

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis seeks to explain how Lord George Gordon Byron achieves catharsis through the writing of his truth in Don Juan. In the poem the narrator expresses Byron's innermost emotion while at the same time the protagonist, Juan, relates to readers on a more conscious level. The ability that Byron has to work through the narrator in Don Juan provides him with an avenue of expression for his suppressed and frustrated emotions that are largely subconscious and inexpressible.

Byron's poetry, and especially Don Juan, is poetry in which the scope of human experience reaches into every aspect of life as he shares with readers his innermost emotion, emotion that is significantly more intense than that of most 19th century writers. Studying Byron may be considered a study of life itself and an opportunity

for literary and historical experience on a uniquely intimate level.

Byron left England with his friend Hobhouse to travel through Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and Italy in 1809. At this time he wrote Childe Harold, which brought him great fame after his return. The second and final time Byron left England was in 1816. At this time the intense emotional experience and social criticism contained in his poetry brought on severe public criticism which caused him to leave in self-exile.

During Byron's second exile he traveled throughout Italy, Turkey and Greece. He ultimately died in Missolonghi, Greece, in 1824 while helping the Greek people fight in a civil war with the Turks. Byron felt that it was important to remain in Greece and help the people, even though his health was failing, ultimately resulting in his death.

Byron sought a hero through the writing of Don Juan, and the catharsis he achieved as a result of writing his truth uncovered the hero he was seeking.

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Byron, Don Juan, and Catharsis

by

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Wanda S. Greene, Author

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father for all of the love and encouragement they have given me.

BYRON, DON JUAN, AND CATHARSIS

1. INTRODUCTION

Don Juan by Lord Byron is poetry that expresses the "true" feelings of the author as he talks about his sensitivity and responsiveness to 19th century aesthetic and moral issues. Through the narrator readers are able to understand the suppressed emotion present in Byron's subconscious, and through the writing of Don Juan Byron achieves a release and catharsis for his suppressed social and cultural frustrations.

Byron wrote Don Juan in the years 1818 through 1824 as a critique on the customs and mores of early 19th century English society. At this time people were seeking new levels of understanding and escape from the constraints of theological, cultural, and political institutions brought forward from the Enlightenment era that had controlled society throughout the previous century.

The essential truth in Don Juan exemplifies the autobiographical as well as the cathartic nature of the poetry. As Byron heralds the historic and his personal concerns of the time, readers can hear his voice speaking on many levels of awareness.

Ever since Don Juan was published, literary critics have written extensively regarding the driving force

that motivated Byron to write his poetry. In 1965 Leslie

A. Marchand said in Byron's Poetry,

Fidelity to the mood of the moment was Byron's forte, and failure to acknowledge this has befuddled Byron criticism from the time the poems were published until the present day. There has been a persistent refusal to accept Byron's own frankest statements, and to recognize that honesty and self-honesty were almost an obsession with him. (12)

Byron's "obsession" with "honesty and self-honesty" exemplify his need for and choice of personal catharsis through writing. However, while truth and honesty are significant aspects of Don Juan, it is important to remember that in the poem "variety serves the principle that life is too multiform for any one point of view to contain" (Manning 149). Byron explains multiform variety in Canto XV, LXXXVII: "But if a writer should be quite consistent, how could he possibly show things existent?"

The use of critical analysis is helpful for readers, students and teachers of Byron and,

the proliferation of critical approaches to literature since the 1970s has, by and large, worked to the advantage of Byron's poetry, including the teaching of it. Structuralism, deconstructionism, psychoanalytical criticism, the new historicism, feminist criticism--all these approaches can be fruitful avenues to an understanding and appreciation of Byron.

(Wilkie, Byron's Poetry, 75)

Throughout this thesis various examples of critical analysis will be used and referenced. Frederick W. Shilstone, in his 1991 book Approaches to Teaching Byron's Poetry, addressed the "problematic" issues experienced by educators in teaching Byron in classrooms (ix). According to Shilstone, Don Juan is an "immensely popular and important ottava rima masterpiece" because of "the poem's own kaleidoscopic style and tone" (37). The kaleidoscopic and multiform nature of the poem pose many difficult teaching problems; however, the collection of essays in Shilstone's book offers many solutions for students, educators and readers.

Paul Elledge in his essay "Re-Reading (in) Byron: Intertextuality in Don Juan" explains that "Don Juan fascinates by its dialogue with other texts" (158). Further, Don Juan is,

A noisy ensemble of quotations,
allusions, traditions, conventions,
archetypes, rhetorical formulas,
cliches, puns, cultural signs, street
talk, journalistic sound bites,
reviews of itself, self-quotations--a
medley of gossip, folklore,
confession, travelogue, hymns,
ballads, diary entries, menus,
historical narratives, political
debate, scientific data, and
metaphysical speculation. (158)

Byron searched his psyche and his world and in the writing of Don Juan he "intrigued and seduced readers into further reading" (Manning 151). The "searching," "seduction," and "confession" are indicative of the tension Byron

experienced that motivated him to write cathartic poetry. "There is always tension between the inward and the outgoing effects of profound feeling," and this tension is the motivating force that drives Byron to seek his hero through the self-expression of poetry (Calder 114).

Byron's lack of a firm commitment to orthodox religion left him vulnerable to the many possible avenues of extreme emotional experience. This vulnerability opens the door to his need for understanding through poetic expression. He "sums up the therapeutic or cathartic theory of poetry when he says, 'art comes over me in a kind of rage every now and then . . . and then, if I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad'" (Paulson 239).

In addition to the socially frustrating cultural constraints Byron experienced, he suffered personal hardships during his childhood and youth that created in him a need for the expression of feelings that were in the "unconscious" part of his psyche. These feelings manifested themselves in Byron's consciousness and influenced his ability to handle or cope with every day experience. This phenomenon is easily explained by Sigmund Freud's theory, which states that the powers motivating men and women are mainly and normally unconscious. Freud's theory additionally states that the mind is essentially dual in nature: The predominantly

passional, irrational, unknown, and unconscious part of the psyche is the id, or "it;" the predominantly rational, logical, orderly, conscious part of the mind is the ego, or "I." And the superego is a projection of the ego. Byron found cathartic release for his unconscious feelings, or id, through the writing of poetry.

In love matters Don Juan closely parallels the life experience of Byron, with Juan and Byron both feeling that they are pursued by women. However, while Juan's life does, in general, follow the romantic theme of the Don Juan legend, its significance encompasses a much greater area of culturally significant experience.

Byron experienced strong feelings that had been brought about by his unique and difficult physical and social acculturation. These feelings gave him an uncontrollable need to seek out new belief systems and new heroes in whom to believe. The basis for these feelings will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter two of this thesis. Byron expresses this need in Don Juan, as he tells readers of his hero quest:

I WANT [sic] a hero: an uncommon want,
 When every year and month sends forth a
 new one,
 Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
 The age discovers he is not the true one;
 Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
 I'll therefore take our ancient friend
 Don Juan--

We all have seen him, in the pantomime,
Sent to the Devil somewhat ere his time.
(Canto I, I)

Byron's hero quest was driven on three levels:
the cultural, the conscious, and the subconscious. The
conscious need he had for writing Don Juan, is evidenced
by the following statement that he sent to his publisher
on April 23, 1818: "Don Juan is meant to be a little
quietly facetious upon everything" (Gleckner xxiii).
The subconscious motivation Byron felt is expressed in
Don Juan:

I don't pretend that I quite understand
My own meaning when I would be very
fine;
But the fact is that I have nothing
planned'd,
Unless it were to be a moment merry,
A novel word in my vocabulary.
(Canto IV, V)

I ne'er decide what I shall say, and
this I call
Much too poetical. Men should know why
They write, and for what end: but, note
or text,
I never know the word which will come
next.

.

So now I ramble, now and then narrating,
Now pondering:--it is time we should
narrate. (Canto IX, XLI-XLII)

In the above stanzas Byron shares with readers that he
does not understand completely the motivating force behind
his conscious awareness. The motivating force is, of
course, much easier to understand from our 20th century
perspective and the theory Sigmund Freud has given us

for the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche. We now understand that Byron's motivating force to write poetry was driven by his subconscious and we can see that these stanzas show a release of emotional tensions and the cathartic nature of Don Juan.

Byron wrote Don Juan during the last six years of his life, while he was in exile in Italy and Greece. On his 36th birthday, and only a few months before his death, he wrote the following poem, which is a moving testimony to his dedication to human understanding and love:

Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

· · · · ·
The land of honourable death
Is here:--up to the field, and give
Away thy breath!

· · · · ·
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest. (Gleckner xxvi)

Byron was, and to this day is, a national hero and well-loved in Greece; however, after his death in 1824 his body was sent back to England. Because of his scandalous life experience and his poetry, "he was refused a great poet's burial in Westminster Abbey and suffered the final indignity of empty coaches (sent by the 'establishment') in his funeral cortege" (Gleckner xiv).

2. BACKGROUND

It is important to have an understanding of Byron's unique life in order to gain a proper perspective of how his catharsis works in Don Juan. The suppression of emotion may take place in individuals for several reasons; family experience, religious or political control, as well as stringent cultural and social mores are all factors to be considered. For this reason Chapter two is a very brief overview of Byron's life.

Born on January 22, 1788, Lord George Gordon Byron was "the son of the notorious 'Mad Jack Byron,' named for his scandalous gallantry and extravagance" (Marchand, A Portrait 4). He was the grandson of 'Foul Weather' Jack Byron, named for the numerous storms he encountered at sea after entering the Navy at the age of seventeen in 1740, and he was the nephew of 'Wicked Lord' Byron, named after he "killed his kinsman and neighbor William Chaworth in a duel in a London club in 1765 following a drunken argument on the best way to preserve game" (Marchand, A Portrait 4).

Lord George Gordon Byron's colorful family history gave him much with which to contend because the reputations of his ancestors were remembered and discussed by the English gentry. "Fate had granted him a name notorious rather than famous, an honor rooted in

estrangement, and Byron was enough of a fatalist to feel the obligation of living down to his family's reputation" (Calvert 6). While Lord Byron was not responsible for his heritage, it is probable that the source of at least some of his personal problems began long before he was born.

In addition to his colorful heritage, Byron's youth was marked by numerous painful experiences. One of the most obvious, which caused considerable emotionally painful experience, was that Byron was born with a deformed right foot, probably a "club foot." This deformity and consequent limping gait brought about taunting by his classmates, who called him the lame boy. At the age of ten Lord Byron "was put into the hands of a sadistic charlatan who professed to be able to cure his lameness and tortured him for years with various therapeutic boots that caused him great pain and served no purpose other than to drive home, in anguish, the realization that he could not be like other people" (Evans 342). Despite the years of corrective boots, Byron walked with a limp throughout his life and was extremely sensitive about being lame and "different." In addition, his lameness prohibited him from dancing, running or participating in most sports. He was, however, an excellent swimmer and horseman.

Byron suffered countless emotionally painful experiences throughout his childhood due to his lameness; however,

he had so far overcome his sensitivity as to take part in games which required running. And in a mood of bravado and kinship with another boy similarly handicapped he could say: "Come and see the twa laddies with the twa club feet going up the Broadstreet."

(Marchand, A Portrait 15)

The deep-seated feelings of imperfection that Byron had because of his deformity lasted throughout his lifetime.

Byron suffered additional problems as a child when his father left Mrs. Byron and her infant son. At this time the frustrations of raising a child alone caused his mother to "exhibit extremes of uncontrollable anger and demonstrative affection towards Byron, who had a temper equal to his mother's" (Marchand, A Portrait 10). Byron said that his "mother, when she was in a rage with me, (and I gave her cause enough,) used to say, 'Ah, you little dog, you are a Byron all over; you are as bad as your father!'" However, "the next moment she was covering him with kisses" (Marchand, A Portrait 10). The mercurial behavior of infant Byron's mother and father help to explain the mercurial emotions Byron had as an adult.

His father, Mad Jack Byron "died on August 2, 1791, perhaps by suicide" (Marchand, A Portrait 13). Byron

was only three years old when his father died; however, prior to his death his years of parenting were erratic and emotionally upsetting to both his wife and child. Regarding this loss Byron said, "Not so young but that I perfectly remember him; and had very early a horror of matrimony from the sight of domestic broils" (Whipple 8). Because of this experience the fear of marriage influenced Byron throughout his life.

"In 1794, when Byron was six, news came of an event that was to change the whole course of his life" (Marchand, A Portrait 16). The "Wicked" Lord Byron's grandson had been killed by a cannon ball in Corsica and George Gordon had become heir presumptive to the title and estates of his Byron ancestors. Just after his tenth birthday he was informed that he possessed the title "sixth Baron Byron of Rochdale" (Marchand, A Portrait 16). Mrs. Byron and the poet moved to the 3,200 acre Byron estate of Newstead Abbey in 1798.

While Byron's lameness kept him from participating in sports and dancing, he found comfort in reading as an alternative activity. He was a "volatile and touchy teenager;" however, his complex psyche was strengthened by his reading and, "by the age of 15 he had devoured upwards of 4,000 novels, including those of Cervantes, Fielding, Sterne, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Locke, Hume as well as books on the lives of Newton and Catherine

the Great" (Coote 14). In 1813 Byron was already widely read; however, his self image was that of a troubled youth. At the age of 15 he recorded impressions of himself as a child in his journal: "I differed not at all from other children, being neither tall nor short, dull nor witty, of my age, but rather lively--except in my sullen moods, and then I was always a Devil" (Marchand, A Portrait 16).

Byron attended Cambridge, but felt "wretched because he was not attending Oxford" (Marchand, A Portrait 35). While at Cambridge he wrote "Hours of Idleness" and "English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers."

He stayed with his mother at Southwell, England when he was not at Cambridge, and while there he wrote "frankly erotic poems" (Marchand, A Portrait 41). "To Mary," from which the following lines are taken, is one of the poems he wrote at Southwell:

Now, by my soul, 'tis most delight
 To view each other panting, dying,
 In love's ecstatic posture lying,
 Grateful to feeling, as to sight.
 (Marchand, A Portrait 42)

Byron "presented a copy of 'To Mary' to the Reverend Thomas Becher at Southwell, who objected to the poetry because the description was 'rather too warmly drawn'" (Marchand, A Portrait 42). Byron's "argument was essentially the same one he used later to defend Don Juan: his muse, he said, was 'the simple Truth'"

(Marchand, A Portrait 42). Nonetheless, "To Mary" created serious repercussions in the respectable clerical society of Southwell.

In his 21st year, Byron resided at Newstead Abbey with "two young maids" The youngest of the maids, Lucy, became pregnant and gave birth to a child, whom Byron "hailed as his 'dearest child of love'" (Marchand, A Portrait 56). He wrote a poem for the child entitled "To My Son;" however, there is no further reference to this child.

In addition to the young maids, "Byron invited several of his more amusing friends, including Hobhouse, Matthews, and Wedderburn Webster, to share the hospitality of his baronial estate" (Marchand, A Portrait 58). The young men "used to sit up late in friars' dresses, drinking burgundy, claret, champagne, and what not, out of [Byron's] skull-cup," which he had fashioned from a human skull he found in the gardens of the estate (Marchand, A Portrait 58).

The residents stayed at Newstead Abbey and amused themselves while Byron waited for Hanson, his bookkeeper, "to raise the money necessary for his voyage" (Marchand, A Portrait 58). Byron finally left England to travel in 1809, at which time he spoke of an urgency to leave, which "suggests some personal impasse more serious than the importunities of his creditors" as his "secret" reason

for leaving (Marchand, A Portrait 58). This personal impasse has never been revealed, and "we shall probably never know" its exact nature. His friend Hobhouse traveled with him throughout Switzerland, Italy, Turkey and Greece (Drinkwater 258).

Byron and Hobhouse's ship departed on July 2, 1809 and, "With due allowance for the distortions and exaggerations of self-dramatization, the essential moods and motives that drove him to travel are recorded in the first canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (Marchand, A Portrait 61). Childe Harold's Pilgrimage was sent back to England to be published, and the poem was an instant success, making Byron famous almost overnight.

Byron returned to England on July 14, 1811, with the expectation of visiting his mother, whom he had not seen during his travels, but she died before he was able to see her. Byron was very upset at the loss of his mother and, unfortunately, he was left in the sad situation of being unable to resolve the differences he had with her while growing up, thus adding to his emotional unrest.

Byron's inability to adjust to married life is evidenced by his marriage with Lady Annabella Milbanke. Annabella and Byron met "for the first time in 1811, when she placed herself in London, as decently as possible, on the marriage market" (Marchand, A Portrait

120). Byron "had presented William Bankes (a friend) with a copy of Childe Harold, which he soon after lent to Annabella" (Marchand, A Portrait 120). Annabella read Childe Harold and became instantly enamored of its sensitive author, as did most of the women who read it. "With a single poem Byron had achieved a sort of celebrity and attention beyond his wildest dreams" (Grosskurth 159).

"At a gathering in June of 1812 Byron and Annabella met again and, when Byron inquired of Moore if she was someone's companion, Moore whispered that she was actually Lord Wentworth's heiress in town for the season and that he had better set his sights on her in order to retain Newstead" (Grosskurth 160). Byron was romantically involved with Caroline Lamb, Annabella's cousin, at the time; however, the relationship was very difficult because "he was violently jealous of her husband, William Lamb, and forbade her to continue waltzing because he could not bear to see her in the arms of another man" (Grosskurth 163). Byron and Caroline Lamb "quarreled constantly," and their relationship was extremely unpredictable.

Byron was desperately "seeking escape" from the unpredictable, imaginative, outrageous excitement of his relationship with Caroline Lamb and Annabella was a very good "alternative" for many reasons, not the least

of which was the comfortable financial benefit he would gain upon marrying her (Grosskurth 163). Byron and Annabella corresponded by mail and they were married in 1814.

Annabella gave birth to Byron's daughter, Ada, near the end of their first year of marriage. Unfortunately, Annabella had become suspicious of Byron's relationship with his sister, Augusta, believing that it was incestuous and that Byron had fathered a child with her. Byron never confessed to the accusations and the paternity of the child was never proven, but Annabella left Byron after only one year of marriage because of her suspicion and disillusionment.

Despite the generous marriage settlement Byron received upon his marriage to Annabella, he later told Lady Blessington that he was constantly bothered by money difficulties. He wrote to Hobhouse, saying:

My debts can hardly be less than thirty thousand. . . ." His generosity to Augusta, Hodgson, and others had taken many thousands of Claughton's forfeited L25,000; much more had gone to pay the most pressing debts and interest on the annuities; "the rest was swallowed up by duns, necessities, luxuries, fooleries, jewelleries, whores, and fiddlers.

(Marchand, A Portrait 196)

Before Annabella and the baby left Byron told her, "I think I love you;" however, she could not tolerate his mercurial "moods" any longer (Marchand, A Portrait 196).

Unfortunately, Byron was still living up to his colorful heritage.

3. FORM

The writing of Don Juan enabled Byron to express the intensity and scope of the emotion he felt at the time he left England for the last time in April of 1816. He chose exile because he could not endure the personal and public criticism he was experiencing. Byron explains his feelings at the time of his exile: "I have been accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour, - [sic] and private rancour; my name which had been a knightly or noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman, was tainted - I felt that, If what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true - I was unfit for England, - if false - England was unfit for me." (Grosskurth 260).

Feeling the rancor of public criticism and unwelcome in England, Byron traveled to Italy where he began writing Don Juan in 1818. His experience was that he was in "exile wounded not by individuals but by society, and his response was not personal vituperation but social satire" because social satire gave him the necessary release of tension that he needed for the sensitive personal and social issues that were troubling him (Trueblood 99).

While Byron chose exile he nonetheless suffered emotional pain at the loss of his sister, Augusta, his

wife, daughter, and his England. Byron wrote to Annabella at the time of his leaving: "I have just parted from Augusta - almost the last being you had left me to part with - and the only unshattered tie of my existence - wherever I may go - and I am going far - you and I can never meet again in this world - nor in the next - let this content or atone" (Grosskurth 269).

As was customary for Byron, at this time he sought relief from emotional frustration by expressing his observations of life through the writing of poetry. Caught between his need to express his true or "real" inner feelings and his failed attempts to conform to England's social mores, Byron wanted to expose reality to his readers through satire and irony. In his most dramatic moments, "When absorbed in thought and indulging in reckless speculations, [he] used often, as he expressed it, to suffer from 'a confusion of ideas,' and would sometimes exclaim in his most melodramatic manner, 'I shall go mad'" (Hodgson 7). At these times he found relief from these feelings through writing.

Because of the diverse and complex emotions Byron felt as an exile, which were not acceptable in English society, he wanted to write in a form of poetry that would enable him to express himself more completely. Thus, in Don Juan "Byron conceives of his role as that of 'a mere spectator,' not as a definer of myth in the

same sense as a tragic dramatist" (Thompson 412). "As a spectator the poet appears to wander almost aimlessly through the world of fact, speculation and . . . the only control over that journey is his desire to experience reality" (Thompson 412). True reality being unstructured, Byron chose to write the reality of Juan in "ottava rima" form.

In addition, the Romantic aesthetic gave Byron the freedom to express strong emotion in his poetry. As we shall see in Chapter six, the publication of Childe Harold in 1812 through 1818 brought Byron new recognition and fame, and it is considered semi-autobiographical of his life. However, in 1818 as he began writing Don Juan, he felt that the Spenserian stanza form of Childe Harold did not allow him the freedom of expression he needed to explore his "real" or "true" deeper experience.

According to William J. Calvert in his book Byron: Romantic Paradox, "As Byron was the child of two centuries, so was he the meeting place of two personalities, the one immediate, spontaneous, emotional, partly self-conscious and partly naive--in a word, contemporary--and the other rational, sophisticated, conservative, partly naive and partly self-conscious--a man of traditions to which he must sometimes, even by force of will, return" (21). Byron's poetry reflects not only a release of his frustration, but also the

suffering he experienced because of the difficulty he had adjusting to England's social mores.

The factors contributing to Byron's complex personality makeup include England's unyielding social mores, his personal background, and his unique adjustment to his world. Because of his unique adjustment, Byron was not only unable to have a fulfilling and successful relationship with women, "it was not possible for [him] to have a fully successful relationship with his poetic imagination, either, and for the same reasons" (Wain 158). Byron's "real purpose" in writing "from first to last, was to present the character of the poet" (Wain 159). He needed to be heard.

Byron, seeking to find an avenue for release of his experience through writing, desired to write in a poetic form that would allow him freedom of expression. He chose Italian "ottava rima" form for Don Juan which, according to Frank D. McConnell in Byron's Poetry,

is the standard verse form of the Renaissance Italian epic, and in Italian is capable of both comic and highly serious, tragic effect. But Italian abounds in polysyllabic words and in natural rhymes, and to write true "ottava rima" in English is to be forced to find at least three rhymes for every stanza, as many of the rhymes as possible consisting of two or three syllables; it means, by the very choice of this form, to write comically.

(McConnell 182)

Consequently, while the "ottava rima" form allowed Byron the scope to express through satirical narrative many of his varied observations of life, at the same time its influence in Don Juan created the tone of a "comic" epic. Nonetheless, Don Juan conveys a "mixture of tones that serve to express Byron's view of human experience - his own included - as consisting essentially of emotional and moral incongruities" (Wikborg 267).

An example of how the "ottava rima" form of necessity creates comic verse is exemplified in Don Juan Canto I, XLVII. In this verse the narrator explains Juan's religious training, a subject which is not usually considered comical.

Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,
 And homilies, and lives of all the
 saints;
 To Jerome and to Chrysostom inured,
 He did not take such studies for
 restraints;
 But how faith is acquired, and then
 ensured,
 So well not one of the aforesaid
 paints
 As Saint Augustine in his fine
 Confessions,
 Which make the reader envy his trans-
 gressions. (Canto I, XLVII)

While Juan's study of religion may be seen as a positive experience which adds to his character value as a hero, the use of "ottava rima" form and the lines stating that "He did not take such studies for restraints," and "Which make the reader envy his transgressions" negate all of

"ottava rima" form definitely enhances Byron's satire in Canto XVI.

The use of the "ottava rima," with the humor it brings, makes the many nihilistic or pessimistic issues Byron writes about in Don Juan more positive. Edward Bostetter in his essay "Masses and Solids: Byron's View of the External World" explains Byron's narrative in Don Juan as follows:

Byron questions the reality or truth of everything, except what he feels upon his pulses, as Keats said--in other words, the experience of his senses. . . The poem reveals throughout Byron's exuberant love of life on its own terms. He writes with gusto and evident enjoyment. He laughs at himself and his characters with genuine humor. . . This is what gives the positive note which dominates the often nihilistic and pessimistic implications of the poem.

(Bostetter 260)

While writing Don Juan, Byron met the Countess Teresa Guiccioli and "began a relationship with her in 1819" (Grosskurth 383). He had found the freedom to write of his suppressed social and cultural frustrations in the poetry of Don Juan; however, Teresa could not accept the emotional depth and social ostracism in the truth of "the experience of Byron's senses" (Bostetter 260).

Byron planned to continue the adventures of Don Juan, but Teresa, after reading an article in the Milan Gazzetta quoting the attacks on Byron's morals in the English papers, insisted that he promise to abandon the poem. Despite his arguments to her that

it was only a burlesque satire, shemanaged to prevail upon him to write to Murray (July 6, 1821) that Cantos III-V were to be his last: "it arises from the wish of all women to exalt the sentiment of the passions - & to keep up the illusion which is their empire. - Now D.J. strips off this illusion - & laughs at that & most other things." (Grosskurth 383)

At Teresa's request, Byron chose to postpone the writing of Don Juan for a period of time, resuming writing in 1822 (Grosskurth 406).

After a stay in Italy of approximately five years, Byron traveled to Greece in July of 1823. He continued writing Don Juan, and the necessity he felt to express himself honestly coincides with his catharsis. As he expresses his "true" feelings in the "ottava rima" form about the many varied subjects in Don Juan, he achieves the additional benefit of relieving his own frustration with the mores and customs of England.

4. THE NARRATOR

Don Juan's omniscient narrator, with his charming, playful and morally strong personality, plays a significant role in Lord Byron's self discovery. The narrator entices readers into sharing Byron's existential psychological experience of life in an offhand and relaxed manner by poking fun at the characters, individuals, and institutions such as marriage, politics and religion.

For example, in the following stanza the narrator spreads scandal about Juan and his family:

I had my doubts, perhaps I have them still,
 But what I say is neither here nor there.
 I know his father well and have some skill
 In character, but it would not be fair
 From sire to son to augur good or ill.
 He and his wife were an ill-sorted pair,
 But scandal's my aversion. I protest
 Against all evil speaking, even in jest.
 (Canto I, LI)

Here the narrator says that "scandal is his aversion," but at the same time he is spreading it about Juan's family. Another time the narrator is cynical about love as he speaks of Juan's and Julia's relationship:

Even Innocence itself has many a wile,
 And will not dare to trust itself with truth,
 And Love is taught hypocrisy from youth.
 (Canto I, LXXII)

The narrator's many moods "make him mercurious of multiple personae" and these many moods make it possible for "Don Juan to actually capture Byron's essential spirit" (Paglia 111). This enables Byron to voice his opinion

on religion, love, marriage, politics and war. For example, the narrator speaks to readers in a charming and playful manner as he speaks of Byron's hero quest and, while it may seem that Byron has relinquished control of both his poetry and his hero over to the narrator, actually the narrator represents just another layer in the complex personality of Lord Byron.

Don Juan was created by Byron in part because of his lack of satisfactory emotional engagement or spiritual identification with any religion or set of beliefs. In his essay "The Narrator of Don Juan," David Parker suggests that "Byron exploited his lack of firm identity, his posturing habit, to create a work of enduring value, in which the oversimplification is transmuted into something richer and more satisfying. . . and the oversimplified images suggest a hidden complexity" (Parker 50). The satirical way in which the narrator tells Juan's story causes this complexity to be successfully hidden beneath the surface of the protagonist's character. However, "the poem contains more of [Byron's] astonishingly varied moods than any other: gloom, ecstasy, flippancy, indignation, pride, self-immersion, self-assertion, guilt, insouciance, sentimentality, nostalgia, optimism and pessimism" (Hirsch 452).

When all of Byron's varied moods do not adequately

help Juan cope with the pressures he is experiencing in life, the narrator tells him,

But "carpe diem," Juan, "carpe, carpe!"
 To-morrow sees another race as gay
 And transient, and devoured by the same
 harpy.
 "Life's a poor player,"--then "play out
 the play,
 Ye villains!" and above all keep a sharp
 eye
 Much less on what you do than what
 you say:
 Be he hypocritical, be cautious, be
 Not what you seem, but always what
 you see. (Canto XI, LXXXVI)

Here the narrator uses his charm and playfulness to help Juan cope with his problems. "Juan must learn self-annihilation and shape-shifting if he is to play in a frivolous world" (Hinkel 84). This shapeshifting parallels the mercurial emotions and varied moods of Byron.

While Don Juan may be considered semi-autobiographical of Byron's life, it "cannot be considered a Bildungsroman because the experience of Juan is conveyed to the reader as emotional reality: in the same moment, it is distanced from him by the continual interposition of the commentary" by the narrator (Joseph 32). For example, in Canto III, XXXVI, Byron "actually achieves complete dissociation from his hero . . . by the device of the narrator":

But let me to my story: I must own,
 If I have any fault, it is digression;
 Leaving my people to proceed alone,
 While I soliloquize beyond expression;
 But these are my addresses from the throne,
 Which put off business to the ensuing
 session:

Forgetting each omission is a loss to
The world, not quite so great as Ariosto.
(Canto III, XXXVI)

With Byron's ability to create distance from Juan through the flippant personality of the narrator, who effectively shifts and changes the mood and tone of Don Juan quite quickly, he is able to express his mercurial emotions in the poetry.

Byron's mercurial emotions are evidenced in his letters and in information collected from his acquaintances. Here it is documented that Byron had two distinct sides to his personality: "a robust satirical humour, which accounted him as excellent company by friends who met him in a laughing mood, and with whom he felt sufficiently at his ease to discard the haughty and supercilious attitude he sometimes adopted in mixed or hostile gatherings; then he had a deep-rooted and pervasive melancholy side that loved to gossip and rarely troubled to philosophise" (Quennell xiii). It is these two distinct sides to Byron's temperament, the satirical and melancholic, that I believe are represented in Don Juan by the narrator and Juan. "Byron himself accepted both sides of his temperament, but did not [consciously] try to reconcile them; however, they both colored his prose style" (Quennell xiii).

The importance of the interaction between the narrator and Juan is a significant aspect in Don Juan and cannot

be ignored. The duality that is exemplified by Juan and the narrator closely parallels the duality in Byron's personality. Critics suggest the duality is apparent when the narrator "is unwilling to be dwarfed by the character of his hero and protects his own ego. . . asserting it at the expense of or at least through a subtle resistance to his story" (Adams 401). An example of this can be found in Canto I, when Juan loves Julia and the narrator speaks of their love:

And if she met him, though she smiled
 no more,
 She looked a sadness sweeter than
 her smile,
 As if her heart had deeper thoughts
 in store
 She must not own, but cherished more
 the while
 For that compression in its burning
 core;
 Even Innocence itself has many a wile,
 And will not dare to trust itself with
 truth,
 And Love is taught hypocrisy from
 youth. (Canto I, LXXII)

In the above stanza Byron's wrenching need to express the truth he feels is evident and the hypocrisy of English society is exposed through the duality of Juan and the narrator.

The playful and roguish behavior of Don Juan's narrator allows the tension between Byron's "visionary and skeptical imaginations" to be explored (McGann 21). For example, in Canto V when Juan is on the island with Haidee, he speaks of the sea and of seamen:

Twas a raw day of Autumn's bleak
 beginning,
 When nights are equal, but not so the
 days;
 The Parcae then cut short the further
 spinning
 Of seamen's fates, and the loud
 tempests raise
 The waters, and repentance for past
 sinning
 In all, who o'er the great deep take
 their ways:
 They vow to amend their lives, and yet
 they don't;
 Because if drowned, they can't--if spared,
 they won't. (Canto V, VIII)

While the sea can bring visionary thoughts of new hope,
 new beginnings, and even treasure, the skeptical
 imagination of the narrator equates it with "seamen's
 fates, loud tempests, and repentance for past sinning,
 and he is further cynical, saying that "if drowned, sinners
 can't repent and, if spared, they won't" (Canto V, VIII).

In addition to the narrator's many moods, and despite
 his moralistic persona, he practices various forms of
 manipulatory behavior. For example, he is not averse
 to gossip in the following stanzas:

I loathe that low vice curiosity,
 But if there's anything in which I shine
 'Tis in arranging all my friend's affairs,
 Not having, of my own, domestic cares.
 (Canto I, XXIII)

But there's a rumour which I fain would hush;
 'Tis said that Donna Julia's grandmamma
 Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.
 (Canto I, LVIII)

The narrator in Don Juan is not averse to gossiping as
 well as spreading scandal. He is charming, playful,

morally strong, and represents a very important aspect in Byron's personality integration.

The wide mood swings and the separation between the narrator and Juan is considerable at the beginning of the poem, and this separation lessens with each canto, until at the end the two are almost one. Byron's personality integration becomes evident in the last six cantos of Don Juan, Cantos XI through XVI. These cantos are commonly referred to as the "English cantos" and,

In spite of Byron's insistence that he was scrupulously and courageously faithful to fact, one does not go to the English cantos as to an historical document. One goes for the good time, for the wit, for the pummeling and stripping of a society and its individual members by a great humorist, and for the perception of that humorist into follies common to any society, and one gets at the same time the bias of a gifted and complicated man in a world that is 'a glorious blunder.'" (Steffan 64)

The change in Byron's personality is due in part to the "continental" experience he is gaining from his travels, his natural maturation, and from the catharsis he is achieving through writing. One example of the change in Byron's personality is apparent in Canto XIV as he experiences and expresses pessimistic feelings:

When we have made our love, and gamed
 our gaming,
 Drest, voted, shone, and, may be,
 something more;
 With dandies dined; heard senators
 declaiming;

Seen beauties brought to market by
the score,
Sad rakes to sadder husbands chastely
taming;
There's little left but to be bored
or bore. (XVIII)

Byron wrote Don Juan over a period of five years, and it was, in fact, a poem that he did not complete. A realization of the time span involved in the writing of the poem helps readers understand the multi-faceted personality of the narrator. Without the great diversity in the style of Don Juan's narrator, Juan would lack the strength of character Byron needed to express the realism of his emotionally perceptive insights. These complex psychological insights and the intense feelings expressed are exactly why Don Juan causes the feelings and emotions within a 20th century reader to stir just as dramatically as the emotions of readers did in the early 19th century.

5. RELIGION

With the help of Juan and the narrator Byron continues his search for a hero in Don Juan by critical analysis of early 19th century belief systems, ultimately reaching the existential nothingness of life and the peace that comes with its realization. "This 'craving void' has been felt by countless other artists and philosophers, not to mention ordinary mortals and it is often referred to as 'the abyss,' 'nothingness,' and all that is negative" (Hendry 203). However, the freedom that an individual gains with the realization of the "nothingness" may be viewed as a "craving void" without hope, or as an opportunity to create and achieve goals and dreams. Byron expressed his feeling of "the abyss," or "nothingness," in Childe Harold:

. . .
 Disease, death, bondage--all the
 woes we see,
 And worse, the woes we see
 not--which throb through
 The immedicable soul, with heart-aches
 ever new.

. . .
 Yet let us ponder boldly--'tis
 a base
 Abandonment of reason to resign
 Our right of thought--our last and
 only place
 Of refuge; this, at least, shall
 still be mine:
 Though from our birth the faculty
 divine
 Is chain'd and tortured--cabin'd,
 cribb'd, confined,
 And bred in darkness, lest the
 truth should shine

Too brightly on the unprepared
 mind,
 The beam pours in, for time and skill
 will couch the blind.
 (Childe Harold IV, CXXV-XXVII)

According to Walter Perrie in his essay, "The Byronic Philosophy," these stanzas in Childe Harold, "this curious combination of Calvinism and modernity, is the core of Byronism" (161). While Byron did not view existential "nothingness" as a positive experience in his life, he did spend much of his "free" time writing and sharing with all future generations of readers his "real" experience of life, which is a priceless gift.

Byron was not able to accept the "orthodox" religious faith of Calvinism he was taught as a child. He told Annabella before they were married that he "subsequently experienced a strong reaction against the sect [Calvinism] and that he became in his young manhood an atheist and materialist" (McGann 247). Had he been able to accept religious faith, it might possibly have made his physical impairment and difficult family history easier to accept.

The poetic fragment that is used as an introduction to Don Juan gives an idea of Byron's feeling about the religious sects of his day:

I would to Heaven that I were so much
 clay,
 As I am blood, bone, marrow, passion,
 feeling--
 Because at least the past were passed
 away,

And for the future--(but I write
 this reeling,
 Having got drunk exceedingly to-day,
 So that I seem to stand upon the
 ceiling)
 I say--the future is a serious matter--
 And so--for God's sake--hock and
 soda-water! (McConnell 183)

The tone of this passage is melancholy and mocking as it describes Byron's feelings of loneliness. Melancholy, or a sense of deep sadness, is present under the satiric, carefree humor of Don Juan as the narrator mocks the social institutions of love, marriage, and religion.

In Canto II, after Juan is exiled from Spain because of his affair with Julia, he experiences a terrible storm at sea and is finally "cast up on a Mediterrean island, where he is found by the virgin Haidee, the daughter of the ferocious pirate Lambro" (McConnell 235). Juan is unable to understand or speak to Haidee because they speak different languages, he Spanish and she Romaic. However, they experience a beautiful and pure relationship, which ultimately leads Juan to spiritual rebirth:

And then she had recourse to nods, and
 signs,
 And smiles, and sparkles of the
 speaking eye,
 And read (the only book she could) the
 lines
 Of his fair face, and found,
 by sympathy,
 The answer eloquent, where the Soul shines
 And darts in one quick glance a
 long reply;
 And thus in every look she saw expressed
 A world of words, and things at which
 she guessed. (Canto II, CLIII)

The purity of the relationship between Juan and Haidee is in direct contrast to Byron's cynical views on organized religion, which is exemplified in Canto II when the narrator comments on the shipwreck:

All the rest perished; near two
 hundred souls
 Had left their bodies. And what's
 worse, alas,
 When over Catholics the ocean rolls,
 They must wait several weeks before
 a mass
 Takes off one peck of purgatorial
 coals,
 Because, till people know what's
 come to pass,
 They won't lay out their money on
 the dead.
 It costs three francs for every mass
 that's said. (Canto II, IV)

The narrator tells us that Catholics must "wait several weeks before a mass Takes off one peck of purgatorial coals . . . [and] it costs three francs for every mass that's said" (Canto II, IV). Byron has stated his views on Catholicism with the help of the narrator, and they are very cynical.

According to James R. Thompson in his essay "Byron's Plays and Don Juan," "The major problem shared by artists from Blake to the present has been the difficulty in finding an orientation for their work. . . [and] The Romantics reacted in their several ways to the inheritance of a bankrupt spiritual and aesthetic orientation" (404). In the absence of a viable orientation, the Romantics

sought desperately to reorder their world, "to give it shape and significance."

Wordsworth's pantheism is one example of Romantic reordering. Byron expresses his opinion of Wordsworth's pantheism in the Ave Maria stanzas:

Ave Maria! 't is the hour of prayer!
 Ave Maria! 't is the hour of love!
 Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
 Look up to thine and to thy Son's
 above!
 Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
 Those downcast eyes beneath the Al-
 mighty dove --
 What though 't is but a pictured image
 -- strike --
 That painting is no idol, -- 't is
 too like. (Canto III, CIII)

Some kinder casuists are pleased to
 say,
 In nameless print -- that I have
 no devotion;
 But set those persons down with me
 to pray,
 And you shall see who has the
 properest notion
 Of getting into heaven the shortest
 way;
 My altars are the mountains and the
 ocean,
 Earth, air, stars,--all that springs
 from the great Whole,
 Who hath produced, and will receive
 the soul. (Canto III, CIV)

With further reference to "the Lakers" and their theories of "Imagination," J. J. McGann says in his book Don Juan in Context:

According to Byron, the Lakers, by teaching theories of "Imagination" as a basic principle of poetry, have revoked altogether the poet's teaching function. They have literally lost

their minds, and Coleridge's "metaphysics"--an explanation of poetry needing its own explanation -typifies the situation. (77)

Byron felt that the pantheists had "sold out" on society completely and were glorifying nature as an escape from society, not as a way to achieve a closeness to nature and God.

The relationship that Byron had with William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Claire Clairmont, which began in Switzerland in 1816 during his first exile from England, may be considered influential in his poetry during this period of time.

Certainly, Wordsworth and Shelley are clearly visible in Byron's poems of this period; through some of them throbs a yearning for the kind of placid synthesis which regulates much of Wordsworth's verse. But at the same time Byron shrinks from the belief that Wordsworth's and Shelley's truth is final truth, that observation and assimilation of natural beauty provide the means for reconciling oneself to the contradictions of human experience. (Elledge, Byron and the Dynamics of Metaphor, 39)

Unable to accept the natural beauty and truth of Shelley and Wordsworth or orthodox religion, Byron's absence of a closeness to God is evidenced in the behavior of Juan and the narrator in Don Juan. These characters clearly show the development of nihilistic and pessimistic feelings throughout the poem. An example of these

nihilistic and pessimistic feelings is evidenced as Byron expresses his view of Christianity:

Ecclesiastes said, "that all is vanity"
 Most modern preachers say the same, or
 show it
 By their examples of true Christianity;
 In short, all know, or very soon may
 know it;
 And in this scene of all-confessed
 inanity,
 By Saint, by Sage, by Preacher, and by
 Poet,
 Must I restrain me, through the fear of
 strife,
 From holding up the nothingness of Life?
 (Canto VII, VI)

As Byron's health failed, his feelings of melancholy began to wane and, while he was a professed atheist and materialist in his youth, he confessed through the narrator in Don Juan, that he had a change of heart. The narrator explains that "the shocks of illness" caused him to "grow much more orthodox" (Canto V, VI):

The truth is, I've grown lately rather
 phthisical:
 I don't know what the reason is -- the
 air
 Perhaps; but as I suffer from the shocks
 Of illness, I grow much more orthodox.

The first attack at once proved the
 Divinity
 (But that I never doubted, nor the Devil);
 The next, the Virgin's mystical virginity;
 The third, the usual Origin of Evil;
 The fourth at once establish'd the whole
 Trinity
 On so uncontrovertible a level,
 That I devoutly wish'd the three were four,
 On purpose to believe so much the more.
 (Canto XI, V - VI)

While it is common for people who suffer severe trauma or illness to experience a personally renewed faith in God and religion, the reader may wonder whether the renewal is real or just another sarcastic remark made by the narrator. I believe that the narrator was speaking Byron's true feelings because,

he was unique among the Romantics in not accepting--not perceiving the dislocation between the writer and actual social conditions rendering the writer impotent to affect conditions directly through his writings. His social position had given him a sense, not wholly illusory, of the real possibility of power, changing the lives and conditions of men.

(Perrie 163)

It is indeed remarkable that Byron felt so strongly about sharing the truth with readers that he would confess his personal suffering and experience of renewed faith.

It is "precisely the marriage of personal circumstance to literary form which enabled Byron--however fleetingly and precariously--to resolve in his life and work the core dilemma of Romanticism, which is the impotence of the artist to reconcile the desired with the actual, action with talk" (Perrie 164).

With the help of the narrator in Don Juan Byron was able to express the "core dilemma of Romanticism" and his "true" spirit and individual will is not left to the fate of control by religious belief, political tyranny or social injustice. Even while Byron is experiencing renewed faith in "orthodox" religion, he

continues to show an awareness of the importance of his own will in fate. He says in Don Juan Canto XII, XII, "Fate is a good excuse for our own will."

6. LOVE

In Don Juan the differences in the personalities of Juan and the narrator in love relationships are significant. Juan is passive and innocent with women, and the narrator prides himself on being very knowledgeable. These two personalities represent the public and private sides of Byron and, as Byron's personality integrates in the final cantos of Don Juan, the differences in the personalities of the narrator and Juan also become less pronounced. In Canto I, where the differences are very pronounced, the narrator expresses his feelings about women:

'Tis pity learned virgins ever wed
 With persons of no sort of education,
 Or gentlemen, who, though well born and
 bred,
 Grow tired of scientific conversation:
 I don't choose to say much upon this head,
 I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
 But--Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
 Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd
 you all? (Canto I, XXII)

Having haughtily informed us of his feelings about women, the narrator is very "cheeky" as he tells readers, in intricate detail, about Don Alfonso finding Juan in Donna Julia's bedroom:

Lights came at length, and men, and
 maids, who found
 An awkward spectacle their eyes
 before;
 Antonia in hysterics, Julia swooned,
 Alfonso leaning, breathless, by
 the door;

Some half-torn drapery scattered on
 the ground,
 Some blood, and several footsteps,
 but no more:
 Juan the gate gained, turned the key
 about,
 And liking not the inside, locked
 the out. (Canto I, CLXXXVII)

After telling of Juan's illicit relationship with Donna Julia, a married woman, the narrator tells of the "scandal and divorce that report of the incident in the English newspapers" (Canto I, CLXXXVIII). The narrator elaborates for pages on Juan's sexual relationships; however, for himself, he is "a plain man, and in a single station" (Canto I, XXII).

While Juan has numerous love affairs in Don Juan, Edward Proffitt says in regard to the sexual behavior of Juan:

Throughout, indeed, Juan seems more
 like a modest maid than the rake of
 legend. With Julia he is the victim
 of the plot of Donna Inez; with Haidee
 and Dudu he is the pawn of
 circumstance; and with Catherine the
 Great he could hardly be his own man.
 (Proffitt 41)

Juan's behavior with women is quite true to Byron's life experience in love relationships. According to John Wain in his essay "The Search for Identity," "Byron could not write for himself because he did not, in the deeper sense, have a self, and therefore he created, in turn, two over-simplified characters to write his poetry for

him" (159). In Don Juan Byron created Juan and the narrator and here Juan is,

in general following Byron's own concept of his relations with women. Reputed to be a rake and a seducer, he felt himself the most pursued of men. Replying to a distorted story of his abduction of the Countess Guiccioli, he wrote: "I should like to know who has been carried off--except for poor me. I have been more ravished myself than anybody since the Trojan War." . . . And to Murray he wrote in 1819: "Your Blackwood accuses me of treating women harshly; it may be so, but I have been their martyr. My whole life has been sacrificed to them and by them."

(Marchand, In the Wind's Eye 440)

Juan is the pursued in his relationships with women; however, the moralistic and solemn narrator is not adverse to gossip in reporting love matters. For example, in Canto I, LIII, the narrator explains his perception of passion:

Such love is innocent, and may exist
 Between young persons without any
 danger.
 A hand may first, and then a lip be
 kist;
 For my part, to such doings I'm
 a stranger,
 But hear these freedoms form the
 utmost list
 Of all o'er which such love may
 be a ranger:
 If people go beyond, 't is quite a
 crime,
 But not my fault--I tell them all
 in time. (Canto I, LIII)

Here while the narrator "hears of these freedoms," .

. . . "If people go beyond, 't is quite a crime"; however,

of course, his moral standards would never allow him to do such a thing (Canto I, LIII). He is allowed to "gossip" to others about the "crime," though.

It seems that Byron is dealing with one portion of his personality that believes moral behavior is proper and another that has escaped the confines of morality. Without the narrator to "gossip" and bridge the gap between the two opposing aspects of human behavior, it would be difficult to explain the presence of the phenomenon in one personality, especially in the early 19th century.

The ultimate satirical scene with regard to Juan's sexuality is when Juan is sold into slavery in Constantinople. The canto begins with Juan denouncing all further "amorous writing" because of the judgment readers will have upon reading the poetry (Canto V, II).

. . .
 As Ovid's verse may give to
 understand;
 Even Petrarch's self, if judged with
 due severity,
 Is the Platonic pimp of all posterity.
 (Canto V, I)

I therefore do denounce all amorous
 writing.
 Except in such a way as not to
 attract;
 Plain-simple-short, and by no means
 inviting,
 But with a moral to each error tacked,
 Formed rather for instructing than
 delighting.
 And with all passions in their turn
 attacked;

continues to impersonate the female character Juanna for the remainder of the Turkish episode in the poem.

The significance of the Turkish episode in Don Juan has been analyzed by many Byron students and experts.

The fact that he [Byron] was fond of boys, and of one in particular, John Edleston, whom he had known at Cambridge--'I certainly love him more than any human being'--may have reinforced a need to prove that he was successful with women. This is speculation, however interesting.

(Calder 113)

There is speculation that Byron experienced some homosexual incidents in his youth, possibly at the Harrow School, which he attended between 1801 and 1805 (Grosskurth 41). While there is speculation as to Byron's homosexual and bisexual activity, it has never been clearly documented. Therefore, conjecture will continue on the significance of the Turkish episode.

While Juan experiences many different love relationships, the omniscient narrator aids in the dissolution of each experience, thus allowing "no disloyalty and no failure of love for Juan; all these melancholy disillusionments are allotted to the narrator of the poem, whose irony and cynicism relieve Juan of any outright cynicism of his own" (Hirsch 451). Juan, in this way can remain innocent and true to his own feelings. In protecting Juan from

expressing negative feelings, Byron "calls attention to the gulf between what people say they believe and their actual behavior, or hypocrisy, which is the main target of the satire in Don Juan" (Thompson 417).

Juan's last love affair is with Aurora who, quite probably, represents a renewal of the ideals and imagination of the hero and the narrator as well, as shown in the following stanza:

And, certainly, Aurora had renewed
 In him some feelings he had lately
 lost,
 Or hardened; feelings which, perhaps
 ideal,
 Are so divine, that I must deem them
 real:--
 The love of higher things and better
 days:
 The unbounded hope, and heavenly
 ignorance
 Of what is called the World, and the
 World's ways;
 The moments when we gather from
 a glance
 More joy than from all future pride
 or praise
 Which kindle manhood, but can ne'er
 entrance
 The Heart in an existence of its own,
 Of which another's bosom is the zone.
 (Canto XVI, CVII-VIII)

With hope and ideals restored in a real world, Juan is able to continue his life experience.

There has been considerable work done by literary critics in recent years on Byron's poetry concerning "gender studies and cultural criticism" (Kroeber and Ruoff 267). Susan Wolfson's 1987 essay, "Their She Condition":

Cross-Dressing and the Politics of Gender in Don Juan"

"is an example of what she calls 'soft-core'

deconstruction--criticism concerned with dismantling hierarchy and difference. . ." (Kroeber and Ruoff 267).

In this essay Wolfson says, "Byron foregrounds the artifice that sustains much of what we determine to be 'masculine' and 'feminine'--a strategy at once cautious and bold, through which he engenders the world of Don Juan and generates its elaborate plays against the codes and laws of gender" (284). Feminine criticism exposes one area of the social codes of behavior that Byron was seeking to understand and reveal through his poetry, which is consistent with his need for truth in poetic self-expression.

Like Juan, Byron entertained many women throughout his lifetime and, it may be said that he "devoted considerable effort dramatizing the phenomenon of the Don Juan myth and complex" (Tate 132). Undoubtedly each of Byron's life experiences contributed to his personality makeup, which in turn carried through to the characters of Juan and the narrator, creating the semi-autobiographical nature of Don Juan.

In striving to write Don Juan, Byron "assumed two characters that were both built up from recognizably genuine elements within his character, but they were both simplifications and existed by virtue of suppression, rather than fabrication" (Wain 159). In matters of love

the two distinctly different personalities of Juan and the narrator help Byron in his epic hero quest and in the personal understanding of his own life experience as he strives in Don Juan for the feeling of release by catharsis.

7. TRAVEL AND WAR

While Don Juan is the poetry of rebellion, it also expresses Byron's opinion on the importance of travel and the educational experience it brings. As a picaresque adventure novel in verse, Don Juan offers readers a rare opportunity to experience a "continental" influence through Juan's travels.

According to Elizabeth Boyd in her book Byron's Don Juan, A Critical Study, "The general theme of Don Juan, Nature vs. Civilization, is illustrated not only in the love episodes and their effect upon the hero, but in Juan's travels" (70). Byron begins Don Juan not in England, but in Spain, with a description of Juan's life and family:

In Seville was he born, a pleasant
city,
Famous for oranges and women,--he
Who has not seen it will be much to
pity,
So says the proverb--and I quite
agree;
Of all the Spanish towns is none
more pretty,
Cadiz perhaps--but that you soon
may see;--
Don Juan's parents lived beside the
river,
A noble stream, and called the
Guadalquivir. (Canto I, VIII)

Juan experiences his first love affair in Spain with Donna Julia, a married woman, but nonetheless he is passionately in love with her. In his thoughts of her he travels to the ends of the universe:

He thought about himself, and the whole
 earth,
 Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,
 And how the deuce they ever could have
 birth;
 And then he thought of earthquakes,
 and of wars,
 How many miles the moon might have in
 girth,
 Of air-balloons, and of the many bars
 To perfect knowledge of the boundless
 skies,
 And then he thought of Donna Julia's
 eyes. (Canto I, XCII)

Juan's travel continues at the end of his love affair
 with Julia, when her mother, Donna Inez,

 . . . had resolved that he should
 travel through
 All European climes, by land or sea,
 To mend his former morals, and get new,
 Especially in France and Italy--
 (At least this is the thing most
 people do.)
 Julia was sent into a convent--she
 Grieved-- . . . (Canto I, CXCI)

After Juan's beginning in romantic Spain, and his
 love affair with Julia in Canto I, he travels by sea,
 experiencing a terrible storm and shipwreck. He struggles
 to shore where he meets the beautiful virgin, Haidee
 and his next love affair begins.

Through his travels and in his poetry Byron tries
 to achieve a better understanding of the duality he feels
 both within himself and with English society. "He chose
 to believe that only in verse could he both reveal and
 conceal his inner turmoil" (Grosskurth 184). He expresses
 this feeling of duality in the following lines from Don
Juan:

Between two worlds life hovers like
 a star,
 'Twixt night and morn, upon the
 horizon's verge:
 How little do we know that which we
 are!
 How less what we may be!
 (Canto XV, XCIX)

Caught up in the experiences of everyday living, Byron did much of his writing at night while the rest of the world was sleeping, feeling free at this time to explore his life, both inwardly and outwardly. What he found was "How little we know that which we are!" (Canto XV, XCIX).

Byron writes of Juan, who continues his travel, and develops feelings against war, which he satirizes in Don Juan. In Canto VII he describes the Russian soldiers and the thrill they feel at the prospect of senseless destruction:

Then there were foreigners of much
 renown,
 Of various nations, and all
 volunteers;
 Not fighting for their country or
 its crown,
 But wishing to be one day brigadiers;
 Also to have the sacking of a town;
 A pleasant thing to young men of
 their years.
 (Canto VII, XVIII)

In Canto VIII Juan joins the military with Johnson, and Byron continues his satire on war, describing vividly the destruction it causes:

Juan and Johnson join'd a certain corps,
 And fought away with might and
 main, not knowing

The way which they had never tried
 before,
 And still less guessing where
 they might be going;
 But on they march'd, dead bodies
 trampling o'er,
 Firing, and thrusting, slashing,
 sweating, glowing,
 But fighting thoughtlessly enough
 to win,
 To their two selves, one whole bright
 bulletin. (Canto VIII, XIX)

After describing in great detail the horror of war, Byron ultimately explains the all-encompassing suffering that war brings:

All that the mind would shrink from of
 excesses;
 All that the body perpetrates of bad;
 All that we read, hear, dream, of man's
 distresses;
 All that the devil would do if run
 stark mad;
 All that defies the worst which pen
 expresses;
 All by which hell is peopled, or as
 sad
 As hell--mere mortals who their power
 abuse--
 Was here (as heretofore and since) let
 loose. (Canto VIII, CXXIII)

Upon the completion of the war cantos in Don Juan Byron expresses his satiric views on despotism, or absolute control of nations by kings, that he has learned through the experience of traveling:

And I will war, at least in words
 (and--should
 My chance so happen--deeds), with all
 who war
 With Thought;--and of Thought's foes by
 far most rude,
 Tyrants and sycophants have been and
 are.
 I know not who may conquer: if I could

Have such a prescience, it should be
 no bar
 To this my plain, sworn, downright
 detestation
 Of every despotism in every nation.
 (Canto IX, XXIV)

While Byron satirizes despotism and sovereign control, it is prevalent in England in part due to the insular existence of the English. However, the opportunity Byron has to travel in Switzerland, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and Greece brings him freedom from English insularity and he learns "continental" awareness. With this awareness he is able to write with "continental" influence.

In Canto X Juan returns to England and, while it seems that Byron might continue his verbal attack on the institutions of England, he does not. As a result of his traveling and the catharsis he has experienced through writing the previous cantos of Don Juan, he has achieved an emotional release from the suppressed experience he has had with his homeland. Thus an acceptance of England's mores and institutions is possible.

Byron's need to find his hero is only enhanced as he sheds the suppression of social mores and begins to feel the release made possible by his catharsis. For example, in Canto XV he asks God for "some new prophet":

Some millions must be wrong, that's
 pretty clear;
 Perhaps it may turn out that all were

right.
 God help us! Since we have need on our
 career
 To keep our holy beacons always bright,
 'Tis time that some new prophet should
 appear,
 Or old indulge man with a second sign.
 Opinions wear out in some thousand years,
 Without a small refreshment from the
 spheres. (Canto XV, XC)

The release of anger and suppressed frustration is desirable; however, the new experience of a feeling of freedom brings Byron to new questions and hopes.

According to Brian Wilkie in his essay "Byron and the Epic of Negation,"

Byron himself feels the need to believe in a heroic ideal, he shows the English to be seriously inadequate. But neither of these judgments is that of the vitriolic satirist; even Byron's criticisms of the English in the later cantos are sad rather than angry or stridently contemptuous in tone. (81)

While Byron's rebellion is exemplified in his criticism of the English because of their lack of individuality, he ultimately realizes that man is a frail being and it is not fair to expect so much of him. Frail and unique beings with individual aesthetic and moral responsiveness, or true feeling, is the nature of 18th-century romantic sensibility; however, "its major significance . . . is as a concept or mood of 18th-century culture" (Baldick 202).

In Don Juan Byron is desperately seeking his hero through an intense examination and study of truth both

within his unique emotional makeup and in the expression of rebellion against the oppressive institutions of England. "Travel in Don Juan serves the double purpose of fostering and chastising the hero, educating him as no mother or book learning in Seville could do; and it educates the reader, by juxtaposing view after view of the modern real world" (Boyd 78). As is true with Juan, it is also true in Byron's personal life, and through his travels he gains "continental" experience which enables him to write the poetry of Don Juan with an objective perspective.

8. CONCLUSION

Byron's search for a hero in his semi-autobiographical epic Don Juan exposes, even more than Childe Harold, his "true" and wrenching need for self-expression and a greater understanding of his most intense and deep undercurrents of feeling. In Don Juan Byron's mission is to find a hero while expressing his feelings on the 19th century institutions of love and marriage, religion, war, the importance of money, as well as leaders, friends and other writers. As Byron tells readers of his hero quest, he expresses his "true" feelings and, as a result, he achieves catharsis.

During Byron's lifetime and since his death, critics have found him a most interesting poet and personality. It is not accidental that the interest in Byron's poetry coincides with his strong belief that writing about truth is important. Byron's statement regarding his feeling about "moral truth" in writing was published in "Blackwood's Magazine" in the early 19th century:

"In my mind, the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth." (Boyd 35)

His declaration and written works attest to the depth of his belief. The commentary and study of Byron's poetry and personality has been continuous since his lifetime.

Contemporary literary critics are expressing increased interest in Byron's later ottava rima works, especially in the areas of gender studies and cultural criticism. In 1987 Susan Wolfson's essay "'Their She Condition': Cross-Dressing and the Politics of Gender in Don Juan" analyzes "gender relations and gender preconceptions" in Don Juan (267). Wolfson shows how the cross dressing in Don Juan exemplifies "a larger challenging of 'conventional expectations and customary boundaries' of all kinds" (267). Currently there is a growing body of interest in the "cultural contradictions and personal self-divisions" represented in Don Juan (Wolfson 267).

While interest is increasing in Byron's poetry in the 20th century, unfortunately, at the time of his early death in 1824 at the age of 36, Don Juan was incomplete. However, the writing of "the poem meant more to Byron as process than as achievement" because of its cathartic effect (Hinkel 85). Byron achieves greater understanding and catharsis through the writing of Don Juan while exposing the hypocrisy present in 19th century English life. As a result, it is possible for readers to glean a significant amount of information about life and history through reading the poem.

We realize now how significant the incomplete work is; we also realize that Byron's life experience is

incomplete, just as is the poetic work. According to John Drinkwater in his book The Pilgrim of Eternity, "When reasoned criticism has allowed him what rank it will, it has also to allow that, taking all things into consideration, variety of readers, caprices of fashion, and extent of appeal both as to classes and nationalities, Byron is, next to Shakespeare, the most famous English poet" (872).

Byron achieved considerable success through his literary works during his short lifetime. He died in Greece while in exile; however, he was an English lord and a poet to the final days of his life, when he wrote the following unnamed poem:

I've taught me other tongues--and in
 strange eyes
 Have made me not a stranger; to the mind
 Which is itself, no changes bring
 surprise;
 Nor is it harsh to make, nor hard to find
 A country with--aye, or without mankind;
 Yet was I born where men are proud to
 be,--
 Not without cause; and should I leave
 behind
 The inviolate Island of the sage and
 free
 And seek me out a home by a remoter sea,

 Perhaps I loved it well; and should I lay
 My ashes in a soil which is not mine,
 My Spirit shall resume it--if we may
 Unbodied choose a sanctuary. I twine
 My hopes of being remembered in my line
 With my land's language: if too fond
 and far
 These aspirations in their scope
 incline,--
 If my Fame should be, as my
 fortunes are

Of hasty growth and blight, and dull
Oblivion bar

My name from out the temple where the dead
Are honoured by the Nations--let it be--
And light the Laurels on a loftier head!
And be the Spartan's epitaph on me--
"Sparta hath many a worthier son
 than he."
Meantime I seek no sympathies, nor need--
The thorns which I have reaped are
 of the tree
I planted,--they have torn me,--and
 I bleed;
I should have known what fruit would
 spring from such a seed.
 (Drinkwater 385)

As we read the above poem it seems clear that through his travels and the writing of poetry Byron found his hero and peace of mind in his final days. We realize, as Byron did, that for all his poetic searching in Don Juan, his hero was with him all along, within his own frame. Byron not only found his hero, he took responsibility for all of the acts he had committed, when he says, "The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree I planted,--they have torn me,--and I bleed; I should have known what fruit would spring from such a seed" (Drinkwater 385).

Byron's passion for life is evidenced in his poetry, which "is animated by a huge emotional appetite for life. . . He, alone of the great romantic trio, Byron, Keats and Shelley, lived his life with existential urgency, but if he put his heart into the business of living, then it is in his art that we find the authorized version of

the passion of the poet" (Bold 13). Byron's passion for life as expressed in the writing of poetry is additionally evidenced by the "seventeen stanzas of a new canto of Don Juan that were found among his papers after his death" (Drinkwater 377).

It has been almost 200 years since Byron wrote Don Juan and we have been able to read and enjoy this poetry and all of his other works because of the driving need he had for self-expression and the incredible genius he had for writing. Byron experienced catharsis through the writing of Don Juan and, because of the intense need he had to express his truth through poetry, readers have found the hero of Don Juan, and he is Lord George Gordon Byron himself.

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