

“YOU IDIOTS!”

HOUSE, M.D. AND THE CONTINUED VITALITY OF THE BYRONIC HERO

by

CATHERINE A. RICCIO

(Under the Direction of Linda Brooks)

ABSTRACT

The Byronic Hero did not die out with the appearance of Byron's *Don Juan*. On the contrary, through the use of humor in the narrator's commentary, a new Byronic Hero emerged, one capable of uncovering the uncomfortable truths behind an artificial society. The inclusion of humor strengthened this character type's resiliency and made him more accessible to modern audiences. This study explores the modern incarnation of this important Romantic figure by focusing on the title character of the currently successful television show, *House, M.D.* This study places House into the tradition of the Byronic Hero, focusing in particular on three key elements: House's characteristics that fit the traditional Byronic Hero, the unique approach to morality that makes both House and the Byronic Hero a useful mechanism for social commentary, and the necessity for a humorous outlook in order to secure the survival of this unique character in modern popular culture.

INDEX WORDS: House, M.D.; Byron; Byronic Hero; Don Juan; Romantic Irony

“YOU IDIOTS!”

HOUSE, M.D. AND THE CONTINUED VITALITY OF THE BYRONIC HERO

by

CATHERINE A. RICCIO

BA, Yale University, 2005

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2010

© 2010

Catherine A. Riccio

All Rights Reserved

“YOU IDIOTS!”

HOUSE, M.D. AND THE CONTINUED VITALITY OF THE BYRONIC HERO

by

CATHERINE A. RICCIO

Major Professor: Linda Brooks

Committee: Joel Black
Martin Kagel

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2010

DEDICATION

For my father, Arthur R. Riccio, Jr., who has pushed me to excel in my education and has reminded me that I can accomplish anything with hard work and perseverance.

For my mother, Lelah Marzi, who is always available in my moments of doubt and has taught me the importance of being true to myself.

For my sister, Natalie Riccio, who embodies true bravery in her relentless struggle to achieve her own dreams.

Without all three, I would not be who I am today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my Committee Chair and advisor, Professor Linda Brooks. Many of the topics I discuss here are drawn from Professor Brooks' own ongoing research, which she has selflessly and openly shared with me throughout the research and writing process. More importantly, her passionate approach to literature, scholarly research and teaching has provided me not only with the indispensable guidance to produce this thesis, but also with a model upon which to base my own work as student and teacher as I move on to future endeavors.

I would like to thank my committee members, Professor Joel Black and Professor Martin Kagel, who also spent significant time and energy providing me with invaluable input on the formulation and writing of this thesis in particular, and more generally on my growth as a student of literature.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1 SOUTH OF NORMAL..... | 15 |
| 2 GOD DOESN'T LIMP | 30 |
| 3 WIT: THE ESSENTIAL WEAPON..... | 47 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 71 |
| WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED..... | 73 |
| <i>HOUSE, M.D.</i> EPISODES CITED..... | 78 |

INTRODUCTION

The Byronic Hero is a character type prevalent in English Romantic literature and steeped in tradition. When Peter Thorslev wrote his book, *The Byronic Hero*, two of his three stated goals were to trace the origins of this important figure and also to find the Byronic Hero's place within Romanticism (12). The result of Thorslev's work was an elaborate review of character types split into two groups: those figures that are pre-Romantic (and pre-Byronic) and those Romantic figures that are full Byronic Heroes.

According to Thorslev, there are three types of pre-Romantic heroes: the Child of Nature, the Hero of Sensibility (also called the Man of Feeling), and the Gothic Villain. The Child of Nature is naïve, unsophisticated, usually impulsive, and somewhat aggressive. His origins typically have a primitive or "close to nature" quality, and his subsequent adjustment to society's demands makes him into a useful tool as societal critic. The Hero of Sensibility is relatively well-bred and a sophisticated cultivator of feelings. These feelings can range from morbid gloominess to simple tearfulness to whimsicality. He is set apart due to his sensitivity, but he shares the same moral and social codes of others around him. The Gothic Villain is an outlaw who flouts morality. He is fully aware of his wickedness and takes full responsibility for it, rather than blaming his villainy on an unjust society (Thorslev 21-22).

Each type of the pre-Romantic figures exhibits components of the Byronic Hero, but each also lacks critical elements that would otherwise turn him into a true Romantic hero. Thorslev argues that the Romantic hero types are solitaries who are fundamentally and heroically rebellious, at first against society and later against the natural universe or God (66). Neither the

Child of Nature nor the Hero of Sensibility is a full-blown solitary, social or theological rebel. While the Gothic Villain *is* a rebel against society and sometimes God, he gains no sympathy and consequently cannot be a hero (65). It was not until the nineteenth century that these character types evolved into the complicated and intriguing figures that Thorslev identifies as true Byronic Heroes.

Thorslev categorizes the Byronic Hero into four subtypes: the Noble Outlaw, Faust, Cain/Ahasuerus, and Satan/Prometheus. The Noble Outlaw, states Thorslev, is the first of these Romantic heroes and also the most popular (66). The Noble Outlaw is fiery, passionate, and heroic (68). He is a natural leader whose authority is rarely questioned by those around him. He is also a sympathetic character, whose rebellious attitude stems from a wrong performed against him by close friends or society. He is never cruel or sadistic and is always good to women. Finally, the Noble Outlaw is particularly distinguished by his “cloak of mystery” and “air of the sublime” (69). The Faustian type of the Byronic Hero “typifies man’s eternal quest for knowledge” (84). The Faust figure exhibits not only a thirst for knowledge, but also a lust for experience. He is isolated, like other Romantic hero types, but he is an “aristocrat of suffering” more than a “hero of action” (87). His tragedy is one of epistemology (84). Faust’s rebellion is not only against society, but also against God, and he is doomed to be unsuccessful (92). The Cain/Ahasuerus figures, like Faust, are humans who rebel against God. However, unlike Faust, Cain/Ahasuerus ultimately takes on superhuman qualities. This type of the Byronic Hero is outcast from God and society and destined to be the eternal wanderer and a wisher for death (92). Finally, the Satan/Prometheus type of Byronic Hero is supernatural from the beginning and is equivocally successful in his rebellion against God (92). He combines a concern for individual liberty with his concern for society and the brotherhood of mankind (108). Prometheus, argues

Thorslev, is the Byronic Hero at his noblest (123). He is the “most sublime and refined” of the Romantic heroes (112), expressing core values such as art, progress, mercy and kindness toward one’s fellow man (117).

In addition to setting forth concrete definitions of the pre-Byronic and Byronic Heroes, Thorslev had a third stated goal in *The Byronic Hero*. This goal was to define and trace the development of the Byronic Hero in the works of its namesake, Lord Byron (Thorslev 12). Although he pointed to *Childe Harold* as the most complete definition of the Byronic Hero in Byron’s works, Thorslev declined to consider Byron’s later epic poem, *Don Juan*, citing its satiric tenor as an overly problematic element that precluded the work from an interpretation in the Byronic Hero tradition (220). Thorslev does not stand alone in taking issue with *Don Juan*. In his groundbreaking study, *Natural Supernaturalism*, Meyer Abrams dismissed Byron’s entire span of work, citing *Don Juan* as the precipitator for his decision: “Byron I omit altogether...because in his greatest work he speaks with an ironic counter-voice and deliberately opens a satirical perspective on the vatic stance of his Romantic contemporaries” (Abrams 13). It would seem that, for Thorslev and Abrams, such satire has no place in Romanticism or in its archetypal hero. For Thorslev in particular, Byron seems to have given up entirely on the Byronic Hero in *Don Juan*, letting it degenerate through flippant humor into something not worthy of comment.

By excluding *Don Juan* from their respective studies on the Byronic Hero and Romanticism, Thorslev and Abrams demonstrate the very inflexibility of thought that Byron himself struggled against in both his writing and his life. Such a refusal to consider a humorous viewpoint for the Byronic Hero not only does a great disservice to Byron’s aptitude for mobility of thought and social commentary, it also downplays an entire segment of Romantic literature

and philosophy, particularly the theories surrounding romantic irony. Anne Mellor addresses Meyer Abrams' omission of romantic irony from his study in her critical text, *English Romantic Irony*:

Romantic irony was as significant and important a way of thinking about the nature of the universe and the artistic process for nineteenth-century English writers as was that other great intellectual tendency of the age, natural supernaturalism. Meyer Abrams has cogently and persuasively argued that English and German romantic works frequently present a secularized Judeo-Christian conception of an ordered, teleological universe in which mankind progresses toward an apocalyptic marriage with the divine and a return to paradise. He is correct, but his failure to discuss either Friedrich Schlegel's concept of romantic irony or its greatest exemplar, Byron's *Don Juan*, should alert us to what Abrams left out of his description of "the spirit of the age." Not all romantic works present a confident movement from innocence to experience to a higher innocence, that circuitous journey which leads the protagonist spiraling upward to a more self-aware and therefore more meaningful communion with the divine. To the contrary, many central romantic works exhibit a structure that is deliberately open-ended and inconclusive.

(Mellor 5-6)

To understand romantic irony as Anne Mellor presents it, it is best to begin with the work of Friedrich Schiller. Schiller addressed the value of what he called the Sentimental poet's use of satire in his treatise *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*. The misfortune of the Sentimental poet, Schiller writes, is that he has the power to recognize the existence of an ideal and must simultaneously realize that it is an unreachable goal. The nature of this ideal is best exemplified in Schiller's discussion of children: "*They are what we were; they are what we should once*

again become. We were nature just as they, and our culture, by means of reason and freedom, should lead us back to nature. They are, therefore, not only the representation of our lost childhood, which eternally remains most dear to us, but fill us with a certain melancholy. But they are also representations of our highest fulfillment in the ideal, thus evoking in us a sublime tenderness” (Schiller 85). The ideal is the ultimate connection to nature, the existence of a universal truth that one can only experience by living spontaneously, free from self-reflexive or rational thought – in other words, by living in the mindset of the childlike, the naïve. However, the sentimental poet is fundamentally a rational being. As such, he can never experience the actuality of this ideal; he can only imagine it and feel humiliation. “We [the Sentimental] are touched not because we look down upon the child from the height of our strength and perfection, but rather because we *look upward* from the *limitation* of our condition...” (Schiller 87)

Instead of humiliation, however, Schiller charges the Sentimental poet to accept his fate with dignity and move forward. “That nature which you envy in the irrational [the naïve] is worthy of no respect, no longing. It lies behind you, and must lie eternally behind you. Abandoned by the ladder that supported you, no other choice now lies open to you, but with free consciousness and will to grasp the law, or fall without hope of rescue into a bottomless pit” (Schiller 101). The Sentimental’s task of accepting and addressing his fate can be achieved by three methods: satire, elegy and the idyll. The satiric method best illuminates the Byronic Hero, in particular because of its congruency with the rebellious nature found in that Romantic archetype.

In Schiller’s view of satirical poetry, the poet focuses less on the ideal of natural existence itself and instead addresses the discrepancy between the ideal and reality. He can do so either with seriousness and passion (tragic satire) or with humor (comic satire) (Schiller 117). It

is comic satire, claims Schiller, that provides the poet with the soundest platform from which to face his separation from nature. “Its purpose is uniform with the highest after which man has to struggle, to be free of passion, always clear, to look serenely about and within himself, to find everywhere more coincidence than fate, and rather to laugh at absurdity than to rage or weep at malice” (Schiller 122).

In light of this assertion by Schiller that one must “laugh at absurdity,” Meyer Abrams’ refusal to consider Byron’s work as Romantic based on *Don Juan*’s comic outlook is misguided at best. Thorslev’s rejection of the possibility of a satirical perspective in the Byronic Hero, however, is not as simple to dismiss as that of Meyer Abrams, because the satire used by Byron in his epic poem incorporates mocking invective. Often Byron moves well away from the playful into maliciousness, a satirical method that Schiller finds flawed: “...playful satire will succeed only with a beautiful soul. For...[it], which may treat only a morally neutral subject, would lapse unavoidably into frivolity, and lose all poetic value if in this case the manner did not ennoble the matter and the poet’s *personality* did not stand in place of his *theme*. But it is given only to the beautiful heart in all its utterances to impress a complete image of itself independently of the subject of its activity” (Schiller 120). Considering the unlikelihood that anyone, including the poet himself, would refer to Byron’s “beautiful soul,” in addition to the inclusion of morally charged subject matter in *Don Juan*, one might be inclined to agree with Thorslev. It is here, then, that one must turn from Schiller’s sentimental poet to the “*witziger*” poet of Romantic literary theorist, Friedrich Schlegel.

Schlegel, in conjunction with the group of authors known as the Jena Romantics, coauthored a series of fragmentary writings, many of which address the concept of *Witz*, or wit. Schlegel’s *Witz* is similar to the satire of Schiller’s Sentimental in several key ways, the most

important of which is its acute awareness of artificiality in society and its approach to morality. As it states in Schlegel's *Critical Fragment 9*, "Wit is absolute social feeling, or fragmentary genius" (*Critical Fragments* 144). This 'absolute social feeling' refers to the individual's realization that the construction of societal relationships is fundamentally artificial and often hypocritical. The individual includes himself within this realization, of course, and as such he experiences the same humiliation and resentment that Schiller's sentimental poet does. He recognizes his own limitations, his own inability to live outside of the boundaries of morality (or immorality). In *The Literary Absolute*, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean Luc Nancy enlarge on Schlegel's notion: "What this means is that *Witz*, as the romantics inherit and ennoble it, is constituted in the greatest proximity to what Hegel will call "Absolute Knowledge," which is absolute less because it is limitless knowledge than because it is knowledge that knows itself even as it knows what it knows, and which thereby forms the actual infinity of knowledge..." (Lacoue-Labarthe 53) The 'absolute knowledge' of such an individual is tragic, because its most important revelation is that he can never be otherwise than an artificial personality, one trapped within the rationality of Schiller's sentimental poet and forever banished from a pure, naïve existence.

If an individual's *Witz* merely limited itself to this tragic realization, however, it would fail to distinguish itself from Schiller's sentimentality. Yet *Witz*, as the word "wit" implies, is precisely not a tragic but a *humorous* reaction. It is a pathway toward the individual's sanity and survival, one that has nothing to do with passivity or even refined satire. Schlegel writes: "Wit is an explosion of confined spirit" (*Critical Fragments* 153). It is rebellious and utterly rejects the very artificial etiquette from which it knows it cannot escape. Another fragment states: "They have so little regard for wit because its expressions aren't long and wide enough, since their

sensitivity is only a darkly imagined mathematics; and because wit makes them laugh, which would be disrespectful if wit had real dignity. Wit is like someone who is supposed to behave in a manner representative of his station, but instead simply *does something*" (*Athenaeum Fragments* 176). Laughter in the face of lost dignity is how *Witz* finds its strength, and it is also the very type of biting humor that Byron incorporates into *Don Juan* and thus into the Byronic Hero.

In truth, *Don Juan*'s invective humor works, *because* Byron addresses the moral themes of his Romantic contemporaries with blunt honesty. The poem addresses an individual's disconnection from society and problems with hypocrisy, and it does so in a way far more upbeat and approachable than those found in characters like Chateaubriand's melancholy René (1802), Lermontov's brooding Pechorin (1840), Goethe's sentimental Werther (1774) or even Byron's own Manfred (1816-1817) and Childe Harold (1812-1818). As such, *Don Juan* (1819-1824) is a turning point for the Byronic Hero and marks the character type's progression into a newer generation.

In Thorslev's definition, the Byronic Hero is isolated from the society in which his author places him (Thorslev 18). In spite of this isolation, he should be passionate and heroic, a natural leader with unquestioned authority. He displays chivalry to women and is certainly never cruel to them. He is a character that evokes some level of sympathy from the reader, perhaps due to a wrong performed upon him by friends or society. Most importantly, he carries an aura of mystery about him which gives the impression of his sublimity (Thorslev 68-69). The Byronic Hero is typically middle-aged or younger, and his notable height and dark features add to his striking appearance. His eyes are always remarkable. Finally, the Byronic Hero should be aristocratic by birth, with an air of mystery or prior sin surrounding his origin (Thorslev 53-54).

With this overview of the Byronic Hero, it becomes clear that Byron's character Don Juan does not match the definition completely, particularly in the early cantos of the poem. His physical description, although it does note his eyes, does not match the tall, dark, brooding and middle-aged man (although it is possible that Byron had intended his character to grow throughout the poem into this description.) The air of mystery that should surround a Byronic Hero's origin is also not so clear cut when one considers Juan. The story of both his parents is laid forth in significant detail in the first canto, and there does not seem to be any doubt about his birth.

Despite these questionable parts of Don Juan, there are some aspects which ring true to the Byronic tradition, the most obvious of which is Juan's chivalry toward women. Unlike in previous literary incarnations of Don Juan, Byron's character does not actively pursue his lovers or view them as conquests (Bostetter 2-3). Instead, he approaches each rendezvous with the desire to love. He never voluntarily leaves a lover. In fact, each instance in which he is forced away from the women he loves could be construed as a wrong against him by society. One such example of this occurs when he and Haideé are discovered by her father, Lambro. The angry father immediately ships Juan off and sells him into slavery. Byron suggests that Juan is blameless in these events when describing his state on the ship:

Wounded and chained, so that he cannot move,
 And all because a lady fell in love. (*Don Juan* IV.51)

There is some truth to Byron's implication that a woman's love causes Juan's troubles, but of course this is an oversimplification for the purpose of satire. Juan does deserve some fault for his actions, but at the same time one must recognize the ignorance that keeps him from anticipating the negative outcomes. It is Juan's extreme innocence in the early cantos, in fact, that makes him

least like the Byronic Hero. If anything, his character's naiveté, appreciation of nature and feelings of love bring him closer to the "Child of Nature," one of the precursors to the Byronic Hero.¹

Thorslev mentions in his definition that the Child of Nature, in attempting to adjust to society's demands, is the author's tool for criticizing that society (Thorslev 21). Although Juan himself does serve as a useful vehicle for such criticism, Byron's reaction to society's hypocrisy ultimately comes through the voice of his narrator, a voice that – as will be shown later in this study – is also inextricably bound with Byron's own. This voice does not merely relate the story of Don Juan's experiences but rather comments repeatedly on them, often interposing details about his own personal life as well as self-aware commentary about his method of narration. The narrator's personality is often more filled out than many characters in the plot. Although his presence outside the storyline makes it harder to recognize his character traits, there are undeniably elements about the narrator that mirror the Byronic Hero. In fact, his existence outside the story allows for a level of mystery that the Byronic Hero ought to have regarding his origin.

Before going further into what one doesn't know about the narrator, one should examine the known. The narrator is unmarried. "I'm a plain man and in a single station" (*Don Juan* I.22.). He is 30 years old, not quite middle aged but certainly no longer a youth, and he dwells often on the fact that his own formative years were spent too rashly, if not even wasted:

But now at thirty years my hair is grey

(I wonder what it will be like at forty?

I thought of a peruke the other day);

¹ The Child of Nature is naïve and unsophisticated. His intimacy with nature gives him moral principles such as love and generosity and develops his strong sense of feeling (Thorslev 30).

My heart is not much greener, and in short I
 Have squandered my whole summer while 'twas May,
 And feel no more the spirit to retort. I
 Have spent my life, both interest and principal,
 And deem not, what I deemed, my soul invincible. (*Don Juan* I.213)

This passage gives a clue as to why the narrator is often cynical as he comments upon Don Juan's story (such as in the previously mentioned passage blaming woman's love for Juan's misfortune). He has lost the illusion of a moral society that he held as a youth (and which Juan still holds at the beginning of the poem). When combined with the known physical characteristics and the element of mystery otherwise surrounding him, the narrator does indeed take the shape of a Byronic Hero.

The Byronic Hero did not die out with the appearance of *Don Juan*. On the contrary, through the use of humor in the narrator's commentary, a new Byronic Hero emerged, one capable of uncovering the uncomfortable truths behind an artificial society. The inclusion of humor not only strengthened the resiliency of the character type himself; it also made him more accessible to a modern audience.

Indeed, the darkly humorous Byronic Hero does continue to thrive in popular culture, and this study seeks to explore the modern incarnation of this important Romantic figure by focusing on one notable example: the title character of the currently successful television show, *House, M.D.* This study explores the placement of Dr. Gregory House in the tradition of the Byronic Hero, focusing in particular on three key elements: those characteristics of House that fit the traditional Byronic Hero, the unique approach to morality that makes both House and the Byronic Hero a useful mechanism for social commentary, and finally the necessity for a

humorous outlook in order to secure the survival of this unique character in modern popular culture.

Mirroring Schlegel's discussion of wit in *Aethenaeum Fragment* 120, House is a man who "is supposed to behave in a manner representative of his station," that of a renowned diagnostic physician. Instead of confining himself to socially established behavior, however, House "simply *does* something," and he acts in conjunction with an irrepressible sense of humor (*Athenaeum Fragments* 176). House's deeds are those of a man who knows that life is a joke and who decides to join in on the laughter, even when it is at his own expense. Combined with the characteristics of the traditional Byronic Hero, the product is a character whom we cannot ignore, whose opinions and actions fill us with simultaneous shock and delight and whose *Witz* has ensured the continued vitality of this nineteenth century figure well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Of course, there are some problems that the limited nature of this study prohibits from being addressed fully; nevertheless, it would be remiss not to address them at least briefly. First, other than including a brief discussion of Arthur Conan Doyle's character, Sherlock Holmes, this study moves directly from Byron's late nineteenth century works to the twenty-first century appearance of House, thus excluding over a century of historicity of the Byronic Hero. While a longer exploration of Byronic incarnations in the twentieth century would certainly be interesting, it is not critical to this analysis of House. Byron's fusion of romantic irony into the Byronic Hero (which this study will elaborate upon in detail) created a character type capable of transcending societal variations within the period of literary modernity that began in the mid-

eighteenth century.² Thus a direct comparison of *House, M.D.* to Byron's *Don Juan* does not neglect any critical evolutionary steps in the character type.

This transcendent nature of the modern Byronic Hero also helps to overcome the second problem in this study: that of genre. The background of the Byronic Hero as he appears in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is, of course, grounded in a literary genre, and the transition of the character to the medium of television raises questions of how the Byronic Hero translates across genres. In particular, the switch from literature to television produces the problem of authorship. While *Don Juan* can be studied in light of the overlapping biographical nature of its sole author, the individual episodes of *House, M.D.* are created by a wide variety of writers, with House's main creator being screenwriter David Shore. This collective creative force seems to preclude one's ability to study House within the milieu of creator/creation that is an important element of the romantic ironic fall. Despite this difficulty, however, this study shall show that House's characterization still places him securely into the tradition of the Byronic Hero and romantic irony. In addition, a future study of the writers of *House, M.D.* could look into possible overlap of individual writers' biographies and the episodes that they created.

A final potential issue that arises in this study lies in the comparison made between the historical figure Lord Byron and the fictional character House. It would typically be problematic to equate a carefully created fictional being with a real, historical individual, but Byron as a historical character is in fact as crafted as any of his literary characters. This study will devote some time to elucidating the illusory, posturing nature of Byron the man, insofar as it relates to transcendental buffoonery. However, a complete review of the fictionality behind Byron's historical, public persona would require a separate study.

² In his influential work, *Five Faces of Modernity*, Matei Calinescu provides an in-depth review of modernism, including a variety of critical opinions on when "modernity" began. Ultimately, Calinescu identifies the Romantic movement as the starting point for literary modernism.

In a longer study, the aforementioned issues could be addressed in more detail. However, their exclusion here does not distract from the focal interest of this study: that the Byronic Hero thrives in the twenty-first century, largely thanks to the inclusion of romantic irony and wit, and that his modern success is particularly exemplified in the fascinating television character, Gregory House. The purpose of this study is to analyze House's status as a Byronic Hero and the way his humor and the philosophical assumptions underlying it have maintained the vitality of this figure. Chapter One surveys the characteristics of the traditional Byronic Hero and their expression in House. Chapter Two focuses on House's unique perspective on morality, particularly regarding social artifice, hypocrisy, and religious faith. As will be shown, House's worldview on these topics mirrors Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's concept of "Absolute Knowledge" in *The Literary Absolute*. The potential for such a perspective to lead to a tragic ending will also be demonstrated. Chapter Three demonstrates how Byron's archetypically serious, even tragic Hero slowly evolved into an ironic, *witziger* figure that shows clear signs of being the progenitor of Hugh Laurie's commanding and wildly popular twenty-first century television hero.

CHAPTER 1

SOUTH OF NORMAL

“...when you’re that big of a jerk, you’re either great, or you’re unemployed.”

-Ronald Neuberger, “Sex Kills”

Early in the first season of *House, M.D.*, the opening credits end to show a beautiful woman lying in a hospital bed. A bouquet of roses stands on the table at her bedside. A soothing landscape painting hangs on the wall. Her doctor stands over her, his hands pensively folded in front of his pristine white jacket. The neatly ironed collar of his blue button down shirt peaks out of the front of his jacket, as does his striped red tie. He is young, as beautiful as the woman. His hair is blond, shiny, perfectly combed back; his skin is flawless; his jaw line sculpted. He looks down at the woman sympathetically as he begins to reveal the results of her MRI. Before he can softly whisper the diagnosis, however, the camera pans back to reveal the edges of a television screen. Into the shot walks Dr. Gregory House, blocking the view of the medical soap opera as he peels back the plastic cover of a cup of cut fruit. “It’s amnesia,” announces House mockingly before he sticks a white plastic spoon into his mouth and flops himself into a chair in the hospital lounge. Like the soap opera’s doctor, House also wears a blue button down shirt, but his is untucked and wrinkled. The top three buttons are undone, and the collar bends up awkwardly. Absent are the tie and the white doctor’s coat. House’s hair is unkempt and overdue to be cut. He is unshaven, which intensifies the haggardness of his features, the wrinkles on his forehead and the lines under his eyes (“Maternity”).

Before anything else is said, before one sees House interact with anyone else, it is already clear that he is as far from the typical charming, compassionate television doctor as one can get. This juxtaposition of House against the soap opera's attractive physician amplifies the physical characteristics outlined by Peter Thorslev as Byronic. In *The Byronic Hero*, Thorslev provides a list of characteristics held by the Gothic Villain – characteristics that would transition into the later Hero of Sensibility and finally into the Romantic Outlaw that would become the Byronic Hero (Thorslev 52). The Byronic Hero is described by Thorslev as a tall, striking, dark-haired man, generally middle-aged or younger (53). Indeed, House is a lanky man, usually tall enough to be able to look down when he is talking to or mocking those around him. Furthermore, while not conventionally attractive, House's appearance is nevertheless alluring. He is, as all Byronic Heroes should be, tall, dark and handsome.

House's bright blue eyes also increase his connection to the Byronic Hero. Thorslev states of the Gothic Villain: "...the most noticeable of his physical characteristics are his eyes" (53). House's blue eyes (no coincidence, as the actor Hugh Laurie's real eye color is brown) starkly contrast the otherwise dark, brooding expression that he usually wears ("Casting Session with Hugh Laurie"). Each time the camera focuses on House's face, one cannot avoid being caught up by the intensity of those eyes. It is an intensity mirrored in many other incarnations of the Byronic Hero. In particular, the narrator's description of Pechorin in Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* demonstrates the power of the Byronic Hero's stare:

Behind his half-lowered eyelashes, his eyes shone with a phosphorescent gleam, if I can put it that way. This was not a reflection of his soul's ardency or his playful imagination; this was a gleam like the gleam of smooth steel, blinding but cold; his gaze, brief yet

perceptive and hard, left the disagreeable impression of an immodest question and might have seemed impudent had it not been so indifferently calm. (Lermontov 49)

Two of Byron's creations demonstrate similar features, Conrad from *The Corsair* and the title character of *Lara*. Lara boasts the same "furrowed brow" as House, as well as "a glance that took their thoughts from others by a single look" (*Lara* I.67, 71-72). Conrad's description goes further in regard to the searching element of his gaze:

There breathe but few whose aspect might defy
 The full encounter of his searching eye:
 He had the skill, when Cunning's gaze would seek
 To probe his heart and watch his changing cheek,
 At once the observer's purpose to espy,
 And on himself roll back his scrutiny,
 Lest he to Conrad rather should betray
 Some secret thought, than drag that chief's to day. (*Corsair* I.215-222)

This ability of the Byronic Hero to seek out truths from others' expressions also appears in House. Often House will pause in the middle of a conversation and stare intently at the other's face while the camera closes into those searching blue eyes. For a few moments those eyes will flick back and forth, reading the "secret thoughts" of his conversation partner. Finally his eyes will narrow knowingly while House voices his discovery. Thus the eyes are more than a mere physical characteristic; they are a tool to aid what seems to be a preternatural gift for reading others.

Although his eyes are a critical component of House's appearance, there is in fact a more obvious and direct reference to the Byronic Hero: House's leg. Its debilitating injury – muscle

death that remained undiagnosed too long to be treatable – leaves House in a permanent state of pain and thus reliant upon a cane to walk (“Pilot”).³ This is a striking similarity to Lord Byron’s own real-life deformity; he was born with a deformed right foot that could have been fixed if he’d had access to modern medicine.

According to one Byron critic, Jason Shinder, this physical handicap fueled Byron’s excellence as a poet, just as any psychological or physical disadvantage would supplement the driven nature of a Byronic Hero such as House: “It seems throughout his life Byron’s defects were the elements of his greatness – as was noted by his friends and lovers” (Muldoon 63). Indeed, numerous critics refer to Byron as being the real-world embodiment of the Byronic Hero. Harold Bloom acknowledges that both Childe Harold and Manfred (both Byronic Heroes) are interchangeable with Byron himself (Bloom 3), and Northrop Frye asserts that the appeal of Byron’s poetry is intrinsically tied to its being about Byron (Frye 53).

House’s limp and Byron’s club foot also underscore the Satanic nature of the Byronic Hero’s character. In *The Limping Hero: Grottesque in Literature*, Peter L. Hays elaborates upon the link between deformity, character and Satan:

That such characters should be deformed – that they should, in particular, limp – is an ancient notion probably derived from two sources: deformity, from the Platonic concept that a man’s character is reflected in his appearance; limping, from the tradition that the Arch Enemy of man, Satan (Hebrew for “the adversary”), has cloven hooves which he can disguise but not entirely conceal should he take human shape (106-7).

³ As explained in the later episode, “Three Stories,” House’s injury is the result of a clotted aneurysm that led to an infarction. It remained undiagnosed for three days and consequently caused muscle cell death. After House went into a medically-induced coma to avoid the pain, his girlfriend Stacy used her position as medical proxy to order House’s doctor to remove the dead muscle. Because of the extent of the muscle removed, the utility of the House’s leg is severely compromised, and he experiences chronic pain.

Byron saw this connection between his own disability and Satan, telling his wife that he saw himself as the “avatar of a fallen angel” (*Don Juan in Context* 26). Jerome McGann asserts in *Don Juan in Context*, however, that Byron’s Satan is not the traditional embodiment of evil but rather a descendant of Milton’s Satan – a humanized creature who may be guilty but has also been unavoidably guided into his crimes by circumstances beyond his control (25, 27). Thus Byron’s numerous Byronic Heroes – Conrad, Manfred, Lucifer, Cain, and others – are both diabolical and sympathetic. “We sympathize with them,” says McGann, “yet our sympathy is not for that in them which is innocent or virtuous but precisely for that which has driven them to crime” (32).

To suggest that a deformed foot is the sole factor in the development of Byron the legend, however, is grossly oversimplified, just as is the implication that House’s enigmatic behavior results solely from a leg injury. House’s behavior is best summarized in a performance review given by his supervisor, Dr. Lisa Cuddy, during the fourth season of the show:

CUDDY: Your treatment of patients is reprehensible... Your management of employees borders on abuse... You are overtly contemptuous to hospital hierarchy.

HOUSE: And covertly. But I suppose you didn’t know about that.

CUDDY: Your attitude toward supervisory personnel is disrespectful, and a disturbingly large portion of your comments are either racist or sexist.

HOUSE: That top makes you look like an Afghani prostitute... would be an example of that. (“No More Mr. Nice Guy”)

House’s final remark in this exchange not only highlights the elements of racism and sexism that Cuddy reprehends, it also serves as a shining example of House’s *hubris*. This trait, which Thorslev cites as a key component to the Byronic Hero, strengthens House’s obstinacy as he

seemingly pits himself against the world around him. Thorslev elaborates upon this self-imposed isolation as it appears in the Byronic Hero: “The Romantic hero types...are invariably solitaires, and are fundamentally and heroically rebellious...” (66). Each offhand remark by House and his apparent lack of respect for anyone else reinforces his defiant demeanor.

House’s rebelliousness is further expressed in behavior that harms no one except himself. Willful self-destructiveness permeates House’s actions in numerous episodes, especially in regard to his excessive use of Vicodin, often in conjunction with alcohol. Despite his leg injury, House rides a motorcycle which he eventually crashes (“Locked In”). In another episode, he purposefully slams a paperweight into his hand, breaking it in order to release endorphins into his system (“Detox”). Later, he induces a painful migraine in himself and follows it with an experimental drug, simply to disprove the work of a colleague against whom House has a grudge (“Distractions”). In these examples and many others, the risks of House’s actions greatly outweigh any potential benefit, to the point that House’s motivations seem steeped in irrationality. Yet House is far from irrational; on the contrary, the premise of the medical drama is based upon House’s innate ability to solve calmly and logically medical cases that others cannot. Why, then, would a man, whose livelihood depends upon the survival of others, treat his own body so carelessly? It suggests a death wish, one that is a staple of the Cain-Ahasuerus extension of the Byronic Hero (Thorslev 106). The motivations behind this death wish will be explored in significant detail in the next chapter of this study. For now, it is important to note the effect that House’s dangerous deeds have upon others’ opinions of him.

House’s enigmatic and sometimes contradictory behavior frequently intrigues his coworkers and friends. His staff debates what kind of parents produced a man like House (“Daddy’s Boy”). Dr. Cameron wonders what House was like before his leg injury

(“Honeymoon”). Wilson in particular spends an inordinate amount of time attempting to explain House’s actions. In one example, House rejects the love of his life after an extensive effort to win her back. Wilson’s exasperated response is typical:

WILSON: You’re an idiot. You don’t think she’d be better off without you... You have no idea why you sent her off... This was no great sacrifice. You sent her away, because you’ve got to be miserable... You don’t like yourself, but you do admire yourself. It’s all you’ve got, so you cling to it. You’re so afraid if you change, you’ll lose what makes you special. (“Need to Know”)

Wilson sounds confident as he speaks, but in actuality he is left guessing about House as much as anyone else in the series. This constant questioning of House’s motives parallels another critical element of the Byronic Hero: mystery. According to Thorslev, “what particularly distinguishes the fully-developed Romantic Noble Outlaw... is his cloak of mystery and his air of the sublime... The hero is dogged eternally by secret sins” (69-70).

The mystery surrounding an elusive past and possible sin is indeed a cornerstone of the Byronic Hero in his many incarnations. Byron’s *Manfred* alludes to the likelihood that the title character engaged in an illicit affair with his sister, one that eventually led to her death. This is never entirely confirmed, however, as Manfred refuses to voice his past sin even to the spirits: “Of that which is within me; read it there / Ye know it, and I cannot utter it” (*Manfred* I.i.138-139). The full driving force behind Manfred’s isolation and subsequent Faustian actions remains hidden in his own private thoughts.

Another example of mystery surrounding incestuous sin appears in Chateaubriand’s *René*, whose title character marks an early stage in the development of the Byronic Hero. Near the end of the novella, Amelia admits that her love of her brother René contains an incestuous

attraction. Although René's descriptions of his sister may also contain that same undertone, he is never conscious of that fact. As such, René's innocence regarding his sister's and his own true feelings compound the confusion that he and others have about his sensibilities. René states, "How can I describe the host of fleeting sensations I felt in my rambles? The echoes of passion in the emptiness of a lonely heart are like the murmurings of wind and water in the silence of the wilderness – they offer their joy, but cannot be portrayed" (*René* 97). René's inability to define the target of his innermost desire leads to his emotional seclusion from society. At first this isolation comes through his inability to converse with others on a common ground, and later it manifests itself in his self-imposed exile to the woods and later to America.

Of course, the isolation and mystery surrounding House is too subtle to blame on an experience as specific as incest, but it certainly implicates some prior trauma or sin, some demon from his past that inspires his current aptitude for insulting others and endangering himself. Yet another literary Byronic Hero maintains a similar, more obscure sense of mystery around his actions: Grigory Alexandrovich Pechorin of Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (published 1840). Coming nearly 40 years after *René* (1802), this novel demonstrates a much more developed Romantic hero, one which comes significantly closer to Thorslev's definition of the Byronic Hero than the Pre-Romantic Rene does.

Mystery surrounds Pechorin in respect to both his background and the motivations behind his actions. This mystery is aided by the fact that the narrator of *A Hero of Our Time* never comes into direct contact with Pechorin, save on one occurrence when the two barely speak. All the information about Pechorin comes to the narrator either through the story-telling of Maksim Maksimych, an old man who lived with Pechorin for only one year, or through the diary entries of Pechorin. Neither source offers concrete information on Pechorin's background; instead the

narrator only has hints and vague references to past events to help round out the character that is Pechorin. With respect to Maksim Maksimych, the old man often attempts to guess at the motivations behind Pechorin's behavior, and the result is a constant shift in the reader's expectation of Pechorin's next actions.

A particular element of Pechorin's behavior that continually shifts revolves around his attitude toward women. His apparent objectification of women is exemplified when Pechorin decides to arrange a kidnapping of Bela, the youngest daughter of a local prince with whom he has become enraptured. His decision to kidnap Bela happens on a whim after he spots her at a party, and he gains possession of her by trading a stolen horse (Lermontov 14, 20). This unapologetic objectification demonstrated by Lermontov's Byronic Hero also turns up in House's frequent comments toward and about patients and co-workers. In the pilot episode of the series, House informs Cameron that he hired her, not because she is a competent doctor, but rather because she is pleasing to the eye – like a piece of “fine art.” Later in “Three Stories,” House uses the image of Carmen Electra in place of his actual patients while relating diagnosis examples to a class.

This initial suggestion that House only views women as sexual objects wavers, however, in light of his relationship with his ex-girlfriend, Stacy. She first appears in the series in “Three Stories” – the same episode in which House objectifies Carmen Electra. The juxtaposition of the two women makes it clear that any appreciation House holds for women as sex objects is nothing compared to the passionate love he harbors for Stacy. In reference to one of the patient examples, House tells his class that facing death clarifies what is critically important to an individual. As the episode progresses, a flashback shows House at the time of his leg injury. Facing possible death himself, he declares to Stacy that he loves her.

Similar to the revelation that House is deeply capable of love, the first impression of Pechorin's disrespect of Bela falters when he refuses to force himself upon her. Instead, he endeavors to win her heart through kindness and material gifts, a method which finally works when he presents her with an ultimatum and the possibility of losing him forever. However, while this suggests to Maksim Maksimych (and the reader) that Pechorin is a man capable of deep and lasting love, he suddenly dispels this notion by quickly losing interest in Bela.

House is equally unable to maintain a lasting relationship with Stacy, despite the strength of his love for her. Stacy attempts to explain why their relationship is so powerful and yet doomed to fail:

STACY: Our relationship's like an addiction. It's like...vindaloo curry. It's really, really hot Indian curry they make with red chili peppers. You're abrasive and annoying and come on way to strong, like vindaloo curry. And when you're crazy about curry, that's fine. But no matter how much you love curry, if you have too much of it, it takes the roof of your mouth off. And then you never want to see curry for a really, really long time. But you wake up one day and you think, god I really miss curry. ("Failure to Communicate")

House comprehends as clearly as Stacy does that he will ultimately hurt her. Nevertheless, he remains unable to keep his distance and spends the first half of Season Two trying to win Stacy away from her husband. When he finally succeeds, however, his immediate response is to spurn Stacy again and send her back to her husband. He acknowledges that he cannot keep Stacy happy, that he will hurt her and ultimately push her away. Stacy attempts to convince House otherwise:

STACY: It doesn't have to be [this way].

HOUSE: It does. It does. I don't want to go there again. I'm sorry, Stacy. ("Need to Know")

Some understanding of House's inability to be with the love of his life comes through the following passage, in which Pechorin attempts to explain his own inconstant behavior toward Bela:

Whether I am a fool or a villain I know not; but this is certain, I am also most deserving of pity – perhaps more than she. My soul has been spoiled by the world, my imagination is unquiet, my heart insatiate. To me everything is of little moment. I become as easily accustomed to grief as to joy, and my life grows emptier day by day. (Lermontov 43)

Even Pechorin is uncertain of his own character, compounding the sense of mystery already present. He continually questions himself and often regrets his own actions. As he states in his diary entry of June 25, "I sometimes despise myself... Is not that the reason why I despise others also?...I have grown incapable of noble impulses; I am afraid of appearing ridiculous to myself" (Lermontov 150). Just as he says in his earlier statement about being either a fool or a villain, Pechorin recognizes his faults and condemns himself for them. His doubt about his own villainy offsets his vices for the reader and casts a sympathetic light over him. At the same time, however, Pechorin is incapable of acting any differently, and inevitably forces the reader to revisit the question of villainy and motivation.

In this same June 25 passage, Pechorin gives the reader one tidbit of information from his past – the prophesy of his death by a wicked wife's hand – and with this kernel he tries to understand his current inability to love. "I was profoundly struck by her words at the time: an irresistible repugnance to marriage was born within my soul... Meanwhile, something tells me that her prediction will be realized; I will try, at all events, to arrange that it shall be realized as

late in life as possible” (Lermontov 150). Peter Thorslev cites a wrong performed upon the Byronic Hero earlier in life by friends or society that ultimately contributes to his split from societal constructs. The fortune-teller’s prophecy does not entirely fit this definition. It is not performed by a friend, and the fortune-teller as a symbol of society is questionable. Also, the intention behind her prophesy was most likely to entertain rather than to cause harm. Nevertheless, it does harm Pechorin, and insofar as it is a past traumatic event that led to his current fickle nature, it certainly applies.

Returning to House, then, one once again faces the problem of defining the basis for his motivations. What happens to a man that causes him to isolate himself voluntarily from the world, to emanate a profoundly inaccessible personality while he simultaneously fights to save lives? From where does his apparent death wish stem? The most immediate answer to these questions is one that House provides multiple times throughout the show: the muscle death which has left him with limited use of his leg. He particularly blames his leg for his excessive Vicodin habit, claiming that it’s necessary to control his chronic pain:

CUDDY: You’re addicted.

HOUSE: If the pills ran my life, I’d agree with you, but it’s my leg that’s busy calendaring what I can’t do.

CUDDY: You’re in denial.

HOUSE: Right. I never had an infarction in my leg. No dead muscle, no nerve damage. It doesn’t even hurt. Actually, it kind of tickles! And chicks dig this better than a puppy.

(“Detox”)

Later in the same show, House admits to Wilson that he is addicted to the Vicodin, but he also affirms that the pills keep him functional, taking away the pain enough to let him do his job.

Such an excessive level of constant pain, one that pushes a man into drug addiction, certainly serves as a reasonable explanation for House's fractious moods, sarcastic comments and abusiveness toward others. However, further exploration into House's past confirms that his motivations are not so easy to define. His high school yearbook photo, placed amid classmates with typical smiling poses, depicts a brooding House even as a teenager ("Half-Wit"). House's ex-girlfriend Stacy affirms that before House's injury, he was "pretty much the same" ("Honeymoon"). Most telling of all this accusation by Wilson, that House uses his leg as an easy, albeit distorted way to justify his behavior:

WILSON: You don't want a healthy leg...If you've got a good life, if you're healthy, you've got no reason to bitch, no reason to hate life. ("No Reason")

This particular statement turns out not to be Wilson's but rather the result of House's hallucination, revealing that it is House's own realization about himself. His leg is not the reason for his behavior; it is only the excuse. Indeed, further exploration shows that House did suffer deeper trauma in his past, a fact that corresponds firmly to Thorslev's assertion that prior wrongs done to a Byronic Hero are done by those to whom he was closest – family or friends. In House's case, the perpetrator was his father. Early in the second season of the show, House makes his first revelation about his father to Cameron:

HOUSE: My dad's just like you. Not the 'caring until your eyes pop out' part. Just the insane moral compass that won't let you lie to anybody about anything. It's a great quality in boy scouts and police witnesses. Crappy quality for a dad. ("Daddy's Boy")

Just after House speaks these words, the scene cuts to an exchange between a father and a dying son. The father knows that his son will imminently die; nevertheless, he lies outright and says the son will be fine. Immediately the scene cuts back to House getting onto his motorcycle and

driving away. The implication is clear: House's relationship with his father has been devoid of comfort, even in the face of life's most terrifying truths.

Two seasons later into the show, House provides a more significant glimpse into his relationship with his father while describing the abuse he suffered. He prevaricates at first, claiming it was at the hands of his grandmother; later, however, he confesses that the following experiences were with his father:

HOUSE: She liked things the way she liked them. And she believed in discipline. She was right, I suppose, because I hardly ever screwed up when she was around. Too scared of being forced to sleep in the yard or take a bath in ice. ("One Day, One Room")

This abuse echoes the emotional mistreatment experienced by Lord Byron himself, who spent his early years at the mercy of a resentful, vindictive mother and a sexually abusive nurse (Manning xiii). For Byron, House, and numerous other incarnations of the Byronic Hero, it is this unfair treatment bestowed upon them by the rest of the world, and particularly by those who should be the most trustworthy, that pushes the Byronic Hero into a state of rebellious isolation. Peter Thorslev writes, "The Romantic Heroes...stand firmly as individuals outside of society. Thoroughgoing rebels, they invariably appeal to the reader's sympathies against the unjust restrictions of the social, moral, or even religious codes of the worlds in which they find themselves" (Thorslev 22). A striking reflection of Thorslev's insight, *House, M.D.* never lets its viewers forget that House is this very kind of rebel, pushed to the fringe of society and eternally unable to reintegrate himself.

One momentary image from the first season solidifies this characterization. House walks through the lobby of the hospital on his way home. He is in stark focus; his sharp blue eyes face ahead resolutely, yet lost in thought; he leans heavily on his cane as he progresses slowly

forward. Around House, the hospital bustles with myriad bodies moving in all directions. They move much more quickly than House, so quickly in fact that they remain out of focus (“Control”). This is a world as enduringly beyond the reach of House as it is momentarily beyond the focus of the viewer. He may walk in its midst, but he is still separate. This isolation is a key defining feature of the Byronic Hero, and its constant appearance in House, combined with his physical characteristics, mysterious demeanor and history of injury, cements his place in the Byronic Hero tradition.

CHAPTER 2

GOD DOESN'T LIMP

“She has God inside her. It would have been easier to deal with a tumor.”

-Dr. Gregory House, “Damned If You Do”

Although each season of *House, M.D.* provides additional insights into the enigmatic character that is Dr. Gregory House, all of the key elements necessary for what makes House an exemplary example of the Byronic Hero exist within the first season. Indeed, one need not look beyond the first few episodes of Season One to find what makes House the fascinating persona that attracts today’s modern audience. Beyond the physical characteristics, the mysterious persona, and the suggestion of past sin or trauma, the most alluring aspect of the Byronic Hero is his unique perspective on moral or immoral behavior in the society around him.

In order to evaluate House’s worldview, it is first useful to consider the initial impression that he gives when faced with specific examples of moral or immoral behavior. At first glance, it appears that House has no desire to face such experiences at all. Five minutes into the pilot episode of the show, House accepts the accusation that he is trying to eliminate humanity from the practice of medicine by refusing even to talk to his patients. He summarizes his reason bluntly: “Humanity’s overrated” (“Pilot”). Two episodes later, House once again discusses his reasons for practicing medicine. Unlike his friend Wilson, who treats patients out of a sense of caring, House states that he treats patients solely because the symptoms interest him (“Occam’s Razor”). This brief exchange demonstrates a fundamental characteristic that separates House

from typical doctors. House has a driving need to solve the puzzle. This is what keeps him working, not any greater moral desire to improve or save the lives of his patients.

House's focus upon the cold facts of the puzzle is emphasized when he refuses to stop looking for an explanation, even after his patients have already been cured. In the same episode as the aforementioned conversation with Wilson, House searches obsessively to prove his theory that one patient was poisoned from an incorrectly filled prescription. The episode ends with the patient already cured and sent home, while House sits on the floor of the hospital's pharmacy and digs methodically through bottles of pills. Only when House finds gout medication that matches his patient's intended cough tablets, does he close his eyes in relief, lean his head against the wall and smile ("Occam's Razor"). One episode later, the show concludes similarly. After an epidemic sweeps through the hospital, House desperately needs to find the source of the virus. It is not enough that the virus itself has been identified and that the afflicted children have been cured; House needs to follow his case to its very beginning. Not until the final minutes of the episode, when House spots the hospital's flower lady and identifies her as the source of the virus, can he smile, satisfied that his puzzle is solved ("Maternity").

The two examples just cited clearly demonstrate House's fascination with the puzzle; however, there are more extreme examples that demonstrate the extent to which House values the puzzle over even his patients' lives. In the second season episode, "TB or not TB", House plays chicken with one patient's life, willingly watching the patient's vitals drop and waiting until the very last moment before he acts, in order to make a diagnosis. House frequently seems to disregard the safety of his patients as he attempts dangerous treatments in lieu of slower and safer diagnostic procedures. Each patient's symptom, each reaction, regardless of the implicit danger, is a clue to aid House in his diagnosis.

House's fascination with solving mysteries extends beyond patient diagnoses. He also demonstrates a profound ability to uncover the underlying motivations of friends and coworkers. One striking example of this occurs when House goes on his only date with Dr. Cameron. House spends significant energy trying to understand why Dr. Cameron is so adamant about dating him, despite his abrasive demeanor. After a number of episodes in which he ponders this mystery, House finally reveals his decision:

HOUSE: You live under the delusion that you can fix everything that isn't perfect. It's why you married a man who was dying of cancer. You don't love. You need. And now that your husband is dead, you're looking for your next charity case. That's why you're going out with me. I'm twice your age. I'm not great looking. I'm not charming. I'm not even nice. What I am is what you need. I'm damaged. ("Love Hurts")

Cameron's reaction to this and subsequent episodes show that House's reading of Cameron's motivations is accurate. This is not the only time that House provides such insightful understanding of the people around him. Of course, it is deeply ironic that a man whose own inner workings and past experiences are an utter mystery should be so driven and talented at uncovering the mysteries of others.

House's driving fascination to uncover every potential clue in order to solve any mystery around him is reminiscent of another Byronic Hero, one who, first published in 1887, appeared later than Byron's own works: Sherlock Holmes. Much like House, Holmes is a drug addict and indulges in heroin or cocaine as a way to dull discomfort. Holmes does not look to assuage physical pain like House claims to do; instead, he claims to need an escape from mental boredom, a torture in itself:

“My mind,” he said, “rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exultation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, or rather created it for I am the only one in the world.” (“The Sign of Four” 64)

Holmes’s contention that he craves ‘mental exultation’ mirrors the emotional high that Wilson often accuses House of seeking via patient diagnostics. In one conversation with Doctor Foreman, Wilson states that House views his patients as puzzles. “He hates them, and he’s fascinated by them” (“The Socratic Method”). Wilson is correct in illuminating House’s fascination with the nature of the puzzle surrounding each patient. However he is wrong by suggesting that House hates the people that he treats. House’s abhorrence is in fact the same as that cited by Sherlock Holmes; House hates “the dull routine of existence.”

By citing this dull routine, Sherlock Holmes, and by extension House, reveals his placement within Friedrich von Schiller’s theory of the Sentimental. As discussed in this study’s introductory chapter, a key element of Schiller’s Sentimental, particularly when satirical, is his acute awareness of the artificiality in society and in morality. This artifice is everything that Schiller’s Sentimental rejects. In his Introduction to Schiller’s *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, Julius Elias affirms that the sentimental poet “seeks nature (i.e., that ideal unity) precisely because it is lacking in himself. For him there is an immense disparity between the ideas of infinite perfection he entertains about the world and the finite imperfection he actually encounters” (Elias 25). This constraint upon the sentimental temperament to interact and conform with society’s artifice leads to the attitudes seen in both Sherlock Holmes and House. In

Season Three of *House, M.D.*, House elaborates upon this awareness that he is trapped in artifice when he voices his envy of an autistic child:

HOUSE: See, skinny, socially privileged white people get to draw this neat little circle, and everyone inside the circle is normal. Everyone outside the circle should be beaten, broken and reset and brought *into* the circle. Failing that, they should be institutionalized, or worse, pitied.

CAMERON: So it's wrong to feel sorry for this little boy?

HOUSE: Why would you feel sorry for someone who gets to opt out of the inane courteous formalities which are utterly meaningless, insincere and therefore degrading? This kid doesn't have to pretend to be interested in your back pain or your excretions or your grandma's itchy place. Can you imagine how liberating it would be to live a life free of all the mind-numbing social niceties? I don't pity this kid. I envy him. ("Lines in the Sand")

House's envy of his autistic patient reflects the Sentimental's envy of naïve individuals, who "act and think naively in the midst of the artificial circumstances of fashionable society; they forget in their own beautiful humanity that they have to do with a depraved world" (Schiller 93). Despite Dr. Cameron's desire to pity House's patient, House realizes that the boy's autism makes him lucky and provides the freedom to exist in an eternal, childlike "state of innocence, i.e., in a condition of harmony and of peace with himself and with his environment" (Schiller 147).

House's revelation of envy for his autistic patient (and by extension, for the naïve sensibility) demonstrates the crux of Byron's contribution to the Byronic Hero. Indeed, House's contempt for the "mind-numbing social niceties" strongly mirrors Byron's own scorn for what Claude Fuess calls "social parasites and office seekers" (Fuess 173). Fuess goes on to cite a

passage from Byron's *Don Juan*, in which the narrator alludes to the need for caution in a hypocritical, scandalous world: "Be hypocritical, be cautious, be / Not what you *seem*, but always what you *see*" (*Don Juan* XI.86). This assertion from *Don Juan*'s narrator, that what one always sees is in fact hypocrisy repeats itself in House's common declaration that "everybody lies." During one conversation with a senator, House elaborates: "Wanting to believe the best about people doesn't make it true" ("Role Model"). For House, true selflessness is an impossibility. There are no naturally good, decent, caring people. As he states to Wilson, people are nice to other people, because they "are cowards. If I'm mean to you, you'll be mean to me. Mutually ensured destruction" ("Acceptance"). Later in Season Two, House expresses his resentment for another doctor who devotes his career to helping overcome the tuberculosis epidemic in Africa. House refuses to believe that such humanitarian efforts could be devoid of any underlying reasons.

FOREMAN: So, the great humanitarian is as selfish as the rest of us?

HOUSE: Just not as honest about it. ("TB or not TB")

House believes that the aforementioned humanitarian doctor finds his personal reward through fame, and this refusal to believe in the existence of such a selfless act underscores House's unassailable conviction in the hypocrisy of humanity. Indeed, for House, everybody lies, and his preternatural ability to see through and expose those lies turns House into a powerful vehicle for social correction.

Such detestation of hypocrisy shows up in Byron's work, as well. In particular, *Don Juan*'s narrator frequently expresses his distaste for insincerity, as demonstrated in the following passage:

I hate inconstancy; I loathe, detest,

Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made
 Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast
 No permanent foundation can be laid. (*Don Juan* II.209)

Leslie Brisman points out that Byron delights not only in asserting the existence of societal hypocrisy, but also in bringing specific examples of hypocritical acts to light. Referring to this element of Byron's writing as "satiric demystification," Brisman asserts that Byron's "dismissal of mystery underlies the genuine effort at the pristine" (Brisman 84-5). This pristine quality that Brisman refers to is that of the character Haidee and her naïve, unsophisticated simplicity. There is an implication in Brisman's statement that Byron's description of Haidee and his stripping away of societal hypocrisy could potentially provide the reader with a glimpse of a true naïve temperament. However, the reality of this possibility is unlikely, and the vast majority of *Don Juan's* commentary clearly intends to do no more than to uncover hypocrisy. There is no intent or hope for correction. There is only the demystification of each person's hidden agenda as uncovered through their interactions with the (initially) innocent Don Juan.

One of the earliest examples in Byron's text revolves around Juan's mother, Donna Inez. The narrator suggests that Juan's first love affair with Julia, rather than occurring by chance, might have been orchestrated by Donna Inez.

But Inez was so anxious and so clear
 Of sight that I must think on this occasion
 She had some other motive much more near
 For leaving Juan to this new temptation.
 But what that motive was I shan't say here;
 Perhaps to finish Juan's education,

Perhaps to open Don Alfonso's eyes

In case he thought his wife too great a prize. (*Don Juan* I.101)

Although the narrator strongly implies that the affair was no mistake, Donna Inez's motive behind it is never clearly revealed. Nevertheless, the narrator does make it clear that Inez does have motive, and she willingly exposes Juan to the experience of an illicit affair. She creates Juan's vulnerability by refusing to teach him anything about women or attraction. "No branch was made a mystery / To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history" (*Don Juan* I.39). Inez then invites Julia into her home and puts Juan into her company. By doing so, she manipulates her son into a love affair doomed to failure. Finally, when Julia's husband discovers that his wife is being unfaithful, Donna Inez sends Juan off to travel, thus punishing him for what is ostensibly his mother's sin:

But Donna Inez...

First vowed (and never had she vowed in vain)

To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles.

And then by the advice of some old ladies,

She sent her son to be embarked at Cadiz. (*Don Juan* I.190)

Byron's portrayal of Donna Inez, with her "several pounds of candles" burned for the Virgin Mary, demonstrates her hypocrisy much more clearly than if Byron had merely called her a hypocrite. After the implication that Inez knowingly put her son into the path of sin, her actions demonstrate a kind of affectation meant only for society's eyes. Even if this is not the case, and if Inez truly believes that her son has sinned, it only shows that her hypocrisy has ingrained itself to such a level that even she does not recognize it any longer.

Thus it falls to *Don Juan*'s narrator, and by extension to Byron himself, to illuminate such hypocrisy. Byron makes Juan experience hypocrisy and injury repeatedly during his travels. As Juan encounters each example of hidden agenda, Byron then uses his narrator to demystify and explain the underlying motives of each individual that Juan meets. Such adventures begin with Juan's home experiences with his mother, as well as with Donna Julia's "innocent" protestations against her husband's suspicions. Other multiple examples of duplicitous behavior occur abroad, such as when the Sultan's wife Gulbeyez forces Juan to dress as a woman in order to hide him, or when the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke disguises herself as the Black Friar's ghost so as to arrange a tryst with Juan. These last two examples are especially noteworthy, as they literally portray the discrepancy between what one sees and what is truth. The mystery of the Black Friar in particular is a striking, comical example of how Byron seeks to strip away the carefully crafted appearances of an individual and unveil the hypocritical reality. The disguise that the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke chooses in order to arrange a sexual encounter with Don Juan is in fact one of chastity and religious devotion. As Adeline sings in Canto XVI, the Black Friar "*still retains his sway, / For he is yet the church's heir / Whoever may be the lay*" (*Don Juan* XVI.40.5). Indeed, the Duchess's decision to disguise her adulterous inclinations with an image of religious purity recalls the earlier referenced depiction of Donna Inez lighting candles to the Virgin Mary. In these and other descriptions, Byron underscores his unwavering intention to highlight the hypocrisy entrenched in society.

Byron's drive to demystify the artifice of his characters permeates the protagonist of *House, M.D.* For House, the mystery of an individual's personality is a solvable puzzle, secondary only to the difficulties of medical diagnoses. The clues exist in the information that people choose to share, in how they present themselves, and finally in the momentary

anomalistic behavior that inevitably occurs. House analyzes people just as he does diseases, and he demonstrates an uncanny success in exposing their innermost secrets.

House's determination to understand the motivations of those around him is particularly apparent in Season Two, when his ex-girlfriend Stacy returns to work at the hospital. Over time House comes to believe that Stacy still has feelings for him, despite her marriage to another man. House questions Stacy repeatedly, second-guesses her actions around him, and continually taunts her in order to gauge her reaction to him. Later in the season, while away together on a business trip, House notices that Stacy is not wearing a cross around her neck. Knowing that the cross, a gift from her deceased mother, never leaves Stacy, House is intrigued and grills the increasingly agitated woman until she snaps at him:

STACY: Why does this matter to you?

HOUSE: It's an anomaly. Anomalies bug me.

STACY: Then you're gonna suffer. ("Failure to Communicate")

After this claim that House will suffer by not knowing the reason for the missing cross, the camera stays focused on House's bright blue eyes. His expression is clearly not one of suffering or concern, but of puzzlement and, more importantly, of enjoyment. House thrives on mysteries such as this one. Of course, he ultimately does not suffer, but rather continually taunts and goads Stacy into revealing why her cross is missing: she had a fight with her husband. When it comes to unraveling and understanding the behavior of others, House not only utterly disregards social niceties; he even on occasion breaks laws in order to assuage his need to know. This is plainly demonstrated when his growing frustration at being unable to read Stacy leads House to break into her therapist's office and to read her session notes ("Spin").

House's need to demystify the world around him, whether in regard to people or illnesses, stems from the Faustian element of the Byronic Hero. Faust "has come to typify man's eternal quest for knowledge – not only of scientific truths, but of Absolutes," Thorslev observes accurately. "His tragedy in its broadest sense is one which has been with us since the dawn of intellectual history: the tragedy of epistemology" (Thorslev 84). This type of intellectual isolation is also apparent in Byron's own Faustian creation, *Manfred*. During his conversation with the witch, Manfred states of his life: "From my youth upwards / My spirit walked not with the souls of men, / Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes; / The thirst of their ambition was not mine, / The aim of their existence was not mine" (*Manfred* II.ii.50-54). Manfred goes on to reveal his fascination with nature and his lifelong attempts to achieving absolute understanding of the world's inner workings. He has devoted himself to scientific analysis of the laws of nature, including of death itself. "And then I dived, / In my lone wanderings, to the caves of death, / Searching its cause in its effect" (*Manfred* II.ii.79-81).

Manfred's description of himself equally describes House's behavior, his unending search to define his world through the cold, calculating lens of science. This is starkly demonstrated with House argues to a patient that "*everything* is rational." The patient to whom House speaks these words has been raped; she is the victim of a crime that is impossible to define through rational terms. Nevertheless, House tries to do just that, and he complains later to Wilson that his patient's need to talk about subjective experience and emotion is a waste of time: "That's not truth. That's bad science" ("One Day, One Room"). House, like Manfred, lives on a separate intellectual and emotional level from other people. He is incapable of thinking about life in any way other than scientifically, and this Faustian characteristic isolates him from others as effectively as his abrasive demeanor does.

Thorslev elaborates further upon this intellectual component of the Faustian Byronic Hero when he asserts that it causes isolation not only from worldly views, but also from spiritual understanding: “Faust...can be seen to stand for the aggressive, analytic side of man’s nature, the eternal thirst for knowledge which will not stop at *hubris*, and which is perhaps for that reason essentially and inevitably antireligious” (Thorslev 85). This statement brings about yet another key component of the Byronic Hero as portrayed through House. Indeed, the writers of *House, M.D.* love to pit House against God at least once per season. As House jokingly states to one patient, “Don’t let me see you praying! Don’t want to fight for credit” (“Human Error”).

House’s relationship with religion functions on three key levels. The first of these levels is identical to House’s general quarrel with societal hypocrisy. As he states in season four, “The corollary of ‘people lie’ is ‘people sin’.” This particular statement is in reference to a patient who is a Hasidic Jew. House’s patient declines a life-saving surgery in order to celebrate Shabbat with her new husband. House rages, “The woman’s not just a masochist; she’s a hypocrite. The commandment to preserve life comes before all others” (“Don’t Ever Change”). House asserts throughout the span of the television show that religion is the ultimate artifice. It hides the truth of people’s nature, what House refers to as humanity’s innate evil (“One Day, One Room”).

House’s intense aversion to religious hypocrisy also mirrors that of Byron, who uses his *Don Juan* narrator in particular to express his disgust. When Donna Inez, Juan’s mother, reappears in Canto X, she counsels Juan to follow Catholic values while she simultaneously urges him into an adulterous relationship with the wealthy Empress of Russia. By giving such contradictory advice, Inez underscores one of Byron’s strongest castigations against false piety:

Oh for a forty-parson-power to chaunt

Thy praise, hypocrisy! Oh for a hymn

Loud as the virtues thou dost loudly vaunt,

Not practice! (*Don Juan* X.34)

As Byron suggests, the insincerely religious individual will speak the loudest about the need for virtue. However, although Byron's disgust for such hypocrisy was intense, he expressed a greater repugnance for honest, blind faith. Leslie Brisman points out that, "Calvinist in temperament but no Christian in belief, Byron thought that an undisguised faith in a paradise was at the root of intellectual and social error" (Brisman 76). House states this in more blunt terms: "Faith! That's another word for ignorance, isn't it?" ("House vs. God") This demonstrates the second key level on which House (and also Byron) view religion. While hypocrisy and its specific examples function primarily on an individual level, blind religious acceptance provides an outlet for demagogues. Byron declares war against such demagogic behavior in *Don Juan*: "Without me, there are demagogues enough...Mind, good people, what I say / (Or rather peoples), go on without pause! / The web of these tarantulas each day / Increases, till you shall make common cause" (*Don Juan* IX.25,29). By comparing religious (particularly Catholic) doctrine to the webbed trap of a poisonous spider, Byron certainly made no friends within that community, nor did he desire to do so.

House clashes similarly with the notion of faith. In the episode "House vs. God," he argues fiercely against the possibility that his patient is a genuine faith healer, instead accusing him of milking as much money as possible from blindly religious followers. It is inconsequential that the patient also believes he can communicate directly with God; he is merely being conned along with his followers. In true Faustian fashion, House would point out that this highlights the danger of faith: without the guidance of concrete scientific law, one falls into the precarious trap of gullibility.

Yet if such faith, even if it is mere gullibility, provides people with a sense of peace, why then would House begrudge them that chance for happiness? The answer to this lies in the third level of House's relationship to religion, as expressed during a conversation between House and Foreman. After a near-death experience, Foreman attempts to change his outlook to one with more understanding and kindness. He is unable to maintain this new perspective, however, because House berates Foreman until he has no choice but to return to his former cynical viewpoint:

FOREMAN: Why are you doing this to me? I was happy.

HOUSE: You were aspiring to be content.

FOREMAN: Don't give me a semantic argument. I was content with the way things were. That's what happiness is.

HOUSE: If we were all just satisfied with what we had, what a beautiful world it would be. We'd all slowly starve to death in our own filth, but at least we'd be happy.

("Forever")

The issue that House takes with Foreman's contentment is the same as his issue with religious faith; both serve as an emotional form of escape from the unpleasant truths of life. Unfortunately, one must eventually return to face the reality of existence or else face injury, including death itself. This is especially true for the Byronic Hero, whose calculating, disaffected worldview precludes any chance that he could find even temporary comfort in blind happiness or faith. G. Wilson Knight notes aptly that "the rejection of religious assistance as powerless to ease the dark anguish and alter an inevitable course recalls *Faustus*, *Wuthering Heights*, and Byron's own *Manfred*" (Knight 42).

In considering this “inevitable course” that causes such anguish, it is crucial to recognize that it is a path without end. There is no goal, either positive or negative, toward which the Byronic Hero moves; there is only movement itself, particularly of the conscious self. In her critical work, *Irony*, Claire Colebrook summarizes romantic irony as it is viewed by the Jena Romantics: “Nature may be creative, but it creates according to its innate tendencies; human creation has the capacity to be ironic: to present itself as other than what it *is*. Indeed, what it *is* has no being other than a capacity to create” (Colebrook 48). This tendency toward creative movement is the inevitable course to which Knight refers. The potential for tragedy comes not from the act of creating itself, but rather from the poet’s realization that he can never move beyond this act into a state of completion or wholeness. Any attempt to do so will merely result in a stagnant fragment of the self, one which is intrinsically arbitrary and artificial (Colebrook 49).

Leslie Brisman points out that Byron was acutely aware of this limitation in the human condition and spent much of his early poetry lamenting it. His character Cain faces a “depression [that] is not simply sadness but the reduction of man to his earthly origins and first nothingness” (Brisman 80-1). Byron’s expression of this sense of tragic realization also appears in his short poem *Prometheus*, particularly in the final stanza:

Thou art a symbol and a sign
 To Mortals of their fate and force;
 Like thee, Man is in part divine,
 A troubled stream from a pure source;
 And Man in portions can foresee
 His own funereal destiny;

His wretchedness, and his resistance,

And his sad unallied existence... (*Prometheus* lines 45-52)

The “pure source” to which Byron refers is the same that Claire Colebrook references in the above passage. It is nature; it is the ability to “create according to [one’s] innate tendencies”; it is the state in which Schiller’s naïve being comfortably resides. In other words, the pure source is the point at which one can view the world through the lens of complete understanding. The predicament of humanity is to be the “troubled stream,” eternally moving away from this natural state of completion – indeed, to be forever *moving*.

The above passage from Byron’s *Prometheus* demonstrates more than the mere state of separation between mankind and nature, however. More importantly, it shows mankind’s self-awareness of this state. This comes back to Hegel’s theory of Absolute Knowledge, as defined by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy: “[it] is absolute less because it is limitless knowledge than because it is knowledge that knows itself even as it knows what it knows...” (Lacoue-Labarthe 53). One with absolute knowledge, like the speaker of *Prometheus*, realizes that he is “in part divine” yet also knows that his physical and intellectual movement brings him further away from that very divinity.

This realization also demonstrates why House remains in inflexible opposition to religious faith. He is not an atheist; indeed, his worldview on the existence of God is much darker. As he states to one patient: “Where is the miracle in delivering a crack-addicted baby, hm? And watching her mother abandon her, because she needs another score? The miracle of *love*! You are over twice as likely to be killed by the person you love than by a stranger... You can have all the faith you want in spirits and the afterlife and heaven and hell. But when it comes to *this* world, don’t be an idiot” (“Damned If You Do”). Instead of disputing the existence of a

deity, House rejects the possibility that humanity benefits from the presence of God's grace. House's allowance for the existence of God also illuminates his conviction that everything in life runs by an unwavering universal law. Despite this conviction, however, House is also profoundly aware of his (and society's) inability ever to comprehend this universal law in its entirety. To do so would make one into a God, and House holds no misconceptions about his flawed mortal status. When Wilson suggests otherwise, an unsmiling House quickly corrects him: "God doesn't limp" ("Cane & Able").

CHAPTER 3

WIT: THE ESSENTIAL WEAPON

“A disease that attacks the brain, heart, and testicles. I think Byron wrote about that.”

-Dr. Gregory House, “Sex Kills”

During his review of the Faustian character-type, Peter Thorslev provides a summary of *Weltschmerz* as it is experienced by the Byronic Hero. *Weltschmerz* presents itself as a duality within one’s personality. On one side, there is a desire to assert oneself as an individual; on the other side exists a driving need to dissolve the self in Absolute understanding, “a longing for some intellectual and moral certainty, ranging from positive commitment to an orthodox creed, to a mystic conception of oneself as a part of a living organic universe” (Thorslev 88). The reason that these two aspects of personality are so antithetical lies within the very definition of Absolute understanding.⁴ The problem as set forth by Thorslev is how to reconcile dueling natures within one personality. How can a man sustain his individuality if he must entirely efface himself in order to reach Absolute understanding? Thorslev attempts an answer:

⁴ As reviewed and shown in the introduction to this study, to have Absolute understanding is in fact to recognize one’s own limitations and inability truly to understand the world, or more immediately, the self’s identity within that world. This crisis surrounding self-definition becomes apparent in the Romantic idea of *Bildung*, insofar as *Bildung* involves the unfolding of the self and the “ironic understanding of its own impossibility” (Redfield 48). Thus *Bildung* never reaches a final product, but rather keeps itself in a state of movement toward an unreachable finality, toward unreachable understanding. When moved into a literary form, specifically poetry, *Bildung* encompasses a duality itself. By inserting elements of himself into his work, the poet becomes simultaneously the work of art and the beholder of that art (Barnard xi). His search for some “transcendental aesthetic” leads to the effacement of the self, as there can never be a substantial, complete “I” present in what is otherwise an eternal process of becoming (Lacoue-Labarthe 30). This process does ultimately provide some truth – that of Absolute understanding – through the infinite nature of its work (Lacoue-Labarthe 48).

If any escape from this tragic dilemma is possible (other than a commitment to absolutes outside the self), I suppose it must lie in the solution of modern humanism: a realization of the limits of the human mind and a cultivation of one's own values in an assertion of a community of selves in an ultimately unknown and unknowable universe. (Thorslev 89)

Thorslev asserts that this solution is present in Goethe's *Faust II*, as well as in Byron's *Manfred*, *Cain*, and the narrator of *Don Juan*, although he does not elaborate upon specifics, much less upon the types of values to be cultivated nor the method by which one would do so (89-90). As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, neither socially-cultivated morality nor religious faith provides a sufficient method of escape from the dilemma of *Weltschmerz*; yet Thorslev fails to provide an alternate type of value that might be cultivated. This omission is not surprising, given Thorslev's stated reasons for excluding *Don Juan* from the tradition of the Byronic Hero.

Thorslev takes issue with the sense of optimism in *Don Juan*, optimism that is brought about by the narrator successfully overcoming what Thorslev calls the "tragic dilemma." Thorslev argues: "The narrator of *Don Juan* has experienced the universe depicted in *Manfred* or *Cain*, but he has come through" (199). It is puzzling that Thorslev should propose a solution for his Byronic Hero, only later to discount the existence of a Byronic Hero who has enacted this very solution. What Thorslev ignores is that the "cultivation of one's own values" that does hold potential for success includes the development of an *ironic* worldview, a perspective that is both deeply Romantic and inextricably present in many of the Byronic Heroes that Thorslev does cite.

This ironic worldview is reviewed by Claire Colebrook in *Irony*. Colebrook addresses the conundrum one faces after completing an artistic creation, particularly one of poetry. As already discussed, this creation embodies the spirit of the artist and strives to manifest this spirit into something complete and substantial. Unfortunately the realization of such an attempt can never

occur, for the human spirit is eternally in a state of becoming. Once a creation “falls” away from its creator, it is stagnant and immediately other than what the creator has already evolved into. This recognition of this “fall” is the basis for Romantic irony; it encompasses the limitations of human understanding, the realization of those limitations, and the potential for despair in having such an epiphany. The fall includes a final element, however, which keeps the artist from descending into such despair. Colebrook summarizes this succinctly:

Romantic irony must tackle this process of the *fall* of creative life into inert objectivity; it does so by recognizing that creativity or the human spirit must always be other than any of its creations, definitions or manifestations...It is only in *not* being at one with itself, in not being self-identical, that life can become and create, or can recognize itself as *life*, even if that recognition will always be partial or ironic...Far from finite daily life being a fall from an original infinite plenitude, it is only the fragmentary, the finite and the incomplete that can give us a sense of the infinity that lies beyond any closed form. An ironic ‘fall’ realizes, therefore, that there was no paradise before the sense of loss...The idea of a fall is, however, essential to irony and life as irony. It is in creating images of a lost paradise that we create ourselves *as fallen*, and thereby create ourselves at all. For to be selves or personalities we must be limited or delimited from some grander whole.

(Colebrook 49-50)

Lauding the unique value of poetry, Schlegel’s oft cited Athenaeum Fragment 116 elaborates upon this notion of the self’s experience of infinity. The poem, Schlegel writes, is less an inactive, lost piece of the self than it is an objective reflection of the self’s process of becoming:

[Romantic poetry] alone can become, like the epic, a mirror of the whole circumambient world, an image of the age. And it can also – more than any other form – hover at the

midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors. It is capable of the highest and most variegated refinement,...capable in that it organizes – for everything that seeks a wholeness in its effects – the parts along similar lines, so that it opens up a perspective upon an infinitely increasing classicism. (*Athenaeum Fragments* 175)

Thus the poem, while it splinters the poet's identity into definable yet infinitely incomplete pieces, also positions those pieces in such a way as to hint at the complete picture. The poet may never be capable of true, universal, infinite understanding, but he can at least reach an understanding of *the existence* of that elusive, infinite truth as he glimpses its reflection within the collective fragments of himself.

Of course, once the poet receives this glimpse into the “endless succession of mirrors,” he faces the potential for despair. No man can look into infinity and remain sane, much less so when the payment for such a glimpse is the dissolution of the self. In order to overcome the power of this ironic view of the fall, the poet turns to what F. Schlegel demonstrates is a type of transcendental buffoonery: “...There are ancient and modern poems that are pervaded by the divine breath of irony throughout and informed by a truly transcendental buffoonery. Internally: the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius; externally, in its execution: the mimic style of an averagely gifted Italian *buffo*” (*Critical Fragments* 148).⁵ The *buffo*'s blundering actions and words not only highlight the futility of true understanding; they also provide one with the ability to laugh at this limitation. It is this very laughter that turns the fool's actions into “transcendental buffoonery.” Colebrook

⁵ This *buffo* is present particularly in the form of the clown or fool, who appears in Romantic texts such as Tieck's *Puss-in-Boots* and Bonaventura's *Nightwatches*.

points out that “buffoonery falls, enjoys the humour of the fall, laughs from on high at the falling buffoon, and remains implicated in the fall” (Colebrook 50). In other words, the buffoon knows that, as a limited individual, he is the source of the joke; nevertheless he laughs at the joke, and thus at his own limitations.

The ironic nature of the buffoon becomes especially effectual when combined with the artist.⁶ When the artist, especially the poet, gives over to a state of buffoonery and lets himself laugh at his own implication in the fall, he also gives up the illusion of himself as a concrete individual and instead recognizes himself as an eternal process that can never be understood. Claire Colebrook shares a quotation from the Jena Romantic Novalis, in which he addresses this necessity for self-destruction as a means to rise above the pain that comes with understanding. “Sacrifice of the self is the source of all humiliation, as also on the contrary it is the foundation of all true exaltation” (Colebrook, 52). The artist destroys himself, in other words, in order to become himself; he becomes the joke in order to provide that comic relief that makes Absolute knowledge bearable. Through the buffoonery of the fall, the artist finds the means to rise above his very fall and maintain his presence of mind.

A notable example of the artist-as-buffoon comes in the form of Friedrich Schlegel’s essay *On Incomprehensibility*. In it, Schlegel responds to critics of the fragments and accuses them of being blind to the irony therein: “It is a very good sign when the harmonious bores are at a loss about how they should react to this continuous self-parody, when they fluctuate endlessly between belief and disbelief until they get dizzy and take what is meant as a joke seriously and what is meant seriously as a joke” (265). This confusion is the very type of awakening that

⁶ Tieck literalizes the fusion of artist with buffoon in *Puss-in-Boots* when his fictional audience confuses the play’s author with the fool:

THE AUTHOR: (*comes on stage dismayed*) Ladies and Gentlemen – most esteemed public – just a few words.

IN THE PARTERRE: Quiet! Quiet! The fool is going to speak! (Tieck 91)

buffoonery is meant to bring about, and thus Schlegel espouses it even as he simultaneously mocks it. He is serious about the necessity of exposing those who cannot think ironically to an ironic worldview, yet in this sentiment he also recognizes his own danger of slipping out of irony: “For example, if one speaks of irony ironically without in the process being aware of having fallen into a far more noticeable irony; if one can’t disentangle oneself from irony anymore, as seems to be happening in this essay on incomprehensibility...What gods will rescue us from all these ironies?” (267) By getting lost in the never-ending cycle of irony (starkly reminiscent of the “endless succession of mirrors” in Athenaeum Fragment 116), Schlegel evokes the image of himself blundering through his own ideas, losing himself entirely, and thus planting himself firmly into the role of author-as-fool. Once in this position, Schlegel is able to demonstrate the power of ironic buffoonery while he moves onward into his discussion of incomprehensibility.

Schlegel’s incomprehensibility is unequivocally tied to Absolute Knowledge; both terms imply a recognition of one’s own inability to fathom the full scope of life. Just as Absolute Knowledge and humor are the two critical elements for the artist’s ironic fall, so does incomprehensibility provide half of the equation for humanity to likewise reach a state of exaltation: “But is incomprehensibility really something so unmitigatedly contemptible and evil? Methinks the salvation of families and nations rests upon it. ...Verily, it would fare badly with you if, as you demand, the whole world were ever to become wholly comprehensible in earnest. And isn’t this entire, unending world constructed by the understanding out of incomprehensibility and chaos?” (*On Incomprehensibility* 268) Of course, as Schlegel espouses this version of Absolute Knowledge to his public, the tongue-in-cheek nature of his words highlights the irony implicit therein. Indeed, two types of incomprehensibility might apply to this

statement: first, the incomprehensibility that is Absolute Knowledge and the realization of one's own limitations; second, the incomprehensibility that keeps one from recognizing one's own lack of understanding. Either definition could apply to Schlegel's statement, thus compounding the very irony behind his entire argument. The mainstream population is trapped in the same cosmic joke as Schlegel, and its survival in such a state requires that it remain ignorant of its own deficiency. Even as he writes ironically to explain irony to this population, Schlegel knows that the real irony of his essay is that it will only be read seriously. At this realization, he chooses to laugh.

While Schlegel's writing provides effective examples of self dissolution and of the artist-as-buffoon, it is not representative of the Byronic Hero. In order to experience the union of Schlegel's ironic worldview with the archetypal Romantic hero, one turns to Lord Byron himself. The Byronic Hero qualities of many of Byron's creations – *Manfred*, *Childe Harold*, *Prometheus*, and the narrator of *Don Juan* – have already been discussed at length in this study. These characters do not stand simply as literary figures in the Byronic Hero tradition, however; each is also the embodiment of Byron the man. Northrop Frye discusses the fact that the Byronic Hero existed long before Lord Byron himself entered the literary scene. Ultimately he concludes that the connection of the man to the character-type was a result of Byron's literary "projection of his inner self, that inner self that was so mysterious and inscrutable even to its owner" (Frye 56). Byron's poetry represents the very type of creation present in an ironic fall. Indeed, each of his characters is a piece fallen away from the man, a fragment of self that, when lined up with other fragments, provides a glimpse into the inscrutable soul that was Byron's. As Frye also asserts, the phenomenon that was Byron was due neither to his greatness as a man nor to the greatness of his poetry, but rather to "something in-between: a tremendous cultural force that

was life and literature at once” (Frye 53). It was the Romantic irony irremovably tied up in the idea of Byron that made him great – for he was ultimately an idea above anything else, one produced through his own self-destruction and recreation and as incomprehensible as anything Schlegel might have envisioned. Harold Bloom argues that even when Byron plays the part of social performer, we cannot be sure that he is posturing. Instead we are left confounded in doubt “as to how much of *him* is real” (Bloom 29).

House similarly mixes performance with serious conversation, leaving viewers with doubt about whether he is merely posturing or is also sincere. One notable example of this occurs in Season Three, when a beautiful seventeen-year-old girl, Ali, develops a crush on House and begins to exhibit stalker-like behavior. Although he clearly enjoys Ali’s attention, House yields to his supervisor Cuddy’s insistence that he reject the girl’s advances. He seems to be genuinely disappointed, yet House still twists the rejection into a mockery by reciting a scene from the classic film *Casablanca*:

HOUSE: Listen to me. Do you have any idea what you’d have to look forward to if you stayed with me? Nine chances out of ten we’d both wind up in a jail.

ALI: You’re only saying that to make me go.

HOUSE: I’m saying it, because it’s true. Inside of us, we both know that you belong with Victor...Is there a Victor in your class? ...If you’re not with someone your age, you’ll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life.

GIRL: What about us?

HOUSE: We’ll always have Fresno. I’m no good at being noble. It doesn’t take much to see that the problems of two little people don’t amount to a hill of beans in this crazy

world. Someday you'll understand that. Now, here's lookin' at you... Damn. ("Lines in the Sand")⁷

House breaks off from his performance, because he realizes that Ali's infatuation is not genuine, but is rather the result of an illness. His reaction to this is one of strong frustration and disappointment, a stark contrast with his flippant attitude moments before. Just as Harold Bloom contends that we doubt how much of Byron is "real," viewers must question which part of House's behavior demonstrates his true feelings about Ali – the flippancy, the frustration, or both at once. His assertion that "I'm saying it, because it's true" is swathed in irony. Any truth to House's words is automatically undermined by the fact that they are not *his* words. Nevertheless, there is truth to his suggestion that both he and Ali would end up in jail if they stayed together – House for statutory rape and Ali for stalking. This fluctuation between the real and illusory in House's behavior mirrors that found in Byron's work. Just like with Byron, House's actions present an incomprehensible and deeply ironic performance. Indeed, it is unclear whether House himself even knows whether the meaning behind his *Casablanca* recitation is sincere or mere posturing.

⁷ The actual dialogue from *Casablanca* is as follows:

RICK: Now you've got to listen to me! Do you have any idea what you'd have to look forward to if you stayed here? Nine chances out of ten, we'd both wind up in a concentration camp. Isn't that true, Louie?

CAPTAIN RENAULT: I'm afraid Major Strasser would insist.

ILSA: You're saying this only to make me go.

RICK: I'm saying it, because it's true. Inside of us, we both know you belong with Victor. You're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going. If that plane leaves the ground and you're not with him, you'll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life.

ILSA: But what about us?

RICK: We'll always have Paris. We didn't have it... we lost it until you came to Casablanca and we got it back last night.

ILSA: I said I would never leave you.

RICK: And you never will. I've got a job to do, too. Where I'm going, you can't follow. What I've got to do, you can't be any part of. Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that. Now, now, here's lookin' at you, kid.

An ironic fall suggests that through his art, we should get a glimpse of the real soul of the artist. To suggest, then, that the man being reflected is as illusory as the fiction he creates compounds irony on top of the ironic fall – a cycle worthy of Schlegel and clearly a step toward transcendental buffoonery. Bloom suggests that Byron is successful in this endeavor: “Thought seeks refuge in the creation of poetry, for by it we gain more life, even as Byron gains in the life he images. His own limitations are transcended as he blends himself with the birth of what he creates” (Bloom 3). The implication here is that Byron becomes more real when he “gain[s] more life,” that his self-dissolution into the fictional world leads to a stronger understanding of the very self being dissolved.

During the tenth canto of *Don Juan*, Byron’s shrewd awareness of this paradox of self becomes particularly apparent. While describing Don Juan, Byron’s narrator digresses into some brief philosophizing on the overlap of reality and illusion:

Don Juan, who was real or ideal –

For both are much the same, since what men think

Exists when the once thinkers are less real

Than what they thought, for mind can never sink

And ‘gainst the body make a strong appeal;

And yet ‘tis very puzzling on the brink

Of what is called eternity to stare

And know no more of what is here than there – (*Don Juan* X.20)

In this single stanza, Byron succinctly summarizes the paradox of the ironic fall and excludes any doubt that he was exceptionally aware of the poet’s, that is his own, position therein. The sentence remains in permanent digression; indeed, its lack of a main predicate for the subject

‘Don Juan’ makes it a grammatical fragment. Within that fragment, Byron implies his own fictionality when he refers to the “once thinkers” – creators, artists, poets – who are “less real than what they thought.” By stating this immediately after describing Don Juan as “real or ideal,” Byron shows his awareness that he, as author, is equally illusory as his creation. Of course, this also means that the creation is just as real as his creator. In addition, Byron hints at the pain that comes with standing “on the brink,” facing infinity, and realizing his own inadequate understanding – that he “know[s] no more of what is here than there.”

This self-doubt and confusion of reality and illusion occurs to House in the aptly-titled episode, “No Reason.” In the moments after being shot, House enters an extended hallucination in which he faces his attacker, Jack Moriarty.⁸ As the episode progresses, House becomes increasingly aware that the world around him is in fact a creation of his delirious mind. Nevertheless, he continues to engage Moriarty in a series of conversations, including the following exchange on his struggle with fact and fiction:

HOUSE: How can I tell what’s real and what’s not? Everything looks the same, sounds the same, tastes the same.

MORIARTY: Seems like I’d be the last person you’d want to ask.

HOUSE: Why not? You’re obviously not here. I’m obviously not here, which means this is a creation of my mind, which means I’m really just asking myself.

MORIARTY: If you’re talking to yourself, that’s a lot of unnecessary explanation.

HOUSE: Hey, I try to work this out. That requires give and take, even in my own mind.

(“No Reason”)

⁸ The name of House’s attacker is a clear allusion to fictional detective Sherlock Holmes’ nemesis and intellectual equal, the villainous Professor James Moriarty (“The Adventure of the Final Problem”).

Despite the hallucinatory nature of his conversations with Moriarty, House recognizes that they provide a pathway to truths about himself. Like Harold Bloom's assertion that "Byron gains in the life he images" (Bloom, 3), so does House gain greater understanding about himself through the fictional world that his mind creates. In particular, he enters an extended debate about the value of the mind over the body. The implication in this debate is that the mind represents the illusory (the creations of imagination and cold logic), while the body represents reality (tangible physicality and social relationships). This is House standing on the brink like Byron, facing his own fears of inadequacy. In the scene leading to the episode's climax, Moriarty summarizes House's greatest fear: that his lifelong espousal of rationality and wit has been in error:

MORIARTY: You wasted your life....If I had killed you, would it have mattered?

...Would anybody care that the world lost that wit? ...You think that the only truth that matters is that truth can be measured. Good intentions don't count. What's in your heart doesn't count. Caring doesn't count. But a man's life *can* be measured by how many tears are shed when he dies. Just because you can't measure them, just because you don't want to measure them, doesn't mean it's not real....And even if I'm wrong, you're still miserable. Did you really think that your life's purpose was to sacrifice yourself and get nothing in return? No. You believe there's no purpose to anything. Even the lives you save, you dismiss. You turn the one decent thing in your life and you taint it, strip it of all meaning. You're miserable for nothing. I don't know why you'd want to live. ("No Reason")

Shortly after Moriarty's assertion that House has sacrificed both happiness and a true understanding of the meaning of life, House makes the decision to stop suggesting mere *ideas* and instead *acts*. While still in the grip of his hallucinatory world, House violently murders his

patient, shouting, “If this is a hallucination, it’s meaningless. I want meaning.” The action wakes House from his delirium and returns him to reality; he is still in the moments just after being shot and is being rushed into surgery. His final words before the Season Two finale ends are to request ketamine, a drug that could return the full use of House’s leg at the risk of impaired mental function. The implication in House’s request is clear: he desperately wants meaning in life, and he wants it in a way that is entirely real, free from imagination.

When Season Three begins with the also aptly-titled “Meaning,” House seems to have fulfilled his desire. He is pain-free and upbeat. He reaches out to patients’ families and comforts them instead of mocking them. This sympathetic version of House is short-lived, however, as his leg pain begins to return. The Season Three opener ends with House in Wilson’s office, forging a prescription for Valium while the Rolling Stones’ *You Can’t Always Get What You Want* plays in the background. This song, which appears in a number of *House, M.D.* episodes and provides a mantra for the show, serves as an answer to House’s decision at the end of Season Two.

Although House may desire meaning and reality, he cannot obtain them through sheer will. As the song states, “You can’t always get what you want / But if you try sometimes, you just might find / You get what you need.” House needs those elements that turn him into an enduring Byronic Hero: physical and emotional pain, the realization of his own limited understanding, and the biting wit that keeps him going in the face of inaccessible meaning.

Before delving further into the value of House’s wit, it is useful to return to Byron and consider the shift of tone when he began to include more direct humor into his poetry. In his earlier works, before he discovered the *ottava rima* stanza, Byron’s expression of the ironic fall was distinctly darker. Indeed, Byron’s characters still assert themselves over their limitations and thus avoid falling into tragedy, but their triumph often carries the price of death – the ultimate

self-dissolution. One such example of this grim end is in Byron's *Prometheus*. After describing man's recognition of his own "wretchedness," the final lines of the poem asserts that his spirit will continue to rebel and will succeed only in death: "To which his Spirit may oppose / Itself... / Triumphant where it dares defy, / And making Death a victory" (*Prometheus* lines 53-4, 58-9).

A more elaborate example of success's reliance upon death is found in the Byronic Hero Manfred, who "would so pervade / The world invisible, and make himself / Almost [the spirits'] equal" (*Manfred* III.iv.105-7). Manfred's position is one of stark defiance to the immortal realm. He knows that he will never possess the infinite knowledge or power of the spirits, but he nevertheless strives toward the impossible goal by utilizing "superior science – penance – daring - / And length of watching – strength of mind – and skill / In knowledge of our fathers" (*Manfred* III.iv.115-7). Of course this endeavor for ultimate knowledge fails due to his mortality; however, Manfred succeeds by *embracing* this failure. His limitation and destruction stems not from a divine command, but rather from his own choice. He asserts this choice on his death bed when faced with the spirits who would take him to hell:

...Back to thy hell!
 Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
 Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
 What I have done is done; I bear within
 A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
 The mind which is immortal makes itself
 Requit for its good or evil thoughts –
 Is its own origin of ill and end –
 And its own place and time...

I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey –

But was my own destroyer, and will be

My own hereafter. (*Manfred* III.iv.124-132, 138-140)

Manfred successfully avoids being the “dupe” or “prey” to the cosmic joke of mortality, but the price he must pay is the ultimate one: death. Granted, this does not make *Manfred* into tragedy, but rather into triumph – albeit an ironic one. For Manfred’s death to be tragic, it would need to be the result of his surrendering to his own inadequacy. He does not surrender, however, nor does he fall into madness or despair. He embraces his death as a final victory and asserts this with his last words: “Old man! ‘til not so difficult to die” (*Manfred* III.iv.151).

Despite the triumph of Manfred and other early creations of Byron, however, the necessity for complete physical destruction still carries with it a bitter taste. Death may not be so difficult for Manfred, but the implication in his last words is that life *was* difficult, was in fact torturous. It is not until Byron’s later works that he begins to incorporate the possibility that one can triumph during life and need not wait until death. To do so requires buffoonery, or more specifically, laughter.

Byron’s attitude toward death takes a decided turn in *Don Juan* with this use of laughter. Gone is the solemn spirit that faces Manfred in his final moments. For the narrator of *Don Juan*, Death becomes a clown-figure:

Death laughs at all you weep for. Look upon

This hourly dread of all, whose threatened sting

Turns life to terror, even though in its sheath.

Mark how its lipless mouth grins without breath! (*Don Juan* IX.11)

The image of the grinning skull appears in a number of Romantic texts and artwork as a standard example of the grotesque. While a full review of the grotesque in Romanticism is far too complex to go into for this study, the fusion of comedy and terror in the grinning skull helps to underscore the distinct change of outlook that Byron incorporates into his later writing. Indeed, *Don Juan's* narrator could easily be talking to *Manfred's* abbot in this stanza when he commands his listener to mark Death's laughter. Suddenly the spirit who would normally imbue such terror becomes less powerful through mockery. The authority that mortality holds over man weakens under laughter, leaving *Don Juan's* narrator with the power to reassert life without terror:

And thus Death laughs. It is sad merriment,
 But still it is so; and with such example
 Why should not Life be equally content
 With his superior in a smile to trample
 Upon the nothings which are daily spent
 Like bubbles on an ocean much less ample
 Than the eternal deluge, which devours
 Suns as rays, worlds like atoms, years like hours? (*Don Juan* IX.13)

Death may laugh at humanity's weakness, but Byron is standing right next to him and laughing along. He does not only laugh at humanity's place in the "eternal deluge" either, but also finds time to smile at those "nothings." He realizes, of course, that as two components of the same life, both the deluges and the nothings are ultimately the same thing. This is part of the irony in Byron's version of the ironic fall, and it allows him to maintain his often flippant humor in *Don Juan* without diminishing the power of his message.

House also works to reduce the hold that fear of death has over us by jumbling the serious with the “nothings.” In the episode “Need to Know,” he decides to reveal Cameron’s HIV test results by handing her a sealed envelope, saying significantly, “There’s something you need to see. Knowing is always better than not knowing.” Taking a deep breath, Cameron opens the envelope to find only a referral request. House then blithely tosses the HIV test results to her, which he has already opened and read, and announces that she’s fine. Cameron is outraged:

CAMERON: The most important letter of my life, and you’re still an ass.

HOUSE: Comforting, isn’t it? (“Need to Know”)

In fact, House’s behavior is comforting, because it underscores the unnecessary reverence that people show toward their mortality. By juxtaposing two envelopes, one with the “serious” HIV results and the other with the “nothing” that is a referral request, House shows that both are powerful only insofar as one chooses to make them. When House mocks Cameron’s test results, he is choosing to deny power to what the letter actually symbolizes: death.

Harold Bloom suggests that, when talking about Byron’s *Don Juan*, the term best used “ought not to be ‘irony,’ but ‘mobility,’ one of Byron’s favorite terms” (29). He could equally be speaking of House when making this statement. Bloom is not denying the Romantic irony in *Don Juan*; on the contrary, he suggests that Byron’s mobility brings the ironic worldview to a higher level:

The great Romantic contraries – emotion and order, judgement and enthusiasm, steady self-possession and profound or vehement feeling – all find their social balance in the quality of mobility. Viewed thus, Byron’s achievement in *Don Juan* is to have suggested the pragmatic social realization of Romantic idealism in a mode of reasonableness that no other Romantic aspired to attain.

Byron lived in the world as no other Romantic attempted to live, except Shelley, and Shelley at the last despaired more fully. (Bloom 29)

Byron's avoidance of despair, like House's, is a direct result of his intellectual dexterity, a nimbleness and wit that keep him from falling into what Bloom deems the "abyss [lying] beneath mobility" (29). Byron's ability to succeed where Shelley failed is not indicative of greater genius, however, but rather owes its thanks to Byron's unique life experiences, particularly in the realm of the dandy's lifestyle.⁹

There is little surprise that Byron found himself attracted to the dandy's way of life. The self-destruction and re-cultivation necessary to be a dandy strongly mirrors the artist's self-dissolution in his search for greater meaning. Like the romantic artist, though, the dandy knows that life is ultimately meaningless, or that at least such meaning is forever out of his grasp. The dandy doesn't rebel in order to create something better; he rebels for the sake of rebellion and laughs while he does. Wit is not just the dandy's weapon. It is also his goal, and he needs sufficient life experience in order to sharpen his tongue. Indeed, this reliance of wit upon experience is asserted in the Athenaeum Fragments:

A witty idea is a disintegration of spiritual substances which, before being suddenly separated, must have been thoroughly mixed. The imagination must first be satiated with

⁹ In his biography of Scrope Davies, a dandy and close confidant of Lord Byron, T.A.J. Burnett attempts to provide a comprehensive definition of dandyism. He cites Thomas Carlyle's assertion that "A dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes," but quickly follows up and acknowledges that such a definition is far too simplistic (50). To focus solely upon clothing is to ignore the social and intellectual wit of the dandy. If anything, the dandy's exterior fashion was merely an extension of his own ironic worldview, as the careful cultivation of his appearance had little to do with impressing others. "To attract attention by one's dress was the supreme mortification, and yet paradoxically to dress in such a manner was in itself a defiant statement, expressing scorn for the values of ordinary men" (51). Ultimately, however, dandyism was a lifestyle of defiance, especially against aristocratic values. Again demonstrating its intrinsic irony, however, dandyism rebelled against the institutions of monarchy and aristocracy by turning itself into a new aristocracy, "one so arbitrarily exclusive that real aristocrats might seek to enter it in vain" (52). Unlike the real aristocrats, the dandy lacked both the social position and the money to maintain his status. Instead, his "tyranny could only be maintained by a sham, by sheer nerve, by unconquerable self-assurance....Wit was the essential weapon" (52).

all sorts of life before one can electrify it with the friction of free social intercourse so that the slightest friendly or hostile touch can elicit brilliant sparks and lustrous rays – or smashing thunderbolts. (*Athenaeum Fragments* 34)

Byron recognizes this importance of life experience in order to include wit successfully into his writing. As such, he uses *Don Juan* as both the motivation and the justification for his frequent real-life plunges into frivolity and debauchery.¹⁰ Byron's expertise as one who has "lived in the world" provides him with a unique perspective on society and equips him with the knowledge necessary to write *Don Juan*. Beyond this, his immersion into dandyism strengthens Byron's persona in the public eye and provides him with the striking personality that shines through in *Don Juan*'s narrator.

This Byronesque indulgence into questionable habits and hobbies is a trait equally found in House. As discussed in Chapter One of this study, many of House's actions are blatantly self-destructive, for example his excessive use of Vicodin and other drugs and the dangerous speeding on his motorcycle. Other indulgences may be less hazardous, but they still carry stigmas and risks. The Season Two episode *Deception* opens with House standing at an off-track betting parlor, his demeanor clearly showing that he is a regular. Three episodes later in *Distractions*, House's hiring of prostitutes moves from hypothetical discussion to actuality when he opens his apartment door to let in a call girl. Even more innocuous hobbies such as House's fascination with monster truck rallies add to the cultivation of personality ("Sports Medicine").

¹⁰ In a letter to Douglas Kinnaird, Byron echoes the sentiments of the *Athenaeum Fragment 34* by insisting that *Don Juan* is truly sublime writing and owes its quality to his immersion in the dandy's lifestyle:

As to 'Don Juan' – confess – confess – you dog – and be candid – that it is the sublime of *that there* sort of writing – it may be bawdy – but is it not good English? – it may be profligate – but is it not *life*, is it not *the thing*? – Could any man have written it – who has not lived in the world? – and tooled in a post-chaise? in a hackney coach? in a Gondola? against a wall? in a court carriage? in a vis a vis? on a table? – and under it? (Burnett 50)

As with Byron, these lowbrow activities are about pleasure and experience for House; even more so, they serve as acts of rebellion against social mores in general and the expectations of a respected doctor in particular. Also like Byron and the dandy, House does not rebel for attention, but rather for the sheer sake of rebellion. He emphasizes this when rejecting a fellowship applicant for having a tattoo:

APPLICANT: Wow. I thought you'd be the last person to have a problem with nonconformity.

HOUSE: Nonconformity, right. I can't remember the last time I saw a twenty-something kid with a tattoo of an Asian letter on his wrist. You are one wicked free thinker. You wanna be a rebel? Stop being cool. Wear a pocket protector like he does (*pointing at Wilson*) and get a haircut, like the Asian kids that don't leave the library for twenty hour stretches. They're the ones that don't care what you think. Sayonara! ("Kids")

To think that House cares whether anyone notices his rebellion is acutely incorrect. Indeed, House's lack of concern foregrounds his defiant behavior. This behavior strengthens House's personality in much the same way that Byron's foray into dandyism aided the development of his own persona. In both cases, these strong personalities provide the basis for the successful fusion of the Byronic Hero with buffoonery and satire.

The lengthy critical study, *Lord Byron as a Satirist in Verse*, enforces the importance of this dominant personality when it quotes Augustine Birrell: "...in satire character tells more than in any other form of verse. We want a personality behind – a strong, gloomy, brooding personality; soured and savage if you will – nay, as sour and savage as you like, but spiteful never" (Fuess 210). Birrell is not speaking about Byron, but his words easily apply to the man whose personality and wit managed to fuse the Byronic Hero and ironic buffoonery without

destroying Romanticism's archetypal character. With *Don Juan's* narrator, Byron effectively finds a way to triumph over humanity's limitations and artifice without necessitating a *Manfred*-like death.

This study does not suggest that either House or *Don Juan's* narrator (or Byron himself, for that matter) entirely disentangles himself from the pain of the ironic fall. Such a carefree outlook can never accompany the realization that comes with Absolute Knowledge. Thus Byron's narrator can laugh in the following passage, but his laugh is a bittersweet one:

No more – no more – oh never more, my heart,

Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!

Once all in all, but now a thing apart,

Thou canst not be my blessing or my curse.

The illusion's gone forever, and thou art

Insensible, I trust, but none the worse,

And in thy stead I've got a deal of judgment,

Though heaven knows how it ever found a lodgment (*Don Juan* I.215)

Even as he mourns the loss of illusion, however, the narrator never stops maintaining his humorous perspective on his current situation. This is partially aided by Byron's use of the *ottava rima* stanza, which detracts from the seriousness of the narrator's words with its limerick-sounding rhyme scheme. Even more effective is the nearly instantaneous switch that the narrator often makes from grief to levity. He may digress frequently into reveries such as the above stanza, and each digression from the story's plotline pulls the reader in with its sincere heartache. The irony intrinsic to such pain is that even in its honesty, it is simultaneously a trap for the

reader. As soon as one begins to weep for the narrator's (and Byron's) lost youth, the next stanza slaps him awake:

My days of love are over, me no more
 The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow
 Can make the fool of which they made before;
 In short, I must not lead the life I did do.
 The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
 The copious use of claret is forbid too,
 So for a good old-gentlemanly vice,
 I think I must take up with avarice. (*Don Juan* I.216)

Byron's quick one-liners and light mockery of his "old" age's need for vice catches the reader by surprise and forces a double-take. One catches oneself chuckling while the taste of grief still lingers in the air. By switching moods quickly, Byron provides his reader the chance to experience – albeit momentarily – the duality of the poet's worldview, the pain that eternally underlies the buffoonery. It is perhaps the closest that Byron's audience can come to appreciating the experience of the artist's ironic fall. Yet this brief glimpse is all that the public can handle, argues Michael G. Cooke in his essay on *Don Juan*:

Byron is [the] consummate Chameleon poet, changing themes and schemes quicker than the mind, let alone the eye, can follow. And this is what poses a threat. Byron strips us of all forms of assurance, from the generic to the linguistic to the religious, offering us in place of this slavery of custom a freedom of the moment that is inseparable from its perils. He, however, having voluntarily cast off form and custom, proceeds effortlessly on his way ("Carelessly I sing"); we struggle up behind. He keeps his footing wherever he

goes, even into the pitfalls of skepticism; we do not and cannot. In short, *Don Juan* threatens us because it does not lend itself to plotting and bounding, and as we trail after it we experience not only the exhilaration of its freedom, but also the embarrassment of its unfamiliar power and ways. (Cooke 104-5)

This is exactly what *House, M.D.* does to its own audience. With his constant self-deprecation and undisguised mockery of his colleagues and patients, House never allows a serious moment to remain that way for long. His one-liner retorts are innumerable and never fail to cause a momentary double-take worthy of *Don Juan*'s narrator. In one example, a patient refuses life-saving treatment after she, in a delirium, suffocates her infant son. House speaks with her in an attempt to change her mind. In spite of the mind-numbing tragedy of the situation, however, he still mocks her self-pity:

PATIENT: I killed my son.

HOUSE: Is it my turn to say something obvious now? Oh yeah, you were insane.

(“Forever”)

A second example shows a patient romantically singing off-key to his wife when he begins to have a stroke. His loss of physical control is painful to watch. House does nothing as the other doctors in the room rush to aid the distressed man. Instead, he takes a moment to comment wryly upon the onset of the stroke: “And not a moment too soon” (“No More Mr. Nice Guy”). He is making fun of the man's singing at the expense of the medical emergency. Just as Byron strips death of terror with the imagery of the laughing skull, so does House remove overwhelming grief and fear from his patient's mortality with his biting humor.

As stated earlier, Michael Cooke suggests that readers are threatened by Byron's mobility of thought, “struggl[ing] up behind” as he maneuvers effortlessly and unencumbered by “form

and custom.” One finds a similar struggle when faced with House’s quips, because one is indoctrinated with the belief that the sickbed is a sacred place and must be treated accordingly. House’s humor helps his audience to free themselves from this trap of fear, however, and this glimpse into his humorously ironic perspective is what has allowed House to flourish as a modern Byronic Hero.

CONCLUSION

According to *TV Guide*, House (now in its seventh season) is currently ranked #14 in America's most popular television shows (*TV Guide*), and the *New York Times* refers to *House, M.D.* as a "worldwide phenomenon" (Carter). In the same *New York Times* article, Hugh Laurie (the actor who plays House) elaborates upon the show's worldwide success:

It really puzzles me that we do so well overseas. It is such a verbal show. Yet it is translated into Portuguese, Italian, Russian, and it still survives. It's the No. 1 drama in Italy. The French are mad for it. I find that baffling. (Carter)

In fact, the show's transcendence of linguistic barriers is far from baffling when one considers the long-standing tradition of the Byronic Hero and his manifestation in myriad languages and literatures. Those examples mentioned in the course of this study provide only a few examples of the Byronic Hero's appearance across cultures and languages, including French (Chateaubriand's René), Russian (Lermontov's Pechorin), German (Goethe's Faust), and English (Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Byron's Manfred, Child Harold, Cain, etc.). In each of these examples, the popularity of the literary work relies upon its chief protagonist and therefore equally demonstrates the appeal of the Byronic Hero himself.

He may be a quintessentially isolated figure, but the Byronic Hero nevertheless exudes a universal allure to those who encounter him. It is this long-established captivation of the Byronic Hero's audience that provides House with the foundation for a wildly successful television persona. When House merges this characterization with a humor that mirrors Schlegel's

transcendent buffoonery and Byron's biting wit, he pushes this allure into a level of fascination that ensures the survival of this classic Romantic character well into the twenty-first century.

At the end of Season Three, House loses his entire team.¹¹ He asks Cameron how she expects him to react to his imminent isolation. "I expect you to do what you always do," replies Cameron. "I expect you to make a joke and go on. I expect you to be just fine" ("Human Error"). Her words apply not only to House, but also to the humorous Byronic Hero that Byron envisioned in *Don Juan*. In the face of hypocrisy, artificiality, isolation, and the incomprehensibility of existence, this new Byronic Hero will be consistent in his ability to laugh through the pain. He will do more than merely survive; he will thrive.

¹¹ This loss occurs when House fires Chase, after which both Foreman and Cameron resign ("Human Error").

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

- Abrams, Meyer Howard. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1971.
- Barnard, Philip and Cheryl Lester. "Translator's Introduction: The Presentation of Romantic Literature." *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1988. vii-xx.
- Bloom, Harold. "Introduction." *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 1-37.
- Bostetter, Edward E. "Introduction." *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Don Juan: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Edward E. Bostetter. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
- Brisman, Leslie. "Troubled Stream from a Pure Source." *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 75-100.
- Bruhm, Steven. "Reforming Byron's Narcissism." *Lessons of Romanticism: A Critical Companion*. Ed. Thomas Pfau and Robert F. Gleckner. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. 429-447.
- Burnett, T.A.J. *The Rise and Fall of a Regency Dandy*. London: John Murray Publishers, 1981.
- Byron, George Gordon. "The Corsair." *Selected Poems*. Ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. New York: Penguin Books, 2005. 248-307.
- Byron, George Gordon. *Don Juan*. Ed. T.G. Steffan, E. Steffan and W.W. Pratt. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

- Byron, George Gordon. "Lara." *Selected Poems*. Ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. New York: Penguin Books, 2005. 316-354.
- Byron, George Gordon. "Manfred." *Selected Poems*. Ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. New York: Penguin Books, 2005. 463-506.
- Byron, George Gordon. "Prometheus." *Selected Poems*. Ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. New York: Penguin Books, 2005. 394-396.
- Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.
- Carter, Bill. "Tormented Doctor Turns to Directing." *NYTimes.com*. 11 Apr 2010. The New York Times. 03 Jul 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/12/arts/television/12house.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1>.
- Casablanca*. Dir. Michael Curtiz. Writ. Julius J. Epstein, Philip G. Epstein and Howard Koch. Prod. Hal B. Wallis. Perf. Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. Warner Bros., 1942.
- "Casting Session with Hugh Laurie." *House, M.D. Season One*. DVD. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2005.
- Chateaubriand. *Atala/Rene*. Trans. Irving Putter. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Clark, David L. and Donald C. Goellnicht. "Discriminations: Romanticism in the Wake of Deconstruction." *New Romanticisms*. Ed. David L. Clark and Donald C. Goellnicht. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.
- Colebrook, Claire. *Irony*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Cooke, Michael G. "Don Juan: The Obsession and Self-Discipline of Spontaneity." *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 101-116.

- Doyle, Arthur Conan, Sir. "The Adventure of the Final Problem." *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992. 435-446.
- Doyle, Arthur Conan, Sir. "The Sign of Four." *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992. 64-113.
- Elias, Julius A. "Introduction." *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime*. By Friedrich von Schiller. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984. 1-75.
- Frye, Northrop. "Lord Byron." *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 53-64.
- Fuess, Claude M., PhD. *Lord Byron as a Satirist in Verse*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *The Sorrows of Young Werther and Selected Writings*. Trans. Catherine Hutter. New York: Signet Classics, 2005.
- Hays, Peter L. *The Limping Hero: Grotesques in Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 1971.
- House, M.D., Seasons 1-6*. By David Shore, et al. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 16 Nov 2004 – 17 May 2010.
- Jones, Stephen E. *Satire and Romanticism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Knight, G. Wilson. "The Two Eternities." *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 39-52.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe and Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1988.

- Lermontov, Mikhail. *A Hero of Our Time*. Trans. Marian Schwartz. New York: The Modern Library, 2004.
- Lovell, Ernest J., Jr. "Irony and Image in *Don Juan*." Twentieth Century Interpretations of Don Juan: a Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Edward E. Bostetter. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
- Manning, Peter J. "*Don Juan* and Byron's Imperceptiveness to the English Word." *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Duncan Wu. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995. 217-242.
- Manning, Peter J. "The Hone-ing of Byron's *Corsair*." *George Gordon, Lord Byron*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 133-148.
- McGann, Jerome. "Byron and the Anonymous Lyric." *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Duncan Wu. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995. 243-260.
- McGann, Jerome. *Byron and Romanticism*. Ed. James Soderholm. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- McGann, Jerome. *Don Juan in Context*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- McGann, Jerome. *Fiery Dust*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- Mellor, Anne K. *English Romantic Irony*. New York: toExcel Press, 1980.
- Muldoon, Paul. "A Conversation on Byron with Jason Schinder." *The American Poetry Review*. Nov/Dec (2007). 63-68.
- Redfield, Marc. "Romanticism, *Bildung*, and the Literary Absolute." *Lessons of Romanticism: A Critical Companion*. Ed. Thomas Pfau and Robert F. Gleckner. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. 41-54.

- Schiller, Friedrich von. "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry." *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime*. Trans. Julius A. Elias. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984. 83-190.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. "Athenaeum Fragments." *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*. Ed. and trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971. 161-240.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. "Critical Fragments." *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*. Ed. and trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971. 143-159.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. "On Incomprehensibility." *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*. Ed. and trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971. 259-271.
- Thorslev, Peter L., Jr. *The Byronic Hero*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962.
- Tieck, Ludwig. *Der gestiefelte Kater*. Trans. Gerald Gillespie. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974.
- "TV Guide Most Popular TV Shows." *TVGuide.com*. 04 Jul 2010.
<<http://www.tvguide.com/top-tv-shows>>.
- Wolfson, Susan J. and Peter J. Manning. "Introduction." *Don Juan*. By George Gordon Byron. Ed. T.G. Steffan, E. Steffan and W.W. Pratt. New York: Penguin Books, 2004. vii-xxviii.

HOUSE, M.D. EPISODES CITED

- “Acceptance.” *House, M.D.* By Russel Friend & Garrett Lerner. Dir Dan Attias. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 13 Sept 2005.
- “Cane & Able.” *House, M.D.* By Russel Friend, Garrett Lerner, Lawrence Kaplow & David Shore. Dir Daniel Sackheim. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 12 Sept 2006.
- “Casting Session with Hugh Laurie.” *House, M.D. Season One*. DVD. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2005.
- “Control.” *House, M.D.* By Lawrence Kaplow. Dir Randy Zisk. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 15 Mar 2005.
- “Daddy’s Boy.” *House, M.D.* By Thomas L. Moran. Dir Greg Yaitanes. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 8 Nov 2005.
- “Damned If You Do.” *House, M.D.* By Sara B. Cooper. Dir. Greg Yaitanes. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 14 Dec 2004.
- “Deception.” *House, M.D.* By Michael R Perry. Dir Deran Sarafian. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 13 Dec 2005.
- “Detox.” *House, M.D.* By Lawrence Kaplow & Thomas L. Moran. Dir Nelson McCormick. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 15 Feb 2005.
- “Distractions.” *House, M.D.* By Lawrence Kaplow. Dir Dan Attias. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 14 Feb 2006.

- “Don’t Ever Change.” *House, M.D.* By Doris Egan & Leonard Dick. Dir Deran Sarafian. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 12 Feb 2008.
- “Failure to Communicate.” *House, M.D.* By Doris Egan. Dir Jace Alexander. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 13 Dec 2005.
- “Forever.” *House, M.D.* By Liz Friedman. Dir Daniel Sackheim. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 9 May 2006.
- “Half-Wit.” *House, M.D.* By Lawrence Kaplow. Dir Katie Jacobs. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 6 Mar 2007.
- “Honeymoon.” *House, M.D.* By Lawrence Kaplow & John Mankiewicz. Dir Frederick King Keller. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 24 May 2005.
- “House vs. God.” *House, M.D.* By Doris Egan. Dir John F. Showalter. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 25 Apr 2006.
- “Human Error.” *House, M.D.* By Thomas L. Moran & Lawrence Kaplow. Dir Katie Jacobs. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 29 May 2007.
- “Lines in the Sand.” *House, M.D.* By David Hoselton. Dir Newton Thomas Sigel. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 26 Sept 2006.
- “Locked In.” *House, M.D.* By Russel Friend, Garrett Lerner & David Foster. Dir Dan Attias. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 30 Mar 2009.
- “Love Hurts.” *House, M.D.* By Sara B. Cooper. Dir Bryan Spicer. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 10 May 2005.
- “Maternity.” *House, M.D.* By Peter Blake. Dir. Newton Thomas Sigel. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 7 Dec 2004.

- “Meaning.” *House, M.D.* By Russel Friend, Garrett Lerner, Lawrence Kaplow and David Shore. Dir Deran Sarafian. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 5 Sept 2006.
- “Need to Know.” *House, M.D.* By Pamela Davis. Dir David Semel. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 7 Feb 2006.
- “No More Mr. Nice Guy.” *House, M.D.* By David Hoselton & David Shore. Dir Deran Sarafian. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 28 Apr 2008.
- “No Reason.” *House, M.D.* By Lawrence Kaplow & David Shore. Dir David Shore. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 23 May 2006.
- “Occam’s Razor.” *House, M.D.* By David Shore. Dir. Bryan Singer. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 30 Nov 2004.
- “One Day, One Room.” *House, M.D.* By David Shore. Dir Juan J Campanella. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 30 Jan 2007.
- “Pilot.” *House, M.D.* By David Shore. Dir. Bryan Singer. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 16 Nov 2004.
- “Role Model.” *House, M.D.* By Matt Witten. Dir Peter O’Fallon. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 12 Apr 2005.
- “Sex Kills.” *House, M.D.* By Matt Witten. Dir David Semel. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 7 Mar 2006.
- “The Socratic Method.” *House, M.D.* By John Mankiewicz. Dir. Peter Medak. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 21 Dec 2004.
- “Spin.” *House, M.D.* By Sara Hess. Dir Fred Gerber. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 15 Nov 2005.

“Sports Medicine.” *House, M.D.* By John Mankiewicz & David Shore. Dir Keith Gordon. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 22 Feb 2005.

“TB or Not TB.” *House, M.D.* By David Foster. Dir Peter O-Fallon. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 1 Nov 2005.

“Three Stories.” *House, M.D.* By David Shore. Dir Paris Barclay. Perf. Hugh Laurie, et al. Fox Broadcasting Company. 17 May 2005.