

Manfred's struggle for redemption



Manfred, in the dramatic poem of the same name, written by Lord Byron, is a character that possesses many flaws. As Manfred mourns the loss of his beloved sister, it is revealed that their incestuous relationship was deemed illegal by and disgusted their society. As a result of this as well as his sister's passing, Manfred attempts to commit more social and legal crimes such as suicide, witchcraft and the conjuration of spirits. Although Manfred is depicted as a man void of righteousness and morality, he also portrays qualities that justify and negate some of his actions. These choices prove that he is not made of pure darkness and attempts to redeem himself. Despite having committed acts that alienated him from society, Manfred demonstrates the redemption of his true character through his guilt for his sister's death, his determination to attain justice for her and his overall courage expressed through the arc of his redemption.

In inadvertent contribution to his atonement, Manfred demonstrates guilt and regret. Being part of this forbidden relationship, the story's protagonist understands that he too had a role in his sister's death. Unfortunately, he understands this far too well and is overcome with guilt throughout the entirety of the play. Feeling responsible, he attempts several times to expel these feelings to no avail. Manfred is left nearly hopeless and unable to live with the pain he has caused to both his love and himself. " But grief should be the instructor of the wise; Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth" (Act I, Scene I, 10-12) Here, Manfred explains that he becomes increasingly troubled the more he lingers on the issue. As he thinks and understands more, his guilt and sorrow are only amplified. Among these feelings are regret. An emotion that does not

appeal to his negative actions but instead combats them. Although Manfred has already committed these crimes and social injustices, he demonstrates the newfound good in him through his disagreement with his previous actions. Being incapable of undoing what has already been done, he is determined to negate these actions and redeem himself.

As a result of his guilt, Manfred attempts tirelessly to attain justice for what he believes he caused or punish himself as a result. His determination is generated by a self-induced moral obligation he feels to satisfy his newly adopted sense of righteousness and humanity. The first instance of this is shown in the first scene of the play. When Manfred summons the seven spirits, he demonstrates just how desperate he is for closure. Even after failing at this, his perseverance is shown in his refusal to back down.

Arguably his most effective attempt involves his suicide. As Manfred is on the verge of jumping to his death off a cliff, even then, he validates this as an act of redemption. “For the wind's pastime – as thus – thus they should be – In this one plunge – Farewell ye opening heavens! Look not upon me this reproachfully-” (Act I, Scene I, 112-114) As Manfred is about to end his life, he expresses his idea to both end his suffering and serve justice for his wrongs, an act even some of the best people would refuse to engage in. The most important line here is the last. He begs the heavens to not look on him so reproachfully, meaning Manfred understands that he himself has changed. He uses the word “reproachfully” here as a way to exhibit the good in him, thus veiling the bad. Manfred tells the heavens to regard him as the man he so desperately tries to become and not who he had previously been.

In order to commit many of the acts necessary to prove his redemption, Manfred has expressed a great deal of courage and bravery. Two of the most prominent here are his attempted suicide and his death. Proving Manfred's redemption involved tasks most would not even consider. His willingness to jump to his death for example, demonstrated just how dedicated he was and that no amount of fear could dissuade him from pursuing justice. This bravery can be seen on an even larger scale during the final scene. As Manfred defends his integrity against a literal demon, denies the Abbot's urges to save his soul and ultimately his own death, Manfred's bravery is truly shown as one of his outstanding qualities. " Old man! ' Tis not so difficult to die." (Act III, Scene III, 173) Accepting his demise was a bitter yet crucial step in his journey to show his redeeming bravery. In Manfred's last sentence, he uses his final breath to embrace death instead of running from it, proving that his courage truly has no limits.

Although Manfred has been involved in acts society find atrocious, he ultimately proves that he his, as a whole, good. This can be shown, in a way, though Manfred's sincere guilt for his sister's death. Due to this grief, his sheer dedication is justified by his desperation to attain righteousness. Through this perseverance, the protagonist exposes his courage through even the most horrifying scenarios. In order to make both himself as well as society believe that he is in fact a good man, Manfred exhibits these redeeming qualities, some only dream of embodying.