

Transformation of Dil Nawaz in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* into a Postcolonial Byronic Hero

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Abstract

This research paper aims to establish the character of Dil Nawaz in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man as a Byronic hero. Deviating from embodying the usual characteristics of a traditional hero, such as idealism and heroic virtue, the argument posits that Dil Nawaz is a depraved character. His personality is shaped by both personal experiences and societal influences, leading him to make unethical decisions and manifesting in self-destructive tendencies. Additionally, this paper uses qualitative content analysis to explore Dil Nawaz's behavior within the patriarchal system prevailing during the 1947 partition of the subcontinent. In the context of underrepresentation of South Asian literature written in English, the study intends to showcase the depth and complexity of South Asian characters like Dil Nawaz by examining his personality, the evolution of his attitude as the narrative progresses, and his relationships with other characters, particularly his love interest in the novel. To further accentuate his repulsiveness, the impact of trauma on his psyche is examined, revealing a character shaped by revenge, melancholia, and a distorted pursuit of love.

Keywords: Byronic hero; South Asian literature; archetype; Bapsi Sidhwa; Ice Candy Man; Dil Nawaz; trauma; speechless terror; revenge; melancholia.

This research paper endeavors to establish the protagonist, Dil Nawaz, in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* as a Byronic hero. Due to South Asian literature's lack of international exposure compared to other works of literature written in English-speaking nations, Dil Nawaz is still an underappreciated character. According to "Where is the diversity in publishing? The 2019 diversity baseline survey results", by Lee and Low Books and coauthored by Laura M. Jimenez, just 7% of books published in a certain year are created by persons of South Asian descent (par. 12). Therefore, my purpose in portraying Dil Nawaz as a Byronic hero is to highlight the fact that South Asian characters possess the same level of magnitude and complexity as their mainstream counterparts in western literature. I intend to demonstrate that Dil Nawaz is a victim of circumstances and external influences have led him to make morally wrong choices, ultimately causing his self-destruction. The examination involves tracing the protagonist's

Byronic hero tendencies, the change in his demeanor as the story unfolds, and his interactions with other characters.

This qualitative study incorporates archetypal analysis, with a special emphasis on the Byronic hero archetype formulated by Lord Byron to characterize Dil Nawaz as a subaltern Byronic hero. In addition, the application of trauma theory is employed, specifically emphasizing the works of Cathy Caruth, notably her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. To comprehend Dil Nawaz's psychological complexities, one must grasp how trauma disrupts conventional narrative structures and the challenges involved in depicting traumatic circumstances. Hence, Caruth's investigation into these subjects is vital to understand how Dil Nawaz copes with and strives to overcome the psychological consequences of traumatic experiences, specifically in relation to the trauma resulting from the partition. In addition, the analysis delves into the components of Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* to examine Dil Nawaz's enduring emotional connection to the past and his difficulties in moving on, despite endeavors to seek forgiveness.

The study addresses the following three questions:

1. How does Dil Nawaz embody the characteristics of a Byronic hero in *Ice Candy Man*?
2. How does the socio-political context of the Indo-Pak partition influence Dil Nawaz's character and his trajectory as a Byronic hero, considering elements such as loss, displacement, and societal upheaval?
3. How does Dil Nawaz's interactions with Ayah, his romantic interest, reflect the Byronic hero archetype, and how does the rejection of his repentance contribute to his status as an antihero?

Lord Byron (1788-1824) obtained the title of 6th Baron at the age of ten from his great uncle, who was famously referred to as "the wicked lord," in the year 1798 (Marchand, 7). His father was a highly charismatic individual during his time, and his consistent inclination towards gambling and frugality earned him the moniker "mad Jack" (Marchand, 7). Byron's mother was a poorly educated woman, whom Byron blamed in his later years for his chaotic and wild behavior. He was self-conscious all his life due to his disability, and insanity also ran in his family. He is a renowned lyrical poet of great talent in English literature. His most important works include *Don Juan*, *The Vision of Judgment*, and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The characters that Lord Byron uses in his literary works are strikingly similar to him; they are characterized by arrogance, strong emotions, and a disregard for social norms. These characters are typical Byronic heroes due to their various attributes of rebelliousness, melancholy, and anguish. Byron himself serves as the quintessential embodiment of a Byronic hero, as he once expressed that he possessed a unique blend of virtuous and wicked qualities that make it challenging to describe him accurately (Marchand, 7).

Byron's semi-autobiographical epic, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, created the concept of the anti-hero, characterized as a condescending and disdainful individual, gloomy and rebellious, filled with misery and relentless in seeking revenge, yet also capable of deep emotional attachment. (Macaulay, par.4) The anti-hero consequently continued to make an appearance in all of Lord Byron's work. Ever since Lord Byron's literary works emerged during the Romantic era, the

Byronic hero has gained widespread recognition as a distinct character type in literature. Numerous authors have subsequently employed this archetype in their own writings over the years. The Byronic hero is difficult to distinguish, in part because he combines characteristics of the Romantic hero with qualities of the tragic hero, as well as traits commonly found in Gothic hero. Lord Byron has crafted a character that transcends the traditional archetype of a heroic figure, offering a fresh perspective. This character defies the conventional belief that a hero must exhibit selflessness and possess extraordinary virtue. Instead, they demonstrate that one may still be a prominent protagonist while having several defects in their nature.

The Byronic hero might be simply described as a young man who, having indulged in immorality at an early age, roams aimlessly in an endeavor to evade both society and his own recollections (Viñoles, par. 5). The archetypal behavior of a Byronic hero in a typical novel is that he is involved in a romantic relationship with a woman, which subsequently transforms him into a passionate romantic hero, evoking sympathy from the readers. However, his aggression towards innocent individuals establishes him as a vindictive antagonist, resulting in his characterization as an ignoble hero. In "Byronic Heroes, Yesterday and Today," White illustrates the Byronic hero as a rebel with certain harmful attributes. Although he may appear to be more intelligent than other characters, emotions, hypersensitivity, and enduring tragedy largely govern his existence.

In "The literary icon of the Byronic hero and its reincarnation," Brindas asserts that the Byronic hero exhibits certain shortcomings, such as a serious disposition, intense unhappiness, heavy guilt, and a tendency to defy authority and societal norms. Thus, this particular type of hero does not possess the conventional heroic attributes and instead embodies an idealized yet flawed character (27).

Pop Zarijeva and Iliev's research suggests that the Byronic hero is an unusual combination of the anti-hero, tragic hero and romantic hero. He embodies a dangerous and ruthless lover, generally irredeemable, a primary cause of misery not just for others but even for himself (743). This character has intense emotional suffering associated with Romantic ideals, possesses a strong longing for self-realization by means of a rebellious disposition, and is plagued by a contemplating mood. He wanders in society he detests and is almost always engaged in an internal conflict caused by his inner demons (744).

It is the instinct of revenge, mentions Margaret Daniel in "The Byronic Hero as a Cultural Icon in the Romantic Period" that drives the Byronic heroes and frequently causes them to seek out rivals in order to justify their own failings to themselves. Hence, the relentless pursuit of justice by seeking revenge is a defining characteristic of the Byronic heroes. In addition, Daniel characterized the Byronic hero as a result of historical events, political circumstances, and the societal context in which he exists. While Daniel primarily concentrated on the *Turkish Tales*, she determined that Byron's biography, together with the political and social occurrences of the day, had a crucial role in shaping the Byronic hero, who has now become a cultural symbol.

Frazell contends in "Immortal Melancholia: A Psychoanalytical Study of Byronic Heroes" that the Byronic hero is driven by profound grief and a state of deep sadness, and that the sole means of liberation from this state is through an equally intense reciprocal love. Lutz also explores the

impact of drive on the behaviour of the dangerous romantic partner. Specifically, she highlights that the urge for retribution within the vengeful lover transforms their damaged heart into acts of external violence. The dangerous lover, driven by a strong need for revenge, seeks to alleviate his own suffering by inflicting anguish onto others. The concealed aggression in his gaze projects a universal animosity that craves annihilation of everyone.

Frazell distinguishes between melancholia and grieving using Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Mourning ("Mourning and Melancholia," In: J. Strachey, 243) may be defined as the emotional response to the death of a loved one or the loss of an abstract concept that holds personal significance, such as one's nation, freedom, or an ideal. According to Freud, grieving is a normal response to loss, but it may be resolved after a specific period of time. On the other hand, melancholia is characterized by intense sadness, lack of interest in the world, inability to feel love, reduced motivation, and a decrease in self-esteem that leads to self-blame and self-criticism. This condition can also result in a distorted belief that punishment is necessary (244).

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, *Ice Candy Man*, transpires against the turbulent background of the subcontinent's separation. Similar to other major political or religious revolutionary movements, the partition of India and Pakistan had devastating consequences for both Hindus and Muslims living there. Sidhwa effectively depicts this period of massive shift in her story, highlighting the suddenness of the transition. One day, people lived with individual identities together, but the very next, they were classified into religious categories, being reduced to mere symbols (96).

The protagonist of the novel, Dil Nawaz is highly influenced by the series of events that unfold in this socio-political background. In the first few chapters, Dil Nawaz is illustrated as an amusing character who neither has serious job nor does he have a serious view of life. He often changes employment, exhibiting a level of street smartness. He assumes the role of a bird vendor in order to entice and manipulate young girls and women into purchasing the birds to set them free. In addition, he assumes the role of a poet and even impersonates a religious baba, blessing women with future sons. This supports the overview Peter Thorslev provides of the typical traits of a Byronic hero in his book, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes*. According to Thorsley, the Byronic hero is always courteous towards women, possesses a fondness for poetry, has honour, and bears a deep sense of guilt of biblical proportions. This definition perfectly applies on Dil Nawaz whose love for Ayah is playful and courteous in the first half of the novel. He flirts with her relentlessly, and she tolerates him (Sidhwa, 19). Dil Nawaz presents himself as an easygoing and carefree individual who has yet to reach full maturity. Moreover, he seems to embody psychological depth that Lenny, the narrator of the story hints at by creating an aura of mystery around him.

Sidhwa uses the Byronic hero template to generate Dil Nawaz's character. Lenny's description of Dil Nawaz appearance resembles that of a dark hero with his kohl rimmed eyes, dark complexion, and nimble toes that crawl up Ayah's sari. His Byronic qualities are further highlighted through his devil-may-care attitude when he suggests to Ayah that he will help her finish her domestic chores by working alongside her in a South Asian household where mingling among the opposite genders is considered inappropriate and could cost Ayah her livelihood. By ignoring the obvious social decorum he deliberately tries to place himself beyond the constraints of conventional culture. As Lenny points out that he's not the kind of person people allow inside

their homes. His gruff mannerism, flashy scarves, foul-smelling cigarettes, and heavy perfume of jasmine attar give him a shady and perhaps disreputable reputation (33).

Dil Nawaz's pursuit of Ayah is a game. She is a trophy he will win in a competition against Masseur, his foil in the novel. He frequently cajoles Ayah away from Masseur by offering her free lunches and gossip in exchange for her time. This harmless love for Ayah takes a dark turn when his emotional side emerges after his sisters are massacred on the first train to Pakistan from Gurdaspur. As a consequence of this event, his whole perspective on life shifts, maturing and transforming him into a Byronic hero overnight. After witnessing Muslims' bodies being dismembered in the Hindu-Muslim civil riots, he swears to exact revenge for the passing of his loved ones. The bitter experience of partition wrenches out the dark side of his personality. The traumatic experience of partition exposes the worst aspects of his character. From a playful lover, he changes into a violent and chaotic anti-hero..

Caruth suggests that trauma triggers an overwhelming fear that renders the experience inexpressible through language. This 'speechless terror' results in preserving the memory differently than under normal circumstances (Richter, 365). Caruth's thoughts highlight the way in which traumatic situations overpower an individual's ability to completely understand and express the experience using language. Such is the case with Dil Nawaz. When he is explaining the extent of the horrors to his friends, he is unable to speak about it, this inability is apparent through Sidwa's use of ellipses, "I was expecting relatives...For three days...for twelve hours each day...I waited for the train!" (131). Dil Nawaz who is normally eloquent and charming with his words, finds himself unable to express his grief adequately. The repression of grief and his failure to articulate it properly robs him of his chance to mourn his loss and leads him to fall into melancholia. Dil Nawaz's actions are in reaction to his loss because he is unable to grieve so he finds an outlet through aggression.

Mourning is a natural process of grief, while melancholia is a prolonged state of sorrow. Freud differentiates between grief and melancholy. While the grieving individual gains the ability to move past their loss, the melancholic, however, is unable to do so. Instead, the melancholic tends to have a strong inclination towards self-hate, self-vilification and often anticipates rejection, almost craving punishment. Due to their moral degradation, the melancholic lacks any fear of repercussions and hence shows disregard for their own mortality. Dil Nawaz's melancholia fills him with so much hate that he takes revenge from his non-Muslim friends. He leads a mob to Sher Singh's house, where the mob mistreats his family and lynches Singh's brother-in-law. He also arranges for Masseur's murder and even participates in Ayah's kidnapping. Using Byronic quality of deception, he convinces Lenny to reveal Ayah's location. By the end of the novel, it becomes less and less clear whether Dil Nawaz has deceived the audience into believing that he truly regrets his past actions.

Despite the ambiguity of Dil Nawaz's real character, the readers still pity and sympathize with him because of the effect the brutal slaughter of his sisters has had on his psyche. According to Caruth, dissociation and fragmentation happens as a result of experiencing trauma (Richter, 367). The mind splits off from the present and surroundings due to the shock caused by experiencing distress. This leads to splitting off of self-perception and results in cognitive desensitization, which makes it difficult to form a cohesive identity or coherent narrative. Ultimately, Ayah is

rescued by godmother. Dil Nawaz acknowledges that his actions, motivated by desire, vengeance, and rage, have compelled Ayah to hold him in contempt. His desire to possess Ayah is perpetually unfulfilled since Ayah would never reciprocate his passion for her. He willingly gives up his love for her, even at the cost of his own suffering, in order to ensure her happiness. Dil Nawaz would persist in his condition of melancholy, so maintaining his reputation as a social outcast.

At the end of the novel, Dil Nawaz apparently looks repentant of his actions towards Ayah, but by then it is too late. He has irrevocably damaged his relationships and love interest. It is implied at the end of the novel that he will continue following Ayah, reverting back to his role of poetry reciting unrequited lover. He carries on not only tormenting himself with his guilt but also continues to haunt Ayah as a sinister shadow of her violent past.

To conclude, the analysis of Dil Nawaz's character in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* reveals a complex individual who undergoes a transformation from a carefree, playful lover to a tormented, vengeful anti-hero. This exploration takes place against the socio-political backdrop of the Indo-Pak partition, highlighting the complex workings of the human psyche in traumatic situations. This paper explores Dil Nawaz's change by examining the paradigm of the Byronic hero. It attributes his behaviour to the tremendous influence of the distressing events of the partition of Indo-Pak. The transformation of Dil Nawaz, from a charismatic yet morally compromised person to a tormented human driven by a desire for revenge, exemplifies the blending of characteristics evocative of the Romantic, tragic, and anti-heroic archetypes. The partition's terrible events not only devastated Dil Nawaz's environment but also fractured his mentality, leaving him incapable of expressing or comprehending the immense sorrow and terror he experienced. Caruth's analysis of the overwhelming fear experienced in trauma is reflected in Dil Nawaz's inability to articulate the extent of his suffering, resulting in the outward display of anger as a means of communication. In addition, Freud's differentiation between grieving and melancholia clarifies Dil Nawaz's decline into a protracted condition of sadness, overwhelmed by self-loathing and an unyielding need for revenge. The character's incapacity to navigate through bereavement sustains his metamorphosis into a tortured individual, always plagued by his unarticulated anguish. The mysterious quality of Dil Nawaz's remorse towards the end leaves readers contemplating the complexity of his character. Although his traumatic experiences elicit compassion, his aggressive acts towards his friends elicit both pity and contempt. Dil Nawaz deviates from the archetype of a conventional tragic hero and instead embodies the role of a hero who is victimized by external factors. He serves as a metaphor for how society may corrupt the inherent goodness in individuals through his tragic history, intense emotions, societal limitations, desire for vengeance, and, most all, his profound ability for love.

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