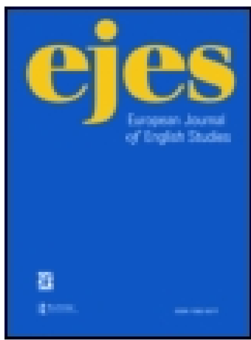

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Imaginative Geographies Disrupted? Representing the Other in English Romantic Drama

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Writing about 'imaginative geography and its representations', Edward Said noticed 'an analogy' between drama, 'whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries' of the world and 'the learned envelope of Orientalist scholarship'. Both poetry and knowledge aim 'to hold in the vast, Asiatic sprawl for sometimes sympathetic but always dominating scrutiny'. In European art and scholarship the Orient is 'a locale suitable for incarnating the infinite in a finite shape', and 'the idea of its representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is a stage on which the whole East is represented'. In other words, the Orient is both the theatrical representation of the East and the imaginary space in which the latter is represented. Assimilating the boundless Other, the mysterious, unfathomable East, in the form of representative 'figures' – a 'cultural repertoire' including figures of speech as well as maps, schemes and literary characters – means also confining it to 'a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe'.[1]

This theatrical representation assimilates the Other, giving it a distinct place in the Western value order. The Other is depicted both as a failure of the Christian myth (incarnation of the Spirit in human flesh) and as a failure of mimesis: 'the Orient and the Oriental, Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese or whatever, become *pseudoincarnations* of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West) they were supposed to have been *imitating*'.[2] It is precisely this double break – with the Divine Origin (the Other is a mere simulacrum, not an incarnation of the Original) and with the art of imitation (as a distinctive human feature and a source of knowledge, power and pleasure) – that opens the site for the imaginary representation or rather recreation of the Other.

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[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism* [1978] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 49, 57, 63.
[2] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 62.

A specific feature of many English Romantic dramas is the liminal nature of this site and its representative figures, and this liminality accounts for a significant modification of the above pattern. An emphasis is put on the boundary between the Same and the Other, which often determines the dramatic characters and conflict. This boundary separates the Occident and the East (as in Wordsworth's *The Borderers* or Coleridge's *Osorio*), the social order and revolution (also in the latter plays), the State and Nature (in Byron's *The Two Foscari*), the Earth and the Universe, the Cosmos and Chaos (in Byron's *Manfred*, *Cain* and *Heaven and Earth*), as well as centralized power and 'a multiple and mobile field of force'[3] which, in Byron's *Werner*, replaces the privileges of law, prohibition and sovereignty. And in all these dramas, the assimilation and re-creation of the Other is not accomplished, revealing a failure of the traditional system of theatrical representation.

A similar failure may be registered in the case of traditional Western representations of historical time featuring in English Romantic dramas. Since the Renaissance, the figure of history as *theatrum mundi*, a site on which past events can teach a viewer to live by their self-evidence, has been an instrument of the homogenization of experience in a specific 'field of visibility'[4] and in a distinct temporal regime. Viewing representations of past events amounts to taking a moral lesson which can help an observer to establish continuity between generations, avoid ancestral errors and act wisely in the present. This 'specular' figure (the metaphor of the theatre as a mirror of true knowledge held up to nature or to an age) has been an important pattern of fashioning individual and collective identities and opening perspectives into the future.

In most English Romantic dramas, the figure of *theatrum mundi* is affected by subversive action. For instance, in Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (1796) the specularity of *theatrum mundi* is disrupted and the moral meaning of this figure perverted.[5] This reveals the Other not only as a boundless, unimaginable and uncontrollable space, but also as a specific form of temporality, a discontinuity of time making the action meaning-

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[3] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1978), I, 102.

[4] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 200 ff.

[5] In *The Borderers* Oswald (Rivers) tries to understand (and justify) his past by making his young friend Marmaduke (Mortimer) act out his atrocious crime: 'the mind of man, upturned, / Is in all natures a strange spectacle' (ll. 1168-69); 'I saw / In you a mirror of my youthful self; / I would have made us equal once again' (ll. 1864–66). *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), pp. 58, 71.

less and suffering limitless.[6] In the later version of Coleridge's *Osorio* (1797), entitled *Remorse* and produced in 1813, the figure of *theatrum mundi* is replaced by the metaphor of the optical lens focusing on images of past events. Nonetheless, this modernized trope is still grafted on to a traditional teleological representation of time as a revelation of Truth ('Veritas Filia Temporis').[7] Thus, while in *Osorio* the specularity of *theatrum mundi* is finally disrupted by the figures of ethnic otherness (Alhadra and the Moors), giving way to revolutionary violence, in *Remorse*, the ethnic conflict is averted and the moral meaning of the figure is re-established by means of Divine Authority and Justice.[8]

In addition to the spatial and temporal figures of the boundary, the Other in English Romantic dramas may be represented as a power exerting a strong attraction and demanding an active response. To invoke once more the analogy with the Orient: according to Disraeli's novel *Tancred* (1847), the East is a career. Yet, in contrast to Said's interpretation of this *dictum* emphasizing the attraction of the imaginary place – 'something bright young Westerners would find an all-consuming passion'[9] – English Romantic dramas focus on the hero's action as a permanent and frequently futile struggle to control and dominate the Other. Thus, the representations of otherness in *The Borderers* are distinctly related to the 'Orient-as-

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[6] See Wordsworth, *The Borderers*: 'deep and vast, beyond human thought' (l. 1467), and 'Action is transitory, a step, a blow – / The motion of a muscle – this way or that – / 'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy / We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed: / Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark, / And shares the nature of infinity' (ll. 1539–44). *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, p. 65.

[7] See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Remorse*: 'Time, as it courses onward, still unrolls / The volume of concealment. In the future / As in the optician's glassy cylinder, / The indistinguishable blots and colours / Of the dim past collect and shape themselves, / Upstarting in their own completed image / To scare or to reward' (II.ii.9-15). *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), II, 841.

[8] Coleridge's *Osorio* is concluded by the revolutionary speech of the Moorish woman Alhadra, according to which the violence of the oppressed is 'wisely' 'ordain'd' by 'Heaven' as a 'cure' for the 'extremes' of repression. The ongoing revolutionary struggle will destroy the 'temples' and 'mountainous towers' of 'cruel men' and 'desolation' will seem 'a beautiful thing' (*Osorio*, V.307–21, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 596–7). Contrary to the earlier version, *Remorse* is concluded by the renewal of Divine Order effected by the Conscience as a half-unconscious internal power: 'In these strange dread events / Just Heaven instructs us with an awful voice, / That Conscience rules us e'en against our choice' (*Remorse*, V.i.286–88, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 881).

[9] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

career'.[10] The appearance and actions of Albert, the main hero of *Osorio*, are connected with the Orient and partially determined by his physical resemblance to the cultural Other.[11] The action of the eponymous hero of Byron's *Manfred* (1817) is governed by his guilt for the death of Astarte, whose name, associating the Assyrian, Babylonian and Phoenician goddesses of fertility, symbolizes the East.

All this seems to indicate that space in English Romantic drama functions as a field for the deployment of power which is 'exercised from innumerable points in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations'.[12] This interplay may reveal, as in the case of *The Borderers*, *Osorio*, *Manfred* or *Cain* (1821), a fundamental failure to incorporate the hero's action as well as the representations of the Other into the system of general moral assumptions. For instance, the interrelationship between the enunciative field and action in *The Borderers* cannot be comprehended as 'a specular mechanism of moral discourse that would enable the hero – along with anyone seeing the play – to recognize his own absolute freedom to act'.[13] Although many Romantic plays may be described as 'closet dramas', and thus standing in a critical relation to the representational possibilities of traditional theatre,[14] I wish to suggest that their texts do not have to be understood merely as suited for reading: they can be staged if their dramatic action is performed as a specific deployment of power which unsettles conventional notions of space, the characters' purposive actions and accepted moral principles.

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[10] In Wordsworth's *The Borderers*, Oswald, who committed a crime on his way to Syria, persuades Marmaduke: 'Let us to Palestine; / This is a paltry field for enterprise' (ll. 2282–83). During his stay in Palestine Oswald comes to the conclusion that 'Every possible shape of action / Might lead to good' and thirsts for 'some of those exploits that fill / The earth for sure redemption of lost peace' (ll. 1781–84). *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, pp. 77, 69. The utopian ideology of freedom and peace for all mankind invented by Oswald in the Orient is in sharp contrast with his criminal action, whose motives can also be traced to the Orient. The Other is thus revealed both in the form of discourse and in the form of alienated action.

[11] Albert (Alvar in *Remorse*), who used to protect the persecuted Moors in the domain of his father Velez (Valdez), returns after a long absence (allegedly in the Orient) in disguise and is mistaken for 'some Moresco chieftain / Who hides himself among the Alpuxarras' (*Osorio*, I.252, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 529). The actual cause of Albert's absence was fighting the Catholics (led by the Spanish Duke of Alva or Alba) on the side of the Dutch Protestants. In his fight Albert is accompanied by a Moor called Maurice (Zulimez in *Remorse*). Albert's 'Eastern career' combines the Protestant cause and the love of the Moors.

[12] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 94.

[13] William Jewett, 'Action in *The Borderers*', *Studies in Romanticism* 27 (1988), 399–410, p. 405.

[14] According to William Jewett, *The Borderers* is 'a closet drama, a text meant in part to provide a critical perspective on the way in which traditional theater allows free agency to be read off appearances' ('Action in *The Borderers*', p. 408).

More than in other dramas, the spaces in English Romantic plays can be understood as Foucauldian 'heterotopias' drawing together geographical spaces, discursive formations of cultures, the empirical spaces of individuals, and virtual spaces created by dramatic illusion. Foucault shows that, on stage, heterotopias juxtapose within one real space 'several sites that are in themselves incompatible or foreign to one another'.[15] Because of this juxtaposition the Other does not have to be staged as a distinct allegorical or symbolic figure but as a deployment of power threatening or disrupting the homogeneous spatio-temporal order and value system. For instance in *Osorio,* the cultural otherness of Albert's disguise and of his dwelling place ('The Giant's Cradle') is juxtaposed with a fantastic ritual empowering individual imaginations (in Act III), wild natural sceneries and the episode of the Moorish revolt against Spanish oppression. And the Other cannot be located in any of these spaces: it is a 'multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various strategies'.[16]

However, the heterotopic character of otherness in English Romantic dramas should not be interpreted only in analytical and critical terms. Rather, these dramas can be seen as moments of fascination by the new forms and functions of power related to the 'deployment of sexuality' and, in most cases, as acts of resistance against them. Foucault has shown that the new 'bio-power' was no longer located in the absolute privilege of a ruler to decide about the life or death of his subjects, but it rather consisted in a different form of subjection: 'the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life'. The effect of this transformation of power structures is profound: 'for the first time in history … biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living … passed into … power's field of intervention'.[17]

It can be argued that this new power and its structures inform the representations of the Other in English Romantic dramas. While the plays of the early Romantics – such as *The Borderers* and *Osorio* – reveal a fascination with the collapse of the old power based on laws, authority and privilege, Byron's plays, especially *Marino Faliero* (1820), *The Two Foscari* (1821), *Sardanapalus* (1821) and *Werner* (1822) represent the Other as various 'matrices of transformation'[18] responsible for the working of power as 'a way in which certain actions modify others'.[19]

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[15] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16 (1986) 21–27, p. 25.

[16] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 100.

[17] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 140, 142.

[18] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 99.

[19] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and the Power' in Robert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 219.

Despite this difference, most plays analysed in this article deal with the otherness implied in the crucial transformation of older forms of power in the act of transgression, which Foucault interprets as the death of god[20] and the manifestation of sovereignty as 'an unlimited right of all-powerful monstrosity'.[21] In many of these texts, the Other is represented as 'parricide'[22] – both the criminal and the crime against the sanctity of religious, filial or fraternal relations[23] or significantly, against the power of the state.[24] According to Foucault, the death of god does not return us to a delimited and positive world, but to a world that is being disentangled in the experience of a limit, a world that shapes and dissolves itself in the excess of crossing this limit.[25] This space of transgression is no longer organized around the central subject, and the latter's dominant role is now taken over by discourse. This is especially true of the power of rhetoric in *The Borderers* which fills up the empty theatre space, the 'bleak Waste'

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[20] See Michel Foucault, 'Préface à la transgression' [1963] in *Dits et écrits 1954–1988 par Michel Foucault*, eds. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 751–69.

[21] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 149.

[22] Alluding to Plato's *Sophist*, Jacques Derrida shows that the figure of 'parricide' is 'a frightening decision' which amounts to 'disruptive intrusion of otherness and non-being, non-being as the other in the unity of being'. 'Plato's Pharmacy' in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 163–164. Derrida's essay explores the links between 'pharmakon', the metaphor of the ambivalent power of rhetoric and writing, 'parricide' and 'scapegoat'. This relationship informs the ambivalent representations of the Other in *The Borderers* and *Werner*.

[23] In *The Borderers*, the old, blind Herbert is called 'Parricide' (l. 895, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, p. 53) because of an invented crime against paternal love and authority ascribed to him by Oswald (educating orphan girls as his daughters only to sell them as concubines to a feudal lord: in other words, de Sade's 'transition from "sanguinity" to "sexuality"': Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 148). The term 'parricide' may also refer to the killing of the old man represented as a powerful symbol of sacred patriarchal authority. Fratricide in Coleridge's *Osorio* and Byron's *Cain* is connected with the crime against God as sovereign power: Osorio is called by Albert a 'self-created God' (III.i.95, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, p. 553) and Cain, in killing Abel, refers to God, as a monstrous, bloodthirsty tyrant: 'thy God loves blood! – then look to it: – / Give way, ere he hath *more*!' (III.i.310-11). However, almost simultaneously he describes God as someone who 'loves lives' (III.i.316). In this way God in *Cain* has the attributes of the old, sovereign power over life and death. *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980–93), VI, 286, 287.

[24] In *Marino Faliero* (in Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, IV, 299–446) 'parricide', a crime that 'had neither name nor thought' in Ancient Rome, is defined on the basis of the father-son relationship which is, symptomatically, inverted. The State is the 'father' of the ruler: 'As sons against princes, and princes 'gainst their realms' (V.i.187, 189, 191, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, IV, 420). In *Werner*, the term 'parricide' refers to killing the hero's remote relative, Baron Stralenheim, who uses state power for his own purposes.

[25] See Michel Foucault, 'Préface à la transgression', p. 754.

of ‘a desolate Moor’.[26] Oswald’s powerful talk of ‘Justice’ and ‘Parricide’ replaces the authority of the Law based on the ‘the Almighty Wisdom’ and ‘All-seeing God’, a common ground of judgement (‘All gathered to the spot’), reliable evidence (given by eye-witnesses) and the will to prevent the crime.[27]

In contrast to *The Borderers*, where the representations of the Other result from the power of rhetoric and discursive language,[28] in Coleridge’s *Osorio* the power of rhetoric is enhanced and partially replaced by the power of representations. The pictures play an important role in the plot as proofs of identity which either do not consist in resemblance (Maria is able to identify Albert in his Moorish disguise only when he produces *her* portrait), or whose resemblance to actual events is misleading (as in the painting of Albert’s assassination). The representations in *Osorio* may be said to function as simulacra or phantasms based on the play of the absent event (fratricide) and its repetition (the assassination of Albert prepared by Osorio, the picture of this scene, the ceremony which reveals this picture). As Foucault points out in his review of Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, the theatrical representation of a phantasm in thought amounts to a phantasmatic repetition of an absent

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26 Wordsworth, *The Borderers*, l. 1388 and stage direction after l. 1141, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, pp. 62, 58. The Moor is characterized by two traits, symbolizing the downfall of the old power: the corruption of feudal authority (the ruined castle is represented as a former scene of Lord Clifford’s orgies) and the absence of piety and religion (the bell of the ruined chapel rings in the gusts of tempestuous wind).

27 Wordsworth, *The Borderers*, ll. 1117, 1391 and l. 1122, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, pp. 58, 62. According to David Marshall ‘[t]he text of the play makes it clear that the deaths of the captain and Herbert are caused not by an act of murder … but rather by a failure to assist, a failure to give any aid’. The emphasis on the here-and-now of the represented action ‘implicates the audience in the scene of the crime’ and indicates the spectators’ complicity with the represented crimes. See David Marshall, ‘The Eye-Witnesses of *The Borderers*’, *Studies in Romanticism* 27 (1988), 391-98, pp. 395–96. See also Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth’s Poetry 1787–1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 130. Moreover, Marshall points out the function of stage in *The Borderers* as the general field of visibility, integrating the perspective of the characters with that of the audience – ‘nowhere upon earth is place so fit / To look upon the deed’ (ll. 656–57, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, p. 49) – but also shows that this general visibility does not create an order which could allow to make reliable distinctions between the true and the false, right and wrong, reality and appearance.

28 The ‘last device’ by which Oswald hopes to manipulate Marmaduke is a typical figure of Enlightenment rationality, a discourse based on diagram in the form of a table (‘a scale and table of belief’, l. 1147, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, p. 58). This discourse differs from the ordinary language of scientific rationality constituting by means of ‘Demonstration’ the ‘spiritless shape of fact’ (ll. 1157, 1158, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, p. 58) by using a different ‘unit’ – ‘passion’ (l. 1152, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, p. 58).

event. In this way a specific, quasi-corporeal, network of relationships is being formed.[29] For instance, Albert's dwelling place, 'The Giant's Cradle', is described in terms of the reflections formed by the landscape on the water surface: while 'a kind of faery forest' grows '[d]own in the water', the waterfall is transformed into 'a wreath of smoke' curling '[u]p through the foliage of those faery trees'.[30] The network of phantasmatic relationships is created especially in one of the crucial scenes of the play, in the performance of a magic ceremony designed by Osorio to convince Maria of Albert's death, and thus to break her resistance to marriage. Coleridge's note in one of the manuscript versions of the play (MS II) is quite telling: 'A scene of magic is introduced in which no single person on the stage has the least faith – all, though in different ways, think or know it to be a *trick* –'.[31] The relations between phantasms and simulacra lead also to the murder of the former Moorish chieftain Ferdinand (Isidore in *Remorse*), which causes a revolt of the Moors once more based on the phantasmatic identification of its leader, Ferdinand's wife Alhadra, with the 'divine' powers of despair and revenge.

By contrast, the representations of the Other in Byron's Venetian plays are not based on the spatio-temporal effects of rhetorical figures or images, phantasms and simulacra. The conflict in *Marino Faliero* is a clash between the authority of a sovereign and the modern state power that shapes individuals as subjects and objectifies them by 'dividing practices'.[32] This form of modern power provokes the resistance of the lower classes against oppression and exploitation, but the Doge's response is different: it consists in the search for an independent subjectivity which, after the failure of the revolt, ends in yielding to the otherness of eternity and the elements. As a result, in *Marino Faliero*, the represented Other is split between the powers of nature and the modern state power imagined as a dangerous, deadly phantasm, 'this spectre / Which must be exorcised with blood'.[33] The representations of Venice as a decaying republic, a successor of the Roman Empire and a spectral or theatrical space of civilization enclosed by 'the great element' of the Ocean (and the Universe)[34] are attempts to overcome the dual nature of the Other. However, this duality

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[29] See Michel Foucault, 'Theatrum Philosophicum' in *Dits et écrits 1954-1988 par Michel Foucault*, pp. 885–908.

[30] Coleridge, *Osorio*, II.ii.152, 156-57, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 541.

[31] *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 555.

[32] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', p. 208.

[33] Byron, *Marino Faliero*, III.ii.166–67, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, IV, 372.

[34] Byron, *Marino Faliero*, IV.i.71–72, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, IV, 388.

asserts itself again in the conflict of *The Two Foscari*, where Venice is identified both with the space of freedom (nature and the sea) and with the repression and violence of an impersonal state power (the spaces of the Ducal Palace and of the adjacent prison). Young Foscari's resistance against the state power can be interpreted as a refusal of the 'matrix of individualization' (making him an exile) which works, among others, through the father-son and husband-wife relationships. Even the Doge becomes the subject of modern power, which in his case results from a contrary process of totalization. Indeed, the totalizing nature of this power is especially evident in the character of Marco Memmo, the Chief of the Council of Forty, who prefers membership in a 'united' government organ, the Council of Ten, to the privileges of noble birth or the sovereignty of a feudal ruler: 'my ambition / Is limited: I'd rather be an unit / Of a united and imperial "Ten" / Than shine a lonely, though a gilded cipher–'.[35] In contrast to *Marino Faliero*, the Other in *The Two Foscari* is represented as a 'kind of political "double-bind," which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures'.[36]

The response to this paradigm of power can also be found in Byron's later plays, the mysteries and *Werner*. While, in *Cain*, Lucifer reveals the strategic character of divine politics of totalization and individualization, the endless cycles of creation and destruction and the pressure forcing individuals to '[p]urchase renewal of . . . life / With agonies unutterable',[37] in *Heaven and Earth,* this mechanism of power is refused as a 'chaos-founded prison'[38] in favour of the new form of power based on the individualizing forces of erotic love and joy: 'If the skies contain / More joy than thou canst give and take, remain!'.[39] The power of love is a higher value than immortality and gives a different meaning to the struggle with the divine powers from that given by the 'immortal mind' in *Manfred* or Lucifer's discursive reason in *Cain*. Nonetheless, the tragic conclusion of the first part of *Heaven and Earth* seems to warn against the utopian excesses of this 'politics of paradise' or even against interpreting sexuality on the basis of 'the repressive hypothesis'.[40]

In contrast to the mysteries, the representation of the Other in *Werner* puts much more emphasis on the subversion of the traditional power of alliance relationships, of the centralized structure of the modern state, and

[35] Byron, *The Two Foscari*, I.i.194–96, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 138.
[36] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', p. 216.
[37] Byron, *Cain*, II.ii.303-304, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 269.
[38] Byron, *Heaven and Earth*, III.813, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 377.
[39] Byron, *Heaven and Earth*, I.132–34, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 350.
[40] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 1–50.

also of the power of theatricality deployed on the contemporary stage.[41]

In particular, the extremely long text of Byron's play contains a number of non-dramatic descriptive passages which foreground a modified Gothic setting and develop a detailed representation of the scenery whose central feature is the darkness of a secret passage. This strategy, however, does not quite fulfil the reader's expectations of Gothic horrors and baffles all attempts to find the clue to the drama's 'detective' plot.[42] The deceptive play of rhetoric and mimesis in the first part of Byron's text may be interpreted as a manipulation of the Foucauldian field of visibility, the creation of a 'blind spot'[43] in which the archetypal crime, identified with parricide,[44] has been committed. This rhetorical complication of spatiality

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[41] The concluding part of this article draws on my essay 'Byron's *Werner*: Redrawing Moral, Political, and Aesthetic Boundaries' in *Re-Mapping Romanticism: Gender – Text – Context*, eds. Christoph Bode and Fritz-Wilhelm Neumann, Selected Papers Delivered at the Symposium of the 'Gesellschaft für englische Romantik' held at the University of Erfurt – November 1999 (Essen: Die Blaue Eule Verlag, 2001), pp. 79–90.

[42] The investigation of the theft of Stralenheim's gold in the 'Gothic' setting of a ruinous palace with a secret passage communicating between the remote wings inhabited by Werner and Stralenheim.

[43] See Jacques Derrida, 'White Mythology' in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982). Here Derrida presents the concept of the 'eclipse of the sun'. In *Werner*, the 'blind spot' is created by the power of rhetoric which disrupts the spatio-temporally coherent and causally evident mimetic representation. One of the best examples is Act III, Scene iv, where the protagonist's son Ulric tests whether and what his father knows of the murder of Stralenheim, a crime that he himself had committed: 'ULRIC. Are you or are you not the assassin / Of Stralenheim? WERNER. I never was as yet / The murderer of any man. What mean you? … ULRIC. Died he not by your hand? WERNER. Great God! ULRIC. You are innocent, then! my father's innocent! / Embrace me! Yes, – your tone, your look – yes, yes, – / Yet *say* so!' (III.iv.34–43, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 463). The vagueness of the whole exchange is caused by the ambiguity of Werner's responses ('I never was *as yet* the murderer of any man') or the exclamation 'Great God!', which neither confirm nor refute Ulric's pretended suspicion. Moreover, the power of rhetoric, which does not assert anything, cannot be effectively replaced by the emotional expressions of Werner's face: these are immediately translated into clumsy exclamations ending in the ominous phrase 'Yet *say* so!', demonstrating both Ulric's feigned distrust in the innocence of his father and his actual disbelief in the immediate manifestations of emotions. In this way the text indicates the rift between language and emotions, later revealed in Ulric's character, and thus it requires a post-modern analytical reader sensitive to the ambiguity of rhetorical means (indicated already in the first question 'Are you or are you not the assassin…?') rather than an implied reader of Romantic 'closet dramas' who can internalize the scene by means of imagination and 'mental theatre'.

[44] The protagonist's son Ulric is called '[p]arricide' (Byron, *Werner*, V.i.423, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 505) for killing his remote kinsman Stralenheim. This implies that the word 'parricide' in *Werner* acquires the general meaning of crime against blood relationship which, according to Foucault, was '*a reality with a symbolic function*' (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 147). Werner's addition – 'no less / Than common stabber' (Byron, *Werner*, V.i.423–24, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 505) – identifies Ulric's crime with murder in general.

implies a Romantic refusal of the stage as a field of visibility, where – as Byron's reflections on the contemporary theatre indicate – the performed text is exposed to the 'trampling' of the nondescript, unpredictable and shapeless mass of the audience.[45] Accordingly, the representation of the Other in *Werner* is characterized by two concurrent strategies. The above described rhetorical manipulation of mimesis results in the fashioning of dramatic space as a heterotopia of the field of visibility enforced by contemporary theatre and its audiences. This evasion of the power of the audience's gaze is accompanied by a transformation of the dramatic conflict which significantly changes its *dénouement*. The 'matrix' of this transformation is a specific deployment of sexuality which disrupts and replaces the relations of alliance[46] that seem to form the basis of the plot and of the protagonist's link to state power, represented chiefly by his relative Stralenheim.

In the play, the single most important form of alliance is the protagonist's relationship to his son Ulric. Although Ulric's actions seem to stem mainly from his individual will or 'impulse',[47] they are determined by the moral precepts and sexual behaviour of his father. They are the outcome of Werner's understanding of humanity as 'secured / By … nerves only',[48] which implies the view of the body as a 'machine'.[49] Moreover, Ulric confirms the regulative and controlling power of the deployment of sexual-

[45] In the final part of the Preface to *Werner*, which was omitted against his will, Byron complains of the state of contemporary theatre: '[w]ith the exception of Shakespeare (or Tate – Cibber – and Thompson under his name) not one in fifty plays of our dramatists is ever acted … however much they may be read. … I am far from attempting to raise myself to a level with … the least even of their names – I only wish to be exempted from the stage – which … is not theirs' (Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 714). Though Byron seems to acknowledge his own modesty and admiration for Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists (including some recent authors, such as Joanna Baillie) he also stresses that the stage 'is not theirs'. As Byron indicated in the Preface to *Marino Faliero,* the value of dramas on contemporary stages was not even determined by 'the sneering reader, the loud critic, and the tart review', but by the unpredictable and amorphous audience: whether good of bad, the play is always exposed to 'the trampling of an intelligent or an ignorant audience' (Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, IV, 305). Byron's objections seem to have proceeded from his distrust of the *power of theatricality* in contemporary productions. This power has often been identified with 'an extremely hybrid and fluid form' of *melodrama* containing the traces of non-dramatic cultural forms and events: see Gillian Russell, 'Melodrama' in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age. British Culture 1776–1832,* ed. Iain McCalman (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 599.

[46] When the protagonist despairs over Ulric's crime, his son answers: 'This / Is the time for union and for action, not / For family disputes . . . Let us have done with that which cankers life – / Familial feuds …' (Byron, *Werner*, V.i.427–29, 468–69, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 505–6).

[47] Byron, *Werner*, V.i.456, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 506.

[48] Byron, *Werner*, V.i.446 in Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 506.

[49] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 139.

ity when he accuses his father of depriving him of '[a]ll power to vindicate myself and race / In open day'[50] by a marriage which otherwise appears as an affirmation of the freedom of love and a revolt against the social power of blood relationships. It may be said that, in the *dénouement* of the dramatic conflict, this deployment of sexuality substitutes the two general ethical 'matrices' of alliance relations: rationalist ethics and a morality based on love.

Unlike its model, Harriet Lee's 'The German's Tale', Byron's *Werner* repudiates a generalized, ethical vision of society as a 'great aggregate' whose every part works, despite the Thirty Years' War, to the same end.[51] In Byron's drama, the general ethic of social duty is supplanted by individual strategies of power. '[W]e have done / With right and wrong'[52] says Ulric replacing the antagonism between the morally conscious father and unprincipled son with the continuity of thought and action: 'Is it strange / That I should *act* what you could *think*?'.[53] Ulric's gesture attempts to exclude the disruptive force of rhetoric and emphasizes the unity of reasoning, feelings and action which seems to erase the past and eliminate the guilt. Having 'done with that which cankers life', Ulric constructs himself a site of bio-power whose bearers act on impulse and 'dare venture all things'.[54]

This bio-power may seem to differ from that described by Foucault, since it is not deployed by the modern state and consists neither in '*an anatomo-politics of the human body*' nor in '*a bio-politics of the population*'.[55] Nonetheless, Foucault shows that the notions of war and politics are only two different ways of coding the 'multiplicity of force relations', and that 'the force relationships which for a long time had found an expression in war, in every form of warfare, gradually became invested in the order of political power'.[56] The compatibility of different forms of warfare is evident in *Werner*, where Ulric and his 'black bands'[57] operating in the frontier forests of Silesia, Lusatia, Saxony and Franconia, are compared to the generals of the Thirty Years' War.[58] Although the power of Ulric's

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[50] Byron, *Werner*, V.i.457–58, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 506.

[51] Harriet and Sophia Lee, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Pandora Press, 1989), p. 115.

[52] Byron, *Werner*, V.i.453–54, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 506.

[53] Byron, *Werner*, V.i.452–53, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 506.

[54] Byron, *Werner*, V.i.468, 473, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 506.

[55] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 139.

[56] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 93, 102.

[57] Byron, *Werner*, II.i.124, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 419.

[58] 'After all / Your Wallenstein, your Tilly and Gustavus, / Your Bannier, and your Torstenson and Weimar / Were but the same thing upon a grand scale' (Byron, *Werner*, II.i.138-41, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 420).

banditti is represented as an outcome of the degeneration of war which, in its last years, 'had dwindled into / A kind of general condottiero system',[59] it also retains a global destructive potential: 'each troop with its chief / And all against mankind'.[60] The menace of the new type of warfare is present in the catastrophe of the play: 'Go tell / Your senators that they look well to Prague; / Their feast of peace was early for the Times'.[61]

The new war that disrupts the long-awaited peace is no longer a conflict between nations or creeds, but a diffuse warfare that spreads across borders. Thus, once more, Byron's representation of such a war may be described – in Foucauldian terms – as 'a multiple and mobile field of force' which replaces the privileges of law, prohibition and sovereignty. In addition, the character of Ulric cannot be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the Other,[62] as otherness in *Werner* is inscribed in the strategies and 'matrices of power' transforming the father-son conflict. The power of Ulric's *banditti* anticipates the strategic nature of modern power, a 'model' which is neither 'a speculative choice nor a theoretical preference' but expresses the changed structure of force relationships which 'gradually became invested in the order of political power'.[63]

This reorientation of power effects a large-scale distortion of moral standards, especially evident in the change of Gabor, a straightforward and frank soldier, into a calculating blackmailer. As Siegendorf gives Gabor his diamond star, the token of his wealth, rank and power, the Hungarian becomes the symbolic receiver of his inheritance. Thus, the transformation heralded by Ulric is traced to the downfall of privilege and sovereignty, as well as to their replacement by the strategic power of terrorists, blackmailers and a form of 'mafia', which starts to redraw moral and political boundaries seemingly defined by the war.

My reading of the *dénouement* of Byron's tragedy indicates that the moral and political implications of the dramatic conflict in *Werner* reach far beyond the limits of the historical periods in which the play was set and written. Because of its focus on the individual roots of moral problems and on their connection with the disruption of dramatic form, social order and law, Byron's last finished drama may be said to refer to any time in

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59 Byron, *Werner*, II.i.126–27, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 419.

60 Byron, *Werner*, II.i.128–29, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 419.

61 Byron, *Werner*, V.ii.49–50, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 510.

62 In the draft of the play written in 1815 Ulric is represented as a wayward child that may become a scapegoat whose sacrifice may redeem his parents' sins: 'a homeless beggar for his parent's sin – / Thy sin & mine – Thy child & mine atones' (*First draft* I.i.54–55, Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, VI, 699).

63 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, 102.

modernity following a great social cataclysm. And the unique power of the Other in *Werner* consists in the representation of the moral and political effects of the subject's move from an idea of space as a field of visibility to 'a multiple and mobile field of force' or, analogously, from a feudal domain and the nation-state to a Europe without frontiers.