

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Travel and Self-understanding: Byron's Metamorphosis

از جمادی مردم و نامی شدم وز نما مردم بحیوان بر زدم
مردم از حیوانی و آدم شدم پس چه ترسم کی ز مردن کم شدم
حمله دیگر بمیرم از بشر تا برآرم از ملایک پرو سر
[...]
بار دیگر از ملک قربان شوم آن چه اندر وهم ناید آن شوم¹

Mawláná Jalál al-din Mohammad Balkhi

Auch die ästhetische Erfahrung ist eine Weise des Sichverstehens. Alles Sichverstehen vollzieht sich aber an etwas anderem, das da verstanden wird, und schließt die Einheit und Selbigkeit dieses anderen ein. Sofern wir in der Welt dem Kunstwerk und in dem einzelnen Kunstwerk einer Welt begegnen, bleibt dieses nicht ein fremdes Universum, in das wir auf Zeit und Augenblick hineinverzaubert sind. Vielmehr lernen wir uns in ihm verstehen, und das heißt, wir heben die Diskontinuität und Punktualität des Erlebnisses in der Kontinuität unseres Daseins auf.²

Hans-Georg Gadamer

6. 1. Introduction

The West and the East work on the basis of a particular logic and they are generally seen as opposed, West versus East. If the West is to be considered as the West and to have meaning as the West, it has to be defined in relation to the others. As Derrida argues, “the same cannot be the same except by being the other’s other” (1978: 128). The West must negate the identity of the East to be distinguished as the West. In Edward Said’s critical remarks, by virtue of defining itself against the ‘Others,’ the West “[gains] in strength and identity.”³ Through the detour of the ‘Other,’ the West arrives at a self-understanding. However, in Wimal Dissanayake’s and Carmen Wirkramagamage’s words, “in the process of the representation of the other, there is also the domestication, distortion, simplification, and even caricaturing of the other.”⁴ Robert Young remarks

that such a mastery shows itself in an “implicit violence of ontology itself, in which [the West] constitutes itself through a form of negativity in relation to the other, producing all knowledge by appropriating and sublating the other within itself.”⁵ The West consolidates its sovereignty by defining and denigrating its colonies and identifying them as “Others.”⁶ By reducing the ‘Others,’ the West stabilizes itself, at one time by means of colonizing the ‘Others,’ yet at another time by means of war as a “form of the appropriation of the other,”⁷ which legitimizes the Western foreign policy to expand its ‘democracy abroad!’ Moreover, the West’s “other has been a narcissistic self-image through which it has constituted itself while never allowing it to achieve a perfect fit.”⁸ From another vantage point of discussion, in terms of identification, the West and the East are inseparable from each other, for identity is defined in a reciprocal interaction between these two poles. To omit one part means to disregard the other side as well as both of them; thus, their identities rely on the presence of both.⁹ These two poles define each other, which can be summed up in this German phrase: “ein Wiederfinden des Ich im Du (a self-recognition of the I in the you).”¹⁰

Travel to the Orient was and is one of the prominent media through which the Western traveller enters into the process of understanding both his own culture and the culture of the ‘Other.’ Travel, as a productive activity, produces knowledge. During his travels, the traveller is in the act of becoming, growing and developing. He learns through the travails and experiences of travel. Such experiences open up the fact that the traveller “learns what he did not know before and did not expect.”¹¹ Each step of travel introduces either a pleasant or unpleasant experience to him which might contradict his expectations. In Richard Palmer’s words, “[in] experience, then, there is a shattering of expectations, and one emerges as a sadder and wiser person.”¹² A truly experienced traveller does not take his own presuppositions as absolute; rather, he takes them as something subject to change. The traveller’s experiences pave the way for him to understand what he encounters during his travel. In other words, to understand the signs, works of art and people is to experience them. Hence the traveller’s pre-knowledge and experiences participate invisibly in every step of his understanding the travelleses, which grants him wisdom. They teach him to find out what his limitations are, to expect the unexpected and to be open to new experiences.

To some extent, there is a reciprocal interaction between the traveller and the travelleses which results in a self-description and that of the other cultures; in Manfred Pfister's words, "each description or definition of the other culture implies a self-description or self-definition [...]. A culture defines itself by defining other cultures; the self defines itself by defining the other."¹³ In a similar way, Hans-Georg Gadamer argues „daß *alles* [...] *Verstehen am Ende ein Sichverstehen ist*. [...] Insofern gilt in allen Fällen, daß, wer versteht, sich versteht, sich auf Möglichkeiten seiner selbst hin entwirft.“¹⁴ Therefore, in Joel C. Weinsheimer's words, "what we understand [...] is ourselves."¹⁵ Elleke Boehmer, in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995), asserts, "in a great many cultural contexts, identity is based on a distinction of self from what is believed to be not self."¹⁶ Similarly, Brian Dolan, in *Exploring European Frontiers* (2000), refers to the effects of the travelleses on the travellers and the reconstruction of the self and the other: "the travellers in foreign territories witnessed (better to say experienced) different ways of life, lived in strange and motley conditions."¹⁷ Dolan notes that travel has the potential of enlightening the individual as much as it endangers the travellers' lives; it is capable of leading to the appropriation of indigenous artefacts as much as to a new understanding of distant cultures. This ambivalent potential results in a self-formation. Identity is defined relative to and in relation to the 'Other.' In other words, "through the dialectics of travel and [encountering] the Other, both self and Other's identities have been, and are continuously, reconstructed."¹⁸

Paul Fussell points out that a particular feeling after returning from the journey comes into the traveller's mind "from moving from a form of non-existence back to existence."¹⁹ The traveller "undertakes ordeals, feels a sense of homelessness, and an outsider in the country he has travelled to, thence on his/her return, the traveller will encounter his/her other self."²⁰ Greg Ward refers to Robyn Davidson in *Tracks* that there are some moments in life that are like pivots around which your existence turns—small intuitive flashes, when you know you have done something "correct for a change, when you think you are on the right track," the change in the life, self, identity and the Others' life.²¹ Paul Hollander argues that "travel and revolution have something in common. Both are routine-shattering, seen as open-ended and leading to some, not fully definable, transformation of personal lives."²² Moreover, for Bernard Schweizer, "travelling means

not only leaving one's emotional tangles, old habits, and stale relationships behind, but also engaging with new orders of knowledge and, perhaps most importantly, embracing new social and political possibilities."²³ Nick Danziger, in *Beyond Forbidden Frontiers*, admits that back home he was "haunted by his memories of his travels and disturbed by news" of the place he had travelled to.²⁴ "On my return to England I led a monastic existence."²⁵ He found himself caught between being a stranger to his previous world and remaining an outsider in the lands he journeyed through. What is important for him to bring back is the greatest reward travel can give him: understanding. Andrew Hadfield argues, "undertaking the enterprise involves a series of reflections on one's own identity and culture which will inevitably transform the writer concerned."²⁶

These critics put stress on one prominent aspect of the impact of travel on the traveller: a transformation or metamorphosis in the travellers' life. By encountering and understanding the 'Other,' they undergo a transformation, in other words, at the end of their journeys (in Vita Sackville-West's, Robert Byron's, Robert Payne's and Ronald Sinclair's journeys, for instance) they are haunted by the 'Other.'

In the preceding chapters my argument was focused on dealing with Byron's travel books based on Barthesian and Foucauldian analyses. Even though semiotics and hermeneutics are totally two different analytical and interpretive perspectives²⁷ (I am not concerned with conflating them or making a bridge over the gap between them), what I am interested to show in this chapter is Byron's position as a go-between: like Hermes, the traveller is "associated with the function of transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp"²⁸ and his attempt in representing/translating the unfamiliar travelleses to his own people paves the way for expanding his horizon of understanding. Moreover, I want to stress the impact of travel (mostly travels to the Orient) on Byron's life, and to analyse his travel books, which are imbued with historical, political, ironic and parodic descriptions, in the light of whether they contain the signs of transformation concerning his understanding and insight. My understanding is that Byron, through encountering the 'Other' (the great works of art or architecture, for instance), improves his world of understanding; in other words, his confrontation with the great works of art, architecture and people transforms and refreshes his gaze, which results in understanding his own self and the other better. In

Gadamer's words „auch die ästhetische Erfahrung ist eine Weise des Sichverstehens. Alles Sichverstehen vollzieht sich aber an etwas anderem, das da verstanden wird, und schließt die Einheit und Selbigkeit dieses anderen ein.“²⁹ Thus, we learn to understand ourselves and the other in and through the works of art. My argument revolves around three keynotes: first, Byron's position as a go-between; second, the impact of travel and works of art on transforming and improving Byron's horizon of understanding; and third, Byron's self-understanding through understanding something other than the self.

The consequences of travel change the traveller's perception and transform him in one or another way. The salient point in the traveller's journey to the exotic lands and his return is to see to what extent he is transformed. This transformation is in different forms: it might consolidate the traveller's prejudices. Metaphorically, it might be in the form of a death and birth of a new identity, a metamorphosis of self. For instance, to some extent Robert Payne shows the signs of metamorphosis of self, when, after his return from Persia, he confesses: "I saw Paris through the eyes of Persians."³⁰ The traveller might pass through a series of deaths and rebirths which results in rising and developing to a higher stage of perception. It might either double his blindness or sharpen his insight. It might confirm the traveller's pre-knowledge or prejudice concerning the travelleses. For instance, one of the outcomes of Byron's travel to Persia is that travel verifies his presuppositions concerning the pre-Islamic and Islamic architecture, and to some extent, his travel to India and Russia refreshes his knowledge; thus, he discovers a common meaning in the Indian and Russian culture.

Moreover, the impact of travel on Byron results in a form of development and metamorphosis. My understanding is that Byron's metamorphosis is neither the birth of a new identity, nor the changing into an Oriental; rather, it is a transformation which sharpens his gaze and improves his understanding. I use the term metamorphosis in this particular sense to argue that the consequences of travel instruct, improve and expand Byron's horizon of understanding. I also use the term metamorphosis in another sense to claim that Byron metamorphoses travel writing by means of his travel books, especially *The Road to Oxiana*. One of the prominent changes which Byron creates in the mode of travel writing is a shift from an objective-informative-representation to a subjective representation of the travelleses.³¹ Unlike Western philosophy which considers the West

as present, masculine and on the other hand the Orient as absent, feminine, one will find that through Byron's travel books (mainly *The Road to Oxiana*) such binary oppositions, masculine/feminine, presence/absence, civilised/primitive, rational/irrational are not stable and seem to disappear. He destabilises these hierarchical oppositions, and thus dissociates himself from the preceding Western stereotyping of the Orient which undervalues the Orient as 'inferior', 'irrational', 'passive', 'undisciplined' and 'sensual.' The placements of such dichotomies are changed; i.e., when he is in the East (Persia, for instance), the East turns into present, masculine, or as Pfister argues, "hard and virile"³² rather than absent. Byron's insight (which differentiates him from the mere tourists) enables him to represent the Orient differently from the preceding travellers. It is an attempt to inscribe the 'Other' as Other, "outside the sphere of mastery."³³ Byron's encountering and understanding the 'Other' is not based upon presenting the absence of a presence in order to be a presence, rather it is a matter of self-understanding.³⁴ The image of the 'Other' functions as a hinge between Byron and his self, which results in a self-formation. Therefore, throughout Byron's writings, one can trace a "general choice of tone, of ethos [which shows him] clearly as an individual"³⁵ who discovers "how to use [his] mind and thus [win] the title of a man"³⁶: an experienced traveller.

6. 2. Once Again: Different Aspects of Byron's Quest

Before entering into the argument, I wish to elaborate on Byron's quest that motivates him to travel to the remote lands. There is an objective to the traveller's expedition, which he aims to fulfil and achieve during his journeys. It might circulate around the fulfilment of the objectives of a missionary, political, economic and scientific expedition. It might refer to what Mark Cocker calls "the very otherness of the visited country"³⁷ that gives meaning to the traveller's journey. It might be the traveller's search for his "own personal truth."³⁸ Byron's quest has different aspects; however, one of the main aspects of his quest throughout his journeys he has summed up in "The Traveller's Confession" in *First Russia, then Tibet*:

I have travelled, I must confess, *in search of both instruction and improvement*. As member of a community, and heir to a culture, whose joint worth is now in dispute, I would discover what ideas, if those of the West be inadequate, can with greater advantage be found to guide the world. (RT: 9, my emphasis)

"Instruction and improvement" are two key words concerning Byron's quest during his journeys, which illuminate his major intention of transforming his perception. This can be traced throughout his travel books and his letters home. He is concerned with tracing and understanding the people's life and culture, analysing and interpreting the art and architecture in terms of history, aesthetics and the manifestation of power. In short, Byron uses his Barthesian-like gaze (*avant la lettre*) and Foucauldian-like analysis (*avant la lettre*), which are the results of the experiences and knowledge he gains during his journeys. Another aspect of Byron's quest is to dissociate himself from the mere tourists in terms of representing/translating the travelleses, which can be traced throughout his travel books. The next aspect of his quest during his journeys might be traced in what Pfister argues concerning modern travel writing as a means of "understanding oneself and the other, one's own culture and the culture of the Other."³⁹

Christopher Sykes, Paul Fussell, Bruce Chatwin, Christoph Bode and Manfred Pfister argue that Byron's quest in Persia circulates around finding the origin and character of Islamic architecture. Similarly, Lucy Butler believes that Byron

since 1931 [...] had had in the back of his mind a journey to Persia. [...] From his studies of Mongol architecture in India, and of what Islamic architecture he had come across, Robert felt he was unable to identify the origins underlying such elaborate façades. Photographs of early Seljuk brick towers, remotely situated in northern Persia, had convinced Robert that this was where he must start looking for a solution and he now began to set in motion the realization of his plan. (*LH*: 188-9)

This also suggests that Byron's objective in identifying the origins of Islamic architecture confirms his pre-knowledge concerning such an architecture, and Persia is the place "where he must start looking for a solution." He is determined to fulfil this objective; therefore, his pre-knowledge and what is "situated" in Persia motivate him to undertake a journey to this country. Byron's telescopic vision turns to Persia to accomplish his quest. It seems that Byron, throughout *The Road to Oxiana*, shifts from one quest to another, such as finding the origin and character of Islamic architecture, "a research into the combustive properties of charcoal," (*RO*: 270) and "visiting the Oxus" (*RO*: 287). Pfister argues that the book "constantly redefines its purpose and destination, fails to reach what its title proclaims with mythical resonance as the ultimate telos and reaches its climatic

moment of revelation less than two-thirds into the book and long before even getting near Afghan Turkestan!"⁴⁰ However, in a letter to his mother, Byron elaborates his intention of travelling to Persia: "I now know, at last, exactly what I want to do here, which is such a relief—[...] what I want to see, & where to go to complete a book about the buildings that will have permanent value."⁴¹ Byron's quest to "complete a book about" the Islamic architecture "that will have permanent value," suggests that he wants to mythologize both these monuments and his writings. His desire to read the cultures through their architecture, results in his desire to write and unfold them. His mind is preoccupied with such an ambition. Similarly, to get help from Macmillan, his publisher, he writes:

'My object now is this, to make a complete survey of the chief monuments of Persia, and in the spring to return to Afghanistan, and make another complete survey of the chief monuments of that country. I plan the book in diary form, that is to say in sections under dates entries. But in each case where a monument is described, or a series of monuments, this would occupy another section, suitably headed. Thus those who wish to read the book as a travel book can concentrate chiefly on the dated sections, while those who want to use it as a guide book can concentrate on the others.'⁴²

During his dispute with Herzfeld at Shiraz, Byron repeats his aim in visiting Persepolis: "[all] I'm *interested in* here is the *architectural forms*, not because they are old, but because they are a part of *architectural history*" (RO: 185, my emphasis). Architectural forms and history are two prominent elements that Byron tends to study from both the books and through studying the monuments in the remote lands. His objective concerning writing a book—"to make a complete survey of the chief monuments of Persia, and in [...] Afghanistan, [to] make another complete survey of the chief monuments of that country"—might have other significances, which he leaves to the readers to discover. Elsewhere, concerning Gunbad-i-Qabus, he states: "[it] was Diez's picture of [Gunbad-i-Qabus] that decided me to come to Persia, and I would sooner, as far as I know, have missed any other building in the country" than this (RO: 227). The crucial point in Byron's confessions regarding his objectives is that there is something significant in these monuments which absorbs and invites him to travel to these countries.

In Afghanistan, Mazar-i-Sherif, May 26th, Byron confesses, "I left England in August with two hopes: one, to see the monuments of Persia; the other to reach this town. Neither was very formidable, but they have taken some time to fulfil" (RO: 280). In relation to his

quest to see the Oxus, in a parodic letter to Mohammad Gul Khan, minister of the interior for Turkestan, Byron writes:

[in] undertaking the journey from England to Afghan Turkestan, whose tedium and exertions have already been thrice repaid by the spectacle of Your Excellency's beneficent administration, our capital object was to behold, with our own eyes, the waters of the Amu Darya, famed in history and romance as the river Oxus, and the theme of a celebrated English poem from the sacred pen of Matthew Arnold. We now find ourselves, after seven months' anticipation, within forty miles of its banks. (*RO*: 290)

Apart from its parodic tone, the letter illustrates Byron's quest which gives meaning to his journey. At that moment, Oxus takes priority over other objectives; he wants to see it "with his own [trained] eyes" that in turn confirms his pre-knowledge and multiplies his experiences. Byron's chief concern in visiting Russia, as Lucy Butler states, was "to avoid all political controversy and to pursue his object; the study of Russian fresco painting and its breakaway from Byzantine influence to which, initially, it owed its inspiration" (*LH*: 179). In contrast, his objective in travelling to India was "primarily [...] to reach Tibet, secondarily because Lord Beaverbrook gave [him] a ticket. [He] had never felt, nor wished to feel, any interest in India" (*EI*: 4). But again, his "own interests in India were concerned more with the artistic monuments of the country than with its politics or people" (*EI*: 91). James Knox points out that Byron's purpose in *The Station* is "to study the works of El Greco. This would complete his survey of Byzantine painting in preparation for writing the accompanying text to David's photographs of the frescoes on Athos and at Mistra."⁴³ The "architectural forms" and "history," the "picture of [Gunbad-i-Qabus]," the "monuments of Persia", "the river Oxus," the "Russian fresco painting," the "artistic monuments" of India, the "Byzantine painting" and the "works of El Greco" show that Byron's mind is largely imbued with the works of art. These are the significant signs which motivate him to travel to the remote lands. He searches for and traces the underlying meaning in such artistic constructions. My understanding is that Byron's quest to travel and encounter the great works of art is to broaden his horizon of understanding, to reach his "own personal truth," and to understand the culture of the 'Others'; therefore, his quest shapes his perception.

Byron repeatedly points up the different aspects of his quest, which circulate around instructing and improving his horizon as well as enlarging his experiences. In this regard, Lucy Butler writes, Byron

was determined to push out further the horizon of his experience and proceed with his plan for a preliminary exploration of the major civilizations of the world before he was 30. As he wrote to his mother: 'I am afraid I shall be permanently discontented until I am again embarked on some *work*—not mere money making, but something calling for a real mental effort.' (*LH*: 188)

Byron's quest and search for "a mental effort" rather than "mere money making" shows the expansion of his horizon which goes beyond the boundaries of life; i.e., he is not in search of a momentary, short-lived effort, but something to last for ever. Having an aim in his mind, and by means of a dialectical interaction with his quest, expedition and the travelleses, the traveller's horizon of understanding and expectations meets and merges in the horizon of the travelleses; accordingly, through travel he attains an understanding of the world and a self-recognition. Central to Byron's quest in travelling to Mount Athos, India, Russia, Tibet, Afghanistan, Persia and other countries is his desire to "push out further the horizon of his experience." He cannot achieve his quest unless he travels to these countries and understands their art, architecture, people and culture.

6. 3. Byron's Hermes-like Position

Metaphorically, a traveller acts as a translator and a mediator between two worlds. The traveller translates something foreign, separated in time and space into something familiar, present and comprehensible; i.e., he brings something to understanding. Similar to a translator, the traveller "brings what is foreign, strange, or unintelligible into the medium of one's own language. Like the god Hermes, [the traveller/translator] mediates between one world and another"⁴⁴ and spells out his perception of the unfamiliar travelleses to his own people. In order to represent/translate one world to another, the traveller has to understand these two worlds. Jean Grondin elaborates that understanding, application and translation are almost equivalent and

[the] meaning (event, person, monument) that is to be understood is always one that needs to be translated. [...] What I seek to translate (understand, apply) is always something that is at first foreign to me, but that is in some way binding for my interpretation. [...] I cannot

say whatever I want, but I can only unfold my understanding in terms that I can follow and hope to communicate. Understanding, as an application, is thus always a challenge, but I can only raise up to it if I succeed in finding words for what needs and cries to be understood.⁴⁵

For a traveller, the travelleses at first seems to be "foreign" and unfamiliar. He attempts to understand and translate the meaning implied in the signs, works of art, people's behaviour and culture. In representing/translating the unfamiliar travelleses, he "unfolds" his "understanding" in the hope of communicating with the 'Others.' By means of representation/translation, as a special interpretive process of bringing something "foreign, strange, or unintelligible to understanding and into the medium of one's own language," the traveller plays a crucial role in such an in-between position. His function is to familiarize the unfamiliar travelleses and to bring a *hidden* meaning of "what is unknown to light: revelation and disclosure."⁴⁶ This is not a simple mechanical matter of synonym-finding;⁴⁷ the traveller/translator is mediating between two different horizons, and he has to have genuine knowledge concerning these two worlds. His representation/translation is „daher schon Auslegung,"⁴⁸ provided that the meaning of the cultural and social signs and codes are preserved. Moreover, to interpret the cultural and social signs he has to understand them.

The cultural and social signs, works of art, architecture and monuments are like texts, and have a particular symbolic language. Thus, in Paul de Man's words, "one can argue that all other art forms [...] are in fact proto-literary languages."⁴⁹ The language of cultural signs might be either familiar or unfamiliar to the traveller.⁵⁰ In this regard, if we accept that translation, to some extent, contains an interpretation and these two take place in the medium of language, then one of the primary steps for the traveller to understand, translate and interpret one culture for another culture is to have a mastery of the symbolic language of the signs, objects and monuments of the exotic lands. It is through mastering such a symbolic language, as a precondition, that the traveller can understand the travelleses.

One of the prominent ways by means of which Byron tries to understand each country is to study "the origins of its art and architecture" (*LH*: 1); in short, he reads the symbolic language of art and architecture. So far as his "whole life is made up of a craving for beautiful things," (*LH*: 9) Byron reads such a cultural language and turns the signs and

objects into value, thus mythologizing them. He engages in a dialogue with the architecture and monuments of the exotic lands, experiences and understands them. His understanding concerning the works of art turns into a means to understand his own self and culture and that of the 'Other.' This broadens his horizon of expectations; thus, his insight is changed, and he sees the world in a new light. This does not mean that Byron's identity is changed; rather, his gaze is sharpened.

Similar to the process of translating from one language into another, one must bear in mind that "it will never be completely convincing that other languages can name well-known things differently, for example, for an English speaker that a horse can be called a '*Pferd*.' Something just does not feel right in this."⁵¹ The traveller/translator encounters various impediments to finding pure correspondence between his preconception and that of the travelleses. The despair of every traveller/translator in working on representation/translation is that there are no corresponding expressions for the individual expressions, objects, signs and codes. The prominent point here is that the traveller/translator usually comes to stand in-between, as a mediator to make a bridge over the cultural gap, to represent, describe, analyse and interpret the content of the unfamiliar culture through comparison and contrast to one's own cultural content.

Having the purpose of representing/translating what he understands in the travelleses, the traveller uses a language and articulates his observations. Accordingly, representing/translating one world to another makes us aware of the fact that representing/translating through language, to some extent, contains an all-embracing interpretation of that world, to which the traveller/translator must be susceptible even when he represents/translates the individual objects and signs. He illustrates the people's horizon and worldview in his travel books. In this regard, the discourse of travel can be considered as one of the prominent sites through which one can see how the traveller's discourse shapes man's

seeing and his thought—both his conception of himself and his world. [...] Far more than man realizes, he channels through language the various facets of his living—his worshiping, loving, social behaviour, abstract thought; even the shape of his feelings is conformed to language. If the matter is considered deeply, it becomes apparent that language is the 'medium' in which we live, and move, and have our being.⁵²

More precisely, "language is clearly a repository of cultural experience; we exist in and through this medium; we see through its eyes."⁵³ Therefore, the words, indeed, shape our view and perception of the world; i.e., man's very vision of reality is shaped by language.⁵⁴ For instance, after encountering and reading the symbolic language of the Islamic architecture at Isfahan, Byron expresses his feelings in words of what he understood concerning the beauties of Isfahan, which "really excel their reputation. [...] Airy and fresh—and then these tremendous coloured domes and minarets—and lovely old trees and superb bridges over the river—an atmosphere of amenity and urbanity—I am longing to get back there" (*LH*: 211). In this way, Byron spells out what he understands through reading the language of Persian architecture; i.e., a transference from a symbolic language of architecture to a descriptive language of travel book.

In order to represent/translate the culture, there are some connected and interwoven phases, which influence the traveller. Regarding my argument concerning mastery of the symbolic language of the signs, artistic works and monuments, the basic step for the traveller is to understand such a symbolic language. It means that he must live within that language. The process of representing/translating clashes with the traveller's own world of understanding and that of the travelleses; indeed, it is a dialectical dialogue between two partners who are separated from each other in terms of geography, culture and worldview. In Byron's words, to understand and make the "world's acquaintance" (*RT*: 10) is to create a mutual dialogue between the traveller and the outer world, and to enter into the process of interaction of the horizons. Therefore, the traveller begins a conversation with the travelleses not through language per se, but rather by means of entering into the game of comparing and contrasting his preconceptions and pre-knowledge with what he encounters. For instance, encountering the architecture and monuments, the traveller begins to speak with them by tracing the underlying meaning of these 'silent objects.' In turn, the architecture and monuments begin to open up themselves to the traveller and further a conversation with him. This reciprocal interaction helps the traveller to understand the monuments. Then, he articulates a meaning, an object and event into words. When the traveller responds, interprets, searches for words during and after his journey to record what he experiences, it shows

that he understands what he is looking for; he might blend with the travelleses and be guided to adopt a position in relation to it.

To understand is to think, transpose and re-experience the world as the others meet it in lived experience. More precisely, "[to] understand [...] is, in general, to grasp something ('I get it'), to see things more clearly (say, when an obscure or ambiguous passage becomes clear), to be able to integrate a particular meaning into a larger frame."⁵⁵ For the traveller, this process of understanding is to participate in an interaction with the world of the travelleses. Byron illuminates how a traveller can enter into the game of experiencing and understanding the travelleses:

Admittedly there are other ways of making the world's acquaintance. But the traveller is a slave to his senses; his grasp of a fact can only be complete when reinforced by sensory evidence; he can know the world, in fact, only when he sees, hears, and smells it. [...] The traveller can only reply that at least he desires to know more and more about more and more. (*RT*: 10)

The crucial point is that Byron emphasizes the importance of experience prior to understanding. In fact, to understand a world means to experience, "see, hear, and smell it," to "know more and more" about it, thereafter to come to an agreement with it, to interpret it, and eventually, in Susan Sontag's words, "to restate [it], in effect to find an equivalent for it."⁵⁶ Elsewhere, Byron expresses such a priority concerning the Russian cultural and social life: "I looked down to the river below me; I looked up to the sky; I looked to the right and I looked to the left: horizontally and vertically, towers and domes, spires, cones, onions, crenellations, filled the whole view" (*RT*: 19). In short, he gazes at the cultural signs from different perspectives to get the full meaning of each minute object. His aim is to broaden his experiences and horizon. To understand the meaning of the term 'horizon' and the way through which it is expanded, I refer to Gadamer's definition:

Horizont ist der Gesichtskreis, der all das umfaßt und umschließt, was von einem Punkte aus sichtbar ist. [...] [In der philosophie] das Wort verwendet, um die Gebundenheit des Denkens an seine endliche Bestimmtheit und das Schrittgesetz der Erweiterung des Gesichtskreises dadurch zu charakterisieren. [...] Der Horizont ist vielmehr etwas, in das wir hineinwandern und das mit uns mitwandert.⁵⁷

In this regard, the horizon will change for the traveller whose life is dynamic and is imbued with travel and the experiences of past and present. The traveller's horizon of the present always already includes the original horizon of the past. Through experiencing the horizon of the past, which exists in the form of tradition, the traveller continually tests all his prejudices and finitudes. By fusing the horizon of the past and that of the present his worldview is broadened; thus, he experiences the world in a new light. This means „dass man über das Nahe und Allzunahe hinaussehen lernt, nicht um von ihm wegzusehen, sondern um es in einem größeren Ganzen und in richtigeren Maßen besser zu sehen.“⁵⁸ Moreover, if he understands at all it means he „*anders versteht*.“⁵⁹

Experience “as Aeschylus says, [is learning] through suffering,”⁶⁰ which teaches us to recognize reality and truth. Consequently, experience can be considered as the basis of understanding and expanding the horizon. By means of experience, in Palmer's words, the traveller can learn an “element of negativity, for the experience referred to is primarily negative and painful experience in which one learns what he did not know before and did not expect.”⁶¹ Thus, as Weinsheimer argues, experience gives man a perception that “something is not what [he] thought, not what [he] expected.”⁶² This improves his range of vision gradually, which transcends and negates his expectations. It is a referential operation by means of which one can understand something by comparing it to something one already knows. Hence, comparison plays a crucial role in experience, which in turn influences understanding.

Through experiencing the works of art, signs, sites and architecture, Byron continually compares what he already knows to what he encounters. For instance, he compares the mosque at Veramin with “a ruined abbey, Tintern” (*RO*: 48).⁶³ Regarding Gohar Shad's personality, “her patronage of the arts”, “the versatility of her life,” as “the most incomparable woman in the world,” (*RO*: 252) Byron compares her with Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria. Moreover, he compares the river Murghab at Merv with the Thames at Windsor (*RO*: 267); the emerald grass, “the grey villages, irregular fields, winding lanes, and broken-down stone walls of the Kazerun valley [with] Ireland” (*RO*: 176). In a letter from America, he compares New York with England “I can't start and tell you what New York ‘is like’, as I am still rather numb. But it is much *more* like England than I expected” (*LH*: 228). Yet in another letter, he repeats

what I find [in New York]—which I didn't expect, is that there is a very large stratum of purely English people who approximate in behaviour and tastes to the English university—educated professional people, to people like ourselves—their standard of manners is what ours was before the war. (*LH*: 229)

In these two letters, one can trace the “element of negativity” since what Byron presupposes and “expects” is in contrast to what he encounters. Such a contradiction shatters his expectations through which he recognizes his limitations. These limitations might stem from his prejudices, his presuppositions and pre-knowledge, his relation to power, his unfamiliarity with the travellers' conventions, and his blindness which act like a filter and prevent him from encountering the travellers dispassionately.⁶⁴ Elsewhere, at Washington, “the White House is a charming old building, rather like Government House, Calcutta, but better and a little earlier” (*LH*: 232). Yet on another occasion, he compares Persia with England: “the *whole* of Persia is desert—but on the north of the Elburz is tremendous forest—it happens in half an hour—and the coastal strip seemed just like England, fields with hedges, blackberries and nettles etc” (*LH*: 218). At Damascus, saying goodbye to the West and turning as a “*tourist*” (*RO*: 32) to the East:

I felt the peace of Islam. And if I mention this commonplace experience, it is because in Egypt and Turkey that peace is now denied; while in India Islam appears, like everything else, uniquely and exclusively Indian. In a sense it is so; for neither man nor institutions can meet that overpowering environment without a change of identity. But I will say this for my own sense: that when travelling in Mohammadan India without previous knowledge of Persia, I compared myself to an Indian observing European classicism, who had started on the shores of the Baltic instead of the Mediterranean. (*RO*: 33)

It is a matter of finding similarities between two different locations, cultures and horizons; this might originate in his desire to find at least a minimal similarity between his own culture and that of the other. During the process of comparing his past and present experiences with each other, a collection of images comes into Byron's mind. At the centre stands his quest and around it there stand the cultural signs in Damascus, Egypt, Turkey, India, Persia and other countries. It shows that he is “open to new experiences,” and is “prepared to have and learn from new experiences.”⁶⁵ Such a comparison directs him towards an understanding and then judging; that is, he experiences the objects, signs and codes, hereafter he interprets what he has observed. Accordingly, what pleases him becomes important, and each step forward during his

journey shapes his subjectivity and enables him to see and understand differently. One of the significant points in the above quotation is the impact of space on Byron's life. To "meet" such an "overpowering environment" is to undergo a "change of identity." Moreover, at Isfahan

the monuments have kept me too busy. One could explore for months without coming to the end of them. From the XIth century, architects and craftsmen have recorded the fortunes of the town, its changes of taste, government, and belief. The buildings reflect these local circumstances; it is their charm, the charm of most old towns. But few illustrate the heights of art independently, and rank Isfahan among those rarer places, like Athens or Rome, which are the common refreshment of humanity. (*RO*: 195-6)

Byron, by comparing different places with each other, intends to confirm his pre-knowledge about the site, which refreshes his insight; thus, enabling him to gaze at the travelleses with careful exactness. Isfahan has one point in common with Athens and Rome; it reflects the "local circumstances", "the fortunes of the town, its changes of taste, government, and belief." Confirming his pre-knowledge results in a dynamic interaction of his presuppositions with what he encounters in the exotic lands. Byron is an experienced traveller, which means he knows "how to deal with the unexpected—indeed expecting it."⁶⁶ To some extent, he encounters the travelleses in an "undogmatic" way; i.e., he understands the 'Others' in their 'otherness.' His experiences pave the way for him to "learn [more] from new experiences."⁶⁷ When he compares two places with each other, it means that he has a preconception and an experience of both. Each place acts as a trigger that brings to the surface of his conscious mind what is hidden in his mind, and activates a point of similarity, which is in relation to and in accordance with his pre-knowledge and preceding experiences.

When Byron finds a point of similarity between two places and objects, they seem to become familiar to him, and then he sees them in a new light. Through refreshing his experiences, Byron's mind is imbued with a familiar sensation in an unfamiliar place; he finds home and security in a strange and remote land. It is as though two spaces interact with and merge into each other in his mind. Byron attempts to find affinities in the new location with what absorbed him already at home or in other locations. Consequently, the similar aspects will be matched with each other, and the dissimilar aspects will be added to his pre-knowledge. In this way, comparison broadens Byron's perception and his

world of understanding. The more he encounters and studies the travelleses, the more critical his insight becomes. Byron's experiences enable him to see life accurately. Tibet is one of the places in which Byron tests his limitations:

It produced a curious feeling, almost fear, this first contact with persons, clothes, and observances of utter strangeness. For many years I had thought about Tibet, read about it, and gazed longingly at photographs of its huge landscape and fantastic uniforms. None the less, the reality came as a shock. (*RT*: 179)

[...]

[In Tibet] looking back on Gyantse now, I realize what a precious glimpse that week gave us of a way of life which the world has nowhere else preserved. In European parlance it is a medieval way of life, a stage through which we ourselves have passed long ago, but from which, nevertheless, the roots of our tradition still draw much of their strength. (*RT*: 228)

Byron's presuppositions and reality encounter each other, i.e., two experiences meet each other, one is the experience he gains from his studies and the other is gained from what he encounters in reality. Whenever Byron finds a point of similarity, a sense of pleasure creeps into his mind, whereas contradictions create a sense of surprise, "a shock." By means of his trained eyes, Byron searches for the undiscovered cultural and social aspects of the nations among the ruins of the exotic lands. For instance, he recognizes "the roots of [European] tradition" among such ruins; thus, Byron's understanding the culture of the exotic lands directs him towards understanding his own culture. In Gadamer's words, „[alles] Sichverstehen vollzieht sich aber an etwas anderem, das da verstanden wird, und schließt die Einheit und Selbigkeit dieses anderen ein.“⁶⁸ It is through such dynamic processes of comparison, contrast and judgement between two worlds that he "can become a connoisseur of anything" (*RO*: 78). He becomes an experienced traveller. After experiencing different artistic and architectural constructions, the traveller might find

the horizons of his own world, his way of seeing his world, his self-understanding are broadened; he sees 'in a different light', sometimes as for the first time, but always in a more 'experienced' way. This shows that the world in the work of art is not a world divorced from one's own; it is contiguous with it and illuminates self-understanding even as one comes to understand it.⁶⁹

The artistic and architectural constructions disclose the outer world to his self-understanding so that his world, the horizon in which he lives and moves are broadened. The works of art which open up a world to him, in becoming experience, transform his insight. In Weinsheimer's words, what happens to a traveller like Byron "in the

experience of art [...] is very much like what happens to [man] in play: [he loses himself]."⁷⁰ It is "an experience of truth."⁷¹ As Gadamer argues, „das Kunstwerk hat vielmehr sein eigentliches Sein darin, daß es zur Erfahrung wird, die den Erfahrenden verwandelt."⁷² Thereupon, he begins to judge, interpret, translate and represent what he has observed based on a new insight. For instance, in Russia: "If I claim a good enough eye and a sufficient experience of other countries to have enabled me to appreciate the visual arts of Russia, and to judge them by general standards, it is only to admit my disadvantage in seeking to paint their present environment" (*RT*: 16). Moreover, Byron's experiences enable him to recognize his own limitations. In Weinsheimer's words, he "who is aware that he has something still to learn is aware of his finitude and his limits."⁷³ Therefore, by means of travelling abroad and "testing his limits,"⁷⁴ Byron goes beyond such boundaries and enlarges his horizon. During his Tibetan journey, Byron's

thoughts were really on the journey [he] had just completed. [He sees] it now as one of the great experiences of a life, a period of vivid, unclouded enjoyment in its revelation of a huge expanse of the world's surface, of unsuspected and unimagined beauties, of heat and desolation beyond credence, of a new pleasure in physical movement. (*RT*: 152-3)

The "great experiences" he gains in Tibet become a part of his life. They open up the "unsuspected and unimagined beauties" of life to him. Travel is a process of experiencing the world and gaining knowledge, which results in self-understanding and self-formation. In addition, travel to the exotic lands gives him an opportunity to discover his prejudices and broaden his horizon. Having the great experiences of life, Byron's horizon is changed and developed by means of which he can come to an agreement with what he encounters; thus, in Weinsheimer's terms, he reorients and reconciles himself "to a new situation."⁷⁵ Through understanding the travellers' cultural and social life, the traveller opens up a world, and by that means he shows the possibilities in both the people's and his own nature. As far as understanding is concerned, the traveller accomplishes and rediscovers himself in understanding the others. It is a process of disclosure of what is real for him; therefore, it is "the original form of the realization of our existence."⁷⁶ More to the point, "travel is a route to spiritual development,"⁷⁷ and a route to the interaction of horizons. Through his journeys to India, Russia, Tibet, Afghanistan, Persia and other countries,

Byron's horizon of world understanding and that of the travellers interact with each other. For instance, in Persia:

The day's journey had a wild exhilaration. [...] Suddenly, from far across a valley, came the flash of a turquoise jar, bobbing along on a donkey. Its owner walked beside it, clad in a duller blue. And seeing the two lost in that gigantic stony waste, I understood why blue is the Persian colour, and why the Persian word for it means water as well. (*RO*: 44)

Each sign functions like a text through which he analyses the cultural and social strata and tests his own pre-knowledge. Even though his analysis might be limited to decoding the signs, and the meaning of each sign might be limited to one or two significations, the prominent point is the impact of the meaning of such signs on his horizon. The last line of the above quotation, which indicates Byron's understanding concerning "why blue is the Persian colour, and why the Persian word for it means water as well," suggests that he fulfils his role as a go-between to represent/translate and familiarize the unfamiliar travellers to his own people. This in turn results in understanding his own culture and that of the 'Other.'

Byron celebrates the magnificence of Eastern art in comparison to Western art, for instance, the "Friday Mosques in Isfahan," (*RO*: 149, 196-7) or in his description of Gunbad-i-Qabus, through which he tries to glorify the greatness of the building in comparison with the great buildings of the world. He shows the fusion between the "genius of Persia and the energies of the nomads from Central Asia" (*RO*: 231). Encountering Gunbad-i-Qabus, he adds:

Superlatives applied by traveller to objects which they have seen, but most people have not, are generally suspect; I know it, having been guilty of them. But re-reading this diary two years later, in as different an environment as possible (Pekin), I still hold the opinion I formed before going to Persia, and confirmed that evening on the steppe: that the Gumbad-i-Kabus ranks with the great buildings of the world. (*RO*: 231)

Comparison indicates that to experience and understand a work of art means to be united and become one with it. Byron puts stress on his quest in travelling to Persia which is to confirm his "opinion," concerning the Persian architecture, for instance, Gunbad-i-Qabus. In Russia, "the vision was over. I had exchanged the experience of a moment for a memory that will support me till I die. I shall never see Moscow again as I saw it on that

afternoon" (*RT*: 23). This proves that a travel account is a site for a dynamic interaction of the cultures and the historical horizons. For instance:

I would have given half my time in Russia to have read into the hearts of my fellow-spectators, and to have discovered whether this crude antithesis of Materialist values had inspired them with real emotional piety, or had rendered their entertainment, as it had mine, just a little tedious. (*RT*: 43)

To the traveller whose first stay in a new country is limited to a month and a half, and whose view of it can therefore be only cursory, the most easily apprehensible clue to the cultural genius of its people is their native architecture. (*RT*: 55)

Byron "then understood [...] why every foreigner of independent movement in Russia is regarded as a potential agent of capitalist propaganda" (*RT*: 88). Moving among the people, he attempts to "see life" (*RT*: 67); he reads, discovers and understands the "what" and the "why" in the Russians' reactions towards the "foreigners." He experiences and learns many crucial points during his journeys. This means that understanding is a necessary stage in the dynamic dialectic of interpreting the cultures. To "see life" and to understand the works of art is to be thrown into history or a set of stories and to understand our past, ourselves; hence, making it a part of our being. For Byron, architecture functions as a master sign through which he understands, represents/translates "the cultural genius" of the people on the one hand and expands his horizon on the other. In Persia, Byron and Christopher Sykes "have learned that the cost of everything from a royal suit to a bottle of soda water can be halved by a simple expedient of saying it must be halved. Our technique was nicely employed in the hotel of Baalbek" (*RO*: 29-30). Apart from Byron's satiric comments on the 'social norms' in Persia, the prominent point is that his experiences enable him to "learn" and understand the cultures. Elsewhere, Byron and Sykes "hope to start tomorrow evening. It is a custom in this country to start in the evening" (*RO*: 56). Travel gives him instruction and improvement, so much so that he learns when to start or stop on his journey from one place to another; i.e., to expect the unexpected. At "*Kavar (c. 5200 ft.), February 20th.*— The start of a journey in Persia resembles an algebraical equation: it may or may not come out" (*RO*: 156). This shows to what extent Byron understands the life, customs and culture of the travellers. Visiting the Mosque of Gohar Shad, Byron states:

I have learned what I wanted to know: first, that the use of coloured mosaic out of doors reached its climax at the Timurid Renaissance; and second, that the beauty of it in the Shrine here is nevertheless surpassed on six of the seven minarets at Herat, whose remains have an even finer quality and purer colour, and are not interrupted by plain brickwork. The few travellers who have visited Samarcand and Bokhara as well as the Shrine of the Imam Riza, say that nothing in those two towns can equal the last. If they are right, the Mosque of Gohar Shad must be the greatest surviving monument of the period, while the ruins of Herat show that there was once a greater. (*RO*: 244-5)

By means of comparing and contrasting two objects to each other, the traveller judges between them. His judgement originates in his knowledge which in turn depends on his experiences and understanding. Accordingly, when he compares or contrasts two places, objects or signs to each other he is both testing his pre-knowledge and adding new information to such pre-knowledge. He is also testing his limits. Moreover, his judgement shows his understanding of the subject under discussion; thus, from his understanding comes knowledge. Here, Byron searches for what he wants to know; i.e., the desire to know motivates him to gaze at and analyse the cultures critically. To confirm his pre-knowledge concerning Persian architecture, he enters the game of comparison and contrast as well as experiencing and understanding this country. Visiting Tibet, Byron declares that the land

for us now, is no longer the 'land of mystery', a piece of dark brown on physical maps, gripped by an unholy hierarchy, and possessing no amenities of life beyond devil-dances and butter statues; but a physical, aesthetic, and human definition as implied by the words France or Germany. Henceforth it exists on the map of our intelligence as well as of our atlas. (*RT*: 187-8)

Byron gazes, reads and represents/translates the works of art. In his attempt, he stands in an in-between position. On the one hand, there stands the 'silent world' of artistic works, and on the other hand, the people; Byron stands in-between. One can trace Byron's position as a go-between when he disguises himself to enter the Shrine at Mashhad. Travelling in disguise is one of the ways to go beyond the boundaries of the exotic lands. As Indira Ghose and Manfred Pfister argue, it is "a quest for self-discovery through testing [the traveller's] limits."⁷⁸ Gadamer argues

[wer] verkleidet ist, will zwar nicht erkannt sein, sondern als ein anderer erscheinen und für ihn gelten. In den Augen anderer möchte er nicht mehr er selbst sein, sondern für jemanden genommen werden. Er will also nicht, daß man ihn errät oder erkennt. Er spielt den

anderen. [...] Dem Anschein nach verleugnet zwar, wer derart ein Spiel spielt, die Kontinuität mit sich selbst.⁷⁹

For instance, by changing his clothes and disguising himself, like Richard Burton and Freya Stark, Byron assimilates himself to the Orient, for a moment. For Byron, changing his clothes and disguising himself is an attempt to be taken for someone else and to disappear from the continuity of his own 'self.' At Mashhad:

[this] morning, when I entered the hotel, the bedroom attendant brought me a plate of corks and charcoal without being asked for them. It was another thing to make up for daylight with these crude materials: my moustache looked green instead of black, and turned out brindled; my eyes were still blue, inside lashes semi-black and sore with scrubbing. But the costume was subtle: brown shoes with tight black trousers four inches too short; grey coat; gold stud instead of a tie; our servant's mackintosh; and a black Pahlavi hat which I aged by kicking it—these components created the perfect type of Marjoribanks's Persia. Alas! (RO: 242)

This time he gazes at the Shrine through his "lower middle-class Persian self," (RO: 244) through a new vision and to some extent, in the same way a Persian, a Muslim, gazes at the Shrine. Byron hides himself behind the Pahlavi hat to escape the surveillance of Marjoribanks.⁸⁰ It is as though he wanted to put aside, at least for a moment, his European coverings. He wanted to gaze and feel like a Persian, a Muslim, and an Oriental. Simultaneously, the 'Others' gaze at him no longer as an outsider, a European, or a non-Muslim, but as a Persian, an insider or a Muslim. Like Burton and Stark who assimilated themselves to the Oriental custom, ritual, and consequently were influenced by it, Byron's world of understanding is transformed after testing the Orient. This is a process through which Byron's insight is broadened. In comparison to Burton and Stark, Byron's potential for 'passing' in the other, was minimal.

6. 4. Byron's Self-understanding through Understanding the 'Other': Metamorphosis

The core of art lies not in mere craftsmanship but in the disclosure of a world, an event in which being shows itself, since a work of art opens up a world, a truth. Weinsheimer argues that architecture as an artistic work "is a locus of mediation between past and present. It gives people a history that is not simply bygone; it is their history for they are still living in it, and changing it."⁸¹ In Gadamer's words, such monuments and „die

Werke der Baukunst stehen nicht unverrückt am Ufer des geschichtlichen Lebensstromes, sondern werden von ihm mitgetragen.“⁸² They create a world of time and space. They, in Palmer's words, disclose “being to our self-understanding so that our own world, the horizon within which we live and move and have our whole existence, is broadened and given greater definition.”⁸³ One of the most important objects, which in the remote lands, attracts the traveller's attention, is the work of art. The artist constructs an artistic work (as Gadamer argues, „sein Entwurf ist selbst dadurch bestimmt, daß das Bauwerk einem Lebensverhalten dienen soll und sich natürlichen und baulichen Vorgegebenheiten einordnen muß“⁸⁴), which draws the attention and admiration of the traveller to itself, thus he penetrates its structure, hereafter, he begins to interpret it. The traveller's objective in visiting the works of art is to understand, interpret and represent/translate them for his own people.

To understand the works of art, the traveller begins to have a dynamic dialogue with them based upon his preconception; i.e., he begins to read the symbolic language of artistic works similar to reading a text. Byron believes that the traveller makes “the world's acquaintance” provided that he reinforces his understanding “by sensory evidence” (*RT*: 10). In fact, he “can know the world [...] only when he sees, hears, and smells it,” (*RT*: 10) which means to come to an agreement with it. His desire to “know more and more about more and more,” (*RT*: 10) his confrontation with the monuments at Isfahan, his “sufficient experience of other countries” which enables him “to appreciate the visual arts of Russia [and other countries], and to judge them by general standards,” (*RT*: 16) his “great experiences of a life,” (*RT*: 152) the “greater knowledge” (*RO*: 188) he attains concerning the “cultural genius of [the] people [through] their native architecture,” (*RT*: 55) these and so many other references throughout his books show to what extent Byron enters into a negotiation with the cultures, works of art and people.

Because of negation and affirmation during his confrontation with the works of art, the traveller attains a new perception, experience and “greater knowledge.” Accordingly, this process expands the traveller's horizon of expectations and directs him towards a better self-understanding. To be more precise, the traveller observes, gazes, compares, experiences, re-experiences, understands, and then begins to interpret, represent and translate the travelleses for his own people. Each of these phases occurs in a dialectical

comparison that interrogates the traveller's own horizon of understanding. Such a dynamic interaction transforms the traveller's insight. Hence his horizon (in terms of understanding) is changed and he is no longer the same person he was before his expeditions. This time he sees and understands the world according to his new mature and sensible insight.

One of the ways through which a nation expresses itself is the works of art, for instance architecture. Such monuments are not mere stones or bricks but a world which transforms the traveller's horizon of understanding. Even though a great work of art seems to be 'silent' at first glance, it *speaks*; its silence says more than words, it shows more than explanations, and in doing so it reveals a world of meaning and, like all true expression, reveals a truth. In other words, in Heidegger's words, it brings the "being of beings into unconcealment and makes truth into a concrete historical happening."⁸⁵ Metaphorically, when the work of art begins to speak, it begs for an answer; hence, it creates a reciprocal questioning and answering in which the partners can communicate.⁸⁶ It holds always ready new answers and prompts one to always new questions. It invites the traveller to interact with the world of art, and to see the world anew, which in turn creates a sense of pleasure in the mind of the traveller, for instance, "the pleasures of the east."⁸⁷ What is closely related to this point is the German word *Lust*, which one can use in the

context of whether [he] would enjoy doing something or not, and in the new technical term '*Lustgewinn*' (pleasure gain). [...] The concept of pleasure [...] is to be associated with all forms of art as well as all free movements of thought. Pleasure is always pleasure in something. We literally lose ourselves in a world of forms and thoughts, and specially then, we are there. That means, we are awake.⁸⁸

The aesthetic experience and pleasure of a work of art is what it conveys. The aesthetic pleasure, in Palmer's words, is a response to the "total movement of meaning, [...] a by-product of one's encounter with the fresh truth of being set forth in the world of a work of art."⁸⁹ For instance, encountering the great works of art, Byron loses himself in the "world of forms and thoughts," thereafter his horizon is broadened and he understands the world differently. It is as though the monuments began to speak in his language, for instance, in Herat: "Even in ruin, such architecture tells of a golden age" (*RO*: 89). At Shirz, Persepolis:

There is still things to be said about Persepolis. [...] And stone worked with such opulence and precision has great splendour, whatever one may think of the forms employed on it. This is increased by the contrast between the stones used, the hard opaque grey and the more lucent white. Isolated ornaments have also been discovered in a jet-black marble without vein or blemish. Is that all? Patience! In the old days you arrived by horse. You rode up the steps on to the platform. You made a camp there, while the columns and winged beasts kept their solitude beneath the stars, and not a sound or movement disturbed the empty moonlit plain. You thought of Darius and Xerxes and Alexander. You were alone with the ancient world. You saw Asia as the Greeks saw it, and you felt their magic breath stretching out towards China itself. Such emotions left no room for the aesthetic question, or for any question. [...] The columns jump to the eye first. Other architectural features are the stairs, the platform, and the palace doors. [...] Neither has any art. But the doorways have. They, and they alone, boast a gleam of true invention; they suggest ideas, they utter a comment, with regard to other doorways. (*RO*: 187-8)

Metaphorically, Persepolis speaks to Byron and reveals the underlying meanings to him. These 'lifeless' monuments come from the "ancient world" to show their "magic breath stretching out towards China," to retell the [hi]story of "Asia", Persia, "Greeks", "Darius and Xerxes and Alexander", tyrannies, invasions and war of nations, one as the conquered another as the conqueror and on the whole to open a world to Byron. As he encounters such monuments and begins to read their symbolic language, they "boast a gleam of true invention; they suggest ideas, they utter a comment"; thus, he starts a conversation with these 'silent' objects. Such a conversation is impossible unless the traveller comes to an agreement with the monuments, which means to understand them. Encountering and experiencing the works of art is to enter into an artistic world, to gain knowledge and to see the world through it. Palmer argues:

When we meet art, the horizons of our world and self-understanding are broadened so that we see the world 'in a new light'—as if for the first time. Even common and ordinary objects of life appear in a new light when illuminated by art. Thus a work of art is not a world divorced from our own or it could not illuminate our own self-understanding even as we come to understand it. In an encounter with a work of art we do not go into a foreign universe, stepping outside of time and history; we do not separate ourselves from ourselves or from the nonaesthetic. Rather we become more fully present. As we take into ourselves the unity and selfhood of the other as world, we come to fulfil our own self-understanding; when we understand a great work of art, we bring what we have experienced and who we are into play. Our whole self-understanding is placed in the balance, is *risked*. It is not we who are interrogating an object; the work of art is putting a question to us, the question that called it into being. The experience of a work of art is encompassed and takes place in the unity and continuity of our own self-understanding.⁹⁰

Every traveller may have such an experience in his expedition through which his horizon interacts with the work of art; as a result, he gains a new insight. In much the same way,

Gadamer argues „[auf] jeden Fall aber gilt, daß ein jeder, der die Erfahrung das Kunstwerks macht, diese Erfahrung ganz in sich einholt und das heißt: in das Ganze seines Selbstverständnisses, in dem sie ihm etwas bedeutet.“⁹¹; he understands himself in and through the work of art. In this respect, one can see why the meaning in an artistic work, if it is understood by one traveller, will remain latent for other travellers, even though the signs and the structure of the work of art remain the same. It also reminds us of Byron's question “Do people travel blind?” (*RO*: 202) One possible answer is that the meaning of these monuments is generated in the act of reading and representing/translating their significations; it is the product of a complex interaction between the traveller and the works of art. Cultural encounter gives Byron an opportunity to look inward and to change his perception, which enables him to gaze at the cultures, read and describe them accurately. At Mashhad, in the Mosque of Gohar Shad

[e]very circumstance of sight, sound, and trespass conspired to swamp the intelligence. The message of a work of art overcame this conspiracy, forcing its way out of the shadows, insisting on structure and proportion, on the impress of superlative quality, and on the intellect behind them. How this message was conveyed is difficult to say. Glimpses of arabesques so liquid, so delicately interlaced, that they looked no more like mosaic than a carpet looks like stitches; of larger patterns lost in the murk above our heads; of vaults and friezes alive with calligraphy—these were its actual words. But the sense was larger. An epoch, the Timurids, Gohar Shad herself, and her architect Kavam-ad-Din, ruled the night. (*RO*: 241)

What is implied in a “work of art” is its “message” which overcomes all impediments, forces “its way out of the shadows,” and insists on “structure and proportion, on the impress of speculative quality, and on the intellect behind them.” Once the traveller reacts towards the works of art and expresses his understanding, the “message [is] conveyed.” The disclosure of the message depends on the fusion of the work of art and the traveller's horizon; in short, in the act of understanding the message, the traveller blends into the work of art. For Byron, the Mosque of Gohar Shad is like a text. He reads “its actual words” and understands its “sense.”

Describing Gunbad-i-Qabus, Byron relates it to Persian history, to Qabus's memory, and the “genius of Persia, to the nomads of the Central Asian sea” (*RO*: 231). His understanding is that the people by the “use of brick, at the beginning of the second millennium after Christ, came to produce a more heroic monument, and a happier play of

surfaces and ornament, than has ever been seen in that material since" (*RO*: 231). His impressions show to what extent Byron perceives and translates/interprets these 'lifeless' monuments. For instance, the Timurid architecture opens Byron's eyes to the power of decorated buildings, the role of Timurid style which was transferred to Transoxiana and the power of Timurid dynasty during that period. He concludes that the Timurids, as the "devotees of art," believed in art as "the highest form of pleasure" (*RO*: 90). James Knox says that Byron "on returning from Herat to Meshed in December 1933, scrutinized through field glasses, from a roof overlooking the precincts of the holy shrine, the most important group of tile—and mosaic-decorated buildings which he had so far encountered."⁹² In fact, Persia influences travellers of all ages from the ancient warrior/tourist, Alexander the Great, to the modern travellers, such as Vita Sackville-West, Freya Stark, Robert Byron and Robert Payne, to name just a few. Whoever encounters this country eventually is involved in the process of changing his/her understanding. This does not apply to Persia alone; rather it is related to other countries in general. Persia influences the travellers through different ways, at one time by means of the beauty of its nature, at another time, in Sackville-West's travels, by the simplicity of the nomadic life in the Bakhtiari country, in Payne's travels, by the blue domes of Isfahan, elsewhere by means of its religious customs, yet at another time, in Stark's case, by its "hidden treasure"⁹³ in Luristan and eventually, in Byron's case, Persia influences him by its architecture, signs and different voices. For instance, Knox refers to the splendour of Shiraz which "captivated [Byron]: 'A delicious place—the black spires of cypresses against the eggshell coloured mountains ... blue onion domes of a late period standing up, a cloudless sky, tangerines on the trees in the hotel garden, and a feeling of spring—almost of the Mediterranean.'"⁹⁴

To see the 'Other' is a matter of learning to see and understand the self. In Gadamer's words, „[alles] Sichverstehen vollzieht sich aber an etwas anderem, das da verstanden wird, und schließt die Einheit und Selbigkeit dieses anderen ein.“⁹⁵ The traveller, by means of such an encountering and in relation to the 'Others,' changes his way of seeing, thinking and experiencing. Through encountering the Persian culture and architecture and acquiring a new insight, Byron deflates the prevailing Western ideology about the Persian architecture, and generally dismantles the Western discourse about the Orient. The

crucial point is the impact of the Eastern consciousness—manifested and articulated in different objects—on the Western consciousness and the way through which this consciousness shapes the Western representation/translation of the East, for instance, Persia. That is the confrontation and interaction of two consciousnesses, two horizons. In-between, Byron's horizon of expectations and perception is broadened and changed.

In Russia, Byron gazes at different phenomena, analyses them, is involved in an argument with Morgan, and so forth, then he confesses that the sense of pugnacity, which is pleasant, comes to his mind. Accordingly, the external factors, the Russian social life, the Bolsheviks' Five-Year Plan, proletariat dictatorship, all influence him. In much the same way, when Byron visits India he confesses

my own mental transformations on arrival in India may serve to illustrate the confusion which necessarily attends any attempt to achieve a detached conception of the problem. The mental strain involved in fitting logical shape to the plain facts revealed by every succeeding minute of the Indian day is overwhelming. (*EL*: 19)

His "mental transformations" might be considered just as a claim, but what is crucial in such a confession is that Byron's critical description and representation/translation of the exotic lands, the people and monuments originate in such "mental transformations." Little by little, the external confrontation brings about the internal transformation and eventually it ends in Byron's important phase of life as an experienced individual, different from when he started his first journey. Space creates internal changes and transformation of thoughts. At Kasr-i-Shirin, the impact of the place on him is so great that he says: "indeed the grandeur of Iran unfolded" (*RO*: 42). At Sultaniya, he finds "a different Persia" (*RO*: 50). Knox argues that Byron's

enthusiasm for the citadel at Tabriz was typical: 'Brickwork of this v. lovely—a pale dusty pinkish russet brick ... gt. Richness of texture ... facet at edge of this [central panel] had bricks roughed criss cross, wh. The Germans & Dutch think so modern.'

Medieval Persian brickwork, unlike tiled decoration, accorded with his passion for form in architecture. On taking a second look at the mausoleum of Uljaitu at Sultaniya, he noted: 'The use of glazed brick in the Mongol things is *exactly* the same as Babylonian—same feeling, not non-representational ... The tile, the patterned tile flowing everywhere, is later & is *much* less architectural in fact non-architectural.'⁹⁶

On yet another occasion, one can refer to the impact of the Persian buildings on him: "Persian *brick* buildings are what excite me—much more than the later tile work."⁹⁷

Encountering the Mosque of Sheikh Lutfullah, Byron writes:

I have never encountered splendour of this kind before. [...] All are rich. [...] In the Mosque of Sheikh Lutfullah, it is a richness of light and surface, of pattern and colour only. The architectural form is unimportant. It is not smothered, as in rococo; it is simply the instrument of a spectacle, as earth is the instrument of a garden. (*RO*: 200)

The more spacious the place, the wider the world view is. The domes of the Mosque of Sheikh Lutfullah, the Friday Mosque, the Shrine of Imam Reza, Sultaniya, which reflect the splendour and grandeur of the Persian world of understanding, invite Byron to lose himself and merge into this greatness. When he enters these places, a new world of signs and "messages" is opened to him. By means of his trained eyes, Byron gazes at this world, experiences, analyses, and understands it, which finally transforms his insight; consequently, he feels he is no longer an outsider, but a different person who achieves a fresh, sharp and new insight.

At Yazd, Byron writes, "Sir Percy Sykes is the only writer who has noticed the buildings here, and he but shortly. Do people travel blind? It is hard to imagine how the portal of the Friday Mosque could escape anyone's notice" (*RO*: 202). Such a question, on the one hand illustrates the impact of space on Byron, and on the other hand it dissociates him from the blindness of the mere tourists. The question also suggests that Byron gains an insight different from the mere tourists, who are conducted by the tours and authorities. In other words, Byron, like a Barthesian tourist⁹⁸ *avant la lettre*, sees and understands through his gaze, whereas the mere tourists have no gaze; rather they pass the signs without noticing and understanding them. For instance, "Diez, who knows the subject as well as anyone, and is not the slave of his journey's emotions like me, says these minarets are adorned with such 'fabulous richness and subtle taste' (märchenhafter Pracht und subtilem Geschmack) that no others in Islam can equal them. He speaks from photographs only" (*RO*: 99).

For Byron, travel has a particular meaning, which differentiates him from other travellers; he finds "it so refreshing to be among efficient people doing something and not just sitting in offices doing things they aren't interested in. I think I have enjoyed that part

of the journey more than any—the organisation of the route—there is something creative about it” (*LH*: 124). Creativity, novelty and understanding give meaning to his travels, without them travel is to tramp the globe and to waste the life idly. Travel is a phenomenon which is organised to instruct and to add something to human knowledge regarding truth. Byron's argument referring to the mere tourists illuminates his horizon of understanding:

One knows these modern travellers, these over-grown prefects and pseudo-scientific bores despatched by congregations of extinguished officials to see if sand-dunes sing and snow is cold. Unlimited money, every kind of official influence support them; they penetrate the furthest recesses of the globe; and beyond ascertaining that sand-dunes do sing and snow is cold, what do they observe to enlarge the human mind?

Nothing.

Is it surprising? Their physical health is cared for; they go into training; they obey rules to keep them hard, and are laden with medicines to restore them when, as a result of the hardening process, they break down. But no one thinks of their mental health, and of its possible importance to a journey of supposed observation. Their light and handy equipment contains food for a skyscraper, instruments for a battleship, and weapons for an army. But it mustn't contain a book. I wish I were rich enough to endow a prize for the sensible traveller: 10,000 [pounds] for the first man to cover Marco Polo's outward route reading fresh books a week, and another 10,000 [pounds] if he drinks a bottle of wine a day as well. That man might tell one something about the journey. He might or might not be naturally observant. But at least he would use what eyes he had, and would not think it necessary to dress up the result in thrills that never happened and science no deeper than its own jargon. (*RO*: 275-6)

Even though Byron's gaze has its own limitations, what he distinguishes concerning the mere tourists or what he terms “these modern travellers” is that they are conducted to see and pay attention to what the “officials” arrange for them, “nothing” more. Byron considers such tourists as blind whose journey to “the furthest recesses of the globe” does not “enlarge the human mind.” “Unlimited money” is spent to support such mere tourists, but the end-result of their journey comes to “nothing.” Byron's critical remarks on these mere tourists show that he is determined to dissociate himself from their blindness. This originates in the transformation and expansion of his horizon of understanding. For Byron, a truly observant traveller is one who attempts to interpret and represent/translate the monuments and signs in the remote lands on the basis of his pre-knowledge, refreshes and improves his understanding both from books and from the culture of the travelleses, and his knowledge “enlarges the human mind.” For instance, before taking his journey to Persia, Byron was

determined not to stir from his room until he had studied his 'few books on Persia enough to tell [Christopher] where & what things are'. Over two days, he drew up maps and schedules of possible journeys and two lists of monuments, 'one of Achaemenid & Sassanian carvings, the other of classic brick & tiled buildings'.⁹⁹

Through reading the books, cultural signs, art, architecture and social life, Byron deepens his understanding. This dynamic aspect of travel gives meaning to his quest. These references might confirm his claims concerning his "mental transformation," his trust to his "own arrangements" (*RT*: 17) and his change after his travels which is a change "for the better" (*LH*: 221). In Russia

[t]he European visitor to Russia who values the inheritance of European humanism finds himself regarded as a baneful reactionary full of pontifical formulas which aim not only at the pursuit of 'objective truth', but at the immediate destruction of the Russian State. In compensation he will derive—unless already infected with prejudices of hate or enthusiasm—an exhilarating stimulus to rational thought from this attitude towards himself, a realization that his world's horizon has been suddenly extended beyond all preconceiveable expectations. He will discover, possibly against his will, a preponderance of what he has been taught to call obscurantism and tyranny which must necessarily outweigh the best of social purposes. (*RT*: 15)

[...]

This arose from my irresponsibility in visiting Russia neither with an avowed purpose nor as a conducted tourist. Nearly all foreigners buy their tours beforehand, and are therefore obliged to keep to set routes. This is not to say, as so many people infer, that the visitor is only shown what the authorities want him to see. On the contrary, free movement within Russia to-day—except in the Turcoman republics, which are reserved for American millionaires—entails fewer formalities than before the Revolution. The advantage of the conducted tours is simply their remarkable cheapness; and since they are, very conveniently, 'conducted', the tourist is naturally treated to the show-pieces of the existing regime. But as these seemed to me, even by anticipation, both extremely uninteresting and fundamentally insignificant, I trusted to my own arrangements, and may here take the opportunity of thanking those who helped me make them. Travelling was consequently more difficult, but equally more entertaining. (*RT*: 17)

Once more, this is the place where Byron illuminates the contradiction between the traveller's presuppositions and what he encounters in the exotic lands, which is painful and reveals his limitations. At this moment he "will discover" the unexpected. It also shows Byron's insistence on observing the signs, monuments and sites with his own trained eyes. This might stem from his prejudices concerning his pre-knowledge and presuppositions. What the Russians show to the world and what the travellers know are at variance with reality. To reach "a realization that his world's horizon has been suddenly extended beyond all preconceiveable expectations," to separate himself from the

prejudices that might prevent him from reaching truth concerning the subject matter, and to dissociate himself from the "authorities" and Intourist guides that want "him to see [...] the show-pieces of the existing regime," Byron trusts to his own trained eyes. Accordingly, to travel in this way is to experience and enter into the ordeals and travails of travel. For Byron, such a travel is "more difficult, but equally more entertaining," since it instructs and improves his insight.

At Ibrahimabad, the "unity of eastern and Western architecture and its origins in Central Asia,"¹⁰⁰ are revealed to Byron so that he spells out his feelings enthusiastically: "today has been the *perfect day*, the one day which, even if there is no other like it, makes the whole journey from England worth while" (*RO*: 166). This suggests that each step in Byron's journey reveals something novel to him and grants him a new experience. It is as though, step by step, his horizon of expectations and understanding is expanded, and transformed. In Russia:

The supreme moments of travel are born of beauty and strangeness in equal parts: the first panders to the senses, the second to the mind; and it is the rarity of this coincidence which makes the rarity of these moments. (*RT*: 17)

[...]

Upon the intellectual and aesthetic background which presented itself to me, and which I have here tried to describe, I can now impose the incidents of a personal journey and the treasures it discovered.

The tourist goes to Spain to see Spain, or to Italy to see Italy; but to Russia he goes to see Bolshevism. I went to Russia to see Russia. (*RT*: 61)

This shows Byron's view concerning travel and its "supreme moments"; the traveller's senses and mind will be satisfied by the "beauty and strangeness" of the country respectively. For Byron, to achieve such a pleasure and knowledge is to uncover and understand "the message of [the] work of art," to respond to the meaning and truth implied in the signs, monuments and architecture. His dissociation from the mere tourists' blindness is because he gazes at the signs differently. What he recognizes in the exotic lands, the mere tourists are too blind to distinguish. His objective in Russia is to "see Russia," its art and architectural constructions, but what he encounters is "Bolshevism" and an "obscurantism and tyranny [which outweigh] the best of social purposes"; hence the shattering of his expectations. Byron's gaze, which originates in his

experiences and the knowledge he gains during his journeys, enables him to thickly describe and represent/translate the unfamiliar travelleses to his own people.

During his journey, the traveller encounters many impediments and difficulties that might disappoint him, or prevent him from fulfilling what he had planned. In fact, as Mark Coker writes,

the more difficult the journey and the more circumstances are stacked against them, generally the fuller the travel experience. This element of opposition, of having to react to the places and people encountered, is at the heart of travel. [...] The dialogue between the individual and her or his surroundings is part of the traveller's deep self-consciousness, which provides perhaps the litmus test in the question of tourist/traveller identities.¹⁰¹

Since travel is a means to reach a goal, the traveller has to learn how to use his means. Metaphorically, it is a game of chess: on the one side of this vast chessboard, the world, the traveller stands and on the other side an unknown partner. The signs and objects of the world are its pieces. He has to know how to play the game and distinguish a pawn from a knight in order not to be checkmated. He has to adapt himself to the position that he arranges for his game. In short, if he is born to fulfil and achieve his quest, he must do his best.

James Knox mentions Cecil Roberts's comment in the *Sphere*, who celebrates *First Russia, then Tibet* as a work which proves Byron "the born traveller and the born reporter."¹⁰² He was born to be a traveller. Knox also refers to the critics' comments on *First Russia, then Tibet*, as signs of Byron's success: "as a stylist, Robert caught the eye of L. P. Hartley, 'The Literary Lounger' in the *Sketch*, who wrote: 'His prose is stately and rhetorical, and recruited from an exceptionally large vocabulary; it wears long words like jewels. I am all in favour of this.'"¹⁰³ Byron faces two alternatives, the first is a beaten track taken by the mere tourists, and does not need any effort. It is a road that does not create any change in the traveller's life; his worldview at the end of such a journey is the same as it was at the beginning: no change, no transformation. Along this beaten track nothing is added to the traveller's perception; he is conducted to see what the tour had designed for him, which multiplies his blindness. In this regard, it is noteworthy to refer to Knox, who argues that "all [Byron's] contemporaries took the safer route of retailing their experiences as a continuous narrative—none more so than Robert's greatest literary rival, Peter Fleming, who only eight months previously had published his classic tale of

adventure, *News from Tartary*.”¹⁰⁴ The second is a road “less travelled by,”¹⁰⁵ which is a “grassy” way and wants “wear”; it is a route which needs a trained and experienced traveller. It is this second road, which Byron has taken, and “that has made all the difference.”¹⁰⁶ At the end of such a journey, he claims he is no longer the same person as he was at the beginning, he never comes back the same; he is changed and his insight is multiplied. For instance, in Tibet:

[the] journey here described may with some justice be called unusual. [...] Travel within the Tibetan frontiers involves obvious difficulties, of which one is an unpredictable degree of physical discomfort. But such a journey as ours, when regarded as a journey among journeys, can make no claim to be considered unique or even remarkable: the difficulties were overcome with moderate effort; the knowledge gained was such as to satisfy only the personal curiosity of those who sought it. In thus unloosing a second torrent of personal anecdote I have but one purpose and excuse; which is, if I can, to please the reader with some pale reflection of the quality of pure enjoyment which became known to me during my visit to Asia Magna. To travel in Europe is to assume a foreseen inheritance; in Islam, to inspect that of a close and familiar cousin. But to travel in farther Asia is to discover a novelty previously unsuspected and unimaginable. It is not a question of probing this novelty, of analysing its sociological, artistic, or religious origins, but of learning, simply, that it exists. Suddenly, as it were in the opening of an eye, the potential world—the field of man and his environment—is doubly extended. The stimulus is inconceivable to those who have not experienced it. (RT: 127)

This indicates Byron's attempts in instructing and improving his understanding the ‘Other,’ which in turn confirm his desire to gain “knowledge,” to travel and “discover a novelty previously unsuspected,” to learn and to analyse the “sociological, artistic, or religious origins” of the other culture and to open “an eye.” This eye/I might refer to his own eye/I, his own people and that of the ‘Other.’ Byron's travel might “be called unusual.” If we accept it as an “unusual” journey, this suggests the difference between his intention and that of the mere tourists. To travel, (here “in farther Asia”) means to learn, to discover novelties, to experience and to see the world in a new light. His journey gives him knowledge; in short, travel teaches him and deepens his understanding. In a letter from China, he writes:

I have been reading lots of war books and the conviction is growing on me that I *must* write that History of the War and do it *soon*. Either that—or give up writing and get some small job. But I don't feel inclined to give up writing without a last try. All this time, in spite of a certain output of literature (?), I have really been educating myself. Now the moment has come to use the knowledge I have gained—and that is the subject with the scope. If it was

successful, I should be established. I am also developing a new and more concise style, which you will see, I hope, in the Russian articles. (*LH*: 268)

Each moment in Byron's life is imbued with gaining knowledge and experience. All the time he has "really been educating" himself and for him, as an in-between being, the "moment has come to use the knowledge [he has] gained" throughout his life and journeys. He is determined to spell out his experiences, to add something to human knowledge and to "enlarge the human mind." To study the history of the remote lands from both the books and from architecture plays a crucial role in his life. Byron achieves what he has been searching for throughout his expeditions; after his journey to the remote lands, his horizon is broadened in a way that enables him to experience a novel construction of the Self.

Through his travel books, Byron metamorphoses travel writing and eternalizes himself. *The Road to Oxiana*, as a masterpiece of travel writing which I believe stands at the pinnacle of his writings, is the outcome of Byron's experiences, understanding and transformation of his horizon. In a review of *The Road to Oxiana*, his mentor, G. M. Young, in the *Sunday Times*, writes: "the power of making every situation yield all it contains of comedy and beauty at once is the best gift of a mature culture to its elect children."¹⁰⁷ Young, by alluding to Lord Byron, "placed Robert in the same tradition of the 'last and finest fruit of the insolent humanism of the eighteenth century.' By humanism, Young meant 'a determination of the mind to maintain its own poise, and to view the world in its own perspective: and I call it insolent for the readiness with which it turns to aggression if its poise is disturbed by sectarian clamour or its perspective blurred by fashionable sentiment.'"¹⁰⁸ At the end of his journey to Persia, Byron writes:

Savernake, July 8th.—I left Christopher at Marseilles. He was going to Berlin to see Frau Wassmuss. England looked drab and ugly from the train, owing to the drought. At Paddington I began to feel dazed, dazed at the prospect of coming to a stop, at the impending collision between eleven months' momentum and the immobility of a beloved home. The collision happened; it was nineteen and a half days we left Kabul. Our dogs ran up. And then my mother—to whom, now it is finished, I deliver the whole record; what I have seen she taught me to see, and will tell me if I have honoured it. (*RO*: 333)

This is the way he improves his understanding, and changes his worldview. The quotation also confirms this point that *The Road to Oxiana* is the result of his quest for

finding the origin and character of Islamic architecture, a long journey to see Oxus, a test of the Charcoal burner car, to experience and to suffer the travails of travel, to "reach his personal truth," and to understand the 'Other.' Back home, Byron's mind seems to be haunted by the impact of travel. Now, "England looked drab and ugly," as if unfamiliar, and he feels "dazed, dazed at the prospect of coming to a stop." This reminds us of Odysseus whose life was imbued with travel and adventure. Byron's life is imbued with travel in such a way that to come "to a stop" means to live idly. One can conclude that Byron's quest and desire to travel is to instruct, develop and broaden his insight. It is obtainable through the *travails* of travel:

I must develop my life in my own way as my instinct bids and it is hideously agitating to feel that *you* [his mother], of all people, who have made me all the good I am, might have become an involuntary opponent of further good, for the absurd reason that I can't let you know once a week whether I have caught cold. (*LH*: 221-2)

Without travelling and undergoing the *travails* of travel, life has no meaning for Byron, since travel is a dynamic action and energizes him, whereas, to stay in one place without anything to do (or "coming to a stop") is unbearable for him. In short, he was born to travel and develop his life. In Mark Cocker's words, travel provides "the enterprising individual with opportunities to attain the status of national symbol, akin to that of the war hero."¹⁰⁹ Byron achieved the name of a true traveller when his masterpiece *The Road to Oxiana* "was recognized at the 1937 National Book Fair [and] was awarded a gold medal as the outstanding travel book of the year."¹¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian* also declared, "Mr Byron ... has produced an almost ideal book of travel ... much candid criticism of men and ideas, some admirable descriptions."¹¹¹ After instructing and improving his insight, he sees the world anew, through a different light; different from what he was before his journeys. It is the kernel and outcome of his dynamic, dialectical understanding the 'Other' and the self; i.e., he loses himself in the 'Other' so that his horizon is changed. In Gadamer's words, „er [ist] gleichsam ein anderer Mensch geworden.“¹¹² Once more, I refer to Byron's letter to his mother through which he points up the transformation in his insight:

I don't travel merely out of idle curiosity or to have adventures (which I loathe). It is a sort of *need*—a sort of grindstone to temper one's character and get free of the cloying thoughts

of Europe. It is how I develop. *I have become quite a different person from what I was when I went away, and the change is for the better.* (LH: 221-2, my emphasis)

Apart from “idle curiosity” and “adventures,” travel as “a sort of need” influences Byron in such a way that he has indeed “become quite a different person from what [he] was when [he] went away, and the change is for the better.” This statement might be considered just as a claim; but a close analysis of his travel books indicates that Byron develops his life in his own way, which differentiates him from the mere tourists. By analysing his travel books and comparing them with each other, from the first to the last, one can recognize whether he is transformed “for the better” or his horizon of understanding is not broadened at all. My understanding is that his “change” is the expansion of his horizon of understanding. Byron’s travel books (mainly *The Road to Oxiana*) turn into a *road* to his life and perceptions, through which one can trace Byron’s transformation into an experienced traveller. The letter quoted above suggests that after his journey to the exotic lands he returns home “quite a different person,” a traveller who understands the world differently. Such an understanding is the end-result of the impact of space on Byron’s life; i.e., he attains a new horizon which is different “from what [he] was when [he] went away.” His transformation is “a sort of *need*” in his life, and travel to the exotic lands, especially to the Orient, is the prominent *road* to undergo such a metamorphosis.