

# The byronic hero

People



While popular culture is usually regarded as something trite, meaningless, and superficial, careful and insightful analysis of certain aspects of popular culture reveals a lot about culture as a whole. For the purposes of this essay, I decided to concentrate on one of the pop idols of the 20th century, namely Jim Morrison. The rationale behind my choice is that this figure produced a powerful impact on popular culture, and the cult of Jim Morrison is still appealing to many generations of Americans.

As for the theoretical perspective to be employed in this essay, I will show how the cult of Jim Morrison is a reincarnation of the image of the Byronic Hero that has always been present in world culture. The Byronic Hero is an extraordinary and talented young man. Tremendous success of Jim Morrison leaves no doubt in his enormous talent, charisma, and energy. I dare call him a genius for the ample reason that speaking about the overall history of contemporary music, people remember only two names, the Beatles and the Doors, and the Doors in the first place.

Secondly, the Byronic Hero is a rebel who opposes almost all social norms and regulations; he deliberately distances himself from conventional social institutions. This feature was characteristic of Jim Morrison from the early childhood: he used to question the authority, and for that he was dismissed from a scout club. At night, he used to sneak out from his parents' house and hang out at overcrowded and disreputable bars. His juvenile misbehaving soon evolved into a consistent social protest expressed through music and show.

'Philosophies of Protest' used to be his favorite course at Florida State University (Davis, 2004). He denounced traditional social patterns; the <https://assignbuster.com/the-byronic-hero/>

evidence for that is the fact that he never got married. Instead, he 'married' Patricia Kennealy in a Celtic pagan ceremony. The Byronic Hero is never impressed by rank and privilege, though he may possess it. Jim Morrison might have become a representative of the elite circles with good education, stable job, and decent social status. Yet he made a choice in favor of a flamboyant bohemian lifestyle. Another feature of the Byronic Hero is intelligence.

The conventional Byronic Hero is well-read and possibly well-bread. Jim Morrison took a keen interest in self-education; he devoted a lot of time to reading Nietzsche, Jung, Ginsberg, Joyce, and Balzac. He derived inspiration in the literary heritage of French symbolists, especially Rimbaud. It is worth noting that Arthur Rimbaud himself was an exemplary Byronic Hero, with his dark passions and impressive talents. By the age of fifteen, Jim established himself as a gifted poet and painter; some sources argue that Jim Morrison had an IQ of 149 (Davis, 2004).

He received solid education and traveled the world. These facts prove that Jim Morrison possessed the majority of features typical for the Byronic Hero. Another characteristic of the Byronic Hero is the exile, usually self-imposed. Exile to Paris is an essential part of Jim Morrison's biography. Morrison escaped to Paris with Pamela Courson; he did so because he disliked being a celebrity. He was deeply dissatisfied with the absence of serious attitude to him as an American poet. Paris seemed to provide an asylum.

The conventional Byronic Hero is distressed by a terrible thing he committed in the past, like a hidden curse or crime; this burden forces him into a voluntary exile. When Morrison escaped to Paris, he faced a tragic dilemma

in his life. His two women, Pamela Courson and Patricia Kennealy, both demanded his love. Some researchers believe that his love for Patricia Kennealy was greater, but Pamela let him continue his experiments with alcohol and drugs (Davis, 2004). He may have always felt guilt and regret for leaving Patricia. The Byronic Hero is constantly depressed and melancholic.

It is reported that in Paris Morrison searched for a sense of living as well as for inspiration to write more powerful poetry (Davis, 2004). But even in the city of great poets Morrison was spiritually void and suffered from depression. The Byronic Hero is unusually handsome and inextricably attractive, often to both sexes. I dare label Jim Morrison as the most prominent male sex-symbol of the 20th century. The Byronic Hero is larger than life in his feelings, talents, ambitions, and pride. This type is also self-destructive in the longer run.

That is one of the most substantial arguments that prove Jim Morrison's connection with the discussed image. His progressing addiction to alcohol and drugs was his curse. Thus, Morrison can be regarded as an example of the Byronic Hero that has been present in world culture from its creation in early Greek theatre through classical English literature and 19th-Century Russian literature to the modern times. It is evident that the classical Byronic Heroes is Byron's Childe Harold. The Canto I from the Childe Harold's Pilgrimage provides an excessive proof for all the abovementioned images of a Byronic Hero.

The following lines can be interpreted as the example of rebellious nature of the Byronic Hero: ' Who ne in virtue's ways did take delight/But spent his days in riot most uncouth...' (Canto I, 2, lines 1-2). Precursors of this typical <https://assignbuster.com/the-byronic-hero/>

hero of English Romanticism can be traced back to Greek theatre. The notion of hamartia, or tragic flaw, is intrinsically linked to the early development of the Byronic Hero. The Byronic Hero is also present in literary Gothicism as one of the literary trends within the tradition of Romanticism.

In the Romantic literature, two different types of heroes can be found, namely Satanic Hero and Byronic Hero. In fact, Satan is also believed to be an early version of the Byronic Hero. Despite some apparent differences, these two literary types have much in common: ' Like Satan, the Byronic hero is an outsider and an overreacher, though the divine Law that he violates is not the First Commandment but the Seventh, a sin often involving not only adultery but incest' (Polidori, Le Fanu & Stoker, 2002, p. 6). As for the classical period in literature, Heathcliff from ' Wuthering Heights' is another example of Byronic hero.

Captain Ahab from ' Moby Dick' is sometimes also cited as a Byronic Hero, although there no broad consensus among critics: ' Captain Ahab's rebellious nature and attitude towards existing norms illustrates his Byronic qualities, as well as the overall dark nature of his humanity' (Hospelhorn & Nicolson, 2003, ' Moby Dick'). Byronic Hero found new incarnation in classic Russian literature. Such notable writers as Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, Alexander Pushkin, and Mikhail Lermontov all contributed to the emergence of the phenomenon later referred to as ' the Russified Byronic Hero. '

In the modern time, the recreation of the Byronic Hero is often attributed to Albert Camus in his novel ' The Rebel': ' But it was Camus's recreation, in modern terms, of the solitary Byronic hero, who resists fate and an alien world by defiant acts, which brought the cult so vividly to life and gave it

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actual meaning to youth on both sides of the Rhine' (Johnson, 2001, p. 575). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Jim Morrison as an incarnation of the Byronic Hero exemplifies the pervasiveness of archetypes that have been present in world art and literature since ancient times.

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