover unmoved. Such a titan may awe mankind but cannot seem to urge mankind to any sort of practical emulation.

Emerson's attempt to present a newer version of heroism offers a contrast to prior heroic fiction of the nineteenth century. Among his contemporaries, Carlyle offers an almost medieval paean to hero worship with the 1840 publication of On Heroes and Hero-Worship. What makes Carlyle's work of such great interest is that he and Emerson were, at least, literary friends and correspondents and that while On Heroes is such a strongly stated case for the God-sent hero, Representative Men, published in 1850, is more a study in self-motivated human perfection. Finally, Emerson, unlike Carlyle, is more hesitant to depict the hero (Representative Man) as a perfectly successful type at all times.

Emerson must redefine the heroic in terms more suitable to a democratic climate. In such a democratic climate every man will have the theoretical ability to excel and to achieve his own potential. What is of interest, aside from Emerson's view of the Representative Man, is the manner in which Emerson is able to lessen the titanic force of greatness and to translate superior performance into democratic possibility. To state that Emerson's Representative Man is more democratic than earlier types is not sufficiently original to warrant a restatement here.

In order to appreciate the seal with which Emerson restamps the hero, the softening which he gives to the stern face of heroism, one must not only include Carlyle's vision as an immediate standard and contrast, but also that very personification of nineteenth century literary heroics, Lord Byron. Byron and Carlyle represent in their works those traditional titanic values which can be described as nothing less than chivalrically magnificent. Both writers offer a mystical _raison d'etre_ for heroism and, by their very temporal proximity to Emerson, serve as striking examples of the romantic, knight-at-arms hero whom Emerson could not happily import to the self-reliant atmosphere of his transcendental, intellectual Concord.

In contrast, Emerson turned a dramatic corner in the history of heroic writing with the publication of

Representative Men. The older, heroic tradition presented by Byron and Carlyle serves as a contrast to the achievement of Emerson's attempts to celebrate greatness in a democracy and to define personal greatness as a study in human potential. Similarly, an appraisal of Emerson's contribution to heroic writing, in light of the earlier Byronic-Carlylian tradition, serves to demonstrate Emerson's belief in the potential for greatness in all men.

As opposed to the differing temperament and times of real, flesh and blood hero, the one and only factor common to all literary-myth heroes, is that all created heroes are assumed to be necessary by their creators. If in real life, flesh and blood heroes fill a need[2] in order to qualify as heroes, in literature the author must construct or set up an assumed need for such a character. Other traits may flow from this assumed need, but this central demand of creativity must be first considered once the student of heroes realizes that any sort of heroic greatness presented by the three writers is purely of a literary sort.

Thus, while both Byron's Childe Harold and Carlyle's On Heroes and Hero-Worship share with Emerson's

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[2]Sidney Hook, The Hero in History (New York: The Humanites Press, 1943), offers this evaluation of nonfiction heroes: "The hero in history is the individual to whom we can justifiably attribute preponderant influence in determining an issue or event whose consequences would have been profoundly different if he had not acted as he did." P. 153.

Representative Men the requirement of an assumed need for the hero, the key distinction to be made for Emerson's hero is the manner in which that need for greatness is assumed within a democratic context.[3] The concern here is not to prove that Emerson makes the hero "more democratic" or less European. Rather, the need is to recognize Emerson's very challenge to the historically assumed need for the traditional hero. Such a challenge had to discover or invent a new manner to create an assumed need for a hero in a particular society.

Four heroic traits consisting of social motivation, social responsibility, endorsement by nature and sincerity, repeatedly present themselves in the three compositions and in total comprise the assumed need used by each writer to present his respective figure. Therefore, a collection of four traits, two social and two fundamental,[4] serves as an important guideline since it acts as a constant measure against which each hero can be compared to the others. The reason for this distinction between the social and

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[3]The terms "great man" and "hero" are applied gingerly in regard to Emerson. A working definition of either term implies that such a figure--like the "representative man"--is a praiseworthy, admirable type. However, the latter figure will evolve as a newer form of traditional heroism in Chapter III.

[4]The terms "social" and "fundamental" are used to describe two strains in each hero's character: The social traits describe his actual earthly dealings with men; the fundamental, his mandate from a higher impulse.

fundamental heroic traits is that Byron, the earliest of the three writers, presents a hero incapable of any achievement in the world of men. Thus, the previously cited verdict of Sidney Hook seems almost an admonishment when applied to Byron's Childe Harold. Hook, even though he writes of real flesh and blood heroes, demands that the hero exert some sort of influence in human experience. This demand is at variance with the type of performance made by the Byronic hero.

The very inability of the Byronic hero to have any impact on his social milieu leads him to withdraw into the consolation of nature and to cite, quite defensively, his sincerity in all his abortive attempts at social interaction. An attitude of frustration with or alienation from the human race (discussed later in greater detail) is summed up by the Childe's remark: "I have not loved the world, nor the world me. . . ."[5] Such a strong, all-inclusive, negative statement makes one wonder about the very sort of hero Byron presents.

This Byronic hero not only suffers disgust with dense humanity but admits his inability to win on a personal

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[5]Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III, cxiv, l. 1058-61, The Complete Poetical Works of Byron (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1933), p. 53. For purposes of clarity, stanza references to Childe Harold have been reduced in this study from capital to lower case roman letters.

level. For the Childe, the fruits of his "successful Passion" amount to "Youth wasted, minds degraded, honour lost."[6] In short, the society of men (and women) offers only a stumbling block to and dissipation of Harold's energies. In one very pointed contrast, while evaluating the ephemeral past glories of Venice, Childe Harold finds eternal value in nature:

> Those days are gone--but Beauty is still here.
> States fall, arts fade--but Nature doth not die.[7]

Such sentiments involve a contrast of society and nature in which the hero's preference for the latter ("I love not man the less, but Nature more/")[8] indicates a rather isolated character who by no means qualifies, if only in fiction, as a hero of <u>men</u> described by Sidney Hook. Yet, it is from this very contradiction of heroic definition that a method or basis of heroic comparison--from Byron, through Carlyle and then to Emerson--begins to evolve. Byron, forces the student of heroes to deal with nature as the driving force behind Harold. Secondly, Harold's sincerity causes this hero to perceive the wondrous facets of nature and allows him a self-righteous contempt for anti-nature or society.

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[6]Ibid., Canto II, xxxv, l. 5, p. 69.

[7]Ibid., Canto IV, iii, l. 5-6, p. 196.

[8]Ibid., Canto IV, clxxviii, l. 5, p. 269.

Thus, as one attempts at first to locate differences, similarities, links and guides which might aid in an evaluation of Emerson's Representative Man in comparison with earlier, European heroic types, the first hero-creator, Lord Byron, delivers a dashing, yet somewhat unvalorous hero. Perhaps then, preconceived notions of popular heroism must make room to accommodate the brooding Childe Harold. Sidney Hook emphasizes the popular notion that heroic action demands involvement with society and an impetus or personal call to action on the part of the hero. But while Hook's criterion may refer to real personages, such a reference cannot at all cover Lord Byron's Childe Harold.

Amidst this basic conflict of heroic definition, a conflict which demands resolution before comparisons can be made between the Emersonian Man and the earlier Byronic type, there falls the Carlylian Great Man, a hero to follow Harold in time and to predate the Representative Man by ten years. Carlyle's Great Man not only fills an important historical gap, but also offers a second type of nature-oriented hero. This Carlylian Great Man, like the Byronic type, relies upon nature for sanction and upon personal sincerity as his protection against hostile elements of society. Historical in a way that Byron's hero is not, Carlyle's Great Man still depends on the same justifications

of nature and sincerity. Standing above the mass of men, he lacks the two traits of social motivation and social responsibility. One example of the Great Man's lack of these social traits indicates the distance between Carlyle's hero and the whole of mankind. Carlyle asserts in Lecture IV, that the hero "appeals to Heaven's invisible justice against Earth's visible force; . . . ."[9]

In one sense the Emersonian hero because of his social popularity, seems a facile intellectual achievement. This Representative Man can be viewed as little more than the genuine man of action, the doer, turned loose by personal motivation and a desire to improve his constituency. Such views would lose sight of Emerson's break with the earlier, nature/sincerity-oriented hero. And thus the need arises to study the nineteenth century literary hero in both the "social" and "fundamental" halves of his characterization. To understand the extent of the Byron-Carlyle involvement with nature as a "fundamental" trait, a common denominator between their heroes, is to appreciate the intellectual thrust Emerson exerts to move his own Representative Man beyond the contemporary convention of "fundamental" (nature, personal sincerity) traits into the "social" traits of internal motivation and human involvement.

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[9]Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 153.

The presence of the two earlier heroic models demands that heroes as a group be studied not only as characters who perform actions (and thus exhibit "social traits") in their society, but also as externally controlled personages with supernatural cures and mandates. Hence the need arises for a "fundamental" as well as a "social" evaluation of the nineteenth century hero. These two sets of traits must not only be kept central in this discussion, but must be kept scrupulously discrete since Emerson's radical reinterpretation of the "fundamental" traits will then free his hero to act in a social manner alien to Childe Harold and the Great Man. A failure to differentiate one set of traits from the other prevents an appreciation of the bold yet necessary challenge Emerson made to the earlier British heroic traidition which relied upon the mandate of nature and the hero's personal sincerity to justify his existence.

Further demonstration of this British tendency appears in Carlyle's repeated defense of his Great Man exemplars, gleaned from history. From the very outset of On Heroes and Hero-Worship, Carlyle views man as the greatest work of nature and feels that early man worshiped nature by primitive forms of hero-worship.[10] In Lecture I,

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[10] Ibid., p. 14.

Odin and the Norse religion celebrate nature.[11] Lecture II describes an "earnest" Mahomet charged by "Nature . . . to be sincere."[12] In Lecture III, the same Nature-sincerity emphasis persists: Dante and his Divine Comedy are described as "sincere,"[13] while other lesser poets and their poems miss the true message of the universe. Likewise, Shakespeare has his own problems but is, for Carlyle, "the free gift of nature; . . ."[14]

Such sweeping coverage of Carlyle's heroes protects them from personal failure in their personal achievement; yet, this same protection, this reliance on supernatural powers, emphasizes "fundamental," or innate God (or nature)-given talents at the expense of "social traits" and personal heroic achievement. Thus in Lecture IV, Luther is described as a "voice from unseen Heaven."[15] Likewise in Lecture V, Carlyle holds that the Man of Letters (Goethe) is "a piece of the everlasting heart of Nature herself."[16] Finally in Lecture VI, Cromwell is presented as a sincere

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[11] Ibid., p. 38.

[12] Ibid., p. 71.

[13] Ibid., p. 122.

[14] Ibid., p. 134.

[15] Ibid., p. 151.

[16] Ibid., p. 234.

follower of "Heaven's goodness,"[17] prepared to do God's Will.

While such portraits of greatness do not demean the stature of each of Carlyle's models, such depictions do not credit heroic action to the hero himself. This point is lodged not as a criticism, <u>per se</u>, of Carlyle's heroic theory, but rather as an observation of the way in which Carlyle, like Byron, tends to utilize a Higher Force (whether God or nature) as the chief mover behind his hero.

Therefore, one must begin with nature, or what is herein termed the "fundamental" set of traits in order to describe what causes the British heroes to operate. These "fundamental" traits of nature-mandate and sincerity can then be compared to the more obvious "social" traits of heroic motivation and a sense of shared human responsibility. A comparison of these two sets of traits is essential to understand Emerson's democratic need to shift the emphasis of heroic greatness from the "fundamental" to the more individually attainable "social" set of traits. Yet, in order to create such a shift, Emerson does not simply ignore the "fundamental" traits. He must and does redesign, the very definition of "nature" in order to place more social responsibility, more self-respect[18] upon his hero.

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[17] Ibid., p. 296.

[18] Dixon Wecter, <u>The Hero in America, a Chronicle of Hero-Worship</u> (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of

Such a redefinition offers more potential and human possibilities to all the Representative Man's followers.

The two "fundamental" traits--nature and sincerity --permeate Byron and Carlyle and also appear prominently in Emerson's Representative Men. Yet, not only does Emerson redesign this set of traits, he so reinterprets the heroic role of nature that his own Man is now free to exercise the "social traits." These are designated as "propulsion motivation"--the impetus to spring into action--and "shared human responsibility"--the mutual respect between the Representative Man and his constituents.

Like Byron and Carlyle, Emerson relies upon "nature" and "sincerity" to describe heroic action. Yet, the American writer does not afford his hero the same blanket coverage nor pardon his hero, as do Byron or Carlyle, who pardon a hero's fault if caused by an honest impulse. For an example of this trait one finds a candid Harold at the end of Canto IV offering the entire poem as a lesson on how not to live a life; for Carlyle, the cynical Dante displayed a sincere tendency when he refuses to flatter kings. By redesigning or limiting earlier notions of "nature" and

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Michigan Press, 1963), observes: "No great American idol, in review, has lacked a touch lent by the struggle against odds, or by discouragement and passing failure. He must be a man who fights uphill. Unlike the dictator, or the superman as hero, he cannot display the arrogance of victory; but rather must be attuned to the still sad music of humanity." P. 16.

"sincerity" in heroic writing, Emerson is able to present a new type of hero, a democrat, capable of leading all men to find what is best in each man. Ultimately, the use of such a method of evaluation demonstrates the most important differences between earlier interpretations of heroic traits and the Emersonian treatment of these same basic devices. What this study finally describes is the way in which Emerson redefines heroic traits so as to assume the need for that new type, the new great man, the hero representative of men in a democracy.

CHAPTER II

THE FUNCTION OF NATURE AND HEROIC SINCERITY IN CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE AND ON HEROES AND HERO-WORSHIP

As writers producing an early form of nineteenth century heroic writing, Byron and Carlyle create an assumed need for their respective heroes by an extensive use of the traits of "endorsement by nature" and "sincerity." While these writers confront the problems facing each hero in society, both Byron and Carlyle use the trait of nature, along with the trait of heroic sincerity, to describe the mission presented to each hero from a higher force. This early-to-mid nineteenth century attitude toward heroism has nature function as an inflexible, dictatorial force which has not only fated the hero to confront a problem, but which also offers the hero spiritual sustenance during his exertions.

Directed by nature to act, the hero in both the Byronic and Carlylian models answers to a force greater than any earthly power. While such a force seems majestically powerful and irresistibly enchanting, in both Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and Carlyle's On Heroes and Hero-Worship it has sufficient thrust to overshadow the social

traits which yield heroic worth, social propulsion and shared human responsibility. Thus this study pursues Byron and Carlyle as creators of heroic models who embody a traditional reliance upon nature as a power from on high in order to validate the need for each hero.

Byron's Harold, although not very productive as a hero to mankind, exemplifies the fate of a hero controlled by nature. Childe Harold carries ". . . on his faded brow curst Cain's unresting doom."[1] To study the "social propulsion" trait or thrust of such a hero is to see this trait over-shadowed by a mysterious edict of nature: The Childe is a damaged type. What _is_ heroic about such a hero in Byronic terms is the fight Harold wages against the reality of a cursed existence.

In the Addition to the Preface (To the First and Second Cantos) of _Childe Harold's Pilgrimage_ Byron states that Harold ". . . never was intended as an example, further than to show that early perversion of mind and morals leads to satiety of past pleasures and disappointment in new ones, . . ." and that only the excitements of ambition, not nature or travel, are not lost "on a soul so constituted or rather misdirected."[2] Thus, while coyly pretending that

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[1]Lord Byron, _Childe Harold's Pilgrimage_, Canto I, lxxxiii, l. 837, _The Complete Poetical Works of Byron_ (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1933), p. 17.

[2]Ibid., p. 2.

poor Harold is a non-exemplary type, Byron presents this "misdirected" though attractive hero as a fated type who must struggle in later life because of earlier actions.

Byron has set up for the reader those particular circumstances which are to delineate the need for Childe Harold to pursue his torturous journey in both the geographical and emotional spheres. At this point the observation of Peter Thorslev, Jr., seems germane since he lists Byron, Carlyle, Emerson and Nietzsche as "visionary writers" and "sensationalists" who "expressed their opinion in a manner definitely calculated to shock the unwary reader, . . ."[3] This view is echoed by G. Wilson Knight who comments on the thrust or propulsion which drives the Childe. Knight sees Harold's journey through the centuries as a tension between reverie and repugnance.[4] Such a view captures the quest of a troubled hero to find a self-definition somewhere on earth even though he must act against a problem decreed by nature.

Harold's personal problem, his noisome emotional wound, is further irritated by the behavior of mankind in general. Seeking personal nobility, he finds the world

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[3]Peter Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1962), p. 193.

[4]G. Wilson Knight, "The Two Eternities," in Byron, ed., Paul West (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 25.

rife with examples of human failing. This discovery on Harold's part forces him, somewhat reluctantly, to demonstrate the second heroic trait of "shared human responsibility." Once he does look beyond himself he is able to express his alienation from men ("But view'd them not with misanthropic hate.")[5]

Earlier in this Canto he has sarcastically asked the "sons of Spain" why they had not "saved your brethren ere they sank beneath/ Tyrants and tyrants' slaves."[6] And later he concludes that "new Utopias," or "little schemes of thought" might be used, "To teach man what he might be, or he ought, . . ." While he quickly concludes that probably man cannot "be taught,"[7] Harold has at least strongly indicated his role as leader and interpreter of history. As a world traveller and weary pilgrim in the society of men, Harold lets slip the frustrated observation: "I have not loved the world, nor the world me. . . ."[8] Yet he has prepared the reader for this attitude when he laments the sorrows of a shared human responsibility: "He who surpasses or subdues mankind,/ Must look down on the hate of those

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[5]Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto I, lxxxiv, l. 829, p. 17.

[6]Ibid., Canto I, xxxvii, l. 417-418, p. 10.

[7]Ibid., Canto II, xxxvi, l. 321-324, p. 25.

[8]Ibid., Canto III, cxiv, l. 1058-1061, p. 53.

below."[9] His description of "the moral of all human tales" is that of a progression of Freedom, Glory--eroding into "Wealth, vice, corruption--barbarism at last."[10] Thus the verdict of nature precludes any personal exertions by the hero.

The portrait of Harold which emerges is not that of a vigorous, glorious leader of men; rather Byron seems content to let Harold "pile on human heads the mountain of my curse."[11] The "curse shall be Forgiveness," Harold explains in the next stanza.[12] In the next stanza his anger registers disgust with man: "From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy/ Have I not seen what human things could do?"[13] What all of this vacillation indicates is the sheer frustration of a wise, world-damaged sage who wishes to bestow his wisdom on his fellows. Just when the attempt seems futile, Harold notes that he has "not lived in vain."[14] For him, shared human responsibility, involvement, does not come easily; he is constantly troubled by both his own cursed state and by the natural state of general stupidity all

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[9] Ibid., Canto III, xlv, l. 397-400, p. 42.

[10] Ibid., Canto IV, cvlll, l. 964-967, p. 71.

[11] Ibid., Canto IV, cxxxiv, l. 1206, p. 75.

[12] Ibid., Canto IV, cxxxv, l. 1207, p. 75.

[13] Ibid., Canto IV, cxxxvi, l. 1216-17, p. 75.

[14] Ibid., Canto IV, cxxxvii, l. 1225, p. 75.

about him. However, for all his problems, Harold demonstrates most emphatically a special sort of attitude toward shared human responsibility which corresponds to the stance of Carlyle's Great Man: Both of these earlier, British heroes--mostly different in vigor and social adjustment--must always stand above their constituents. While the Great Man tends to awe his followers and the Byronic Harold seems almost driven to nausea at the sight of people, both have built into their personalities a feeling of superiority.

This superiority must be underscored in order to appreciate the manner in which Emerson's own Representative Man deals with humanity. Additional observations of Byron and the subsequent study of Carlyle's Great Man demonstrate a certain shrill quality of presentation not to be found in Emerson. What does emerge from this study of traits is the observation that Byron and Carlyle tend to have difficulty with the propulsion catalyst and shared human responsibility of their heroes. Emerson does not. Byron and Carlyle force themselves into an exploitation of the "nature" and "sincerity" traits. Emerson uses these traits not as strident proofs of greatness, but rather as opportunities or calls to successful performances in the world of men.

Thus, one must now consider the way in which Byron exploits "nature" and heroic "sincerity." In this study of

traits, the traits themselves are of interest since they indicate the ability of each author to give a convincing rationale for the assumed necessity of each hero. And while there is no further need to pursue Emerson's attempt at this time, there does exist a need to recognize the peculiar practice of Byron and Carlyle to assume the necessity of heroes who have trouble propelling themselves as free agents and who must function with their constituents only in a superior capacity.

One gets a feeling for Harold's appeal to a higher force to determine the worth of the latter's life when the Childe speaks of "that within me" something unearthly which men do not understand and which will "breathe when I expire."[15] Such a reliance on one's myth-making powers likewise speaks badly of one as a real force in one's lifetime. Harold appeals to a sort of "nature" to further his legend and impact. Once again he wonders about his life, death and his followers. In a very telling passage he speaks of himself as a bearer of Good, as a victor over hatred. He muses over the attempt: ". . . let me not have worn/ This iron in my soul in vain--shall <u>they</u> not mourn?"[16]

Byron appears to assume the entire necessity for Harold on the latter's ability, once gone, to impress

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[15]Ibid., Canto IV, cxxxvii, l. 1228-1230, p. 75.

[16]Ibid., Canto IV, cxxxi, l. 1176-1179, p. 74.

mankind magically and mystically with his mission. Byron, more than either Carlyle or Emerson, fuses his hero's sincerity with the pure, higher forces of nature. This easy appeal to a "higher force" once more not only makes Harold a hero of grand tradition, but also disburdens him of the responsibility of proving the necessity of his propulsion motivation and human responsibility while it absolves him of any failures on a purely earthly level.

A balanced reading of the poem must consider the complex relationship that Harold has with nature. Nature does not simply function in the work as an inflexible minister of fate, but rather as a benevolent parent entrusted with Harold, a child with monumental problems.

> 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.[17]

What is of interest here is the comment that Harold is not "favour'd" by nature. Presumably, to be completely favored by Nature would lessen the need for Harold's venture into the world of men. However, Harold's final recourse to his mission as hero might be seen in the statement "I love not Man the less, but Nature more, . . ."[18] Such a statement indicates an acceptable solution to the

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[17] Ibid., Canto II, xxxvii, l. 325-328, p. 25.

[18] Ibid., Canto IV, clxxvii, l. 1598, p. 81.

problem of jumping into the affairs of men (propulsion motivation) while dealing with one's own problem. One can try; one can even contradict the author's preface and attempt a didactic exercise. Yet, if one is the Childe, then he can dazzle an audience, yank history from a silk hat with a flourish, profess his involvement with mankind, but still not quite convince the reader that such a heroic life has anything to do with the daily life of another.

Thomas Carlyle published On Heroes and Hero-Worship in 1840, twenty-two years after the appearance of the fourth and final Canto of Childe Harold. In his letter of July 2, 1840 to Emerson, Carlyle conveys the urgency with which the Heroes lectures were presented.

> I meant to tell them among other things that man was still alive, Nature not dead or like to die; that all true men continue to this hour, Odin himself true, and the Grand Lama of Thibet himself not wholly a lie.[19]

Such a forceful assumption of heroic necessity, at once more vigorous than the lamentable Harold's attempt, paradoxically must resort to the same traits of heroic naturalness and sincerity which marked the Byronic performance. For all of Carlyle's histrionic bravura, the series of lectures relies heavily upon the righteousness and cosmic demand for the Great Man. As in the case of Byron, the

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[19]Joseph Slater, ed., The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 274.

traits of propulsion catalyst and shared human responsibility are bolstered to the point of confusion by the assertion of heroic sincerity and endorsement by nature. On the very first page of this collection Carlyle states: "universal History is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked there."[20] Thus Carlyle has little problem thrusting his hero into action or introducing him to mankind. A justification of early pagan religions leads to the notion that nature is represented in man; thus to worship a great man is to celebrate, for the pagan, the great work of nature.[21] Carlyle's coverage of shared human responsibility can likewise be summed up by the assertion: "Society is founded on hero-worship. . . ."[22]

Carlyle's further observations not only offer sharp contrasts to Byron's Harold--these assertions, when understood as heroic traits, demonstrate a strong, shared attitude between the two English writers which belie any superficial differences in their respective heroes. When Carlyle points to the first thinker as the "beginner of all"[23] he is not only presenting a success-oriented hero

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[20]Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 1.

[21]Ibid., p. 14.

[22]Ibid., p. 15.

[23]Ibid., p. 45.

(contrary to Harold) but asserting the hero's contribution to mankind. Thus what appears quite interestingly throughout the lectures is a technique similar to Byron's approach. In both studies, the hero is given to mankind without much emphasis placed on the desire of the hero to appear or to the willingness of a constituency to share in the hero's work.

When in Lecture I Odin appears to awake "the slumbering capability of all into Thought,"[24] such an action, though quite majestic, does not allow Odin any decision to act and to share in the human pageant. Carlyle then engages in a discussion of the Norse religion which recognized "the divineness of Nature; sincere communion of man with the mysterious invisible Powers."[25] Thus Odin's performance is of the nature of a tropism or earthquake. Nature decided that its finest creation must act and Odin fills the order.

Likewise in Lecture II, "The Hero as Prophet," Carlyle stresses Mahomet's role as "one of those who cannot but be in <u>earnest</u>; whom Nature herself has appointed to be sincere."[26] And once more favoring the two traits of nature and sincerity over personal propulsion and human

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[24]Ibid., p. 28.

[25]Ibid., p. 38.

[26]Ibid., p. 71.

involvement, Carlyle establishes Mahomet's titanic stature which then propels the latter to despise the stale "formulas" which disguise the truth of nature.

Dante, in Lecture III, "The Hero as Poet," quite obviously establishes the heroic assumption of Carlyle, who states: "Let Nature send a Hero soul; in no age is it other than possible that he may be shaped into a Poet."[27] The grammatical usage of the passive rather than active voice of the verb "shape" reenforces the role of the Great Man as purely a product of nature. While such an endorsement--if accepted--appears quite impressive, the same statement does not picture the Great Man as self-propelled or as having any real involvement in the world.

William Shakespeare, the second Poet-hero gets the same treatment: "Nature at her own time, . . . sent him forth. . . ." "Priceless Shakespeare was the free gift of Nature. . . ."[28] For all his strident language and his eighteenth century penchant for capital letters, Carlyle presents strong heroes who, like Harold, are personally weak men. This weakness results from their lack of personal motivation and involvement as individuals. While Harold may shrink from men, his hand to his cursed brow, Carlyle's mannikins (for this is what he has made of dynamic

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[27]Ibid., p. 102.

[28]Ibid., p. 134.

individuals)[29] parade before mankind like mechanical giants riding on a flower festooned float.

Dante, as the Poet, led a sad life because, Carlyle states, he was "in earnest with the Universe though all others were but toying with it."[30] Carlyle also says of the Divine Comedy, "He must have been sincere about it too. . . ."[31] Once again, there are almost strains of Harold's lament, the sad song which cries of sincerity and the endorsement of nature in the face of earthly failure.

In Lecture IV, "The Hero as Priest," Carlyle displays a certain treatment of the propulsion trait and of the shared human responsibility trait which indicates his willingness, his determination to stretch the relationship between cause and effect. Luther receives praise, quite correctly, for Protestantism. Yet, Carlyle terms this movement as the "grand root from which our whole subsequent European History branches out."[32] Carlyle's further claims for the movement include English Puritanism and the French Revolution. Magnificent as these claims are in

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[29] John Kelman, Prophets of Yesterday (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), Kelman's verdict of Carlyle's subjective historical appraisal is that the author "unconsciously changes the facts themselves." P. 76.

[30] Carlyle, op. cit., p. 106.

[31] Ibid., p. 122.

[32] Ibid., p. 162.

themselves, they present Luther and other Protestant divines as a "voice from the unseen Heaven."[33]

Thus, any personal involvement in the affairs of men, any personal call to action, is superseded by a voice from on high. Once again Carlyle resorts to nature--not the maternal, fate-laden nature of Childe Harold, but nevertheless an equally all-powerful cosmic force which takes the initiative from the hero's grasp. The hero, states Carlyle, "appeals to Heaven's invisible justice against Earth's visible force";[34] and is able to see through mere "shows of things" and into their true reality. The observation of Bliss Perry that Carlyle's demand for sincerity appears in all of the latter's heroic models views each model as a variation of the same basic theme.[35] This theme stresses cosmic direction (nature) and sincerity as the complete explanation of the hero. It is mankind's role to cheer from the sidelines. Almost ironically, Carlyle poses the question: "If Hero means _sincere man_, why may not every one of us be a Hero?"[36]

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[33]Ibid., p. 151.

[34]Ibid., p. 153.

[35]Bliss Perry, _Thomas Carlyle_ (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1951), pp. 171-172.

[36]Carlyle, op. cit., p. 167.

The answer to such a question--if plausibly answerable--would form a bridge between hero and humanity. Yet, such a question is of a rhetorical type. A thorough reading of On Heroes convinces any heroic candidate that without some sort of call from heaven (nature) he cannot penetrate into the heart of reality. There is in Lecture V, the hint that the "Man of Letters," "the man of intellect at the top of affairs . . . ."[37] can reach men directly; yet Carlyle notes that this hero's life is "a piece of the everlasting heart of Nature herself." Dr. Johnson as a man of letters almost seems self-propelled in his desire to save men from "the boundless, bottomless abysses of Doubt."[38] However, Johnson's humanity, his personal thrust gets the Carlylian treatment: the author explains this hero's performance as perhaps the result of Johnson's personal suffering, a neat character-builder visited on the man by nature.

In the final heroic example, Lecture VI, "The Hero as King," Carlyle will overcome an initial attraction to Napoleon and finally will describe the warrior as a negative example of heroic kingship. This last lecture bears the important notation that the King Hero "may be reckoned the most

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[37] Ibid., p. 222.

[38] Ibid., p. 239.

important of Great Men."[39] Yet, though the hero has graduated to a bit more power, he operates on the same basic premise: This time it is a sincere Cromwell who trusts "in Heaven's goodness" to defend God's Gospel.[40] Carlyle's description of Cromwell and his followers as "armed Soldiers of Christ" fighting "a great black devouring world . . ."[41] gives further evidence of the recourse which Carlyle has to the traits of nature and sincerity. In a word, both traits spell divinity: Carlyle's hero once again need not be self-propelled nor linked with his fellows. Rather, Carlyle will make all the connections. The blackness or threat of the real world can be defeated only when men march in the God-like path of a Hero-King. Yet such a Hero-King, in his mission and righteousness, in his adherence to nature and sincerity, will himself be too God-like to walk with men and under his own power.

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[39] Ibid., p. 257.

[40] Ibid., p. 296.

[41] Ibid., p. 287.

CHAPTER III

THE REINTERPRETATION OF NATURE AS A GUIDE TO THE COMPOSITION OF EMERSON'S REPRESENTATIVE MEN

The contribution of Ralph Waldo Emerson to the field of heroic description creates a paradox when compared to the earlier efforts of Byron and Carlyle. At once, the Emersonian Representative Man is less "heroic," less dramatically the magnificent type prevailed upon to challenge the problems confronting his author. Yet, this new hero--if Emerson would allow such a term at all--lives as the embodiment of human potential, human possibility.

The problem or paradox grows in proportion to the degree of social involvement and shared human responsibility the Representative Man displays in his solutions to problems facing his fellows. In an old-fashioned sense, the Byronic, heroically-fated Harold and the Carlylian, heavenly cast Great Man are both finer, purer examples of humanly unattainable mandates and missions. Compared to either, the Representative Man runs the risk of seeming a mere striver, an overly motivated reformer with feet of clay.

Emerson ran the risk and succeeded in presenting a hero whom readers must accept or reject on the basis of merit. Such a hero, while diverging from the heroic tradition, can offer the enervating notion that every person has an heroic potential within which can only be claimed if exercised. This potential found in the Representative Man encourages the critical view of the Representative Man as a fine example of the heroic ideal translated into a democracy. However, after the student of the nineteenth century heroes admits the democratic interpretation of Emerson's Man, he is then fascinated by the way in which this softening of old values--this remolding into new values--takes place.

Throughout Representative Men there are examples of Emerson's casual treatment of titanic greatness. In fact, this study opened with the observation that the great man is "a bore at last." A compendium of such statements could be recorded to make the point that Emerson, the democrat, reduced the Great One a peg or two and only then could install this humbled figure in Yankee New England. However, such an approach would not do justice to the approach used by Emerson to create a new hero for his society and not simply a European pretender clothed in homespun. Emerson faced the dual problems of the anti-intellectual materialism of nineteenth century American

society and the aristocratic intellectuals of his neighbors, the Boston Brahmins, a privileged class which could not appreciate American greatness outside of its ranks.

As an intellectual he could find no immediate link with the Jacksonian Mob; as a transcendental thinker neither could he celebrate the patrician employers who exploited that same Mob.[1] A facile importation of a European style heroic titan would only score as a social fairy tale, a backward wistful glance at a certain medievalism which very heavily stamped Childe Harold and the Great Man.

In "Emerson as Democrat," originally published in Men of Good Hope, Daniel Aaron states the quandry of educated thinkers like Emerson who castigated their own privileged, college-educated class for social crimes perpetrated on a working class about whom the reformers knew very little.[2] Emerson and other intellectuals with a social conscience felt guilty about the benefits of their

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[1]Perry Miller, in "Emersonian Genius and the American Democracy," notes the discomforture of a transcendental thinker caught between his own genteel rearing and his intellectual responsibility to recognize the worth of all men regardless of rank. Found in Konvitz and Whicher, eds., Emerson (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), pp. 73-74, originally published in The New England Quarterly, Vol. XXVI, no. 1 (March, 1953), pp. 27-44.

[2]Daniel Aaron, "Emerson and Democrat," found in Carl Bode, ed., Ralph Waldo Emerson (New York: Hill & Wang, 1968), p. 170; originally published in Men of Good Hope (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

rank, because they knew of no way to live outside of that caste.

Emerson's solution to such a pair of problems--his own social tendencies and the unattractiveness of the masses--pushed him toward a new definition of the heroic. He had to discover and publish a heroism to suit his time and his mind. This new heroism can be fully appreciated when studied in light of the same process as the earlier Byronic or Carlylian types were studied. The four heroic traits presented in Chapter I were, until now, recognitions of the earlier writers' mutual tendency to defend a hero in such fundamental terms as "closeness to nature" or "sincerity." Social motivation and shared human responsibility could always be waived by the British writers since their heroes needed no performance rating to justify an heroic mission.

The very conflict of social identity in which Emerson found himself trapped led this American away from titular heroes, titans of an author's Divine Right of composition. For Emerson and for his stated belief in the capacities inherent in all men, the new Man must not simply have a value but must perform a valuable function. Grammatically put, the Childe Harold and the Great Man could simply exist in the simple "to be" or copulative verb sense; the Emersonian man must function as an action verb, a doer

capable of demonstrating his worth and recognition.

Once new attention is paid the four traits used to outline the attempts of Byron and Carlyle, the reader can witness the methods by which Emerson redefines the very makeup of traditional heroism. Aside from the new emphasis placed on the heroic traits of motivation and shared human responsibility, Emerson also presents a new interpretation of nature and sincerity. Sherman Paul offers a clue to the Emersonian view of nature from which the transcendental thinker could celebrate the potential in all men. Paul discusses the character of the Spheral Man, or full man discussed by Plato in his Symposium. He notes how Emerson acknowledged the impossibility of such a well-rounded actual man and then settled for a literarily drawn composite. Emerson was able to see "greatness" as what Paul calls "the natural tendency in man." This greatness is said to stand for "completeness"--the rounding out of one's potential toward the goal of spheral man.[3]

George Willis Cooke, in an early study, Ralph Waldo Emerson, shows that among other lessons learned from Plato, Emerson adopted the theory of "the scale of the mind, or that life ranges in stages one above the other, each reflecting the one above it; and that man has come up from the

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[3]Paul Sherman, Emerson's Angle of Vision (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 168.

lower orders of life in the self-evolving ascent of spirit."[4]

Thus this germinal Platonic idea helps to explain the possibility of individual growth and the rise of the best man, the Representative Man. While not a democratic theory in itself, such belief in the potential growth and betterment of the race can be interpreted--as Emerson did--as a democratic phenomenon: Each man possesses the germinal claim to greatness; the Representative Man is he who uses his potential and thereby offers to other men the best example of realized human potential. Such a "democratic" view could be posited only after fundamental reinterpretation of the role of nature in heroic description. For Emerson, nature is a starting point, the springboard from which a person may or may not move toward heroic proportions.

As was stated at the outset of this chapter, Emerson's new interpretations offer a hero who is both more and less than his predecessors. The Emersonian man must be more only through personal exertion; Harold and the Carlylian Great Man could use nature either as a maternal force or as a thinly veiled will of God. In reference to this newer view of nature, there is an irony afoot in Lecture II of Representative Men. If Emerson has borrowed the Spheral

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[4]George Willis Cooke, Ralph Waldo Emerson (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1882), p. 273.

Man notion from Plato, he is also quick to note the failure of Plato's system: "No power of genius has ever yet had the smallest success in explaining existence."[5] In one sense, nature is so important a force that Emerson cannot conceive of anyone's complete understanding or interpretation of so large a force. Yet, Emerson saves nature to serve as no man's private preserve so that each man may strive for his own development.

So insistent is Emerson's redefinition of nature that in the second paragraph of his first lecture, "Uses of Great Men," he announces: "Nature seems to exist for the excellent. The world is upheld by the veracity of good men: they make the earth wholesome."[6] Emerson here speaks of "good" men and he has them making a better world. Here is the first strong clue of Emerson's ability to draw a democratic hero capable of working with and improving upon nature.[7] While such a hero does not share the epic relationship with nature so common to Childe Harold or the Great Man, he does have a certain ease, a more polished

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[5]Ralph Waldo Emerson, Representative Men (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), p. 78.

[6]Ibid., p. 3.

[7]John Q. Anderson, The Liberating Gods (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Missouri Press, 1971), here substantiates this new view of nature with the observation that Emerson's "complete man" has such well developed spiritual and mental faculties "that he is able to employ to the fullest the potentialities of his soul." P. 17.

confidence in accepting nature not as a destiny but as an opportunity. Even while Emerson might fault Plato's system when that system attempts a full explanation of existence, the New Englander is ready, always, to view nature as a fit point of departure for man's speculations: "Nature is good, but intellect is better: as the law-giver is before the law-receiver." Emerson then encourages all men ("O sons of men!") "that we have hope to search out what might be the very self of everything."[8]

Such a striving activity is also found in Emerson's re-evaluation of Plato: The Greek becomes an example of Spheral Man, "who could apply to nature the whole scale of the senses. . . ." Thus each of Plato's words "becomes an exponent of nature."[9] Yet this nature is neither a maternal force nor a mandate from God; nature for Plato is a beginning from which the philosopher tries to lead men to truth. Likewise, Plato's sincerity is described in terms of "a native reverence for justice and honor, and a humanity which makes him tender for the superstitions of the people."[10]

Although the full implications of Emerson's meaning might be lost in the sweep of rhetoric, a careful rereading shows that Emerson can make the Representative Man more

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[8]Emerson, Representative Men, p. 63.

[9]Ibid., p. 82.

[10]Ibid., p. 58.

"democratic" by changing the fundamental virtues of endorsement by nature and sincerity into working virtues. In this general topic, Emerson's democracy will always remain something of a two-edged problem. On one side there are obvious cases--later discussed--in which the social traits of social propulsion and shared human responsibility become glaringly different from the performance of Childe Harold or the Great Man. Yet, the other side of the problem, the far sharper edge, must deal with the <u>way</u> in which such a transition or added involvement takes place. To say that the Representative Man moves out into society or is a "man of the people" with special talents begs the question.

The crucial test of Emerson's achievement is found in his ability to maintain an heroic posture for his hero and to make the hero involved with society. A more shallow mind could have merely made his hero more "social"; Emerson faced the challenge by redefining the basic traits of nature and sincerity which were presented as fixed factors by Byron and Carlyle.

Frederic Ives Carpenter describes the Emersonian Man as a striver who is able to show "correspondence" or relationship "between the ideal and the real: the great man is a kind of demi-god who relates man to God by realizing some of the god-like potentialities inherent in all man."[11]

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[11]Frederic Ives Carpenter, <u>Emerson Handbook</u> (New York: Hendricks House, Inc., 1953), p. 63.

Once more there is the inference that Emerson has presented his readers a working hero, a performer who must act for the better interests of his society. The fundamental traits are to serve the social traits.

The section on Swedenborg, Lecture 3, repeats the same process found in the discourse on Plato. Swedenborg does have his faults: he is "retrospective" in Emerson's view, while a more desirable type "invites us onward."[12] Quite interestingly Emerson in the same paragraph describes Swedenborg's inability to rise to "pure genius" in terms of nature. Emerson speaks of "the umbilical cord which held him to nature" and which the mystic could not rend. Such a view of nature is a far cry from the maternal nature of Harold and the divinely-cast nature of the Great Man.

Emerson's redefinition of sincerity is also apparent in Lecture IV, "Montaigne, On the Skeptic" in which he creates an internal monologue to describe the human strength of an honest skeptic. "But I see, plainly, he says, that I cannot see. I know that human strength is not in extremes, but in avoiding extremes." And with such a resolution, Emerson's Montaigne decides to "shun weakness of philosophizing beyond my depth."[13] After the Carlylian recourse to God-Nature to speak for the sincerity of the Great Man and

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[12] Emerson, Representative Men, p. 143.

[13] Ibid., p. 158.

the assertion that the Childe is sincerely telling his tale, the appearance of such a Representative Man is refreshing.

Such a statement is more than honest; it is liberating in the way in which it allows the Emersonian men to act as men, honest men, in their improvement of the human condition. Lecture V, "Shakespeare; Or the Poet" likewise contains similar Emersonian appraisals which rescue heroism from the tyranny of destiny. Emerson depicts a creative being always in control of his material: "He is not reduced to dismount and walk because his horses [poetry] are running off with him in some distant direction: he always rides."[14] Emerson is also ready to blame Shakespeare for the playwright's inability to see in earthly things "a second and finer harvest to the mind."[15] Emerson concludes this lecture with the observation that the "world still wants its poet-priest,"[16] a being superior to Shakespeare and Swedenborg. Such an observation was bound to draw and did draw fire from Carlyle who could not understand the seemingly unheroic description of Emerson's Men.[17] Yet this

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[14]Ibid., p. 215.

[15]Ibid., p. 217.

[16]Ibid., p. 219.

[17]In a July 19, 1850 letter to Emerson from Chelsea, London, Carlyle comments on his dissatisfaction with Emerson's final remarks on each Representative Man: "--in fact, I generally dissented a little about the end of all these Essays; which was notable, and not without instructive interest

tendency in Emerson to limit the innate importance of each man enables all of Emerson's Men and all men everywhere the license to seek their own excellence.

Even, by Lecture VI, "Napoleon: Or the Man of the World," Emerson cannot lavish an easy sincerity on this Man. "Bonaparte was singularly destitute of generous sentiments."[18] What traits Emerson does praise are the involvement and shared human responsibility of Napoleon. Once more, Emerson will not readily try to depict heroism as "natural" nor the proper result of "sincerity." Emerson repeatedly frees his men from such heroically traditional values in order to celebrate human performance in the world. Emerson's men succeed almost in spite of a lack of pure perfection. They have their faults, but these faults tend to strike a common chord in all men and this shared humanity makes the Representative Men successful. "His [Napoleon's] grand weapon, namely the millions whom he directed, he owed to the representative character which clothed him."[19]

Emerson particularizes praise of Napoleon by mentioning the shared humanity with which the leader inspired

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to me, as I had so lustily shouted "Hear, hear!" all the way from the beginning up to that stage.--" In Charles Eliot Norton, ed., The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson 1834-1872, Vol. II (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1883), pp. 188-189.

[18] Emerson, Representative Men, p. 253.

[19] Ibid., p. 240.

men. "He filled the troops with his spirit, and a sort of freedom and companionship grew up between him and them, which the forms of his court never permitted between the officers and himself.[20] The critic Josephine Miller finds that of Emerson's six Men, "no one a hero or even a heroic type," all may be "villains as well as heroes" in order to be representative. Miller cites Emerson's beliefs in "aspiring men; of negative as well as positive quality."[21]

In Lecture VII, "Goethe; Or the Writer," Emerson leaves the practical Napoleon and appears to float into an overly lofty statement regarding the bond between nature and the writer. While at first reading, the beginning of the lecture tends to sound a bit too much like Carlyle, a second reading yields the realization that for Emerson nature can record itself, but man can make a better rendition of the record. Emerson notes how nature's "self-registration is incessant . . . ," yet he introduces his necessary agent: "But nature strives upward; and, in man, the report is something more than print of the seal. It is a new an finer form of the original."[22]

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[20]Ibid., p. 241.

[21]Josephine Miller, Ralph Waldo Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1964), p. 14.

[22]Emerson, Representative Men, p. 262.

While Emerson characterizes Goethe as too "fragmentary," too digressive in "his observations from a hundred sides"[23] the American also links him to Napoleon as two "representatives of the impatience and reaction of nature against the morgue of conventions-- . . .,"[24] individuals who challenge when lesser minds accept blindly. Emerson concludes his remarks on Goethe with the observations that Goethe "teaches courage" and that "the disadvantages of any epoch exist only to the faint-hearted."[25]

In the final lines of this last lecture, Emerson makes a declaration of human potential and shared human responsibility that encourages all men to aspire to greater levels of social involvement and of shared human responsibility. Emerson tells his listener: "The world is young: the former great men call to us affectionately. We too must write Bibles, to unite again the heavens and the earthly world."[26] Such an exortation "to realize all that we know"[27] rings a hopeful note for those listeners who, convinced by this new form of heroism, are able "to honor every truth by

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[23]Ibid., p. 287.

[24]Ibid., p. 289.

[25]Iibd., p. 290.

[26]Ibid., p. 290.

[27]Ibid.

use"[28] and to realize that truth is not given to mankind by nature. Rather, the truth of Emerson's wisdom demands of those future Men the desire and courage to reach with their minds and hands into those recessed regions of nature where the truth they discover will serve and represent their grateful populace.

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[28] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The very novelty of Emerson's approach to heroic literature seems almost predictable in light of this thinker's adherence to personal originality. In retrospect, the reader views a man who tells and encourages each person to "write Bibles." And if Ralph Waldo Emerson has no qualms about using such venerable terminology to make his point about human existence, how could he dare accept the traditional views of heroism presented by two earlier writers of the same century? The answer to such a question does not fault Emerson for any perversity in daring to be different simply to be different. Emerson supplied his own answer to the need for a new hero by his own need for a new method for judging man and men in his century.

And while his reinterpretation of the fundamental heroic traits of endorsement by nature and sincerity proves exciting, he did not have to redescribe these factors if his simple intention was to make his hero "more democratic." In fact, the democracy of his hero is really secondary, an ancillary by-product of his view of nature. The hypothetical importation of Carlyle's Great Man or Byron's Childe Harold to American soil could be effected, however

illogically, by any glib hack capable of writing more social motivation and shared human responsibility into either hero. Stilted as they might appear, these traditional heroes could be softened by greater social interaction with their fellows.

However, Emerson would not import an imperious Great Man or a melancholic Harold and could not change them here or there to seem more democratic. Emerson went deeper, plunged into the basis of his own concept of heroism and was forced to write from his belief in human potential. This potential could not really rise to heroic stature if its status were already defined by traditional concepts of heroic nature. Thus, a redefinition of nature--or rather an original Emersonian definition of nature--served to create a type of hero whose primary challenge was internal: He must push himself, know himself and his milieu soundly enough, before he is able to give his constituents philosophy, skepticism, military victories, plays, poems or whatever.

In contrast to the earlier heroic type, the Representative Man is poised toward the creation of future Men. He is not morbidly involved with the conquest of one dragon, but is rather fascinated with the possibility of new dragons not yet even foreseen by other men. Finally, because of Emerson's reappraisal of the fundamental heroic traits of nature and sincerity, the Representative Man is better able

to serve his people and to demonstrate his genuine motivation and his naturally induced responsibility toward his fellows. While the grandeur and austerity found in Harold and the Great Man are lacking in the Representative Man, this newer interpretation of human excellence has been freed from the demands of traditional heroic nature and can be of use not to a romantically heroic past galley of titans, but to an optimistically poised nation of potentially representative candidates.

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