

DIALOGUES IN BYRON'S *DON JUAN*: STRATEGIES IN
RHETORIC, NARRATIVE, AND ETHICS

by

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ABSTRACT

Both Byron's rhetoric and his narrative strategies, as social *praxis*, or practice, and *poiesis*, form ethical relations that have a range of artistically unpredictable and socially defined consequences. This study evaluates the literary social relations in Byron's *Don Juan*. It considers also literary relations amongst Byron's *Don Juan* and texts by Blake, Shelley, Khayyam, Márquez, Rushdie, and Calvino. In order, it treats three broad, interdependent categories, namely, rhetoric, narrative, and ethics, and it attempts to demonstrate new ground for assessing Byron's narrative strategies in *Don Juan*. Piecemeal, some of the principles of scepticism, unpredictability, digression, and self-reflexivity have appeared in past literary studies but have not been shown in combinations to generate ethics.

The study incorporates Kenneth Burke's pentad as a base from which to explore the ethics in *Don Juan*. It traces the ethical workings of language in the poem and values such as self-examination, compassion, solicitude, and peace that are brought to light in self-conscious ways. It argues that Byron's prevailing scepticism about language is, like Burke's, comedic and regenerative.

Byron illuminates the dynamic quality of the implied dialogue between the writer and the reader. To employ a Burkean concept, Byron *courts* the

reader, and the particular workings of his rhetorical strategies are intricately tied to the four principles mentioned above, which are tendencies rather than absolute structures in the poem. Byron delineates the flexible tendencies of these principles to show his social concerns in the reflexive boundaries of poetic mutability. In his courting of the reader that marks his transformative narrative, Byron valorises compassion instead of the detrimental effects of war or of the acts of social aggression against the Other. He appeals in his dialogues to the reader to take the imaginative journey of self- and social examination in order to reassess the ethical relation between the expression of poetic values and human action. Central to Byron's ethics in *Don Juan*, the journey motif expresses both "emblems of Emotion" and intellectually playful energy. Insisting that he shares Truth's beauty and banishment, Byron examines the human masquerade.

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For Livleen

The truth may be that if you are charged at such high voltage you can't fit any of the ordinary human feelings; must pose; must rhapsodise; don't fit in. He wrote in the Fun Album that his age was 100. And this is true, measuring life by feeling.

Virginia Woolf
Sunday, February 16, 1930
A Writer's Diary

INTRODUCTION

This study argues for the advantages of reading *Don Juan* from the perspective of the following thesis: both Byron's rhetoric and his narrative strategies, as social *praxis*, or practice, and *poiesis*, form ethical relations that have a range of artistically unpredictable and socially defined consequences.¹ The study, which is far from being comprehensive, attempts to explore and to evaluate the literary social relations in Byron's *Don Juan*. In order, it treats what I consider to be three broad, interdependent categories, namely, rhetoric, narrative, and ethics. The study seeks also to re-evaluate his poem in light of the texts of some writers that have rarely been considered for their literary relations to Byron's Romantic context. The journey of this study takes us, then, en route to a Romantic landscape with Byron, Blake, and Shelley; to an encounter with Omar Khayyam; to a meeting with the global magic realists Calvino, Márquez, and Rushdie. The study attempts to demonstrate new ground for assessing Byron's poem. Piecemeal, some of the principles of scepticism, unpredictability, digression, and self-reflexivity that I describe here have appeared in past literary studies, usually in the form of narrative

¹The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition) defines *praxis* in the following way: "1. The practice or exercise of a technical subject or art, as distinct from the theory of it (? obs.) b. Habitual action, accepted practice, custom. c. A term used by A von Cieszkowski in *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* (Berlin, 1838), then adopted by Karl Marx in *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie, Einleitung* (1844), to denote the willed action by which a theory or philosophy (esp. a Marxist one) becomes a social actuality. d. *Action that is entailed by a theory or a function that results from a particular structure* [*italics mine*]". In addition, *poiesis*, according to the *OED*, denotes the following: "Creative production, esp. of a work of art"; *poietic*, "a. rare. Creative, formative, productive, active." I will employ *praxis* in the sense of *d* (*italics*) above. For a fuller explanation of *praxis* and *poiesis* than that offered here, see footnote 8 on page 15 of this study.

strategies or operating structures in the poem, and have been linked to the reader and sometimes to ethics. Yet, from my perspective, much analysis remains to be done. When one eliminates the passages in the poem which incorporate the four principles, a strange phenomenon occurs: Byron's values lose their poignancy. The four principles are, in a manner of speaking about narrative, the cosmopolitan expression of Byron's values. Centring on the courtship of the Other as reader, I focus in this study on the connections between the governing principles, which collectively account for narrative transformation and narrative structure, and the ethics of the poem. I explore ethics in the realm of the comedic. Yet ethics, normally thought of as having substantial import in literature, seem to go hand in hand with the realm of tragedy. In the Occidental world, literary greatness has often been skewed on the scales of literary judgment in favour of tragedy, yet Byron's *Don Juan* offers a rare blend of the comic and the tragic in an ethical and serious celebration of human energy—of intense feeling and sharp intellect—human imagination, and human action. Byron's rhetoric and narrative encompass the dynamic interplay of the dialogue implicit in the relations between the implied reader, as Other, and Byron, as the poet empathizing—"to share her Beauty and her Banishment" (*DJ* 9.22)—with the Truth personified as a Woman; he does this in his ethics of mutability because without change, the regeneration of his narrative becomes impossible. Not once in the broader structures throughout *Don Juan* does Byron simply spin in the abyss—of literary exhaustion—without a way out of it with words.

I vary my approaches to *Don Juan*, and the overall movement of my criticism is meant to accentuate and, at times, to reflect its narrative density. I seek to clarify and to trace some of the major movements of the ethical narrative in Byron's poem. I practice criticism on the text in numerous ways; first, theoretical considerations of the ethical, aesthetic, narrative, and satiric

relations of the text to other texts; second, a blend of deductive and inductive reasoning combined with intuitive analyses of broader structures and concerns outlined in the poem; third, cultural criticism and structural analysis; fourth, close readings of the text; fifth, a placement of Byron's *Don Juan* in a context with the texts of the Romantic writers Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Blake; sixth, a re-evaluation of *Don Juan* in light of the texts of the global magic realists Italo Calvino, Gabriel García Márquez, and Salman Rushdie; seventh, a breaking of theoretical *rules* and overturning of underlying assumptions of literary terms to re-employ them in new ways that directly relate to the social relations in *Don Juan*. I may frustrate some critics or readers this way, but I, for one, do not think that we can fix language to a strict unfoldment of its future. I believe that the elasticity of language is a wonderful thing. Accountability is, of course, necessary in the evaluation of the new-found contexts of literary terms and in the continued assessment of the scholarly manufacturing of consent. In particular, I am thinking of my employment or, rather, *deployment* of the terms *intertextuality* and *Other*. I try not to align myself with any particular school of criticism though I am sure my preferences for a blend of cultural criticism and analysis of social relations in language will become apparent. And with Byron's *Don Juan*, I do not believe that any one school of criticism could, by itself, define the workings of narrative in the poem. *Don Juan* is a defiantly changing text. A panorama of social vignettes is funneled through Byron's mind and words. I analyse this panorama in relation to the process of writing. In this study, Byron the poet is given greater say than Byron the man. And this poet is all about change. In my experience, I find the poem to be one of the most protean texts written in the English language. This slippery quality of the text has fueled unwarranted irate criticism against Byron's narrative. Before Virginia Woolf's appreciation of that unpredictable quality, few critics had accommodated the sophistication and richness of *Don Juan*.

In part, the unpredictability of the poem reflects Byron's sceptical attitude towards language. Generally, Byron's scepticism about language and society is comedic and regenerative, especially at a macrocosmic narrative level. To help me account for the diverse rhetorical strategies that focus on the social relations in the poem, I employ Burke's pentad as a base from which to launch my ideas or as a locus to return to after theoretical considerations of the text. I employ the term *Other* in my analysis of the poem in order to refer to a subject, person, voice, or force different from an individualised self. In contemplating the relation between Byron's writing and the Other whom he addresses, I attempt to stress certain values in the poem such as self-examination, compassion, solicitude, and peace that are brought to light in self-conscious ways. Byron creates this ethical quality by employing four dominant narrative strategies or principles that are often threaded together throughout *Don Juan*: scepticism, unpredictability, digression, and self-reflexivity. Digression, which is sometimes viewed as a stylistic feature or a rhetorical ornament, is perhaps the weakest strategy of the group for conveying ethics in a consistent way, but nonetheless it is, in conjunction with the other principles, instrumental in enabling Byron to create the narrative transformations he requires in the text to broach the particulars of his social concerns. These key narrative strategies accentuate the relations amongst art, illusion, and the world, and the strategies examine also the illusions that a self is independent of the Other and that art is independent of life. Byron's concerns are with the interdependence of the self and the social Other and with the words that stress that ethical interdependence. In this spirit, Byron satirises the folly of hypocritical love in all of its manifestations, including sexual repression and war. He illuminates the practice of writing by showing how it weaves social commitment to worthy values or experiences and how writing relates to the act of reading. To employ a Burkean concept, Byron

courts the reader, and the particular workings of his rhetorical strategies are intricately tied to the four principles. These narrative strategies are tendencies rather than absolute structures in the poem. And through them, Byron valorises an ethical commitment-in-writing that reflects the sanity and the strength of spontaneous benevolence where benevolence is indeed warranted instead of the detrimental effects of war or of the acts of social aggression against the Other.

The study treats his ethics in some way or form in each of the seven chapters. Increasingly, ethics become prominent in the last half of the study or in chapters four, five, six, and seven. The preliminary chapters though are no less significant or divorced from Byron's macrocosmic and microcosmic strategies in presenting concerns about language and society.

Chapter one analyses the narrative strategies of Byron's *Don Juan* through theoretic and rhetorical lenses. First, I give the rationale for reading *Don Juan* and introduce the thesis of the study. Then I show how Byron's narrative strategies practice a self-reflexive artistic freedom that is atypical in his time but currently regarded as innovative writing. This self-reflexive freedom is double-sided, for the writer's freedom is an attempt to show the reader's freedom as well in a reader-writer compact. For Byron, the reader-writer contract consists of specific values such as intelligence, honesty, and openness. In showing Kenneth Burke's rhetoric and philosophy of language, I delineate the relevance of Burke's views about courtship to the aforementioned values in *Don Juan*.

This Burkean and interdisciplinary approach connects with the four principles or narrative strategies that Byron employs in his exploration of language, self, society, and Other. By retaining the strong links between the principle of unpredictability and the other principles, Byron's writing resists closure, exploring the tangible relations between ethics and aesthetics. His

masterfully comic but serious poem reveals the interdependence of art and life and the writer's and reader's responsibility to treasure that interdependence so that our lives are actively poetic.

Chapter two analyses the concept of *narrative*, drawing primarily on the ideas of Kenneth Burke, Gérard Genette, and Linda Hutcheon. Then this chapter focuses on Byron's narrative strategies in *Don Juan* in relation to social criticism. These narrative strategies sometimes work individually and at other times in combination to show praxis and poesis at work. Byron's poem displays a serious playfulness in exploring human follies and substantive social concerns. Byron invites his readers to share in his laughter and indignation. In doing so, Byron clarifies and complicates the paradoxical, changing social relations between the self and the Other. In essence, Byron demystifies the relations of power in social hierarchies and shows the limits and merits of language.

Chapter three examines the relationship between satire and Byron's narrative praxis in his poem. Byron's satire borrows from Augustan satire but, more importantly, stands alone in its ability to deconstruct itself while still upholding ethical values. The ethical values show how excessive human pride, human aggression, and human manipulation of power for narrow ends inhibit artistic endeavour. Objects of satire spring from satiric narrative strategies, and both Byron and Omar Khayyam satirise human pride and displace it with the celebration of human pleasure.

Chapter four explores the eye-sign language of the Haidée episode and the bonds of love between Juan and Haidée. Lambro's patriarchal aggression against Haidée is significant in severing her relation from Juan, from life, and from her unborn child. Byron crafts his language to show the limits of language while valorising the language of the eyes and the Other as lover.

Chapter five delineates the relations amongst Byron's *Don Juan*, Blake's

Jerusalem, and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* in their analyses of how language and thought may create war or peace. Peace is an aesthetic phenomenon for each of these writers, an artistic practice as opposed to a passive state. Each writer displays a remaking of language and social relations with the Other to fight intellectually against the rhetoric of war with words from his respective calamus of peace.

Chapter six surveys and evaluates the innovative strategies of Byron's *Don Juan* in relation to some of the texts of three significant global magic realists, namely, Salman Rushdie, Gabriel García Márquez, and Italo Calvino. I explore briefly the concept of *magic realism* to highlight the relevance of magic realism to Byron's concerns about society and language. In addition, I show how Byron's imaginative realism, along with some of the main principles that bring coherence—and coherent discontinuity—to his poetry, is an ethical force in his poetry.

Chapter seven focuses primarily on the ethical motif of travel in the poem, illustrating the methods by which Byron raises social concerns about such phenomena as slavery, British colonialism, and social hypocrisies. He examines also the concept of artistic integrity in poetry and its relation to the world. Byron's ethics of mutability undermine rigid and repressive social values that promote undue fear and anxiety, and displace the old moral orders with an ethics that celebrates human energy, human intellect, and human emotion.

In this study, I leave traces of my own critical hand, which has been influenced in significant ways by Kenneth Burke, Anthony England, Linda Hutcheon, and Jerome J. McGann, and appeal to the Other who reads these lines to re-read and to re-evaluate Byron's epic poem. With its own prognosis, literary criticism, as any judicious literary court should acknowledge, in some way violates the text. In this sense, the examination of social values is not

without the dangers of interpolating one's own prejudicial views. The greater danger, however, lies in silent consent—precisely why Byron's *Don Juan* champions open dialogue and rigorous self- and social examination.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUAL THEORY FOR TEXTUAL PRAXIS

Thus, in mediating between the social realm and the realm of nonverbal nature, words communicate to things the spirit that the society imposes upon the words which have come to be the "names" for them. The things are in effect the visible tangible material embodiments of the spirit that infuses them through the medium of words. And in this sense, things become the signs of the genius that resides in words.²

Serious responsibility recognizes itself to be responsible for the course of things beyond one's own death.³

²Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (LSA, Berkeley: U of California P, 1966) 362. Burke's socioanagogic concern with mediational, social signing, signing with language, has much to do with how we sign, or give signature to, our social narratives for the Other (see footnote number 4 for an explanation of my application of the word *Other*). Burke attempts to show the cultural changes and consequences implicit in the complex dance of language that social relationships require. And because he unrelentingly focuses on social relations, no text exists, for him, in the chrysalis of interiority or the purely abstract realm of alterity—both call into question the relation between the self and Other.

³Alphonso Lingis, introduction, trans., *Otherwise than Being*, by Emmanuel Levinas (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) xiv.

In accordance with the Aristotelian dictum that "[r]hetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (1.2) and in substantial agreement with Kenneth Burke's view in *A Rhetoric of Motives* that rhetoric is an *act*⁴ addressed to an agent (37-46), the first chapter of the study opens with a description of the rhetorical ground for the workings of dialogues addressed to and acting on the implied readers of *Don Juan*. The social contexts for such appeals to an audience are also related to Byron's narrative and to his ethical concerns in the poem. To date, Kenneth Burke is, in my mind, one of the most perceptive critics of the social and literary relationships that erode or promote ethical attitudes and actions. With his sceptical practice of analysing our linguistic resources, Burke seeks to create "perspectives by incongruity" by undermining the unethical exercise of both human power and the human will, and he does this by remoralizing and reinventing his rhetorical strategies and, in turn, their implications for social and literary relations (*Perspectives by Incongruity* 96-97): "incongruity is the law of the universe; if not the mystic's universe, then the real and multiple universe of daily life. . . . The incongruities we speak of are moral or esthetic" (*Perspectives by Incongruity* 96). In *Don Juan*, Byron's aesthetic is, with its

⁴Burke writes, "The term 'rhetoric' is no substitute for 'magic,' 'witchcraft,' 'socialization,' 'communication,' and so on. But the term rhetoric designates a *function* which is present in the areas variously covered by those other terms. And we are asking only that this *function* be recognized for what it is: a linguistic function by nature as *realistic* as a proverb, though it may be quite far from the kind of realism found in strictly 'scientific realism.' For it is essentially a realism of the *act*: moral, persuasive" (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 44).

depiction of paradoxes and changing social relations in the Burkean spirit of creating perspectives by incongruity, ethical. The first chapter presents a theoretical meeting ground for a dialogue between Burke and Byron in the context of what they mean to practice in their respective social examinations of the self, language, society, and the Other. Rhetoric with a capital R is, for Burke, any means of social persuasion. What Byron does with his narrative strategies, which are based on the four broad principles of scepticism, unpredictability, digression, and self-reflexivity, should, I think, be considered in light of his rhetorical courtship of his audience; hence Byron's courtship produces in his dialogues with his readers a localized dynamics. Byron's rhetoric emphasises the continuing invitation to take the narrative journey in its primarily ethical examination of social relations. So one has the opportunity to embark upon the narrative voyage of *Don Juan* and to make literary judgments about Byron's analysis of language and society.

The basic story of *Don Juan* may be roughly limned in the following way: Byron creates an anti-heroic hero who needs to act heroically to earn his place as one. He writes, "I want a hero: / An uncommon want" (*DJ* 1.1). Juan is this hero, who, from the beginning of the poem, has much to learn but buds quickly. After the death of Don Jose, his father, Donna Inez, his mother, raises him, providing a strict education. Juan, sixteen and young at heart, becomes involved with a married friend of his mother, Donna Julia. Theirs is a brief encounter. Immediately after news of the affair becomes public knowledge, Juan, on the ship *Trinidad* (*DJ* 2.24), leaves Spain. Following a shipwreck, he, in an open boat, is exposed to the elements and to starvation. He manages to reach the shores of an island in the Cyclades, where he is nurtured to health by a young, passionate woman, Haidée. They become lovers. She, the only child of an enterprising Greek pirate, is the maker of an idyllic paradise for Juan. Their authentic relationship incorporates human and spiritual love,

combining passion and peace. This paradisiacal scene crumbles on Lambro's—or her father's—return. He severs the bonds between Haidée and Juan. Haidée, heartbroken, dies. She carries to her grave her unborn child. Juan survives and is offered for sale on the slave market. In Constantinople, Gulbeyaz's bidders buy Juan. Gulbeyaz, a prominent wife of the Sultan, attempts to seduce Juan, but she is unsuccessful. Juan eventually escapes from the Turks and fights against them by joining the Russians. The Russians capture Ismail. Juan travels back with them to St. Petersburg. While giving the sealed victory letter to Catherine II, he becomes the object of the Empress's desire. They become involved sexually. His health waning, Juan suffers acutely. Alarmed, Catherine consults her physicians and in following their advice sends him to a more clement place than Russia. He leaves, then, on a diplomatic mission to England. There he mingles with the British aristocracy, with Lord Henry Amundeville, Lady Adeline Amundeville, Aurora Raby, and the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke.

I

"If from great Nature's or our own abyss / Of thought, we could but snatch a certainty" (14.1)—these words from *Don Juan* (*DJ*) do not spell the end of Byron's philosophy of language and social relations but are a beginning to a paradoxically sceptical, embracing attitude that, in the words of the poet, enables him to see anew: "I know nought; nothing I deny" (*DJ* 14.3). Despite claims of self-ignorance, the Socratic persona continues to write for an audience and attempts to enlighten his readers about the necessity of denying nothing and examining everything.

A poet reading and writing about the changing weather of social and

political times in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Byron, in conversing with his readers, invites his audience in *Don Juan*⁵ (*DJ*)—in the figurative sense—to sail with him and to imagine the social implications of his narrative: "The new world would be nothing to the old, / If some Columbus of the moral seas / Would show mankind their souls' Antipodes" (*DJ* 14.101). He may not have a set course, but he does have a formal but flexible sense of rhythm and rhyme in his crafting of poetry in *ottava rima*⁶ and a sense of passion in employing his witty genius with words. Paul Fussell writes, "Byron's *Don Juan* is now the poem which most readers would associate with *ottava rima*, and in that poem we can appreciate one of the rare miracles by which a poet's individual genius and a single stanzaic form encounter each other in delight and end in an eminently fruitful marriage" (146). Early in the

⁵Peter W. Graham, "Nothing So Difficult," *Rereading Byron*, ed. Alice Levine and Robert N. Keane (New York: Garland, 1993) 44. Graham writes that "[p]ronouncing 'Juan' with 'new one' is comical, yes. More important, it exemplifies a distinctively English habit of speech that in turn suggests a human trait Byron particularly deplored in his countrymen—the tendency to appropriate and then alter (that is, 'improve' or 'correct') another culture's property, whether a word, a practice, or a product" (44).

⁶Frank J. Warnke and Alex Preminger, "Ottava Rima," *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 179. The encyclopedia defines *ottava rima* and outlines its literary context in the following way: "A stanza of 8 iambic lines rhyming abababcc. Its origin is obscure, being variously attributed to development from the ballade or the *canzone* (qq.v.) or to imitation of the Sicilian *strambotto*. However, it was in use in the religious verse of late 13th-c. Italy, and it was given definitive artistic form by Boccaccio in his *Teseida* (1340-42) and his *Filostrato* (1339-40). Becoming almost immediately the dominant form of It. narrative verse, it was developed by Poliziano, Pulci, and Boiardo in the 15th c. and reached its apotheosis in the *Orlando Furioso* (1516) of Ludovico Ariosto, whose genius exploited its potentialities for richness, complexity, and variety of effect. . . . The work of the great masters of the stanza—Ariosto and Byron—suggests that o.r. is most suited to a work of varied nature, blending serious, comic, and satiric attitudes and mingling narrative and discursive modes" (179).

poem, Byron poses a significant rhetorical question about social recognition and answers by emphasising the uncertainty of writing: "What is the end of fame? 'tis but to fill / A certain portion of uncertain paper" (1.218). And as a reader of his poem, I have my own questions about the real implications of Byron's rhetoric behind his erotesis. I wonder, why read that "uncertain paper"? Why travel along the roads of Byron's discursive narrative, especially since the latter sometimes displays wayward signs. Why experience his cinematic, stormy deftness with changes of scene and circumstance? Why take seriously a narrative in which certainty constantly yields to his trust in uncertainty? About his role as a writer who seeks narrative success, Byron states, "I think that were I *certain* of success, / I hardly could compose another line" (DJ 14.12). In *The Blind Man Traces the Circle* (BMTC), Michael G. Cooke notes that *Don Juan* strives, in employing its "eclectic instruments," to "evolve a gospel of uncertainty" (139). Dialogue is one such instrument. In the course of the numerous dialogues in the poem, Byron's evolving ideas about uncertainty are, paradoxically, structured by and woven with narrative values. If Byron is uncertain not only about success but also about writing, why read this British Romantic writer's interpretatively most malleable text?⁷ One reason, which I

⁷G. Kim Blank, ed., appendix, *The New Shelley: Later Twentieth-Century Views*, (London: Macmillan, 1991) 246. Blank provides the results of a Shelleyan survey wherein questionnaires were randomly distributed to over 100 universities in Canada, the United States of America, and Great Britain, and eight-four completed responses were given (242). The survey asked respondents to rank Shelley's import as a British Romantic poet relative to the other British Romantics, and the table below shows how well Byron fares.

shall try to support in the following study, is that both Byron's rhetoric and his narrative strategies, as social *praxis*, or practice, and *poiesis*, form ethical relations that have a range of artistically unpredictable and socially defined consequences.⁸

The poem presents rich ethical dialogues. And, as I will discuss and analyse over the course of this study, these dialogues have inextricable bonds with the rhetorical strategies that *Don Juan's* narrative displays in hosting the reader. With the auditory and conceptual web of probingly contradictory and

Table 1

	Wordsworth	Coleridge	Blake	Keats	Shelley	Byron
1st	80%	8%	10%	0%	2%	0%
2nd	16%	40%	22%	12%	10%	0%
3rd	4%	18%	12%	32%	28%	6%
4th	0%	12%	22%	20%	32%	14%
5th	0%	12%	16%	18%	20%	34%
6th	0%	10%	18%	18%	8%	46%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

⁸See note 1 in the introduction for definitions of *praxis* and *poiesis*. I will connect *praxis*, as long term rhetorical strategies of writing, to *poiesis*, as short term tactics of narration, in Byron's narrative strategies. Consequently, *praxis*, as Hugh McDonald has suggested to me, leads to *poiesis*. I would also add that *poiesis* makes a writer reassess the viability of *praxis*—that is if one is concerned with making theory, in the double sense of the word, work. For an interesting and fuller account of *praxis* that treats authors such as Marx, Weber, Hegel, Habermas, and Foucault, among others, see Joseph Margolis's fourth chapter, "Thinking, According to Praxism" (101–143), in *Texts without Referents: Reconciling Science and Narrative* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

paradoxical voices balanced with Byron's other, less ambiguous, didactic voices, these dialogues are complex yet clear. This ambiguous stance prevails in the following statement: "whether glory, power, or love, or treasure, /The path is through perplexing ways" (DJ 1.133). The ways may be perplexing, but there is a narrative path or trajectory that we are invited to travel upon as the writer intimates his secrets and explores the craft of writing in continuous dialogues with his readers.

These dialogues aim to engage the reader in the challenging reassessment of social values:

Indeed I never knew what people meant
 By deeming that my Muse's conversation
 Was dangerous;—I think she is as harmless
 As some who labour more and yet may charm less.
 (DJ 15.94)

Both dangerous and charming, Byron's Socratic Muse re-evaluates language and society: "in the days of old / Men made the manners; manners now make men— / Pinned like a flock, and fleeced too in their fold" (DJ 15.26). Byron's dialogues with his readers rhetorically voice his ethical concerns with social relations.

One prominent critic disagrees that Byron's address to the reader is conversational. Although his book offers some perceptive insights into the ethics of *Don Juan*, I am not convinced by Jerome Christensen's comment in *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* that "*Juan* is written in what is doubtless a speaking style, but, contrary to received opinion, it is not conversational" (309). I am unconvinced that the poem is not conversational. If the speaking style is not conversational, what makes it seemingly speak? Can style be divorced from the context which it purports to speak about to someone else?

In "*Don Juan: Form*," Jerome J. McGann notes, "Byron opposes a

discourse ruled by symbols, which drive into silence and ecstatic revelation," with a discourse of "conversational facility" (15.20). The structure of *Don Juan* is based upon the structure of human talk, which is "dialectical without being synthetic" (39). Recently, in reference to *Don Juan*, McGann called this conversational facility *dialogic*.⁹ One could even say that human talk is dialogic without resorting to the formal application of quotation marks. A kind of structural speaking, Byron's talk attempts to shift the centre of concern from what is readily acceptable in his society to what should be examined closely—to address social hypocrisies. In *Byron*, John D. Jump maintains that the "effect of spontaneous, varied, and expressive talk is wonderfully sustained throughout *Don Juan*" (137). In contrast, William H. Marshall writes in his book *The Structure of Byron's Major Poems* that *Don Juan's* "irony is terminal rather than instrumental; this is achieved and sustained principally through a complex of individual monologues, in which the speakers, often unaware of the full situational context for their speeches, frequently reveal to us far more than they intend" (177). Yet Byron does not create pockets of solipsistic monologues. In contrast, he questions human action by conversing with his readers and showing them the versatile but limiting qualities of his various personae.

In strategically employing narrative strategies, Byron converses with the reader to show both order and unpredictability. The poem's structures evolve from his complex social dialogues. *Don Juan*, I believe, does not merely soliloquise at great length but converses—in Byron's continuing dialogues—with the implied reader:

But let me to my story: I must own,
 If I have any fault, it is digression;
 Leaving my people to proceed alone,

⁹Jerome McGann, personal interview, 3 November 1994.

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.
 (3.96)

Clearly, in the above stanza, the opening two lines and the closing couplet address an implied reader: "let me to my story . . ."; "each omission is a loss to / The world, not quite so great as Ariosto." Byron's rhetoric draws attention to the telling of his story and pays his respect to the Italian master Ludovico Ariosto whom he, in his own modest admission, emulates in employing the ottava rima. Soliloquies are meant for an audience, but soliloquizing "beyond expression" hints at silent or mental ones that eventually emerge as "addresses from the throne" of the author. The author speaks to an audience from a throne in order to initiate conversation, but leaves it to conduct his business with his audience in other sessions that express his explorations of narrative and social values. In the above stanza, Byron moves from soliloquizing to implicit dialogue and then from implicit dialogue to his explicit dialogue that seeks to conduct business with the world. And in examining both the corrupt and the auspicious social relations of self and Other,¹⁰ these dialogues are aesthetically unpredictable and fluidly ethical. Further, they connect with Byron's various narrative strategies in *Don Juan*. The narrative strategies draw attention to writing. But they also illustrate how both language and thought

¹⁰By *Other* I mean Other than one's self. This Other, however unknowable, is not divorced but different from one's self. One's self is primarily in a social *relation* to the Other. The Other is, in this sense, the social Other and influences the self. Byron's ethics of mutability stress this evolutionary relation between the alienated but interdependent self and the interactive Other. The respecting of this difference between the self and the Other enables humane social interaction and social evolution.

come into being—writing as a solitary act meant for social acts of reading and interpretation. Byron's *Don Juan*, in fact, displays a rare *ethical* self-reflexiveness.¹¹ And critics such as Michael G. Cooke and Paul Elledge uphold and value the workings of qualities such as action, courage, and benevolence in the poem's narrative strategies.

There still remain, however, critics such as Malcolm Kelsall and M. H. Abrams who respectively offer considerable resistance to acknowledging or simply remain silent about Byron's narrative dexterity and achievement in *Don Juan*.¹² In eclipsing the import of his poetry, Byron's detractors, in the past and the present, have had a proclivity for gazing on his life—or its fragmented

¹¹In *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (NN, New York: Methuen, 1980), Linda Hutcheon gives a comprehensive account of textual reflexivity by explicating Dällenbach's multilevel notion of *mise en abyme*: "Dällenbach feels that the mirroring image is central to the concept of the *mise en abyme*, but that there are three distinguishable kinds. One is a simple reduplication, in which the mirroring fragment has a relation of similitude with the whole that contains it. A second type is a repeated reduplication 'in infinitum' in which the above-mentioned mirroring fragment bears within itself another mirroring fragment, and so on. The third type of doubling is labelled 'aporistique,' and here the fragment is supposed to include the work in which it itself is included" (55-56). Hutcheon notes that Dällenbach's typology distinguishes the aforementioned three structural levels of reflection: one, *énoncé*; two, *énoncé* reflects on the *énonciation*; three, narrative or linguistic code reflects itself.

¹²After rarely mentioning Byron (he might have received a page of analysis in the entire study), M. H. Abrams, in *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953), writes: "For economy's sake, I shall omit the discussions of such contemporaries as Byron, whom everyone knew to wear his heart on his sleeve" (244). Yet when he chooses to analyse Byron's works, Abrams makes insightful comments: "Byron characteristically prefers metaphors of greater daring, dash, and grandiosity. [DJ 4.106]. . . And it is also Byron who offers the interesting parallel between poetic creation and childbirth, resulting in a poetic offspring at once separable from and blended with the spirit and feelings of the father-poet (or is it the *mother-poet*?) [my emphasis, *Childe Harold* 3.6]" (49).

linguistic remains—and projecting his personal failures or shortcomings onto his poetry. In *Byron and the Dynamics of Metaphor*, W. Paul Elledge reminds us of the facile stereotyping of Byron's writings on the basis of his flamboyant life: "No doubt Byron wished his contemporaries to believe he took his art no more seriously than he took his charades and his women. But the evidence of his texts, once located and uprejudicially evaluated, gives the lie to Byron's dazzling deceptive tactics" (4). Although it may be difficult to view any text without some traces of prejudice of one kind or another, there is, indeed, a difference between what Byron was as a man and what he desired as a poet. Specifically, his poetry exhibits much of the language of desire. Byron wants to create with words a mosaic of social and political concerns about the world. For example, as we shall see in chapter seven, he confronts the British and satirises or denounces their complacency toward the subjugated people of their colonies.

Housed in *Don Juan's* cultural framework, Byron's politics are not the politics of a leader delivering policies to his people but of a poet seeking to address social problems through a revolution in values. Malcolm Kelsall complains about the ineffectuality of Byron's politics as they applied to the real world. Kelsall writes in *Byron's Politics*, for example, that the "last thing Juan is doing in Europe is raising stones against tyrants. These libertarian outbursts have no correspondent action in the poem" (151). Besides the dangerously reductive equation of Juan's actions to Byron's politics, Kelsall misses the significance of the process of narrative as exhibiting the political efficacy of Byron's satiric treatment of the British in their mismanagement of their colonies. Byron, in *Don Juan*, does not offer a prescriptive politics to save the world but re-makes and vitalises the reading experience of his general audience, providing opportunities to create a practical awareness about the social praxis of narrative. Jump elaborates on the import of Byron's

incorporation of Augustan influences while reforging these influences by speaking in his own voice about political and social concerns:

His presentation of a comedy of manners in these English cantos does not prevent him from continuing to voice his political attitudes. His blood boils when he sees men letting "these scoundrel Sovereigns break law" (XV. xcii). He calls for a restraint to be imposed upon Alexander I of Russia and the other despots who head the Holy Alliance; on their generals; and, if not on George IV's person, at all events on his squandering of wealth on Brighton Pavilion. (140)

Poetry, according to Byron, cannot force attitudinal changes but may evoke them. Further, there are no complete or perfect instances of representative ethics for Byron, at least not in a fallen world.

In "Byron and the Empire of the East," delivered during Byron's bicentenary in 1988, Marilyn Butler points out the popular media's inadequate consideration of Byron's literary achievement. The media had a driving fascination with his personality, physical deformity, or sexual prowess, thus losing sight of the extraordinary richness in his poetry: "It must have been either bad form or too troublesome to tackle the real problem he [Byron] represents, as an apparently major poet whose poetry has in fact been steadily belittled in the English-speaking world" (63). Further, Philip W. Martin, in *Byron: A Poet Before His Public*, argues that "Byron has been given scant credit for the narrative successes of his poem [*Don Juan*]" (192).¹³ And due credit can

¹³Philip W. Martin, in *Byron: A Poet Before His Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), writes: "The manner in which *Don Juan* presents its events is new and vital. Whether or not its poet has tired of life, the evidence before our eyes is that he has only just discovered his art, and is delighting in it" (195). Byron's unique manner in writing *Don Juan* consists in daring manoeuvres which create a freshness of vision that many readers were incapable of appreciating in Byron's time. The diverse styles incorporated in *Don Juan* probably bewildered the reader who wanted a straightforward world. In *Self, Text, and Romantic Irony: The Example of Byron* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), Frederick

be given to *Don Juan* only when the critic focuses on the text as a primary object of study in relation to culture.

As Butler and Martin are saying, we should apply our judgment not to the man but to the writer who would have us read his work. Such critical analysis may recognise Byron's desire to have his readers read his work to understand better their relations to the Other. This reading is a mutual affair that Byron expects from himself and from his readers.¹⁴ Byron may frustrate his readers, but he does seem to respect the act of reading, even if he sometimes seems nonchalant. When writing his mature and highly crafted poetry in *Don Juan*, Byron attempts to influence the reader and to promote social responsibility.¹⁵ As this study will demonstrate, Byron urges the reader to participate in the linguistic analysis of human failings, opening the possibilities of reassessing the relation between writer and reader. Such advancement of social responsibility is integral to *how* Byron writes to the reader, to the social Other.

Byron's commitment to creativity exemplifies an ethics of the aesthetic translatable into human action and social responsibility, a responsibility borne in the facing toward the Other. About the relation of Byron's aesthetic to his ethics in *Don Juan*, McGann says, "His aesthetic is ethics."¹⁶ So, in *Don Juan*,

Garber shows the master hand that Byron exhibits in forging an ironic vision of powerfully complex and profound dimensions: "Many stanzas in *Don Juan* are compact testing places for those practices of the later Byron which make him a prime romantic ironist, arguably the best in any language" (153).

¹⁴These ethical dialogues between writer and reader emerge in the course of reading *Don Juan*, connecting with Byron's narrative strategies in examining social relations.

¹⁵Byron, for example, creates this responsibility in his narrative praxis when he satirises the excessive pride of characters such as Gulbeyaz, Catherine, and Suwarrow.

what function does the aesthetic perform in its ethical relation to the Other? Levinas may be able to provide an incomplete but momentary answer to our question. Although I disagree with both the narrow scope of feminism exhibited in Levinas's ethics as they pertain to women and his distrust of spontaneity, he perspicuously delineates the value of solicitude for the Other and the possibility of peace. Alphonso Linges describes the uniqueness of Levinas's ethical philosophy in delineating the facing of the self and the Other in the creation of responsibility:

Facing, which is not turning a surface, but appealing and contesting, is the move by which alterity breaks into the sphere of phenomena. For Levinas responsibility is the response to the imperative addressed in the concrete act of facing. Responsibility is in fact a relationship with the other . . . the acts by which one recognizes the other are acts of exposing, giving, of one's very substance to another. Responsibility is enacted not only in offering one's properties or one's possessions to the other, but in giving one's own substance for the other. The figure of maternity is an authentic figure of responsibility. (viii)

In what way does Byron attempt to give birth to something beyond, yet from, himself and his world?¹⁷ In what figurative sense is *Don Juan* an act of creation that houses responsibility? Although at times *Don Juan* has nothing to do with morality—that is, it becomes an amoral poem wherein the linguistic sites of the text do not signal values of any serious degree of commitment or concern—the poem's most significant impetus shines as an ethical commitment-in-writing that examines the potentially regenerative relations between the self and Other. Amidst the darkened but comic canvas of burlesque,¹⁸ such commitment to

¹⁶Jerome McGann, personal interview, 3 November 1994.

¹⁷See *Don Juan* 10.28.

¹⁸See A. B. England's accounts of Byron's employment of satire and burlesque in *Byron's Don Juan and Eighteenth-Century Literature: A Study of Some Rhetorical*

writing is ritualistically conversational—offering dialogues about the art of writing as a therapeutic social practice to the willing reader.¹⁹

Ethics, in some current theories of deconstruction, are seen as an impossible insistent demand for systematic action or regulations of some type or other. Such theoretic rigidity, however, need not be the case.²⁰ Ethics, according to Burke, involve the power of negation to create positive human conduct—without always offering closure or prescriptions but valuing general human attitudes, desires, and characteristics such as intellectual curiosity or wonder, openness, kindness, generosity, serenity, intuition, spontaneity, vitality, sexuality, and creativity. When Byron employs strategies such as self-reflexivity and digression to evoke responses from the reader, these attitudes, desires, and characteristics are pronounced.²¹

Continuities and Discontinuities (London: Associated University Presses, 1975).

¹⁹The conversational ease of some of these dialogues should not be mistaken as superfluous chit-chat but should be seen as intricately connected to Byron's overall purpose of creating his ethics in *Don Juan's* narrative strategies.

²⁰In snapping the limits of structuralist thought, Burke pushed himself in *The Rhetoric of Religion* to the kind of deconstructive self-examination few critics practice on their own texts (an activity perhaps more like Zen than many critics could ever imagine), yet he retains an ethical outlook while pointing to, in his precursory way, the limits of deconstruction.

²¹See Robert Bernasconi's "Deconstruction and the Possibility of Ethics" in *Deconstruction and Philosophy*, ed. John Sallis (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987) 122–139. Bernasconi writes, "Hence in the face of the demand for an ethics, deconstruction can reply, in the course of its reading of Levinas that *the ethical relation is impossible and 'the impossible has already occurred' at this very moment.* In other words, the ethical relation occurs in the face-to-face relation, as witnessed in the demand for an ethics itself, a demand which it is as impossible to satisfy as it is to refuse. . . . This does not mean that writing ethical systems is impossible. Only that the attempt to do so is a denial of the ethical relation" (135). This statement seems like a form of censorship to me. It seems, at least in my understanding of Bernasconi's point, that ethics rigidify

Byron illuminates the ethical problems involved in self-reflexive writing, *defamiliarising*—to use a Russian formalist term—the process of reading by highlighting self-reflexivity in poetry, accentuating the newness of narrative, providing opportunities for differentiated readings.²²

Today, to capture the reader's interest, many innovative novels—for example, Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*—interweave defamiliarisation, self-reflexivity (a notable characteristic of the modern and especially the postmodern novel), and magic realism.²³ Such

once they become prescriptive, but what of ethical styles, as opposed to systems, of living or interpretation that defy the sole demand for rules based on duty? In a very strange way Buddha's teachings do not demand anything or desire anything, so what place does a non-demanding ethics that incorporates the concept of minimal harm have in Derrida's refusal/non-refusal to write an ethics of writing? What is the role of violence or appeals to violence in the shaping of human action? Byron deconstructs traditional beliefs in *Don Juan* without coercing the reader to believe in a system of ethics, yet he creates an ethical landscape in valorising scepticism, unpredictability, digression, and self-reflexivity.

²²Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics," *Russian Formalist Criticism*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, ed. Paul A. Olson (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska UP, 1965) 85. Tomashevsky, in keeping with Burke's postulate that language contains the signs and the objects of desire, links the idea of defamiliarisation to "artistic motivation" because the "introduction of nonliterary material into a work, if it is to be aesthetic, must be justified by a new and individual interpretation of the material" (85). And, he reiterates, "Conventional devices usually destroy themselves. One value of literature is its novelty and originality" (93). To elaborate further, Professor Summerfield in the autumn of 1992, in noting "Byron's love of Pope," writes, "I am reminded of one of Johnson's comments in his *Lives of the Poets* on *The Rape of the Lock*: 'familiar things are made new'."

²³Calvino, Márquez, and Rushdie have their own particular forms of ethics in their respective works. In addition, this idea of self-reflexivity seems to have captured the imaginations of writers in Hollywood since many programs on

current imaginative writing relates to Byron's *Don Juan*. Byron, like many magical realists, accentuates the reader's role in reading and forges a link between reading and the ethics of writing: "words are things, and a small drop of ink, / Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces / That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think" (*DJ* 3.88). Byron's allusion to the morning dew bespeaks the writer's ability to promote critical thinking. Byron's art—the art of thinking on paper—gives purpose and ethical appeal to his writing. And even if at times he hints that his writing is aimless, it is a creative aimlessness with the purpose of exploring the socially dynamic relation between self and Other.

television employ such a strategy. On any given day, numerous self-reflexive references proliferate on television. On September 9, 1993, for example, "Seinfeld" employed a comic self-reflexivity that focussed on the self-conscious process of creating comedy. Jerry Seinfeld in "Seinfeld" plays the part of a comedian on a pilot program named "Jerry." Later, he watches the taping of "Jerry" and remarks, ". . . a show called "Jerry" and I'm playing Jerry." This framing of a show-within-a-show, which has some similarities to Shakespeare's metadrama or play-within-a-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, exhibits the creation of self-reflexive programs on television. Further, such reflexivity is connected to reader-response television. Interestingly, while watching "Seinfeld," the general viewer watches numerous audience responses to "Jerry." In keeping with the comic spirit of Byron's *Don Juan*, David Letterman, in the same evening as the above example about "Seinfeld," refers on the "Late Show" to his own show: "If you watch these shows [Letterman's shows] and I watch them myself . . ." Like Margaret Laurence in *The Diviners*, Letterman displays an acute awareness about the self-reflexive interpenetration of art forms by giving a listing of *new* magazines, and the last one, which is *Racquetball Illustrated*, has him on the cover. He remarks, "I look like one of those guys getting ready to fight Jerry Cooney." With our cultural communication becoming infused with such self-reflexive moments, our critics are only now beginning to appreciate not the fact but the high degree of self-reflexivity in British Romantic texts.

II

In posting signs that rhetorically appeal to his reader, Byron creatively employs his imagination to examine social concerns such as the freedom to express one's critical viewpoint and the freedom to resist perceived social hypocrisies. In *The Making of a Masterpiece*, Truman Guy Steffan accentuates the import of Byron's experimental compositional energies in writing *Don Juan*: "Little people have always been intolerant of the loftiest minds. . . . In the fragmentary seventeenth canto, Byron advocates the positive premise of this negative criticism of intolerance—the absolutely free discussion of all matters" (250-51). Byron writes, "I would solicit free discussion / Upon all points no matter what" (*DJ* 17.6). Burke, like Byron, values the free discussion, as far as discussion can be free from linguistic and cultural bias and blindness, of life, language, and thought. Pertaining to the narrative significance of texts, the art of free inquiry, for Burke, recognises and explores the moments of narrative change.

At the heart of Burke's literary work and socioanagogic criticism, narrative change depicts transformational social relations. He applies his pentad to the social employment of language to account for the rhetorical shifts in an author's perspectives in given texts. In delineating his dramatic pentad of act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose, Burke insists that there is no fixed "calculus of motives" (*GM* xv-xvii), yet probability or linguistic patterns may help to explain specific tendencies in a writer's text. His pentad is a linguistic alembic for exploring both the narrative mutability and the ethical considerations of social matters in *Don Juan*.

Current thought about critical relations has rocketed into new orbits in the last two decades, and Burke's terms now appear to be somewhat limited in their power to delineate narrative relations in *Don Juan*. His interest, however,

in "strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise" (GM xviii) is of considerable worth for the understanding of this poem. Perceiving that change and ambiguity are part of the social drama of life and of the mutual, *active* relation between the reader and the writer in the agency of the text, Burke bases his theory of dramatism on literature's relation to the art of living:

The titular word for our own method is "dramatism," since it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought *primarily* [italics mine] as modes of action. (GM xxii)

Burke's central concern is with how language acts. But he does not stop just there. He wants to analyse critically the desire, or at least the traces of desire, in literary texts. Burke, highly cognisant of the ways in which writing frames the reader's desire and experience and reading frames the desire and experience of writing, employs the pentad, that is, act, agent, agency, scene and purpose (with attitude hovering on the periphery), to analyse literary forms in their attempt to persuade the reader. Consequently, Burke sees literary texts as an expression of human desire and human motives, as cultural centres or scenes with extensive implications.

Complex and dangerous, Burke's stance implies that we are neither wholly free from nor entirely bound to social influences.²⁴ Absolute perspectives are both restrictive and unrealistic, yet we collectively possess the means of and the continuing responsibility for challenging and changing harsh social inequities. Some of these inequities that come to my mind are the impoverished areas in Los Angeles, child prostitution in developing countries, and the discrepancy on the pay scale between men and women working on

²⁴Socially, we, according to Burke, influence others, and others influence us. The interactive relation is the important variable in human dialogue and human action.

comparable jobs in the G-7 countries. Burke contends that societies need to create working justice.²⁵ He posits that the reader creates the possibilities for re-visioning the text's cultural ideas and refiguring that text in social acts. Reflecting Burke's philosophy and Byron's narrative praxis in *Don Juan*, human acts, like literary acts, bespeak the differentiating and changing space of our identities.

In the ever present moment, the moment *now* in which we read or write, we have the possibility of transforming our partial newness into what Burke would term *alloiosis* or qualitative change (GM 82), the spiral to significant personal change and therefore to social change. Our languages do not work, in the real and literary world (a kind of double genesis for the crafting of ideas), without verbs. Burke stresses the dramatic action of language by attributing human consciousness (and purpose) to both the utilitarian and aesthetic employment of language: "As for 'act, ' any verb, no matter how specific or how general, that has connotations of consciousness or purpose falls under this category" (GM 14). Narrative creates *alloiosis* by embodying experiential values and readers' choices that stress the evaluation of possibilities, comprising a qualitative mode of action.

²⁵Such changes may take a long time. I would even grant that some of these changes may never come. But the outlook or the results should not doom our efforts or our responsibility to try for the sake of the Other.

III

The act of reading must, at least partially, represent itself in human consciousness, relying on experience to interpret the object—in its double face of *effacement* and veiled presence—of representation. For Burke, as I suspect for Byron, there is no such thing as a totally complete representation but only the transforming of incoherent and coherent fragments; change occurs in social relations, relations that are possible because of the social agency of language; both writers believe in the unending transformative play of ambiguities. Burke wants to explore the paths that language, figuratively, carves out of (into?) human consciousness. In essence, what are the effects of writing or reading? Even more importantly, what are the processes of writing and reading? What are the qualitative experiences in the human acts of reading and writing? What have we learned to read, in gesture, perception, acculturation, before we ever begin to write? And how do we rewrite what we have learned to read? Burke has some uncommon suggestions for some of our common problems in the world such as the perpetuation of the status quo when marginalised groups struggle to articulate their economic need or the neo-Nazi promise of white liberation when the jobless rate rises dramatically. And his enterprise, like Byron's project, attempts to dispel the myths of freedom to free us from social illusions.

Byron's concern for liberty, like Burke's, centres on human action as it forms social communication. Byron adheres to *parrhesia*, that is, "saying whatever one wants without regard for conventional or traditional restrictions on doing so" (Rajchman 120), in conducting a free, critical inquiry into the sociopolitical workings of society. Critical social analysis, for Byron, involves a reader-writer event of intertextual figurations, not created just by the obvious pressures exerted on the text from the interpenetrating forces of history and

culture that form textual boundaries, but by the act—the ever present act—of the reader reading critically the writer's construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of a play of continuities and discontinuities. In these ways, Byron anticipates his audience and self-reflexively writes about the reading of his writing and offers self-critical, chess-analogous openings to the reader.²⁶ To borrow an idea from Burke, we can say that Byron *courts* the reader, trying various rhetorical strategies to seduce, invite, coerce, praise, denigrate, jab, cajole, shock, or humour the reader into responding to his text.²⁷

Particularly important to keep in mind is the spectrum of readers, explicit and implied, Byron considers in writing *Don Juan*. William St Clair, in "The Impact of Byron's Writings: An Evaluative Approach," demonstrates the social influence of *Don Juan* on its audience: "Within a decade *Don Juan* had penetrated far deeper into the reading of the nation than any other modern book, with the possible exception of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*" (18). The Tory response to Byron's book, however, was anything but critically constructive. St Clair, for example, notes the self-defensiveness exhibited by Robert Southey, "who described *Don Juan* as 'a high crime . . . against society'" (qtd. in St Clair 14). An aristocratic lord writes *Don Juan* not to appease his social and personal

²⁶Julia Kristeva, in *The Kristeva Reader* (KR, ed. Toril Moi, New York: Columbia UP, 1986), employs the Bakhtinian term *intertextuality* as designating the following: "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (37); "If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an intertextuality), one then understands that its 'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated" (111). Byron employs a kind of metareading (reading his reading in advance of writing or rewriting; or metainterpretation) in combination with intertextuality in attempting to assess the readers he is writing for or against. See Byron's *Don Juan* 13.89.

²⁷See Kenneth Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950) 208-212, 221-233, 234, 267-268.

critics but, judging by Southey's reaction, to enflame some of them. Byron's central goal in *Don Juan*, however, is not to irk his readers but to court them.

In self-reflexively addressing and courting the reader, Byron's *Don Juan* resonates with many voices, sometimes discordant, sometimes opposing, sometimes synchronized in the attempt to speak not one but a multitude of partial truths, partial lies, eclipsed insights into the dynamics of language and culture. Stylistically a linguistic mosaic and contextually never too certain of even its uncertainties, *Don Juan* entertains a serious textual play between social desire and circumstance while accentuating its fierce self-reflexivity: a bright tiger aware of its stripes. Such self-reflexivity is often spontaneous, and in accenting this quality of his writing, Byron writes, ". . . I can't *furberish*—I am like the tyger (in poesy) if I miss my first Spring—I go back growling to my jungle."²⁸ The demands of the text of *Don Juan* influence the reader to question the act of reading and therefore to question not only what but, more important, *how* the writer writes.

Ahead of his time—though Laurence Sterne has helped to break the literary ground in *Tristram Shandy*—in the self-reflexive narrative strategies he crafts, Byron entices the reader to continue to read the text:

O reader! If that thou canst read,—and know,
 'Tis not enough to spell, or even to read,
 To constitute a reader; there must go
 Virtues of which both you and I have need.
 (DJ 13.73)

In attempting to entice or to court the reader, Byron promotes a critically engaging openness in viewing the world of experience and the world of words; thus he appeals to the reader in a reader-writer compact that embodies

²⁸George Gordon Byron, "To John Murray," 18 November 1820, *Byron's Letters and Journals (BLJ)*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (London: John Murray Publishers, 1973-1982) 7: 229.

certain virtues, particularly honesty, kindness, passion, alertness, nobility (without reifying it and constraining it to the status quo but grounding it in human generosity), amongst others.

For Byron, humanity's practice of employing rhetorical strategies for constraining human action and categorically binding it to normality represses human energy and produces ennui, both in society and in politics. He expresses serious concerns about the social and political shortcomings of his day, analysing the role of social ritual. The narrator is a convenient device for expressing such sociopolitical concerns. Consequently, at times the narrator mediates Byron's voice. At other times, the narrator, except as a literary creation of the author, has little to do with the flesh and blood Byron. Byron often employs the narrator in challenging conventional morality. In stripping off the straitjacket of normality, the narrator also appears to hold inconsistent beliefs, serving to make the reader puzzle over intriguing questions about human actions and their effects in the real world. Language, Byron argues, touches, moves, shakes and remakes human perception, and human perception and action form the political workings in the world.

Language, in this respect, shapes Juan's education, and his education and character development, in the larger context of social events, become key elements for Byron's social criticism about sex, love, war, and death. Byron explores critically the role of social ritual in the linguistic masking of desire. Further, he analyses the folly of rigidifying action into a system of human behaviour. To use a paradoxical phrase, Byron creates an ethics of spontaneity, an ethics counterbalancing, for example, the rigid morality or educational beliefs of a Donna Inez. Byron's ethics are not codified systems but open-ended ways of living poetically while valorising human intelligence, responsibility, and dignity.

Michael Cooke argues in his essay "*Don Juan: The Obsession and*

Self-Discipline of Spontaneity" that a hauntingly self-reflexive narrative unifies *Don Juan*: "we may argue a principle of unity based on obsession. . . . The idea of obsession, startling though it may seem, does help to account for the reflexive repetitiousness of the poem" (110). Unity subsumes dissolutions. The self-reflexivity in *Don Juan* forms one central principle of artistic freedom. Closely associated with the dominant ethics of the poem, this principle of self-reflexivity, conjoined with these ethics, counteracts and radically contrasts with what Byron calls *cant*. Jerome McGann, in "My Brain is Feminine!: Byron and the Poetry of Deception," explicates the nescient workings of *cant*: "it is this lack of consciousness which turns the lies of the male brain into that central nemesis Byron called 'cant'" (42-43). To Byron, then, the two significant extremes or antipodes found in social hierarchies are ethics based on the idea of freedom and *cant*. *Cant* denies justice, denies the social figuration of justice. But the idea of justice alone, as Blake and Byron both acknowledge, does not foster benevolence; human goodness does. Connected to the idea of justice, then, in negating *cant* is a vigilant self-examination and solicitude for the Other that frees one for benevolently spontaneous acts.

Byron's worlds of words in *Don Juan* contain their own political thrust to eliminate *cant*. His narrative strategies deliberately satirise and subvert social mores. Byron intends not only to teach lessons about life and education in *Don Juan* but to show human problems in the labyrinth of repressive social expectations and social illusions.

In challenging these repressive social attitudes, fiery energy abounds in Byron's *Don Juan*, especially in the relationship between its narrative texture and the twin themes of love and war that exhibit the power of passion and the futility of mercenary wars: "Fierce loves and faithless wars!—I am not sure / If this be the right reading—'tis no matter; / The fact's about the same, I am secure" (DJ 7.8). Byron's lines echo Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*: "Le donne, i

cavallier, l'arme, gli amori, / le cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto" (Mondadori 1.1). Byron's lines are also, of course, to be found in Edmund Spenser's opening in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*: "Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall moralize my song." Byron changes Spenser's order and simultaneously valorises love over physical war.²⁹ And in similarly challenging the social attitudes which resist social amelioration, Burke's theories about language may illuminate *Don Juan's* treatment of identification, courtship, and social estrangement, among other key ideas, in relation to love and war.³⁰ Briefly, the function of language, proposes Burke, is to unite individuals socially, to promote human cooperation for destructive or constructive ends. In its best light, Burke's noncombative paradigm—which, however, does recognise the struggle for power in the "human barnyard"—values the poet who voices social concerns to reshape society by offering alternative views to existing ideologies or by counteracting the systemic violence in the social hierarchy. Byron, for example, values the freedom of the individual and social reform, and he stresses the reader's responsibility to recognise and to help eliminate social injustices. In creating the desired relationship between the reader and the text, Byron's narrative strategies stress the process of narration. At times, these strategies create unresolvable ironies, paradoxes, and irregularities. Yet

²⁹In *The Style of Don Juan* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1960), George M. Ridenour calls Byron's parody of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* "bitter" and feels that Byron "is quite seriously implying the moral superiority of his epic over that of Spenser" (70).

³⁰For a definition of *identification*, see Kenneth Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* (*RM*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1969), especially pages 19-27 and 55-59. Identification, for Burke, necessitates a respect for human differences while affirming a common bond or principle (*RM* 21). Burke writes, "You can persuade a man [or woman or child] only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his [or hers]" (*RM* 55).

these linguistic constellations of ambivalence affirm the differences in and complexity of human experience expressed in narrative, and in this mode of activity they consistently participate in an ethical argument.

IV

Four principles influence Byron's narrative strategies in *Don Juan*: first, the principle of scepticism—his narrator is a doubting narrator, challenging conservative authoritarianism; second, the principle of unpredictability—the narrative in *Don Juan* subverts its own design; Byron writes, "This liberty is a poetic licence, / Which some irregularity may make / In the design" (*DJ* 1.120); third, the principle of digression³¹—the narrator in *Don Juan* digresses to satirise social hypocrisies and to give social commentaries; Byron writes, "But let me to my story: I must own, / If I have any fault, it is digression" (*DJ* 3.96); fourth, the principle of self-reflexivity—Byron's language and methods of narration point up the metalinguistic qualities in *Don Juan* and reveal that the poem's language explores critically its own use of words and ideas; he, for example, writes, "[T]his Epic will contain / A wilderness of the most rare conceits" (*DJ* 16.3). These principles, however, do not constitute a rigid system for interpreting *Don Juan*.³² They provide the foundation for exploring the

³¹With respect to the form of social criticism in *Don Juan*, Jerome J. McGann writes, "*Don Juan*'s digressions are the poem's plainest illustrations of its informality, just as they are the places where Byron most directly engages the argument about poetry with his contemporaries" ("*Don Juan: Form*" 35).

³²Of course, other key principles are prevalent codes in Byron's *Don Juan*, but for my purposes, when Kenneth Burke's socioanagogic criticism, as well as other key ideas from other critical theorists, is combined with Linda Hutcheon's analysis of metafictional elements in modern texts, those four

contradictory and often puzzling reflections of a text that employs language in a highly self-conscious way; more important, they show how Byron creates values, such as peace, compassion, and intelligence, in his narrative.

Byron wants the reader to consider seriously the repercussions of war and the benefits of peace in most situations. In his appeal to the reader, he employs the ethical import of the negative by denouncing tyrannical systems of thought and action, an act paralleling Burke's when he analyses the rhetoric, the linguistic strategies, of a perverted "no" in commercialised accounts of war. Language, Burke asserts, contains the principle of the negative. The principle of the negative, *principium negationis* (LSA 439), explains the linguistic source and power of ethics in its stance against perversion. "Perversion," the obverse face of ethics, "is a major aspect of No" (LSA 473). Two types of "no," consequently, embed themselves in language: the perverted "no" and the ethical "no." "No" means "no" in different social circumstances. The colonizer's "no" stands in stark contrast to the "no" of the aboriginal people of a colony. Ethics enter social relations such as these, for Burke, when social actions reflect both Kantian "voluntary self-legislation" (LSA 439) and compassion, that is, combined self-legislated duty and, the conspicuously underrated element in Kantian ethics, feeling.³³ Similarly, Byron, although

principles hold a dominant role in expressing Byron's ethics and capturing the spirited play of his words and the seriousness of his social concerns.

³³For Byron, feeling plays a significant role in the ethics of spontaneity. Byron writes, "I once thought myself a Philosopher and talked nonsense with great Decorum, I defied pain and preached up equanimity, for some time this did very well, for no one was in *pain* for me but my Friends, and none lost their patience but my hearers, at last a fall from my horse convinced me, bodily suffering was an Evil, and the worst of an argument upset my maxims and my temper at the same moment, so I quitted Zeno for Aristippus, and conceive that Pleasure constitutes the "το Καλον." —In Morality I prefer Confucius to the ten Commandments, and Socrates to St. Paul (though the two latter agree in

making exceptions for using force in defending one's country and freedom, says "No!" to the destruction of that voluntary self-legislation which is necessary for continuing peaceful relations:

You are 'the best of cut-throats:'—do not start;
 The phrase is Shakespeare's, and not misapplied:—
 War's a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art,
 Unless her cause by Right be sanctified.
 (DJ 9.4)

Clearly, Byron detests the mindless or "brain-spattering" art named *war*, and he undermines both its brutal destruction of human life and its impatience with a commitment to and a passion for constructive dialogue and innovative human action.

In developing the ethical linguistic bridge between duty and passion but without descending to platitudes, Byron's *Don Juan* rhetorically aims to influence the reader to consider the repercussions of irrational wars and the rational benefits of peace.³⁴ In his rhetorical appeal, Byron courts the reader by acts of persuasive communication. Burke writes, "A persuasive communication between kinds (that is, persuasion by identification) is an abstract paradigm of courtship. Such appeal, or address, would be the technical equivalent of love" (RM 177).³⁵ Byron's most profound paradigm arises from his love of peace. In

their opinion of marriage) in Religion, I favour the Catholic Emancipation but do not acknowledge the Pope . . . I hold virtue in general, or the virtues severally, to be only in the Disposition, each *a feeling* not a principle." "To Robert Charles Dallas," 21 January 1808, *BLJ* 1: 148.

³⁴Cf. William Blake's outlook on war and peace in *Jerusalem*.

³⁵Kenneth Burke elaborates on the linguistic structure of courtship by connecting courtship to rhetorical positioning for the purpose of mitigating, if not entirely eliminating, social alienation: "By the 'principle of courtship' in rhetoric we mean the use of suasive devices for the transcending of social estrangement" (RM 208).

this way, *Don Juan* constellates the philosophical beliefs necessary for the advancement of peace: "war cuts up not only branch, but root" (7.41). Burke affirms Byron's philosophical stance:

The choices between war and peace are ultimate choices. Men must make themselves over profoundly, when cooperatively engaged in following such inescapable purposes. And as the acts of persuasion add up in a social texture, they amount to one or the other of those routes—and they are radical, no matter how trivial the errors by which war is permitted to emerge out of peace.
(RM 179)

Clearly, Burke and Byron write about the value of cultivating peace and the problems of resisting the political machinery and theatre of war—actions carrying radical consequences for social growth or decay.

Rhetorical persuasion is a powerful tool. In the hands of a Hitler and in the minds of listeners ripe to exert their sense of dominance and superiority over others, the results are terrifying. Yet untold, the story remains to be written of the substantial number of Germans who, while they lasted in the ranks or the country, resisted the rhetoric urging them to divide and dispose of the Other. Hitler's "cult of war," according to Burke, "is developed 'in the name of' humility, love, and peace" (SS [no irony intended] 216), where Germany's internal political peace is aimed in the form of a weapon (hate) against an external scapegoat, the perfect enemy, the Jew. Hitler's misreading of his world created immense social suffering and historic guilt. His identification with a master race closes out the space of the Other.

For Burke, identification should be perceived not as a fixed but as an evolving entity fostering the rhetorical and social exchange of ideas and actions. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he insists, "[I]dentifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression" (20) and, I might add, rhetorical persuasion. Identification, for Burke, involves interest or desire. And since identification works psychologically in the transformative site of social

mobility and social division—that is, division by association—it behooves the reader to try to determine the intended audience of a given text and to ascertain the text's objects of desire, whether they be actions such as a call to arms or a summons to passive resistance. It is this division by association that unscrupulous leaders employ to create a scapegoat, an object—in this twisted idealism—one supposedly ought to hate: a case in point is the KKK who in collective acts of cowardice continue to target unjustly the Jewish people, blacks, and other minorities. Historically, two antithetical individuals are Hitler and Christ. Hitler's rhetorical strategies of drawing and persuading his audience contrast significantly with Christ's reported rhetorical strategies. An analysis of love takes on a considerably different linguistic dress when material purity, in blood lineage, is the object of desire rather than spiritual purity.

According to Burke's analysis, these textual objects of desire are decoded in the act of reading, an act consisting of two triads: one, reader-text-writer; two, desire-identification-persuasion. The latter triad exists potentially in each of the elements of the former. The reader's interactions with the text open the possibilities behind interpretation, something which an astute author such as Byron keeps in mind in writing *Don Juan*. Writing, in the Burkean view, may be seen as a social event, a medium for the narrative traces of human action and human desire. And when we study the resources of our speaking, our writing and our reading, Burke, the neo-liberal, advises us to proceed sceptically: "Linguistic skepticism, in being quizzical, supplies the surest ground for the discernment and appreciation of linguistic resources" (GM 443). Burke's attitudes toward language and closed systems of knowledge are closely parallel to Byron's in the powerful streak of scepticism and Socratic critique both show toward them.

Both authors employ scepticism and irony to undermine the rhetoric of language performers—like Donna Inez and Castlereagh in Byron's writing and

Machiavelli in Burke's—who employ language for primarily self-serving or for violent purposes. Moreover, Byron and Burke offer critiques of figures like Suwarrow and Hitler who utilise linguistic resources and closed systems of knowledge for promoting war. With Burke's distrust of pigeon-holing words into fixed meanings, we need to be aware about and responsive to an ironic, sceptical playfulness loaded with serious implications. Such playfulness fuels Byron's enterprise in *Don Juan*.

In analysing rhetorical strategies an author employs to persuade the reader, Burke is not only interested in *logology*, the study of "words about words," but also in *metareading*, reading how we read in acts of metainterpretation.³⁶ Although Burke never employs the terms *metareading* or *metainterpretation*, they are viable concepts in revealing the literary qualities of *Don Juan*. They can show, in essence, how we frame our awareness about the social workings of the linguistic texture of Byron's epic poem.

In his introduction to *On Symbols and Society*, Joseph Gusfield summarises the relevance of Burke's pentad for cultural studies, emphasising its ability to analyse the rhetoric of social address and to promote plurality:

The focus on the Pentad as a universal system for making sense of reality might lead one to consider Burke a precursor to Lévi-Strauss and the structuralists. There are two significant differences. First, structuralists present a monistic sense of how "deep structure" affects thought and behavior (Lévi-Strauss 1966; Leach 1976). Burke presents a deep-seated pluralism. There is much more than one meaning, one possible interpretation, one possible "structure." Second, Burke's position is dynamic and dialectical in contrast to the present-day structuralists. Precisely because there are multiple meanings the conflict and contrast of

³⁶Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion* (RR, Berkeley: U of California P, 1961) 1. I would like to thank Kim Blank for his suggestion, in the summer of 1991, that we need to study acts of metainterpretation to analyse the peripheral workings of language in texts and, by way of extension, in society.

perspectives gives rise to transformations. Terminological sets carried to their logical conclusions give rise to new terminologies.
(17)

In re-presenting human action, literature refigures culture. Literature is not just the pursuit of literary scholars wanting to stamp their particular exegesis and self-containing critique on a work. Literature embodies a centre of competing viewpoints—a pluralism, to Kenneth Burke, of the profoundest order.

In a similar spirit, Byron creates a *mélange* of styles and subject interests in *Don Juan* to give voice to cultural diversity, to differences, to metareading. Byron, for example, emphasises the reader's role in consciously reading about reading: "an outline is the best,— / A lively reader's fancy does the rest" (*DJ* 6.98). Reading, according to Byron, involves actively imagining the text. Byron expects from the reader this active reading of his narrative praxis with its implied address to the Other. The creation of an outline, a distinctive but malleable form, announces the narrative locus where Byron's ethics emerge when the reader, according to Byron, actively and imaginatively interprets that outline's relation to the social Other.

V

In general, Byron's narrative praxis ethically addresses the Other, and his narrative practice displays tendencies in his writing, without creating the semblance of a system or an anti-system. In considering the latter point, then, we can see that the desire to set artificial boundaries on the pursuit of literature as a purely structuralist or post-structuralist domain may say more about the politics and rhetoric of our own desires than about the open-ended

possibilities for interpretation. Awaiting under the no-name school of cultural change and exploration is the Burkean view, the continuing dialogue amongst the many, even if the terms for literary criticism and social critique have changed and continue to modify themselves in the face of future criticism. Burke implicitly poses a significant question in his writings—how does the letter, the text manifesting itself in social space, create ethical action?

Similarly, Byron's dialogue with the reader poses questions about ethics and human action, both in the realm of the fictive world of the text and the changing text of the real world: real literary events transpire where text and real world both create new phenomena in the social house of language. Reality blends with the illusion of art to create Byron's imaginative landscapes in *Don Juan*. Michael G. Cooke delineates the literary contours of Byron's *Don Juan* with its accompanying ethics of exploration, both of the self and the Other:

Byron's sense of morality is peculiarly epistemological, and rests on his conviction of the inscrutability of the universe, so that instead of formal obedience and a goal-directed discipline he appears to espouse self-honesty, personal generosity and if necessary self-sacrifice, spontaneity and inclusiveness of experience, and equilibrium in the face of human imperfection and incertitude. (BMTC 14)

Cooke's perceptive account of Byron's basic ethical position accentuates maturity and openness in an uncertain world. Byron, the writer, courts the general reading public. The meeting of writers and readers takes place not only in the text but also in the worlds of minds. As cryptic as that may sound, it simply means unread texts culturally die: the only good text is a read text. And in his ethical address to the general reader, Byron never insists we should believe him or trust his line of thinking, but that we should think for ourselves. In Byron's *Don Juan* (BDJ), Bernard Beatty insists, "It is not only the narrator who thinks. The poem thinks or, at any rate, is a paradigm of thinking" (83). The poem challenges readers to think about common or

received ideas, to enquire about the workings of language in social formation.

Enquire, discover, think, act—these words, though not necessarily in the prescribed order, tell something of the basic but dynamic story of the narrative method in *Don Juan*. Byron would have us live those key words, combine a sense of adventure with the capacity to think and to act. Virginia Woolf writes about the strange fascination she feels with Byron and with his narrative method in *Don Juan*:

Having indicated that I am ready, after a century, to fall in love with him [Byron], I suppose my judgment of *Don Juan* may be partial. It is the most readable poem of its length ever written, I suppose: a quality which it owes in part to the springy random haphazard galloping nature of its method. This method is discovery by itself. It's what one has looked for in vain—an elastic shape which will hold whatever you choose to put into it.

(3)

The above extract from Virginia Woolf's diary (Friday, August 8, 1918) provides a key to understanding the protean quality or narrative elasticity of Byron's *Don Juan*, a quality often withstanding, I must admit, critics' attempts to categorise or even to analyse the poem. Byron self-reflexively points to this elasticity in the poem on at least two occasions in the so-called English Cantos. This elasticity of the ottava rima is often found in the randomness of the rhyme, exhibiting the diversity of rhyme in the English language. Byron, in a telling passage which well may be a source for Woolf's insight, himself refers to narrative dialogue as a natural rhythmic exercise or excursion with improvised routes or outcomes:

I perch upon an humbler promontory,
 Amidst life's infinite variety:
 With no great care for what is nicknamed glory,
 But speculating as I cast mine eye
 On what may suit or may not suit my story,
 And never straining hard to versify,
 I rattle on exactly as I'd talk

With any body in a ride or walk.

I don't know that there may be much ability
 Shown in this sort of desultory rhyme;
 But there's a conversational facility,
 Which may round off an hour upon a time.
 Of this I'm sure at least, there's no servility
 In mine irregularity of chime,
 Which rings what's uppermost of new or hoary,
 Just as I feel the 'Improvvisatore.'

(DJ 15.19-20)

Because of its "desultory" or aimless rhyme, the poem's values depend on readers who recognise the poem's "conversational facility" in its playful examination of language and society. Let us take a look at the rhyme scheme in Byron's own reflections about improvisation in the above passage. The only perfect rhyme—a strict standard in *Orlando Furioso*—in stanza nineteen occurs in the couplet ending with the masculine rhyme of "talk" and "walk." We can find the poem's "desultory rhyme" in "variety," "eye," and "versify": the stressed sound varies in the pattern of this "irregularity of chime[.]" There is a stressed long *i* in both *variety* and *eye*, but in *variety* the stress occurs in the middle of the word rather than at the end. The final syllable of *variety* is unstressed and does not rhyme with *eye*. The main stress in *versify* is not on the long *i*, though *eye* does rhyme with the final syllable in *versify*. This irregular but creative chime enables Byron to modify the rhyme to suit his story. To give the sense of self-reflexive immediacy and improvisation found often in the poem, Byron, as a poetic weaver with his evaluative narratorial I/eye, continually evaluates his linguistic resources in order to portray his story: "speculating as I cast my eye" on how to "suit" or *dress* his narrative. He uses a simile to compare this act of versification to the acts of riding with or talking to his company. Though Byron does not specify it, his "conversational facility" addresses the readers of his poem with a definitive purpose: "my business is to *dress* society, / And

stuff with *sage* that very verdant goose" (*DJ* 15.93). In producing his narrative, he examines, in sceptical fashion, his own rhetorical strategies to convey ethically the signposts of the journey of reassessing social values.

This journey is, for example, explicit in Byron's reference to and employment of the ottava rima, especially in his deliberate use of "irregularity of chime," in the following stanza:

But oh, thou grand legitimate Alexander!
 Her son's son, let not this last phrase offend
 Thine ear, if it should reach,—and now rhymes wander
 Almost as far as Petersburg, and lend
 A dreadful impulse to each loud meander
 Of murmuring Liberty's wide waves, which blend
 Their roar even with the Baltic's—so you be
 Your father's son, 'tis quite enough for me.
(*DJ* 6.93)

The rhyme of lines 1, 3, and 5 is inconsistent. The half-rhyme of the word *wander*, which occurs between the pairing of *Alexander* and *meander*, accentuates with its elongated sound the nowness of wandering. Kinesthetically, the initial stressed vowel in the word *wander* slows down the pace of the stanza, braking its speed momentarily and reflecting the poem's aimless or "desultory rhyme." The meandering and murmuring of Liberty's roaring waves are testimonies of wars and their noise, from different historical times, from Alexander's to Catherine's. Byron's ottava rima floats—like his muse, the butterfly—from one historical subject to another, reflecting the self-reflexive changes in its narrative.

Another example of this relation between Byron's journey motif in *Don Juan* and the rhyme scheme can be seen in his admission that he looks for or thinks about words that will suit his narrative and express its sensuous qualities:

Besides Platonic love, besides the love
 Of God, the love of Sentiment, the loving

Of faithful pairs—(I needs must rhyme with dove,
 That good old steam-boat which keeps verses moving
 'Gainst Reason—Reason ne'er was hand-and-glove
 With rhyme, but always leant less to improving
 The sound than sense)—besides all these pretences
 To Love, there are those things which Words name Senses;—
 (DJ 9.74)

The ottava rima or "[t]hat good old steam-boat" creates the variety of and the changes in the verses that defy the limits of reason. Byron states that one kind of sense—a sense of intellectual understanding—depends on reason. A second kind of sense may be found in the form of sensory experience. He promotes the imaginative accent on the sensuous. One's reason may desire to make sense out of poetry, which in itself is good, but the sound can also have a sense of its own that creates meaning and subtle nuances beyond reason. There is, Byron hints, a nonrational sensory pleasure that comes from listening to the sounds of the ottava rima since the steam-boat keeps moving against reason: "Words name Senses" (DJ 9.74). The double meaning of *sense(s)* and its alternating play with reason and passion connect us with the text within and outside of the parenthesis. Sense, of the second type, denotes sensory experience, and sound, as a quality of the rhyme, expresses sensory passion. Byron employs the ottava rima to reflect both order and unpredictability—reason is contrasted not only with madness but also with the newly erotic or "those things which Words name Senses;— / Those movements, those improvements in our bodies / Which make all bodies anxious to get out" (DJ 9.74-5). Words, in expressing the movements and interactions of the world, name those things that move and intertwine. This bound sexual energy requires imaginative expression in the rhyme scheme to heighten the act of naming desire. In continuing the enjambment into a focused discussion, he writes about the sexual desire "to mix with a Goddess": "How beautiful that moment!" (DJ 9.75). Byron does not fall into the trap of

condemning pleasure. Indeed, his courtship of the reader in the poem is, in part, contingent on the exploration of sexual attitudes and on the valorisation of the erotic—on qualitative changes in the rhymes and in the sensory rhythms and sounds they not only embody but whose textual skins they also reach beyond.

The rhyme scheme bears out the ethical challenge in *Don Juan*. To return to the earlier passage from canto 15, self-reflexivity and unpredictability combine to give a paradoxical quality to the poem—predictably self-reflexive in the dialogues about the poem's improvising exploration of language and social values but unpredictably fresh in the varied possibilities for rhyme that the English language offers because of the diversity of the relations between orthography and sound: "Eng. [English] is more tolerant than any other European language of rhyming licenses. . . . Moreover it is the way of art to make virtues of necessities; and so the poets have found reasons for rhyming relaxation which originate in the recognition of the beauty and imperfection and the pleasure of novelty and surprise" (*Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* 235). Another instance of Byron, who wears the "motley mantle of a poet" (*DJ* 15.24), mentioning this wayward rhyme scheme occurs later in *Don Juan* during the supernatural Black Friar incident: "It is the sable Friar as before / With awful footsteps regular as rhyme, / Or (as rhyme may be in these days) much more" (*DJ* 16.113). Indeed, Byron's improvisations in rhyme are much more than regular *footsteps* with words. In "Byron's Flirtation with his Muses," David V. Erdman shows the significance of ottava rima for Byron's poem:

Byron's technical dilemma as a poet was only resolved when he found a verse form in which he could keep, as he desired, "nine Muses at a push," each in opposition [not always] to the others—a form in which he could break loose with wild Byronic jam sessions and yet make music and keep time.

As Byron ran from England, so he ran from English verse. And in a rebellious tradition he found his liking—in *ottava rima* a

verse form in which he could freely explore his own mind.
(129)

This ottava rima enabled Byron to introduce a fresh unpredictability to his rhyme schemes while examining social concerns. Interestingly, Frere, whom Byron had called "blundering" in a cancelled stanza to the first canto of *Childe Harold*, "turned to writing verse again. His facility with *ottava rima* helped Byron find the stylistic idiom of his greatest poetry" (Keach 552-53). Suzanne Ferriss notes that the "*ottava rima* stanza gave Byron a form better suited to embody the Menippean atmosphere of 'jolly relativity'" (136). In reference to *Don Juan*, she specifies: "Byron's denial of order begins with his use of the *ottava rima* stanza. As we have seen, the *ottava rima* stanza allows Byron to combine such contradictory impulses as sentiment and satire, romance and realism" (141). The denial of order, as well as the contradictory impulses of the poem, may be found in the unpredictable workings of Byron's employment of the ottava rima.

Byron's denial of order, paradoxically, integrates his narrative praxis. The latter emphasises social change. And in that practice there is a restorative scepticism which Laurence Lockridge, in *The Ethics of Romanticism (ER)*, explicates:

Byron is a master performer who, through aggressive acts of the writer's freedom, reads human nature, behavior, and history in terms predominantly negative but whose compositional energies and metaphysical skepticism allow for a partial conversion from dark to bright; whose commitment to values—ultimately the value of human life, in accord with Blake's wisdom that "Everything that lives is holy"—is found in his darkest lament and satire; and whose restorative power is communicated to us in the comic mastery of one who has seen an oppressive panorama of human history and yet finds the pluck to go on writing. (421)

Although he is not as convinced as Michael Cooke by Byron's affirmatively creative, self-reflexive energies in *Don Juan*, Lockridge does acknowledge the

substantial import of the linguistic freedom Byron exercises in creating a masterfully comedic vision that interpenetrates art and life. In "Byron's *Don Juan*: Poem or Hold-All?" John Jump limns this strong interrelation for Byron between poetry, in particular, and life: "Byron feels certain that poetry is, or can be, a direct transcript of life, and that responses which can coexist in life will not be incompatible in art" (231). I would like to elaborate upon Jump's observation to mention that Byron captures the historical or biographical conditions of writing by showing the power of poetry to comment on its own making. Lockridge perceives an ethical resistance to fixed systems of thought in *Don Juan* because "the act of writing—audacious, inventive, prolific—becomes a last-ditch affirmation in itself, subverting closure and censorship as if they were repressions of life and intellect" (450). In short, Byron's verbal play in *Don Juan* connects the reader with significant considerations and decisions about the sociopolitical dynamics of human language, human thought, and human action.

Anything but a traditional Christian, Byron's respect for Christ, for example, is certainly apparent in the following passage: "Socrates and Jesus Christ were put to death publicly as *Blasphemers*, and so have been and may be many who dare to oppose the most notorious abuses of the name of God and the mind of man" (*DJ*, preface to cantos 6, 7, & 8). Byron valued the acts of a man who broke with tradition and redefined ethical action. Vengeance and bloodshed, according to Christ, were not the way. In this sense, Burke, Blake, Shelley, and Byron illuminate the social act of peace and the artistic act of social kindness in their mature works.³⁷ Byron not only dismantles systematic

³⁷Peace is not just the absence of war but the presence of cooperation. Such cooperation—when cooperation does not perpetrate systemic violence against innocent people—requires an active involvement in communal relations. A person's responsibility consists in developing communal relations. This social

thinking in *Don Juan* but also surges forth to valorise key philosophical ideas such as artistic energy, human compassion, and social betterment. His poem houses definitive values about matters such as war, sexual repression, legal infrastructures, love, education, writing and writers, and reading and readers.

In writing *Don Juan*, Byron desires to limn the ethics of self-expression that resonate with the self-reflexive social practice of narrative, to explore the craft of creating poetry, and to demystify the construction of social customs. The formative agency of social thought and action for Byron is power in language, the creative power to transmute the identity of the individual and her or his role in the world. Art's magic consists in enticing its audience, in its various rhetorical stances, to re-vision relations of perception and power in society.

Art, for Byron, thus becomes a kind of open-ended ethical action. Through the pleasurable, intimate strategies of courtship, he writes about a world capable of social amelioration. Frederick Garber succinctly states in *Self, Text, and Romantic Irony: The Example of Byron* that "[w]hether or not there is anything beyond, the making of a lucid contour is always cause for gratification" (170). Moreover, Byron, as the next chapter explores, frames his narrative to show those lucid but changing contours that bespeak the import of writing as a social practice.

Byron's obsession with spontaneity, modulated by a creative control in his quest for expressing the many linguistic faces of scepticism, unpredictability, digression, and self-reflexivity, gives credence to his desire to uphold values such as self-examination and social responsibility and to

participation is an artistic activity, a painting or a writing of *real* relations. The question arises in the following way: if art captures life in some senses, then in what ways does life capture art? Burke recognises an interactive relation between art and life.

undermine human narcissism. Such narcissism, in Byron's view, causes social relations in the world to stagnate. From the exuberance of human praxis in *Don Juan's* narrative, Byron succeeds in expanding and diversifying the relations between the self and Other, adroitly creating a space for social amelioration in the ethics of mutability and in the rhetoric of courtship.

CHAPTER TWO

NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

To be sure, exploration has definite value, as a negation of smugness and inertia, but without presuming any final goal or final success.³⁸

We started in the opening chapter with the concept of rhetorical courtship as a way to understand the relationship between Byron and his audience. This courtship reflects the process of threading in the text different dialogues, both those explicitly addressed to the reader and those intertextual voices within the work itself. The primary purpose of these dialogues is to challenge the reader to consider the comparative merit of varying human actions and circumstances. Byron's act of continuously changing the narrative frames for the reader in the attempt to bring about this awareness diegetically builds his poem while advancing his satiric, thematic concerns about the virtues and limitations of his worldly narrator, whom he structurally undermines, as we will see more extensively in chapter four, with the Haidée episode. Byron employs the metaphor of a child playing with bubbles to show his evolving belief in the virtue of playing seriously with words. His playing with words—words as acts of rhetoric with a poetic force that may make us

³⁸Michael Cooke, *BMTC* 209.

contemplate our social relations with others and that may help us communicate poetic acts in our lives—crafts a writing laden with the values of ethical change, without which change becomes, for Byron, merely tiresome repetition. Central to Byron's playfulness, his open dialogue beckons his readers to reassess the role of reading in promoting intellectual freedom and intense passion.

I

Narrative, for Burke, dramatises and limns social relations. A social art, it expresses the writer's world and enables the reader to reconstruct that world. Narrative houses the psychological traces of the possible intersubjective moments between writer and reader that correspondingly link cognition to the interpretative grounds for future intertextual connections:

The general approach to the poem may be called "pragmatic" in this sense: It assumes that a poem's structure is to be described most accurately by thinking always of the poem's function. It assumes that the poem is designed to "do something" for the poet and his readers, and that we can make the most relevant observations about its design by considering the poem as the embodiment of this act. In the poet, we might say, the poetizing existed as a physiological function. The poem is its corresponding anatomic structure. And the reader, in participating in the poem, breathes into this anatomic structure a new physiological vitality that resembles, though with a difference, the act of its maker [.]

(Philosophy of Literary Form 89-90)

Burke breaks the artificial boundaries between form and content to stress how the one is integrated with the other in the textured narrative of a poem in doing something of personal relevance to the author and to the avid reader (PLF 90). A poem, for Burke, contains the structured effects of the rhetorical

acts of courtship that the poem embodies. Rhetoric may be seen as the author's act of writing the poem for an audience, and the poem's narrative may be viewed as the agency or medium which carries the *pluralistically contextualized* intentions of the author's telling of a sequence of events. In keeping with Burke's focus, pivotal to my analysis of *Don Juan* is a central premise: Byron's narrative strategies, as social praxis and as poesis, rhetorically appeal to us as readers to confront the freedom in our becoming aware of the workings of language and its subsequent persuasive demand for personal and social action.

The reader, as Burke's earlier remark suggests, breathes life into the text of the writer and changes it, personalising the imaginative, realistic applications of the text. Because it is both the reception and the Other face of a mutually accommodating act of giving texture to the text, reading cannot preclude dialogue. In short, any critical reading is a literary form of conversing with the text. In *Don Juan's* ethics of mutability, an ethical examining of social attitudes, ideas, and practices in the light of a restorative scepticism, narrative socialises with the reader; the reader, with narrative. In stressing the relations between art and interpretation, Byron highlights the medium of *Don Juan's* narrative—language calling attention to its own social construction. Socially constructed, narrative invites us to another world, to the world of the Other in the process of reading. In this respect, reading is a sharing of experiences. Narrative, over time and in the re-creation of the relations of social space, reaffirms the social ritual of the reader-writer compact: the writer's imaginative recounting of the stories and particulars of her or his world and the reader's reading the life of the text and her or his own world.

Reading is not only ceremonial but also transgressive. In showing the endless opportunities for expressing and reinterpreting our world in this social ritual, Burke promotes a homeopathic, liberal view of art in his preface to *Counter-Statement* (xi). In his theoretical account, he does not make a

one-to-one correlation between artistic intention and closed readings of texts. In contrast, he argues that art expresses freedom because of the unpredictable processes and outcomes of artistic endeavour:

To the artist, the belief that the ways of influence are devious and unpredictable, and that "anything can happen," should be sufficient justification for devoting himself to his purely aesthetic problems, solving them according to his lights, and letting all other eventualities take care of themselves.

(C-S 91)

Narrative freedom resides in a reader-writer compact. Where no compact, implicitly or explicitly, exists, no freedom is possible in the literary sense of critical engagement. An unwillingness to read, for example, nullifies a freedom to expand or to reassess one's life in, and perception of, the world. Reading enables us to acknowledge and appreciate differences in varied or dissenting points of view.

Burke, in recognising the blatant dangers of illiteracy and of apathy towards reading, regards the opportunities for linguistic courtship in a text as the "margin of persuasion" wherein shared "patterns of experience" are the basis for communication and the confirmation or reinterpretation of social ritual (C-S 176). The margin of persuasion, an elastic zone that accounts for changes in the bonds of the identifying relations between the author and his readers, influences human action, beckons readers to human action. Burke writes that "a pattern of experience is an interpretation of life. Life being open to many interpretations, the reader is open to many interpretations" (C-S 176). But the flipside of any freedom granted to the reader is the writer's manipulation of reader expectations because "to guide the reader's expectations is already to have some conquest over [the reader]" (C-S 178). Byron guides the reader in *Don Juan*, but, even more important, insists that the reader see the ways in which narrative, as artifice, creates possibilities for the personal and

social re-evaluation of language and human actions.

II

In a real and transformative cultural sense, Byron's narrator speaks to the reader in ways that rhetorically appeal to the latter to interact with the text. As a part of the strategy to include the reader not only in the process of reading but also in the process of making choices stimulated by the writer for his imagined reader at the time of writing the text, Byron stresses diegesis, accentuating the telling of the story.³⁹ In purposefully employing this self-reflexive, tactical margin of persuasion, Byron courts the reader, seeking, like Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*, to surprise her, and eventually and persistently to draw her attention to the metafictional elements in the text and to flaunt its narrative.

It is the flaunting of narrative that Linda Hutcheon, in *Narcissistic Narrative*, calls metafiction, "fiction about fiction," to designate writings which display the making of their own structure or content (1). Linked to this displaying of the process of writing itself is a key Greek term: *poiesis*.⁴⁰ Poiesis seems to have two significant resonances for us that are passed down from Grecian times: 1. *poiesis* as "poetry" or "the art of poetry," signifying "anything made by poets [the effects that display a poem's own making] or craftspeople,

³⁹Linda Hutcheon, *NN* 5. Hutcheon points out the transformative interrelation between diegesis and mimesis in Aristotle's theory of poetry in the *Poetics*. See pages 4-5 and 39-43 in Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative*. She also describes briefly Plato's belief in the connection between mimesis and diegesis in the epic (*NN* 44).

⁴⁰See Linda Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative*—20, 41, 88.

or the activity of making something"; 2. Aristotle's third classification (theoria—abstract or cognitive knowing—and praxis—practical knowledge—being the other two) of poiesis or poietokos which signifies the "knowledge that is involved in making, producing, or creating something" (Angeles 215). The reader's reception of and interaction with textual poiesis, the tissue of poetic gestation, involves the reader in a complex courtship with the metafictional elements of a text.

Hutcheon thus insists on a salient point about reading metafictional texts: the reader plays an active role in re-creating the text. She illuminates the reader's role in analysing the common social ground that metafiction offers in displaying its linguistic and political workings of language. More specifically, she focuses on linguistic and narrative structures in considering the activity of the reader called into play by those structures. According to Hutcheon, "*Tristram Shandy* . . . [is] the major forerunner of modern metafiction" (NN 8). Byron succeeds in creating a self-reflexive viscosity in his text in the nineteenth century similar to what Laurence Sterne does with *Tristram Shandy* in the eighteenth or what Salman Rushdie does with *Midnight's Children* in the twentieth. And such success makes new demands on Byron's readers to examine closely the medium of his art. Byron allures the reader to participate in recognising the crafting of narrative in *Don Juan*. The reader reads poiesis at work and participates, through self-examination and the criticism of language, in praxis, engaging in an ethics of mutability centred on spontaneous benevolence. An example of this spontaneous benevolence, paradoxically encoded in the producing action of self-conscious narrative, is Byron's rendition of the dynamics of written language, human love, eye contact, and eye-sign language in the Haidée episode. In Hutcheon's sense of *narcissistic narrative* as a progressive, artistic activity, Byron orchestrates narcissistic narrative acts to show the double-sided life of the text: the birth of the writer's

craft and the birth of the reader's engagement.⁴¹ Further, Byron's narrative, paradoxically, attacks human narcissism—not to be mistaken for narcissistic narrative—in the play of narcissistic narrative. He emphasises self-conscious narrative to focus on the process of writing, an act which critically analyses the social employment of language in shaping human affairs.

G rard Genette has his own version of narcissistic or self-conscious narrative. His study of narrative punctuates the relations amongst story, narrative and narrating, and stresses the architectonic role of narrating only in relation to narrative. The author's role in the act of narration becomes less substantial than the textual signifiers that are the effects of narration. The psychology of narrating is handed an abrupt death in Genette's account. Genette's typology primarily consists of the following levels: "*story* for the signified or narrative content" (27); "*narrative* for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself" (27); "*narrating* for the producing action, and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place" (27). In his definition, *narrating* appears to lead into the territory of the author as a figure with a life beyond the text. He does not, however,

⁴¹See pages 1, 6, and 7 in Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative*. She writes, "Narcissistic narrative, then, is *process* made visible [*italics mine*]. . . . Some redefinition of novelistic mimesis would seem to be in order if critical theory is to deal adequately with the new forms of the genre that have developed. This redefinition would necessarily entail a reconsideration of the nature of novelistic language; in all fiction, language is representational, but of a fictional 'other' world, a complete and coherent 'heterocosm' created by the fictive referents of the signs. In metafiction, however, this fact is made explicit, and while he reads, the reader lives in a world which he is forced to acknowledge as fictional. However, paradoxically the text also demands that he participate, that he engage himself intellectually, imaginatively, and affectively in its co-creation. This two-way pull is the paradox of the reader. The text's own paradox is that it is both narcissistically self-reflexive and yet focused outward, oriented toward the reader" (6-7).

sustain any interest in the author's psychological workings in creating the architecture of narrative. Consequently, he is severely limited by the belief that narrating is subsumed by the narrative. More precisely, narrating is a broad category for Genette, yet he unduly constricts it to narrative and excludes the author's psychological influence. Yet, illuminatingly, Genette maintains that the narrator's manipulation of narrative levels, other than simple shifts of scene or knowledge, transgresses narrative boundaries:

The transition from one narrative level to another can in principle be achieved only by the narrating, the act that consists precisely of introducing into one situation, by means of a discourse, the knowledge of another situation. . . . Sterne pushed the thing so far as to entreat the intervention of the reader, whom he beseeched to close the door or help Mr. Shandy get back to his bed, but the principle is the same: any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse (as in Cortazar), produces an effect of strangeness that is either comical (when, as in Sterne or Diderot, it is presented in a joking tone) or fantastic.

We will extend the term *narrative metalepsis* to all these transgressions. (ND 234-35)

These transgressions, indicative of the producing action, are authorial interruptions of narrative. And the authorial interruptions are typical of Sterne's treatment of narrative in *Tristram Shandy*. For Genette, a transformation, transition, or transgression appears in the narrative when the author introduces narrative knowledge of a level other than mimesis or story. Genette calls this phenomenon *narrative metalepsis*, a transformative matrix indicating the author's desire to redirect and control the *self-reflexive* components of the narrative (ND 235).⁴²

Narrative transgressions unfold with the dynamic relation between

⁴²Genette's footnote—51 in "Voice"—denotes metalepsis as "taking hold of (telling) by changing level" (ND 235).

mimesis and diegesis. Careful to limn the different degrees of convertibility between mimesis (showing) and diegesis (telling), Genette depicts their gradational relation:

Finally, therefore, we will have to mark the contrast between mimetic and diegetic by a formula such as: *information + informer = C*, which implies that the quantity of information and the presence of the informer are in inverse ratio, mimesis being defined by a maximum of information and a minimum of the informer, diegesis by the opposite relationship. (ND 166)

Moreover, he posits that the producing action is a narrative seam, creating diegetic, transgressive shifts that stress the mimetic boundary⁴³ that they attempt to overstep:

All these games [of narrative transformation or narrative metalepsis], by the intensity of their effects, demonstrate the importance of the boundary they tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude—a boundary that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells. (ND 236)

Genette's strong adherence to the self-reflexivity of the text and to the transformation of narrative levels in the text signals an awareness of the performative import of the act of narrating and of the interdependence of mimesis and diegesis. He draws, however, a sharp distinction between the written narrative and lived narrative. Therefore, although he concedes the dramatism or the performance of the narrating moments of a text, he is disturbed by the possibility that our lives have a fictional textuality: "The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis . . . that the narrator and his narratees—you and I—perhaps

⁴³The boundary is, paradoxically and necessarily, also diegetic when the mimetic is stressed over the diegetic.

belong to some narrative" (ND 236). At this juncture, I depart from Genette, who takes narrative strictly as a literary term devoid of biographical and cultural forces or effects, eliminating in the text the cultural nexus of social communication. We do, after all, live out a complex and evolving narrative that is revisioned and relived over time, and language enacts our desires in the methods and substance of our narrative communication.⁴⁴ Against Genette, the theoretical move I want to make is to reinsert the narrating components into the narrative to show the traces of the author's values in light of his or her *writable travels* in the mind's landscape, a landscape containing social relations and connected to social action.⁴⁵ An author may dream about working on a text, and even the texts of our dreams find a way into our waking selves, blurring, in a Borgesian sense, the boundaries between traditional concepts of reality and imagination.

The problem with Genette's view of narrative is that although he asserts there is a literary need to classify and to account for the shifts in narrative levels across the sacred frontier, he, in a post-structuralist move, flirts with the

⁴⁴Our untold narratives become dramatic, in the Burkean sense of the power of verbs to play out social relations, in the process of being written, precisely because our lives dramatise our social relations in language. When written, those social relations are open to interpretation. And writing creates differences that extend beyond the fixed version(s) of a written script. The life of the text, then, depends on the stroke of the pen, written and read over time. Authors and readers would fail to write and to read narratives if they themselves had had no previous experience with the narrative of their own lives. The experiential, even when in flux, is structured like an open-ended narrative, and the process of composition is, in a manner of speaking, an ever-becoming-pregnant smile, filled with pain and joy, of artistic labour.

⁴⁵To propose that ideas and intentions are not traceable to the human mind and to human interaction severs the relation between desire and the written word. The question then needs to be asked, why not remain silent instead of writing?

idea of the *interiority* of language. He does this when he places narrating or "the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place" (ND 27) under the umbrella of narrative or the signifier since, as he says, "[s]tory and narrating thus exist for me only by means of the intermediary of the narrative" (ND 29). Theoretical views, however, that monopolise language as a self-sufficient phenomenon are unable to connect with the cultural dissemination and consumption of language as an artistic and ethical social act. In short, language communicates social motives. There is a question that Genette does not ask but Burke does in recognising the rhetorical configurations in language's displaying of social motives and social values. Burke exemplifies the significance of the continuing dialogue amongst pluralistic societies with the anecdote of the evolving roundtable discussion in which one enters a room, sits at a table, and listens to an ongoing discussion; then one engages in discussion and departs, making room for future generations: Burke asks, how does that which is anterior to the writing subject influence the act of writing and eventually the act of reading those diegetic moments of a given narrative?⁴⁶

In *Criticism and Social Change*, Lentricchia underscores the dialogues from the past as the "primal scene of rhetoric," a changing landscape of the "unending conversation of history" (160). He describes Burke's relevance to these dialogues: "Burke's domestic setting of rhetoric's historical scene is itself rhetorically shrewd. We are at home. . . . We enter a parlor and we are late—not by accident but by necessity. Others are already there, and they are so involved that they can't stop to fill us in. . . . Burke's fable for history has a double moral. History is a masterful, powerful process: it "makes" us, and yet,

⁴⁶See Kenneth Burke's *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), especially pages 110-111.

at the same time, at *any moment* [in writing, in reading, in interpreting, in enacting our desires] in the process, our active willing "makes" the conversation, gives it the propulsive energy that forces it on [*italics mine*]" (160-161). And, we should never, amidst the many voices of different cultures, forget to ask ourselves, how does the writing subject rewrite the cultural in changing both the subject and the cultural? In stressing open dialogue in *Don Juan*, Byron acknowledges the role of change and the responsibility not only for tolerating but, more important, for promoting positive social change.

In employing his ethics of mutability that promote positive social change in *Don Juan*, Byron repeatedly creates transformational narrative matrices or narrative metalepses to display many of the values in his poem. His ethical narrative weaving is guided by an interplay of the four principles in different ways. As a writer who crafts his narratorial masks in *Don Juan*, Byron, for example, creates a sophisticated narrator, a contradictory world-weary sceptic who not only self-consciously digresses but sceptically examines and seriously flaunts the workings of language in his digressions. Reflecting this narrator's sceptical attitude toward and experiment with language, Byron presents these digressions as part of the self-reflexive, humorous, and, quite often, ethical courtship of the reader for the purposes of creating a dialogue about the examination of social values. The narrator introduces himself as a "plain man" and "in a single station" (*DJ* 1.22). He is, however, a sophisticated sceptic with social concerns. Moreover, his scepticism creates categorical acts which defy and critically challenge social assumptions about human behaviour. Sometimes, Byron shows the failings and limits of a rigid scepticism bordering on cynicism by structurally and ironically undermining the narrator's linguistic resources. The narrator does have considerable desire to expose the hypocrisies of his society while displaying, as we shall see in the broader context of canto four, some of them himself. With a

decidedly Blakean and forthright statement, the narrator says, "I hate all mystery, and that air / Of clap-trap, which your recent poets prize" (*DJ* 2.124).⁴⁷ Further, he generalises that "All tragedies are finish'd by a death" and "All comedies are ended by a marriage" (*DJ* 3.9). Significantly, the narrator counteracts any optimistic beliefs in the power of the imagination to mould an ideal world with comedic realism, pointing out the prevalence of change, but the narrator's idea of change is, in the course of writing canto four, ironically pinned and reversed by the romantic realism⁴⁸ of Byron's ethics of mutability. At the beginning of the canto, the narrator says about himself:

Now my sere fancy 'falls into the yellow
 Leaf,' and imagination droops her pinion,
 And the sad truth which hovers o'er my desk
 Turns what was once romantic to burlesque.
 (*DJ* 4.3)

Comedic but not regenerative, the narrator's notion of "the sad truth[,]" which does not change romanticism into tragedy but burlesque, signifies the laughter, crude as it may be at times, of humanity's fallen condition. Yet part of the problem of "the sad truth" that produces laughter is the continual reassessment—or the scaling and rescaling of represented objects against social standards—involved in calibrating a reality which, because it keeps changing, evades even burlesque. Burlesque does not portray life realistically since it is

⁴⁷Byron does, however, have his share of esoterics in *Don Juan* of the kind that he prizes. As we shall see later, his diapasonal narrative is not so far removed from Shelley's Aeolian lyre metaphor for the creative and inspirational forces of poetry-in-the-making (*poiein*). Byron writes, "My music has some mystic diapasons; / And there is much which could not be appreciated / In any manner by the uninitiated" (*DJ* 14.22).

⁴⁸I stress the *romantic* or the *imaginative* elements or tendencies in Byron's realism in light of the diegetic components that colour the mimesis in *Don Juan* and infuse the poem with values, especially romantic concerns with any language's ability to portray compassion, freedom, and individuality.

dramatically opportunistic in emphasising certain features of reality to produce laughter, not truth, and a controlled response, not liberal ideas produced by wit. Caught in the limited scope of burlesque, the narrator does not reflect Byron's views. Throughout *Don Juan*, Byron, in opening the narrative possibilities beyond burlesque, continues to valorise the elements of narrative risk and flux as they pertain to reality. A critical feature of his ethics of mutability, this changing reality in his narrative, then, delineates a human regeneration in both Haidée and Juan. This regeneration, far superior to the narrator's fixation on burlesque, counteracts his argument about social decay. Byron deftly undermines the early statement by the narrator that romance falls into burlesque. Structurally, the narrative does not support the narrator's position. Specifically, in canto four, Haidée is a figure of natural health and healing. Byron, in employing the principle of unpredictability, both paradoxically and structurally undermines the narrator's brittle ideas about the powers of burlesque that arise from the withered leaf of imagination. Instead of shunning change or seeing it as a mode of linguistic entropy, Byron's narrative praxis embraces it, celebrating the opportunities that arise from the changing face of the world. The narrator's overdependence, then, on contradictions to explain the nature of life weakens his ability to re-position binary oppositions. Such contradictions do abound in living, but they can be contextualised and dynamic, for the world keeps changing and refiguring relationships.⁴⁹ And Byron retains this constant refiguring of relationships in his ethics of mutability. Note, for example, the following contradiction in the narrator's philosophical view of language and life: "But then the fact's a fact—and 'tis the part / Of a true poet to escape from fiction / Whene'er he

⁴⁹I see an overreliance on contradictions or aporias as a methodological rigidity in itself, and I believe that Byron subtly satirises the narrator in this respect.

can" (*DJ* 8.86). Fiction, as the narrator does not acknowledge at this point but as Byron's text shows, can enrich the starting points in reality on which the fiction is based. Where, then, is the need for "escape from fiction" into a medium that draws life from the power of fictionalising?

And how are we to read Byron's emphasis on fact? The word *fact* comes to us from the Latin *fact-um*, "thing done," and from *facêre*, "to do" (*OED* 947). But the story does not end with the making or doing of something. As Byron notes in *Don Juan*, the concept of a real fact is problematic (*DJ* 11.37). The problem usually is not that certain events did not occur but has to do with how they are perceived to have occurred; hence they display their susceptibility to various interpretations. Language enables us to face the world, the world of facts, the enigmatic tree of knowledge. One possible etymological branch connecting *fact* to *face* is in the the Latin *facêre*: "Face. . . Latin *facia*," which is the "altered form of *faciês*, form, figure, appearance, hence face, visage" (*OED* 945); some scholars, according to the *OED*, attribute the etymology of *faciês* "to *facêre*, and other scholars link it to 'the root *fa-*' or 'to appear, shine'" (*OED* 945). Both fact and face are interfaced with *facêre*. The idea of fact as fixed entity rooted in reality can be challenged with the notion of fact as appearance, form, figure—the latter definition stresses the boundaries between appearance and reality, form and content, figure and background. Reality also tells us that appearances are changing. The narrator in *Don Juan* appears to value fact, but fact itself, as Byron's ethics of mutability suggest, has many faces or appearances. Moreover, the absolutism of his statement, that is, an "escape from fiction," contradicts the diegetic components of the text, failing to encompass them; Byron, however, preserves and values these diegetic components throughout *Don Juan*.

In stepping forward with his self-reflexive polemic about dressing society through the eye of social examination, which may require in his

courtship of the reader some social undressing or casting off of received opinions, Byron writes:

But politics, and policy, and piety,
 Are topics which I sometimes introduce,
 Not only for the sake of their variety,
 But as subservient to a moral use;
 Because my business is to *dress* society,
 And stuff with *sage* that very verdant goose.
 And now, that we may furnish with some matter all
 Tastes, we are going to try the supernatural.
 (DJ 15.93)

Notwithstanding the pun on *sage* as an obvious condition of cooking up a palatable dish of some profound order, the poet here is interested in committing himself to an ethical exploration of society. He plays the part of a sage. In contrast to the sometimes sardonic narrator, the poetic sage stuffs society with an uncommon wisdom. This wisdom, despite the possibility of failure, works to articulate social values that promote self-examination and social amelioration. Byron, in his most idealistic stance, believes in the realism of a polemic behind his narrative meanderings, something his sometimes jaded narrator does not always promote.

As in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, though not nearly to the same extent, the narrator is an object of satire, the butt of humour. In the Haidée episode of *Don Juan*, Byron satirises the narrator's position, exposing the limits and shortcomings of his vision when they do not accord with Byron's values. The narrator, at other times, reflects Byron's values because the narrator also reveals with considerable intelligence the self-reflexive exercise of writing: "And, laying down my pen, I make my bow, / Leaving Don Juan and Haidee to plead / For them and theirs with all who deign to read" (DJ 2.216). The narrator is here acutely aware of writing as rhetorical strategies that emphasise the text's dramatic performance and reader expectation.

The narrator flaunts his rhetorical devices with his sceptical attitudes about language. In this way, the narrator's scepticism permeates *Don Juan*. Byron, for example, underscores the difficulty of distinguishing human truths from fiction: "Truth's fountains may be clear—her streams are muddy, / And cut through such canals of contradiction, / That she must often navigate o'er fiction" (DJ 15.88). As we have seen, the narrator, in expressing a desire to escape from fiction, does not embrace this navigating over fiction to which Byron alludes. Without fiction, there is little over which Byron's personified Truth could navigate. Byron is sceptical towards the notion that there is truth without some mixture of fiction or a "fact without some leaven of a lie" (DJ 11.37). Without fiction, there is an uncrossable bridge between language and the reality that it purportedly represents, an abyss, the unknown—"If from great Nature's or our own abyss / Of thought, we could but snatch a certainty" (DJ 14.1). The abyss, here, is between language and the world of objects. Byron, then, underlines fiction, in a narrative metalepsis, to reveal to the reader that poesis and praxis are part of the healthy examination of contradictions facing the self and the Other. In fact, Byron is recommending that we see the therapeutic value of extracting and examining the fictional qualities in our own lives, for we write our particularised fictions—strewn with inherent truths against the grain of fiction.

Byron's scepticism in *Don Juan* is woven with an ethical playfulness in a bright, flexible web of words, words that recognise the proximity of the abyss between the lines of the web but, in many instances, simultaneously sharply *out-line* his values. About this anomalous, gossamery design filling the abyss, Byron writes that he inevitably needs to mother his thoughts—an act that he expresses in the simile of the whelp clinging to its mother's teats:

I won't describe—that is, if I can help
 Description; and I won't reflect—that is
 If I can stave off thought, which, as a whelp

Clings to its teat, sticks to me through the abyss
 Of this odd labyrinth; or as the kelp
 Holds by the rock, or as a lover's kiss
 Drains its first draught of lips;—but, as I said,
 I *won't* philosophize, and *will* be read.
 (DJ 10.28)

Committed to his craft, Byron admits playfully the dangers of travelling the odd labyrinth of thought and writing. He draws out his courtship with language by the accretion of similes, accentuating his readers' role in travelling a similar path in interpreting his narrative. Containing the nexus of playfulness between Byron and his implied reader, that courtship shows both the value and the pleasure of reading. Such ethical playfulness, in part discursive, reveals his ethics of mutability, connecting with narrative unpredictability. And we can see such playfulness in an earlier passage. Immediately prior to one particular narrative loop—that is, a returning shift—in *Don Juan*, Byron, after his turning the "romantic to burlesque," alludes to the emotional content of his "new mythological machinery"(1.201):

And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
 'Tis that I may not weep; and if I weep,
 'Tis that our nature cannot always bring
 Itself to apathy, for we must steep
 Our hearts first in the depths of Lethe's spring
 Ere what we least wish to behold will sleep:
 Thetis baptized her mortal son in Styx;
 A mortal mother would on Lethe fix.
 (DJ 4.4)

At the end of this stanza, because his focus is primarily on portraying these images of baptism as modes of representing a common social ritual, not on self-consciously telling about Thetis or on revealing the systemic operations of his "new mythological machinery[.]" Byron's writing is primarily mimetic, not diegetic. This apparent difference between mimesis and diegesis is one of accent; mimesis accents objects or events of a shared reality; diegesis, the

power of telling ascribed to language. Earlier in the stanza, the "I" of the passage speaks about the function of laughter. If laughter fails, the narrator may resort to tears when apathy cannot steel the heart against the agonising horrors, that is, "what we least wish to behold," of living. Only when one drinks from Lethe's spring—the river of forgetfulness or oblivion—can forgetfulness set in. Thetis tries to prevent Achilles from encountering physical harm by dipping him into the river Styx, but a mortal mother, according to Byron, cannot soothe the mental agony—or indiscriminately excessive rage—of an Achilles, after he learns about Patroclus's (his closest friend's) death, without forgetfulness. After acknowledging the impossibility of procuring Olympian immortality for her son, a mortal mother, unlike the nereid Thetis, would seek to prevent mortal agony by removing the mental anguish of death. Maternal protection, then, is a strong concern in stanza four, indicating the maternal desire to ward off the "sad truth" of tragedy and displacing the earlier stanza's authorial inclination to be expressive in the burlesque mode with regenerative maternal protection and eventually with the regenerative romanticism of the Haideé episode.

Decisively but unexpectedly (for this reader), Byron offers a comedic vision based on romantic values that differs from the narrator's account of what constitutes comedy. The narrator's vision never realises itself in canto four since Byron undermines the narrator's burlesque by replacing it with the romanticism of the Haidée episode. Byron's narrative in stanza four stresses chiefly its mimesis. Unlike stanza three, where the notion of "sad truth" is expressed in a self-reflexive metaphor of writing, stanza four concentrates on both the content and transformation of "the sad truth," not on the producing action of writing that ostensibly "[t]urns what was once romantic to burlesque." His mythologising serves not only to de-emphasise the self-reflexivity of the narrator's acknowledgement that he turns "what was once romantic to

burlesque" (DJ 4.3) but also, in rhetorically emphasising the communal ritual in that "we must steep / Our hearts," to emphasise the protective cloak of forgetfulness, which defies tragedy, that becomes a subliminal maternal protection. And then, after the mythologising, the narrative shifts from mimesis to diegesis in the next stanza, where Byron's master hand in narrating *Don Juan* creates a narrative metalepsis, completing the narrative loop, which in other places may work conversely as well, from diegesis to mimesis and back to diegesis. The passage below is an example of an intrusion that flaunts the tracing of his strange design,⁵⁰ admitting the poem's unpredictable narrative:

Some have accused me of a strange design
 Against the creed and morals of the land,
 And trace it in this poem every line:
 I don't pretend that I quite understand

⁵⁰In *Orlando Furioso*, Ariosto writes:

Yet should you [Phoebus] instruments, more fit to raise
 The votive work, bestow, as I desire,
 All labour and all thought will I combine,
 To shape and shadow forth the great design.
 (3.3)

The original Italian reads:

S'instrumenti avrò mai da te migliori,
 atti a sculpire in così degna pietra,
 in queste belle imagini disegno
 porre ogni mia fatica, ogni mio ingegno.
 (3.3)

The shadowing forth of the great design comes by way of focusing on and experimentation with the process of writing. What begins as a faint representation becomes through labour a sculpting with words: "Till when, this chisel may suffice to scale / The stone, and give my lines a right direction"; "Levando intanto queste prime rudi / scaglie n'andrò con lo scarpello inetto" (3.4). Byron's narrative praxis in *Don Juan* continuously focuses on the artistic labour involved in the ethics of writing for the social examination of values.

My own meaning when I would be *very* fine,
 But the fact is that I have nothing plann'd[.]
 (DJ 4.5)

Byron's focus shifts from mimesis to the act of narrating the poem. He re-employs the principle of self-reflexivity, in a narrative loop, to give it accumulated force when he writes, "And trace it [a strange design] in this poem every line," which leads to the principle of unpredictability, for Byron has "nothing plann'd." The aporia "nothing plann'd" serves to both affirm and deny nothing. Nothing is planned, and things are planned from nothing. He emphasises "nothing" as a valuable source of creative power. To write, one should forget about creating predictable outcomes, implying the creative force behind explorative writing. Lethe, the possibility of oblivion, is a passage to creative narrative.

And, in alluding to the rivers in Hades, Byron, in Socratic fashion, wants to connect eschatological insights to the poetic art of living. The critical question is, in what ways may one "die," that is, (figuratively) forget, in order to live and to face without trepidation, as Manfred does in *Manfred*, death? As Byron suggests, writing, in facing one's mortality, is one such activity. In the figuratively protective maternal space—that is, the creative sacredness, instead of the inanity, of nothing—the gestation of writing may require a forgetting of a certain kind. To forget the self in reaching out to the Other through the agency and the act of writing is part of Byron's ritualistic courtship of the reader. He encourages the reader, in considering this shift, to become aware of the fluidity, randomness, and polysemy arising from the act of narrating *Don Juan*. The apparent spontaneity of Byron's self-conscious narrating not only signals a narrative metalepsis but affirms the unpredictability and swiftness of the transgressive shift. He discovers some, perhaps many, of his thoughts when he pens them. Virginia Woolf speaks about such freshness of vision

lending spontaneity to his poem. And he displays his opposition to some traditional values by showing his intent to examine them through positing alternative values in his narrative. Those values are, as we shall see, closely tied to his narrative strategies. For Byron to be accused of upsetting the received opinions of the land does not mean his strange design is devoid of ethical import. Quite to the contrary, these exotically strange narrative transformations in *Don Juan*, with all their unpredictability and self-reflexiveness, accentuate the ethics of mutability.

III

The reader reads Byron's ethical narrative transgressions that challenge the social conventions as they are implied by and implicit in narrative structure. For the reader, he opens new possibilities for interpreting the ways in which language flaunts its linguistic workings and creates, in culturally ripe conditions, social impact. Byron asks the reader to examine her beliefs during these transgressive narrative shifts, offering oblivion as protection against pain, as the possibility of beginning anew, as the expression of unpredictability against the rigid *surfacing* of determinism. In the allusion to Thetis and in the reference to maternal instinct, maternal protection ensures growth, promotes human development. And by analogy, Byron does the same in his narrative. It is in the sacred hollow of "nothing" that something grows. It is in the turning away from reader expectation that Byron renews the reader-writer compact by challenging rigid social beliefs. By no means is the narrative loop in stanzas three to five deterministic, but rather it is a tendency which creates narrative viscosity. In some cases, Byron's energetic narrative, as I have been arguing up to this point, structurally displaces the narrator's declining narrative (beliefs

that diegetically turn the yellow leaf of declining romanticism into burlesque) by counteracting and transforming burlesque into the romantic realism of the Haidée episode. Byron weaves this romantic realism into the design of his narrative: "trace it in this poem every line." The narrative transitions enable Byron to highlight the value of unpredictability in the ethics of mutability, the authorial, responsible sceptical facing toward the Other that gives credence to change.

Byron, as I imply all along, employs more than scepticism though, for he also creates ethical attitudes when he incorporates self-reflexivity. To examine self-reflexivity then, we can turn to some instances in the first five cantos of *Don Juan*. Byron's address to the reader at the end of canto one typifies the self-reflexive passages—in this case, an intertextuality of subtle sophistication—dispersed throughout the poem. The reader is the "gentle reader" and "gentle purchaser" (*DJ* 1.221). Byron assumes the role of "humble servant" (*DJ* 1.221). The conversational and metafictional delineation of the reader-writer relationship culminates in the poet's desire to free his book from his solitude so that it may travel the ocean of time and into the minds of future generations:

'Go, little book, from this my solitude!
I cast thee on the waters, go thy ways!
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
The world will find thee after many days.'
(*DJ* 1.222)

Although the above lines are Southey's, and although Byron would not have us (mis)take them for his, the only way that Byron can put in his "claim for praise" is to employ the intent of Southey's words, without stealing the lines or the poet's fame. Byron clearly wants a fame that goes beyond Southey's—to be read long after many days, after many centuries. Employing the principle of self-reflexivity, Byron's narrative praxis valorises writing and affirms the

presence of his ideal audience. In this way, he counteracts his experience of solitude. The writer's acts, according to Byron, should be seen as not only appealing to the public's desires but guiding them. Byron imagines that such rhetorical appeals inform social thought and encourage constructive social actions such as resisting white slavery and black slavery and preserving the freedom of writing since writing is "a lasting link / Of ages" (*DJ* 3.88). His commitment to writing expresses, preserves, and disseminates the materials of thought. More specifically, Byron values freedom of thought and shows it working in the particulars of his narrative. Self-reflexively and humorously, Byron writes about the need to translate desire into words: "This is a liberal age, and thoughts are free: / Meantime Apollo plucks me by the ear, / And tells me to resume my story here" (*DJ* 4.7). If we are to read and hear Byron's story about Juan, then it will be in the language of narrative, in the devices that flaunt the making of narrative.

In weaving his narrative, Byron creates scenes that signal his intent to play with his readers' expectations. Toward this end, Lambro, for instance, cocks his pistol, and Byron writes, "Lambro presented, and one instant more / Had stopp'd this canto" (*DJ* 4.42). Such comedic futurity delights in the power of the written word to weave the tissue of narrative. Byron makes visible the process of his storytelling. Juan must live on for the reader to read on in some metafictional space⁵¹ that is the making visible of a narcissistic narrative dependent upon the reader's re-creation of the text. Similarly, throughout *Don Juan* Byron offers the reader self-reflexive asides such as the following: "I'll make Don Juan leave the ship soon" (4.97). We keep reading—if we in fact do—to fulfill our expectations of narrative chance, probability, and surprise in

⁵¹This metafictional space is the reader's interaction with the metafictional elements of the text.

the text's poiesis or to see these expectations challenged in unique ways.

In *Don Juan*, self-reflexivity alone, however, does not form its praxis and poiesis; digression serves also to accentuate the workings of narrative and combines with self-reflexivity to create a highly dense narrative about the social applications of words. In a digression that emphasises structurally the process of writing and thematically the virtues of the dinner bell, Byron likens the "prophetic eye of appetite" to the consumption of digressive narrative. With acute purpose yet comedic play, Byron, instead of "being short" after he himself complains about other people's tediously lengthy philosophical musings, digresses on the efficacy of rhetorical appeals ranging from the "power of pathos" to that of money, peaking in the art and sign of the culinary:

But no one ever dreams of being short.—

But I digress: of all appeals,—although
 I grant the power of pathos, and of gold,
 Of beauty, flattery, threats, a shilling,—no
 Method's more sure at moments to take hold
 Of the best feelings of mankind, which grow
 More tender, as we every day behold,
 Than that all-softening, over-powering knell,
 The tocsin of the soul—the dinner bell.

(DJ 5.48-49)

Byron himself rarely "dreams of being short" in *Don Juan*. The above digression sustains the narrative tension in *Don Juan* through listing and then negating the power of pathos, gold, beauty, and so on. Even in appearing to criticise others for their longwindedness and in checking his digressions, Byron consciously transgresses the rules he points out.

After his "But I digress," one would expect a terse poetic line or two that summarises or illuminates his intentions. Byron, however, does not supply us with a straightforward narrative. His noncommitment to certain reader-writer expectations emphasises his desire to renegotiate them. The six-item list from

the "power of pathos" to that of money delays the verb, that is, "to take hold." We wait only to find a material solution, that is, the "dinner bell," to the metaphysical signal of the soul: Byron literally gives us food for thought by warning the reader that the inevitable home of the soul is the human body. Thought depends on material survival. Spirituality is connected to the acceptance of animality. In short, nothing appeals like the realising (the relishing) of a human need. A narrative bell, Byron's digression's ringing draws attention to the social feast of reading about reading—that metafictional relation between reader and writer, one that forms, according to Hutcheon, narcissistic narrative. The feast is sometimes comical, but it is also reverential. In seriously defying Cartesian dualism, Byron marries the concept of the soul with that of the material elements of the universe, including implicitly the human body since that too is part of the "great Whole": "My altars are the mountains and the oceans, / Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole, / Who hath produced and will receive the soul" (*DJ* 3.104). Byron reveres the regenerative nature of the world and the universe—the profoundly natural Other.

In creating a similar mix of the serious and the comic, Byron employs a narrative metalepsis to criticise Napoleon and then to shift self-consciously to a new theme:

I have seen Napoleon, who seemed quite a Jupiter,
 Shrink to a Saturn. I have seen a Duke
 (No matter which) turn politician stupider,
 If that can well be, than his wooden look.
 But it is time that I should hoist my 'blue Peter,'
 And sail for a new theme . . . [.]
(*DJ* 11.83)

Unlike stanzas 36-41 of canto 3 in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, where he weighs Napoleon's acts and then analyses the exploits of Alexander the Great, Byron's lightning bolt reduction of the French Revolution's failure to universalise

justice satirises the pageantry of powerful appearances that dissolve in a brief two lines as he incorporates a narrative metalepsis that centres on sailing. When we apply Burke's pentad, the scene-act ratio reveals the sudden temporality of hope falsified by power.⁵² The grand scene is limited to Napoleon's self-aggrandizement. Napoleon, the rebel son or Blakean Orc, becomes or shrinks into Saturn or the governing father that he seeks to overthrow. The scene, therefore, is constricted by the agent's acts. The revolution never frees the burdened masses since the agent becomes the centre for the revolution that never advances the plight of the citizens' basic needs but promotes the same disillusioned powers that subjugated the masses in the first place. Centred but not distributed, power is not extended to the Other of the revolution. Despite Napoleon's initial desire to create greater equality by employing his many marshals in the French Revolution, no significant qualitative change for the better takes place. In *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French*

⁵²In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke writes about the transformative interrelations amongst the ratios: "A ratio is a formula indicating a transition from one term to another" (262). Burke lists these ten ratios or transitions in the following way: "scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose" (GM 15). Writing, for Burke, is involved in *alloiosis* or qualitative change since writer and reader as Other bring to the text qualitative differences in experience and expression (these differences exist in the acts of encoding and decoding). Burke elaborates on the dynamic necessity of *alloiosis*: "Earlier in this book, we observed that 'if all the ten ratios were adjusted to one another with perfect Edenic symmetry, they would be immutable in one unending 'moment.' That is, the quality of scene, act, agent, agency, and purpose would be all the same, all of one piece; hence there would be no opportunity for a new 'beginning' whereby the agent would undertake a different quality of act that might change the quality of himself or of his scene, etc. Thus, there could be no becoming, but only unending being. There could be no 'alloiosis,' or qualitative change, no development, no origin and destination, no whence and whither, for all the terms would contain what all the other terms contained" (GM 82-83).

Revolution, Simon Schama limns the tremendous power that Napoleon's marshals secured from the underlying assumption behind the French Revolution that the homeland could only be saved by patriotic militancy:

A crucial element—perhaps, indeed, *the* crucial element—in the claim of the revolutionaries of 1789 was that they could better regenerate the *patrie* than could the appointees of the King. From the outset, then, the great continuing strand of militancy was patriotic. Militarized nationalism was not, in some accidental way, the unintended consequence of the French Revolution: it was its heart and soul. It was wholly logical that the new multimillionaire inheritors of revolutionary power—were not some *bourgeoisie conquérante* but *real* conquerors: the Napoleonic marshals, whose fortunes made even those of the surviving dynasts of the nobility look paltry by comparison. (858)

The irony, of course, of the revolutionaries' claim shows their human failure in the attempt to justify social betterment for their country in their own name. What began as a Napoleonic revolution for the people deteriorates into the ravages of individualistic victory and avarice. Byron's act of narrative splicing subverts Napoleon's power to appear on the scene, thereby shortening the space normally given to such a serious subject as the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. The narrative metalepsis, which turns on the "But it is time . . .," shrinks the space allotted to Napoleon, undercutting Napoleon's achievements that were generated by his stringent exercise of power, the aggressive agency of social upheaval, in favour of a humane poiesis and praxis. Byron shifts from his analysis of Napoleon's demise to flaunting his own desire to hoist his signal flag in a navigational metaphor. This metaphor acts as Byron's conscious arrangement of his narrative.

Other navigational metaphors abound in *Don Juan*, showing the creative energies and strategies required to navigate the narrative seas:

Man fell with apples, and with apples rose,
If this be true; for we must deem the mode
In which Sir Isaac Newton could disclose

Through the then unpaved stars the turnpike road,
 A thing to counterbalance human woes;
 For ever since immortal man hath glowed
 With all kinds of mechanics, and full soon
 Steam-engines will conduct him to the Moon.

And wherefore this exordium?—Why, just now,
 In taking up this paltry sheet of paper,
 My bosom underwent a glorious glow,
 And my internal Spirit cut a caper:
 And though so much inferior, as I know,
 To those who, by the dint of glass and vapour,
 Discover stars, and sail in the wind's eye,
 I wish to do as much by Poesy.
 (DJ 10.2-3)

Byron moves from valorising scientific achievements to accentuating his task as a writer. He shows his enthusiasm as a writer in a narrative metalepsis stressing the power of art to transform a paltry sheet of paper into a process of discovery, strategically expressing, in Byron's combining of the principles of unpredictability and self-reflexivity, the challenging task of improving social relations—"to counterbalance human woes."

Another metaphoric delineation of the power of language to transform human perspectives appears in the following passage: "Shall I go on?—No! / I hate to hunt down a tired metaphor, / So let the often used volcano go" (DJ 13.36). Byron rejects dead metaphors by rejecting the image of the smoking volcano. He then employs the principles of self-reflexivity and unpredictability, drawing attention, in playfully choosing a metaphor of celebration, to his ability to create anew: "I'll have another figure in a trice:— / What say you to a bottle of champagne?" (DJ 13.37). In another self-reflexive passage, Byron makes an unusual narrative manoeuvre by highlighting the unpredictable process of discovery that fiction generates because facts are not fixed entities in reality:

And, after all, what is a lie? 'Tis but
 The truth in masquerade; and I defy
 Historians, heroes, lawyers, priests to put
 A fact without some leaven of a lie.

.....

Praised be all liars and lies! Who now
 Can tax my mild Muse with misanthropy?"
 (DJ 11.37-38)

According to Byron, language distorts reality since there is no one-to-one correspondence between words and objects in the real world, even if in the material sense "words are things" (DJ 3.88). Even the creation of facts, historic or scientific, requires a creation of a paradigm. And paradigms, as we well know, are constantly undergoing change and reassessment. Byron values the protean nature of writing and the interactive role of the writer's and reader's participation. In valuing the elasticity of poetry and language in general, the text becomes, for Byron, the site for unpredictable transformations.

IV

As we have seen, the self-reflexive movement of the poem often shows itself in the principle of digression. Byron, for example, writes, "Oh, pardon my digression—or at least / Peruse! 'Tis always with a moral end / That I dissert, like Grace before a feast" (DJ 12.39). Byron's digressions are prayers for moral ends, yet the moral ends are not the lessons one learns after reading but the lessons of savouring the poet's feast: the process of discovering the role of reading. The reader's consumption and celebration of the text involves a process, not teleologically centred but, paradoxically, teleologically oriented in its activity for the purposes of dislodging predictability.

Unpredictability, therefore, comprises an essential strategy in *Don Juan*. As a narrative strategy, unpredictability enables Byron to diversify the content and the methods of recounting the story of *Don Juan*. Further, the reader is continually surprised by the emergence of unknown variables in the text, and hence reads to discover and to uncover new narrative possibilities. Byron, for example, writes about the complexity of achieving not only mimesis but diegesis in writing: "But if a writer should be quite consistent, / How could he possibly show things existent?" (*DJ* 15.87). Existent in life or in writing? Probably in both. The experiential in language—language laden with the promise of difference, unpredictability, and creativity—enables us to communicate (and despite our best intentions, to miscommunicate) in writing.

Unpredictability and self-reflexivity guide the reader's expectations in the following passage from *Don Juan*:

I write what's uppermost, without delay;
 This narrative is not meant for narration,
 But a mere airy and fantastic basis,
 To build up common things with common places.

You know, or don't know, that great Bacon saith,
 'Fling up a straw, 'twill show the way the wind blows;'
 And such a straw, borne on by human breath,
 Is Poesy, according as the mind glows;
 A paper kite, which flies 'twixt life and death,
 A shadow which the onward Soul behind throws:
 And mine's a bubble not blown up for praise,
 But just to play with, as an infant plays.

(*DJ* 14.7-8)

Byron transforms Bacon's anecdote about knowledge and certainty into a metaphor of poetry's playful unpredictability, that is, a paper kite flying. Byron's words reflect and expand on the common things and places of the world, yet the writing of poetry is an unpredictable process contingent, in part, on an "airy basis" or on the workings of imaginative powers; poetry is a paper

kite flying between life and death in its own artistic space with its semantic flight contingent on the skill of human hands. Byron's poetic flying of the paper kite stresses by analogy the inky path or the taut lifeline of the calamus which pens *Don Juan's* narcissistic narrative. The accretion of metaphors after *straw*, kite, shadow, and then bubble, builds in Byron's "delayed"—not "without delay" (14.7)—sense on the essential point of the passage that writing is an uncertain process, the flying of a paper kite, of shifting positions in the changing face of metaphoric winds. The above passage is, paradoxically, unpredictably and yet architecturally diegetic since Byron does not just build common things and places but shows us how he creates the blueprint for them, spinning unpredictability into poiesis. So what does a writer like Byron do, with uncertainty waiting in the wings? Byron chooses, in a self-reflexive assertion about the value of writing, to play with words "as an infant plays" with a bubble. To play, to create, to celebrate the spectrum of words—all these reasons intensify Byron's desire to show us his showmanship with words in his narrative metalepses.

The significant paradoxical moments in the above passage enable the type of heterogeneous responses that a poet aiming for closure could not provide for his reader, amplifying the divergent use of the narrative that is "not meant for narration" but is nonetheless narrated. Byron's linguistic play is not frivolous but makes the reader seriously question the agency implicit in the statement that his "narrative is not meant for narration." The author draws attention to his narrator at this point, amplifying the diegetic thrust of his narrative in flaunting the seriousness of playing with poetry that metaphorically flies between life and death.

In a Burkean analysis of the text, we see Byron employing the agency of writing, that is, the energy behind the act, for the purpose of linguistic play: he substitutes writing as an agency for writing as an act, which typifies Byron's

self-reflexive writing or writing about writing. From another perspective, the agent-scene ratio works from the agency, the energy in spontaneous writing, to a transcendent realm of the imagination for the purposes of constructing a fictive world with non-fictional particulars of "common places." The agent-scene ratio is one of transcending particulars and illuminating them in a "narrative" that "is not meant for narration" but for something else, not just for weaving a story but for unweaving and reweaving its structure in a serious game of narrative risks. The agent emphasises "build" to clarify the means or agency of materialising the scene figuratively for the reader. And the agency of writing is metaphorically the energy needed in blowing a bubble, stressing the effects of words as reflective, or mimetic, aspects of his writing and as the transparent, or diegetic, elements of the self-reflexive perspectives of writing that enable us to see writing flaunting itself. The bubble is, figuratively, both mirror and reflexive self-expression.⁵³

Don Juan houses Byron's concern with self-reflexivity as it pertains to social matters. This concern centres on the relationship between the real world of lived experience, since to some extent "Experience is the chief philosopher" (*DJ* 15.17), and the world of the text:

Besides, my Muse by no means deals in fiction:
She gathers a repertory of facts,
Of course with some reserve and slight restriction,
But mostly sings of human things and acts—[.]
(*DJ* 14.13)

A hypothetical muse draws on lived experience for her contribution to the narrator's musings. The narrator deals with fiction while the muse apparently deals with facts. The incongruous split between the muse's work and the

⁵³We thus, according to Burke, are not without words to name the dramatic applications of words. Words shape the medium in which they have their being: the relations of human space.

narrator's work suggests, however, that Byron has self-reflexively drawn the reader's attention to the structure of his poem through the ironic situating of a *fictional* muse inspiring the narrator to think and to fictionalise about the Muse's realm. Earlier, the narrator points out that he has "more than one Muse at a push" (DJ 10.5). At the stroke of the pen, the narrator, not the muse, writes those collected facts, those social acts housed in language and refracted through the poet's mind. In this sense, Byron valorises the word *acts* in *Don Juan* because for him language acts and tells of human acts; Byron's narrative recounts the narrative of writing, language as narrative plenitude, providing a "bird's-eye view" of society (DJ 14.14).

In eyeing his potential readers, Byron infuses the following passage in *Don Juan* with a complex dynamic of the principles of scepticism, unpredictability, and self-reflexivity:

'Tis strange—but true; for Truth is always strange,
 Stranger than Fiction; if it could be told,
 How much would novels gain by the exchange!
 How differently the world would men behold!
 How oft would vice and virtue places change!
 The new world would be nothing to the old,
 If some Columbus of the moral seas
 Would show mankind their souls' Antipodes.
 (14.101)

Byron's scepticism emerges when he makes truth-telling conditional: "if it could be told[.]" Scepticism leads to unpredictability when Byron challenges traditional conceptions of vice and virtue, a philosophical move analogous to Blake's admonishing the Christians in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, as well as in *Jerusalem*, for their inability to see that "Energy is Eternal Delight" (MHH plate 4) and that ethics cannot exist in codified action. Blake exclaims, "I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments: Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse: not from rules" (MHH plate 23-24).

According to Byron and Blake, too often the virtuous people have been seen as wicked and the wicked as virtuous. In the sense of enacting imaginative spontaneity, a people's new world of action requires a re-reading of "moral seas" to *seize* the ethical.

One primary qualification in the passage occurs when Byron wonders about the catalytic power of truth, "if it could be told," to transform novels. But since the truth is stranger than the fictional novel, the difficulty is in telling the truth: the singularity of the whole truth is something that Byron actually undermines in *Don Juan*. This, I think, explains in part his reluctance to assent to fixed or conventional systems of morality. Elsewhere in *Don Juan*, he insists on the power of truths to transform fiction into ethical action.

Finally, Byron peppers the passage with self-reflexivity and, by drawing a comparison between truth and fiction, he asserts that, as strangely protean as fiction is, fiction is not as strange as the guises of truth. The reader's attention is drawn to the structural limits of language's ability to speak the truth, hence typifying the uneasy but necessary marriage of fiction and lived experience in imaginative realism. Byron changes the condition of truth-telling from "if it could be told" to "[i]f some Columbus of the moral seas / Would show mankind their souls' Antipodes." The truth may never be told or tolerated, but one should try to articulate it. By extension, that rare act of showing the souls' antipodes would reside in the communicative function of poetry. For Byron, humanity's task consists in attempting to revise the truths of human action, thus recasting the binary opposition of vice and virtue and refiguring them into a sea of new contexts and acts. A Columbus of the moral seas, Byron limns the import of writing as sailing and as ethical action since ideas figuratively have, according to him, their own ethically nautical, protean existence.

If, as Byron suggests, we are intellectual sailors on the ocean of

language—that "Watery Outline of Eternity" (*DJ* 15.2) which "bears afar our bubbles" (*DJ* 15.99)—then language determines to some extent the kind of journey we make. In Byron's polemic, it is not surprising to consider that we employ ideas but that they may also employ us in harmful ways when we fail to steer a *true* and worthwhile course. Similar to Burke's implications of the scapegoat mechanism, Byron implies that people may become unwittingly the followers of vice while thinking vice is virtuous. Byron, in drawing on the sailing metaphor of a Columbus, desires to find new ground for ethical action. For Byron, there is no unlimited freedom in the world of narrative or in the narrative of the world, though there is plenty of room for free inquiry. The freedom to be violent physically, and by extension psychologically, violates someone else's freedom. The self, then, can violate the Other, closing the possibility for dignity in that relation. The cycle of violence against the Other so often begins in a small way and escalates to horrific proportions.

By satirically examining social desire, Byron, in choosing his objects of attack, examines how his society follows its hegemonic order of words. And, like Blake, he distrusts the capacity of rules to ensure ethical human action. Unthinking servitude, according to Byron, Blake, and Shelley, lurks in the heart of most wars. But wars, as Byron's narrative strategies throughout *Don Juan* indicate, operate not just in the physical sphere but in the sphere of human relations and in the expression of human freedom. Byron's narrative strategies themselves stress freedom in writing.⁵⁴ And the reader's freedom

⁵⁴The Ayatollah Khomeini's death warrant on Salman Rushdie's life is an attempt to curb the freedom of speech that *The Satanic Verses* practices. The political desire to kill dialogue and thus silence the Other confers a fear of otherness and a simultaneous denial of both one's freedom to give freedom and one's ability to counter intellectually areas of disagreement.

Kenneth Burke writes, "It is a fallacy to make personal freedom identical with the liberating of all ideas; there is freedom also in associations, if they are

consists in sharing Byron's satiric exploration of human follies, that is, sharing the freedom of laughter and the responsibility for indignation. We, however, share more than just laughter and indignation, for *Don Juan* implicitly demands that we ethically examine the linguistic traversing of the bittersweet zone between the two in the ethics of mutability emerging from the world of narcissistic narrative to the world of action.

the right ones; but no one in the world is free so long as large sections of our population, however inattentively, are being bound by the identifying of patriotism with military boastfulness" (RM 154). The restrictive concept of nationhood, when it turns into militaristic provincialism or into *ethnic cleansing*, leads to the kind of ethnic struggle of the type found in Yugoslavia and India. Tolerance and dialogue are certainly found wanting.

CHAPTER THREE

OBJECTS OF SATIRE, SUBJECTS OF MISCHIEF

"[A]ll punishment which is to *revenge* rather than *correct*—must be *morally wrong*."⁵⁵

No one can define the face of things.⁵⁶

A vital element of his narrative, Byron's satire examines critically and self-reflexively the social problems of his day by looking sceptically at the dynamic process and production of human relations in language. Byron's satire is an organized but evolving deconstructive attack on social folly. His satire, however, has a comedic thrust, seeking to overturn staid beliefs and to create a new order of human pleasure in social relations, without worshipping hedonism. In this same spirit, Omar Khayyam provides, I think, a similar efficacious overturning of rigid beliefs. Byron's sharp but compassionate satire is, like Khayyam's, wary of closed belief systems and the power of religious and social orders to condemn individuals simply because of their capacity for pleasure. The philosophical emphasis turns away from self-entrapment by

⁵⁵Byron, "Detached Thoughts," 96, *BLJ* 9: 45.

⁵⁶Omar Khayyam, *The Rubáiyat of Omar Khayyam*, trans. Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1981) 8.

means of social expectations to a disciplined awareness of immediacy in positioning the erotic and spiritual passion of the Other before—in the immediacy of dialogue—the lover. Forgetfulness becomes a prelude to an awareness of passion and a recognition of the Other.

I

With his sharp wit and imaginative palette of words, Byron paints a vividly satiric picture of the world and its dynamics of social action in *Don Juan*. In doing so, he skilfully combines satire with his narrative strategies. A precursory glance would establish that satire, in deflating or distorting satiric objects or narrative strategies themselves, supplements the principles of scepticism, unpredictability, digression, and self-reflexivity. The four principles and satire can illuminate the narrative basis of *Don Juan's* ethical force.

In "The Mythos of Winter: Irony and Satire" (*Anatomy of Criticism* [AC]), Northrop Frye stipulates, "Two things, then, are essential to satire; one is wit or humour founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack" (224). Frye's definition is based on the satirist's conscious manipulations—"the wit or humour founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd"—of the objects of satiric attack. These manipulations include the scaling, that is, the deflating and inflating, of the object's worth—usually against given social standards. In fulfilling Frye's touchstone for the viability of satire, Byron's *Don Juan*, according to Alvin Kernan in *The Plot of Satire* (PS), attacks, with cutting humour, "the Lake Poets, the politicians of the Holy Alliance, and the beginnings of Victorian prudery" (21), showing

the incapacity of these forces to enliven the human spirit.⁵⁷ And while Byron attacks given objects, he often shows the linguistic hand, that is, the parodic rhetorical glove, that points to those objects.⁵⁸

The self-parodic tendency of *Don Juan*, then, incorporates both poiesis and praxis, the making and practical ethical questioning of the worlds of words in the changing scenes of cultural disintegration and reintegration. Frye notes that the element of poiesis is strongly apparent in *Don Juan* and central

⁵⁷In *The Flowering of Byron's Genius: Studies in Byron's Don Juan* (New York: Russell, 1962), Paul Graham Trueblood writes, "Wordsworth shares with Coleridge and Southey Byron's contemptuous appellation "Lakers." He accuses them of provincialism, of self-satisfaction, of selling themselves for money" (112).

⁵⁸In canto two, Byron, for example, parodies not only Coleridge's symbol of the white albatross in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" but also the biblical dove of peace from Noah's ark, while simultaneously referring to the making of his own text when he says "in this case I also must remark":

About this time a beautiful white bird,
 Webfooted, not unlike a dove in size
 And plumage, (probably it might have err'd
 Upon its course) pass'd oft before their eyes,
 And tried to perch, although it saw and heard
 The men within the boat, and in this guise
 It came and went, and flutter'd round them till
 Night fell:—this seem'd a better omen still.

But in this case I also must remark,
 'Twas well this bird of promise did not perch,
 Because the tackle of our shatter'd bark
 Was not so safe for roosting as a church;
 And had it been the dove from Noah's ark,
 Returning there from her successful search,
 Which in their way that moment chanced to fall,
 They would have eat her, olive-branch and all.

(DJ 2.94-95)

to the relation between reader and text:

Tristram Shandy and *Don Juan* illustrate very clearly the constant tendency to self-parody in satiric rhetoric which prevents even the process of writing itself from becoming an oversimplified convention or ideal. In *Don Juan* we simultaneously read the poem and watch the poet at work writing it[.]
(AC 234)

Byron brings into sharp focus Pope's belief that dulness kills imagination and wit, showing self-reflexively and satirically how imagination and wit operate. Just as Pope in *The Dunciad* berates "Dulness," "Daughter of Chaos and eternal Night" (1.12), so too Byron satirically examines the social customs based on killjoy.

There is a paradoxical combination of similarities and differences between the narrator and Juan. A consequence of the similarities is that Byron's satiric rhetoric affirms the energies of human rejuvenation, carnival, and renewal of liberty: "Byron deliberately chose to narrate the youthful adventures of his hero before he arrived at the cynicism and hardened depravity which qualify his zest for life in the older legend and the versions of Tirso de Molina, Molière, and Mozart" (Kernan, *PS* 188). The narrator, although sardonic at times, energetically recounts the narrative, and Juan, although at times passive and substantially less knowledgeable than the narrator, exudes vitality. In short, they both exude energy. In accentuating the playful energy of the diegetic components of his text, Byron, according to Kernan, delineates the zest for life, coloured by compassion, that Juan exemplifies:

Byron's Juan is the pure embodiment of all those virtues which comedy shows as the key to successful life. These virtues are in origin natural. . . . He [Juan] possesses all the natural virtues—courage, quick wit, passionate feelings, uprightness, frankness, warmth—and all the appetites for love, food, and pleasure. These instincts are not destructive in him but lead to

beneficent actions, to enjoyment, pity, love, concern for others.
(PS 188)

The key element that both the narrator and Juan share is playful energy. This dynamic of playfulness gives tremendous force to Byron's unpredictable narrative. Expressing his ethics of mutability, Byron's narrative transformations contain life-affirming values. The narrator and Juan, however, differ in degree and emphasis in some ways. To present a character primarily with emotional depth and youthful exuberance that complement the predominantly philosophical complexity and scepticism of the narrator, Byron creates an amiable Juan, whom the reader can to varying degrees identify with or resist. And Juan, despite his faults and inexperience, stumbles his way into and out of problems of one kind or another while the worldly narrator keeps reminding the readers of poiesis. In other words, Byron preserves the tension between Juan's actions and the narrator's thinking, and Juan appears more innocent within the narrative frame of the narrator's thinking than without that worldly frame.

Poiesis arises in the intricate movement in the narrative transformations involving the narrator and Juan, undermining the rigid standards of societies that attempt to repress human energy. Thus poiesis, which normally results from praxis, leads back to praxis in Byron's attempt to engage the reader with the values of honest self-examination and openness espoused by the narrative movement of the text. For Byron, the crucial enemy of these values, and of the free enquiry that he seeks, is hypocrisy.

In *Towards a Literature of Knowledge*, McGann underscores Byron's acknowledgement of and implied interaction with his readers for satiric purposes by exposing a "horizon of hypocrisy" (39), a horizon which changes under the rigorous analysis implicit in the bond of a reader-writer compact that relies on the satiric attack of those hypocrisies:

The poetry of sincerity—Romantic poetry, in its paradigm mode—therefore typically avoids the procedures of satirical and polemical verse. Those latter forms—by their protocols—develop through publicly installed dialogical operations. When Romantic poetry opens itself to those genres it opens itself to the horizon of its antithesis, to the horizon of hypocrisy.

This last move is, of course, exactly what Byron did. . . . he is the one English poet who has been commonly charged with—who has had his work charged with—hypocrisy. . . . But Byron, and Byron's poetry, never forgets for very long the provisional and rhetorical character of what he and it are doing. When Byron suspends his disbelief (or his belief) in his writing, he does so with a will and with extreme self-consciousness.

Hypocrisy therefore may be seen as the measure of the importance of Byron's work. It is the dark double of Romantic sincerity, the one "truth" of Romanticism which it appeared unable to imagine. It fell to Byron, however, to reveal through his own work the larger truth of Romanticism: that its "sincerity," its "imagination," its "true voice of feeling" are all constructs erected for various particular purposes and reasons. (38-40)

I prefer to call such a phenomenon a rhetorical play of continuities and discontinuities, a dynamic narrative exploring the open-endedness and truths of *self-conscious* art. Now McGann refers to this implied dialogic exchange between the reader and the implied/real writer as a mutual process of clarification: "Byron's work and his audiences always tend to foster a clarity of presence toward each other" (TLK 43). McGann certainly thinks that Byron's imaginative acts, in the crafting of narrative, connect with potential readers: "Byron is quite sensitive to the presence of his many readers—indeed, his acts of writing are equally acts of imagining them into existence, and talking with them" (TLK 49). Inclusive and socially transformative, Byron's imaginative writing, with its force for acknowledging the multitude of others, reveals social hypocrisies such as the inanity of gossip and envy, as well as subverting hierarchical structures that force undue conformity. Byron's vision contains both rebellious creativity and humane communication, valuing the change

resulting from discontinuing those traditional ideas that restrict artistic freedom and respecting the permanency of human benevolence. He attempts to transform his readers, and his writing expresses its praxis as applied knowledge, as sharing a common understanding that, in the main, he satirically and assertively examines objects to attempt to foster human thinking and to engender spontaneous human action—to free the reader from received opinions and the clutches of social expectations that paralyse the reader from acting spontaneously.⁵⁹

II

Cooke, in considering the social forces that perpetrate human paralysis and fear, clarifies Byron's distrust of the language of law to codify human behaviour: Byron is "skeptical of the extent to which 'words make rules'

⁵⁹McGann thinks that Byron, like the other British Romantics, is entrapped in his own illusions. This view, however, does not account for the *truths* of or behind these illusions. In *Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1983), McGann writes, "Ideas and ideology therefore lie at the heart of *all* Romantic poetry. Its *entire* structure depends upon the credit and fidelity it gives to its own fundamental illusions [*italics mine*]" (134). In McGann's broad brushstroke, he removes any distinction between language as an illusion-making medium and language as narrative praxis. He does, however, change this view later in "'My Brain is Feminine': Byron and the Poetry of Deception" (*Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, ed. Andrew Rutherford, London: Macmillan, 1990) into a viable form: "*Don Juan* projects many kinds of lies and liars, of course, but the poem's quintessential figure of lying is, appropriately and characteristically, female. This feminine brain, which Byron ultimately defines as 'mobility', reigns from Julia's bedchamber to Lady Adeline's drawing-room. Far from standing as a figure of reproach, however, Byron's feminine brain becomes in *Don Juan* a device—both a figure and a mechanism—of redemption" (42).

(XVII.iii)" (*BMTC* 156). Like Cooke, W. H. Auden, in "A That-There Poet," specifies the shifting horizon of Byronic satire: "Satire of the Byronic kind presupposes no fixed laws. It is the weapon of the rebel who refuses to accept conventional laws and pieties as binding or worthy of respect" (16). Words, consequently, can constantly come under questioning and revision in their social function and because of this power of revision, Byron continues to insist that words are dramatic in their ability to target satiric objects; thus words carry ethical intentions even when they break from or reinterpret past morality. Such satirical and sceptical applications of words help to reinterpret and to reshape cultural perceptions. And when the public's attention concentrates and acts on these satiric communications, the public can shape future cultural events.

In *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, Stuart Curran shows these reflexive energies and limits of Byron's poignant, constructive satiric writing in both undermining old moral standards and displacing the tools of satire with positive social values:

[T]he accepted moral standards become the subject of Byron's incessant attack, for they themselves do not accord with the truth of the world or of human life. But a true satire cannot be simply negative, and Byron's brilliant ploy—by this point in his life it is probably as much mature instinct as literary strategy—is to deconstruct satire by turning its tools on itself. (196)

Similar to W. H. Auden's position, Curran's perceptive analysis posits that Byron's deconstructive strategies show the limits of satire and expose the failings of society in order to posit humane values. In satirising past epic forms (Homer's and—less so—Virgil's), Byron, for example, writes:

The city's taken—only part by part—
 And Death is drunk with gore: there's not a street
 Where fights not to the last some desperate heart
 For those for whom it soon *shall cease to beat*.
 Here War forgot his own destructive Art

In more destroying Nature; and the heat
Of Carnage, like the Nile's sun-sodden Slime,
Engendered monstrous shapes of every Crime.
(DJ 8.82 [italics mine])

Byron personifies both death and war, undermining satirically the oblivious art of killing (Death is drunk and War is forgetful) since the lifeblood of a people's future is destroyed through constant beating, and their city—an emblem of the people's body (politic)—is disassembled architectonically part by part into an amorphous slime that gives rise to monstrous shapes. Byron subverts the notion of the fertility of the Nile to show the untimely death of the living. He, as Curran points out, employs satire to show the limits of traditional forms of satire by displacing them with humane values—not that traditional forms of satire cannot be humane—since he is not satiric about the value of peace and the protection of human life. Byron, for example, writes this about war: “[i]t is an awful topic” (DJ 8.89). Moreover, he does not leave his readers with just a destructive rendition of war but rather emphasises constructive social actions while showing the limits of satirising war:

And one good action in the midst of crimes
Is 'quite refreshing,' in the affected phrase
Of these ambrosial, Pharisaic times,
With all their pretty milk-and-water ways,
And may serve therefore to bedew these rhymes,
A little scorched at present with the blaze
Of conquest and its consequences, which
Make Epic poesy so rare and rich.
(DJ 8.90)

Humane action, Byron declares, may save “these rhymes” from the excessive destruction of scenes of conquest from epic poetry and from the biting satire of the thing he condemns. The rare and rich act protects, not destroys, human life, as exemplified by Juan's rescue of Leila, the Moslem girl (DJ 8.94)—“In Juan's look, pain, pleasure, hope, fear, mixed / With joy to save” (DJ 8.96).

Risking ostracism, Juan acts spontaneously, as an exiled warrior fighting his own men in order to protect the innocent. Facing the possibility of death, he saves her. In these circumstances, he truly acts as an individual, revealing his innermost mind and impulse in an act of benevolent spontaneity that serves to protect the innocent. His natural goodness produces an ethical action that defies the social norm of an army of Russian soldiers. If the accepted moral standards do not suffice in promoting ethics, then it is because those standards constrict humane action in some form. Byron's ethics do not attempt to superimpose themselves onto the world but to extract and to valorise a vital feature of life—change. And human tolerance and acceptance are valuable human characteristics in embracing and harnessing the opportunities offered with change. Byron's ethics of mutability are not prescriptive but a serious and creative playing with unpredictability. Byron's satire, consequently, does not rely on absolute standards to make ethical assessments of right and wrong. Even though Byron shows an authorial nonchalance from time to time, the ethical import of his writing is in the writing of the thing in itself, as a voice revaluing the craft of writing in its ability to remake and to reinterpret social perspectives in the name of artistic liberty.

In canto 17, stanza 8, he shows how Galileo was punished for transgressing the rules of the Church. Human actions, not words, speak the ultimate rules for human interaction. In some ways our society reflects the hollowness of rule-centred but uncommitted social relations between people. Consider, for example, that the rules of a mobster may be the very rules he transgresses. Another case in point is that prohibition failed both in India and the United States in the twentieth century, for rules do not guarantee compliance. Further, marriage certificates cannot keep people together as evidenced in North American society in the twentieth century, yet rituals continue to exert social influence in people's lives and in the lives of their

books, passed on from generation to generation. In an Aristotelian sense, the judiciary system promotes justice as long as the procedure, the accessibility, and the application of justice come under revision. We often refer to law and to loopholes; when viewing these loopholes pragmatically from a corporate—but not collective—sense, one could still respect the law theoretically and be unaccountable realistically. With respect to such possible abuse of power, Byron subverts, even with his aristocratic tendencies, the notion that law upholds ethical behaviour, thereby valorising the function of self-governance for the purposes of self-mastery and social improvement. He writes:

But London's so well lit, that if Diogenes
 Could recommence to hunt his *honest man*,
 And found him not amidst the various progenies
 Of this enormous city's spreading spawn,
 'Twere not for want of lamps to aid his dodging his
 Yet undiscovered treasure. What I can,
 I've done to find the same throughout life's journey,
 But see the world is only one attorney.
 (DJ 11.28)

Rules, other than for administrative order and equal justice for all—a notion difficult to implement in the best of times—kill, according to Byron, the human capacity for honesty, self-responsibility, and self-innovation in the creation of humane relationships. Byron's narrative journey attempts to rediscover some of the treasures that lead to human truths.

For Byron, rules without human passion are lifeless rules. Moreover, Byron does not want his readers to read his epic poem by the rules. How can one anyway? Byron makes and remakes the shifting narrative patterns in *Don Juan* to retain some semblance of unpredictability. Byron insists that the reader's ethical self-examination consists—without anarchic reductionism—not of rules (in the diapasonal or the discordant crafting of narrative) that delineate the relations between the self and the Other but of the rhetorical and

persuasive interaction with thought and desire encoded in the text, the nexus that provides the negotiation of the reader-writer compact.⁶⁰ Experience and desire (Burke's margin of persuasion) govern the reader-writer compact. When there is no margin of persuasion, that is, when neither identifying thoughts nor passion motivate a reader (since the reader chooses not to negotiate the contentious issues in this margin), no reader-writer contract is put into play. And the reader-writer compact, for Byron, vanishes without the constant implied negotiation of linguistically enterprising positions.

With regard to this reader-writer compact, the epic has its own covenant, a covenant Byron means to complicate and parody in the writing of *Don Juan*. Byron, however, does not resurrect new laws to function in place of the old but a new ethics based on practical uncertainties—the lesson of experience, the process of writing about one's writing and the questioning and evaluation of what it is that one does or should desire. In showing the folly and worth of different desires, from the extreme of glory and ambition to generosity, Byron follows the satiric tradition, but he also parts from it.

⁶⁰For Byron, actions based on rules are not necessarily thoughtful since he has no faith in the idea that one always thinks out the rules one follows. Actions are full of thought when they originate from a self-examination that opens up the possibility of spontaneity with the Other. Consequently, spontaneity is not thoughtless action but the expression of the impulse of intuitive thought. The Haidée episode provides a constant traversing of the boundaries between planned action and intuitive action and between written language and the spontaneously quickened visual language of the eyes. Paradoxically, through self-examination, both Juan and Haidée meet the Other in each other, since each mirrors the other, by intuitively and spontaneously reaching beyond the self.

III

Although Byron is influenced by the Augustan satirists, he strikes out on his own path in *Don Juan*. Order makes good sense if it does not impede freedom of expression. Ethics are not meant to be prescriptive but improvisational and bound to humane contexts: "I tell the tale as it is told, nor dare / To venture a solution" (*DJ* 13.13). Energy should not be feared, originality recreates order, and unpredictability contains its own grace. Chaos, for Byron, does not wear a simple mask of anarchy. Byronic satire undermines any philosophy that restricts the revaluation of the individual and her place in the social order.

Byron, for example, satirises Donna Inez's excessive self-interest, her dominating fears, and her overpowering control over Juan. She does not want her son to be educated about love and sex. Juan is puzzled about sex and love because "love is taught hypocrisy from youth" (*DJ* 1.72). Later in *Don Juan*, Byron points out the danger of illicit love, satirising the institution of marriage as a permission-granting or legal foundation for love: "Haidée and Juan were not married, but / The fault was theirs, not mine"; "Tis dangerous to read of loves unlawful" (*DJ* 3.12). Byron's unlawful lovers, however, have none of society's divisive vices. In satirising these vices, Byron illustrates hate's rigidifying effects: Juan and Haidée are "Unfit to mix in these thick solitudes / Call'd social, haunts of Hate, and Vice, and Care" (*DJ* 4.28). Byron's satire includes motivational analyses of people's fracturing of social relations and of "solitary Pride's oppressive weight" (*DJ* 13.19). He satirises, for example, Lord Henry and writes, "[Lord Henry was] Proud of himself and her [Lady Amundeville], the world could tell / Nought against either, and both seemed secure— / She in her virtue, he in his hauteur" (*DJ* 13.14). Lord Henry is complacent in his social position. Byron shows how Lord Henry Amundeville's

superiority—"Lord Henry also liked to be superior" (*DJ* 13.19)—and pride divide him from his acquaintances, humiliating them through "Pride's oppressive weight." Such loss of community reveals social relations impeded by excessive self-interest and rigidified by the self-consciousness of one's class.

Byron's satire extends from social to linguistic criticism in presenting the employment and limits of language. The narrator undermines the notion that writing is a perfect mechanical process: "If I have any fault, it is digression" (*DJ* 3.96). Further, in imagining Gulbeyaz, he speculates on the power of language to portray reality fully or neutrally:

Her presence was as lofty as her state;
 Her beauty of that overpowering kind,
 Whose force description only would abate:
 I'd rather leave it much to your own mind,
 Than lessen it by what I could relate
 Of forms and features; it would strike you blind
 Could I do justice to the full detail;
 So, luckily for both, my phrases fail.
(*DJ* 5.97)

While stressing the limits of language, Byron leaves gaps in *Don Juan* so that the reader is given the freedom to project her or his desires into the reading of the poem. The poet, in this way, encourages his readers to participate in imagining the particulars of *Don Juan*.

In emphasising this reader's freedom, Byron, like Blake, propounds the virtues of giving expression to desire and of examining the ostensible power of reason to methodically explain human existence and human motives. According to Byron, Plato's valorisation of reason and idealism shortchanges the individual of earthy, sensuous living, relying on platonic forms as archetypes for the unachievable. The human touch is fiery dust—that spark of human desire and the co-operation of human beings for mutual enjoyment and comfort:

'T is the perception of the beautiful,
A fine extension of the faculties,
Platonic, universal, wonderful,
Drawn from the stars, and filter'd through the skies,
Without which life would be extremely dull;
In short, it is the use of our own eyes,
With one or two small senses added, just
To hint that flesh is form'd of fiery dust.
(DJ 2.212)

Byron satirises Plato's idealism, the notion that platonic forms have an independent existence from material reality. Fiery dust bespeaks the intimate relation between heaven and earth, stressing the human condition in learning to live with both. Plato's philosophy, according to Byron, overly distrusts desire. Passion, for Byron, is inspiration, whereas the human spirit without its covering of *dust* is inexperienced, thus promoting sterile living—living without the sensory spice of the earth since the human senses enrich human experience. For Byron, sexual frustration is embedded in the deepseated belief that bodily enjoyment is a sin or a high crime against society unless sanctified by the church. Although real forms, in the platonic sense, may be reflections of ideal forms of differing degrees of perfection, human desire is creative and artistically necessary as part of the equipment for self-exploration and self-growth but is too often deemed the culprit that taints those perfect forms.

To move from an analysis of platonic forms to epic form, Byron's narrator's self-reflexive and self-parodic narrating signals, in a narrative metalepsis, an awareness of the stylistic opportunities and constraints in Homer's epic narrative. He satirises the idea that muses and writers lead separate lives, accentuating the wind of inspiration in the calamus that expresses it:

Thus far our chronicle; and now we pause,
 Though not for want of matter; but 'tis time,
 According to the ancient epic laws,
 To slacken sail, and anchor with our rhyme.
 Let this fifth canto meet with due applause,
 The sixth shall have a touch of the sublime;
 Meanwhile, as Homer sometimes sleeps, perhaps
 You'll pardon to my muse a few short naps.
 (DJ 5.159)

In mentioning the ancient epic laws, Byron's reference to Homer highlights the journey motif in this Grecian's narratives in *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*. In the opening of the *Odyssey*, Homer invokes, for example, the Muse to assist him in telling to the audience the accounts of Odysseus' travels: "The hero of the tale which I beg the Muse to help me tell is that resourceful man who roamed the wide world after he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy." Further, Byron's intertextuality in *Don Juan* draws on the nautical images in Homer's works. And he combines such content with self-reflexivity, leading to an anchoring of rhyme and affirming an authorial provision for his muse's rest. In drawing attention to the sublime, Byron's nautical metaphors illuminate his narrator's dependence on the winds of inspiration—to scatter those ashes and sparks that Shelley speaks of, in a Byronic way. The writer, however, must rest, must sleep sometime, which, in the above passage, underscores poesis by showing the writer's desire, after resting, slackening his sail, and meeting with due applause, to continue the journey for the audience.

Byron, in moving from the nominal "touch" of the sublime to the verbal "touch" at warfare, elaborates on such poesis or interweaving of the narrative later in *Don Juan* when his narrator's prescient and audacious narrating directs his muse to weave the narrative: "The Muse will take a little touch at warfare" (6.120). In serious fashion, he displays the stupidity of avoidable wars in the war cantos. He is concerned not with the gods on Mt. Olympus but with the

human wars that enslave the heroic spirit.

IV

An enemy of excessive human pride and, on the whole, a believer in the merits of pleasure, Byron in his narrative resists the dogmatic Christian view that pleasure is evil. In his treatment of this difference between excessive human pride and natural pleasure, Byron has some interesting connections to Omar Khayyam. Byron and Khayyam satirise orthodox religious resistance to the separation of human pleasure and human pride. *Hedonism*, however, would be a tempting but misleading word to describe the doctrine of Byron's *Don Juan* or Khayyam's *The Rubá iyat (R)*. Both authors acknowledge and celebrate the limits of language and pleasure. They satirise the unexamined social employment of language, and their sceptical positions subvert both the unexamined pursuit and the evangelical repression of pleasure. In analysing both texts, I am not sure that any reductive term or set of terms would do justice to *Don Juan* and to *The Rubá iyat* because of the protean consciousness about pleasure, moderation, and self-sacrifice implicit in them. Further, I find that writing about *The Rubá iyat* is in itself risky because there is no definably authentic text. I have chosen Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs's translation. They base their translation on Sadiq Hedayat's first 143 stanzas of his 1934 publication. Largely for its satiric and sceptical outlook, Avery and Stubbs's translation is a sensitive rendition of Khayyam's *The Rubá iyat*. A similar sceptical viewpoint comprises the dominant vision of Byron's structurally arabesque *Don Juan*. From their sceptical positions, Byron and Khayyam undermine philosophical attempts to ground being in absolute terms.

Byron and Khayyam incorporate scepticism and Socratic irony in their

narrative strategies to challenge orthodox Christian and Islamic eschatologies respectively: heaven's rewards are heaven's; the earth's, humanity's. Byron's satiric narrative strategies stress uncertainty; Khayyam's, chance. Khayyam, like Byron, incorporates self-reflexive irony to subvert the limits of orthodox conceptions of the good life and to satirise human pride and human hypocrisy. Khayyam, for example, writes, "Tomorrow I will haul down the flag of hypocrisy, / I will devote my grey hairs to wine" (R 141). In exposing hypocrisy and celebrating life, Khayyam's passionate devotion to social examination—and hence self-examination—denies both narcissism and metaphysical dualism: "How long will you live in self-love, / Or run after Being and Non-Being" (R 143). In a similar light, Byron writes, "To be or not to be?"—Ere I decide, / I should be glad to know that which is *being*?"; he concludes, "I'll enlist on neither side, / Until I see both sides for once agreeing" (DJ 9.16). Both writers question the very ground of *being* that is constantly, if you will excuse the pun, under philosophical contention and over, as both writers in their analyses of life's relation to death contend, our graves.

Khayyam distrusts dualism, distrusts the power of binary ways of thinking to clarify the world. Khayyam, in fact, deflates the significance given to being and to definitions of the self based on the dualism of mind or spirit and body when he writes, "What have you to do with Being, friend, / And empty opinions about the notion of mind and spirit?" (R 196). The emptiness of metaphysical speculation about being and the ocean of non-being is less significant than the embryonic site of literary space, the creative, evolving suspension of certainty about being, essence, and existence.

We should keep in mind that Khayyam not only promotes uncertainty but also undermines certainty about uncertainty; however, he does not embrace nihilism. In such a predicament, why not, asks Khayyam, drink wine? Why not celebrate the life of chance? The drinking of wine constitutes the

taking of risks in the lifetime pursuit of happiness: "I'll drown," says Khayyam, "the world's sorrows in wine" (R 94). In literally referring to the inside of his drinking cup, Khayyam's solution of drinking wine is spatially an imaginative one, both literally and metaphorically self-reflexive: "a text," he writes in a powerful conceit, "stands round the inside of the cup" (R 145).⁶¹ Khayyam's reader may imagine the reading of concepts around the inside of a cup, accentuating the space that letters require to form words which disseminate meaning. In limning the nonlinearity of narrative and the self-reflexivity of textual exploration, Khayyam affirms humanity's desire for knowledge through self-examination but satirises philosophical attempts to finalise knowledge, to assert absolute truths divorced from birth and death.

Khayyam's act of drinking from his cup is a textually celebratory act, the gestation of writing in the creation of narrative space and opportunity. Ali Dashti, in his book *In Search of Omar Khayyam*, writes, "In Khayyam's language wine served as a symbol, an allegory of the good life that must be enjoyed while the opportunity offers" (155). In a philosophically trenchant assertion, Khayyam undermines binary ways of thinking about the world and valorises opportunities which enable him to celebrate life; he exclaims, "My rule of life is to drink and be merry, / To be free from belief and unbelief is my religion" (R 75). Peter Avery, in illuminating Khayyam's radical philosophy, writes, "[A rubá i] often voiced criticism of fanatically imposed prohibitions and doctrine" (12-13). In light of Avery's remark, Khayyam can be seen to celebrate liberation from religious dualism and from the gossamer web of a religious lexicon.

Similarly, in desiring to identify and cast off the slough of Christian dogma, Byron undermines physical or mental repression and embraces

⁶¹Avery and Heath-Stubbs note that "Persian wine bowls often had a line of verse engraved round the inside rim" (83, footnote 28).

scepticism as a viable philosophical position and narrative strategy:

It is not that I adulate the people:
 Without *me*, there are Demagogues enough,
 And Infidels, to pull down every steeple
 And set up in their stead some proper stuff.
 Whether they may sow Scepticism to reap Hell,
 As is the Christian dogma rather rough,
 I do not know;—I wish men to be free
 As much from mobs as kings—from you as me.
 (DJ 9.25)

Byron's "I do not know" is a double admission. First, it functions as a counterpoint to dogmatic assertions of brimstone and hell-fire. Second, he is not sure about what he does know. He employs scepticism *and* exposes it: "So little do we know what we're about in / This world, I doubt if doubt itself be doubting" (DJ 9.17). In this way, he, to echo Anne Mellor's use of Schlegel's phrase, employs romantic irony⁶² to flaunt the limits both of Christian dogma and of scepticism and then to reaffirm constructive human actions such as critical inquiry, resistance against unwarranted war, and protection of the innocent—the latter is apparent in Juan's rescue of Leila, the Moslem girl (DJ 8.94). Byron's desire to wish others to be free expands the horizon for constructive social action.

Such constructive action realigns or restructures the hegemonic order; consequently, the linguistic sites, wherein wit employs romantic irony, are open to change, to reinterpretation. This dissemination of meaning enriches the text's life and forms the basis of a new ethics since there is no closure to Schlegel's dialectic (Mellor 11-12):

⁶²Anne Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980) 5. She writes, "The artistic mode that alone can properly be called romantic irony must therefore be a form or structure that simultaneously creates and de-creates itself" (5).

Wit therefore has a dual function. First, it destroys old ideas and relationships: "A witty idea [writes Schlegel] is a disintegration of spiritual substances which, before being suddenly separated, must have been thoroughly mixed." Second, wit unites hitherto dissociated concepts; it becomes the matchmaker of ideas and the founder of new societies or moral orders.

(Mellor 9)

The narrator in *Don Juan* accepts the teeming chaos that pervades the very condition of living life in the paradoxical impulse of art, that is, the simultaneous effacement and self-presence, that is, the de-creating and creating, of witty writing. Byron satirises or de-creates conventional descriptions of narrators' psyches, creating a complex personality for his worldly narrator:

Temperate I am—yet never had a temper;
 Modest I am—yet with some slight assurance;
 Changeable too—yet somehow '*Idem semper*':
 Patient—but not enamoured of endurance;
 Cheerful—but, sometimes, rather apt to whimper:
 Mild—but at times a sort of '*Hercules furens*':
 So that I almost think that the same skin
 For one without—has two or three within.

(DJ 17.11)

Byron redefines the role of the narrator, subverting reader expectations to be guided and replacing them with contradictory impulses that bespeak the psychologically complementary world of balance and change—the stable ethics of mutability.

In satirising social forces such as the rough Christian dogma promoted by churches or the conservatism embraced by the Lakers, Byron undermines absolute claims to truth, specifying the fragility and temporality of human epistemologies and aiming for an ethics of mutability:

Socrates said, our only knowledge was
 'To know that nothing could be known;' a pleasant
 Science enough, which levels to an ass

Each man of wisdom, future, past, or present.
(*DJ* 7.5)

The gist of Byron's satiric thrusts is that we can never know enough—that knowledge, in and of itself, comes with the unfolding of the rhetorical flowers of language (not to be mistaken for flowery language). Our tropes and figures of speech themselves do not contain wisdom *per se* but the possibility of human growth and self-examination—an aspect of human life central to Socratic self-integrity and social responsibility. In a complex trope, Byron writes about being "immoral" in denouncing the actions of "landowners who fought anti-Corn Law legislation and, generally, did everything possible to keep up the price of grain" (McGann, commentary CPW 734): "till we see what's what in fact, we're far / From much improvement with that virtuous plough / Which skims the surface, leaving scarce a scar" (*DJ* 12.40). The surface-riding plough of language, that is, self-serving beliefs, forms the perceptions that are instrumental in the deliberation and execution of ostensibly virtuous actions. But the desire not to create a remotely, let alone truly, ethical economy results, of course, in the failure to plant the seeds for future harvests, for offsetting the difficulties of the poor in affording grain. Keeping this hardship in mind, the question is not one of mixed farming but of deliberate negligence. And in displacing the landowners' interests with the ethics of mutability, Byron attempts to overturn the moral lassitude that perpetrates the old economic structure, satirising the landowners' beliefs and misnaming his own ethics—as "immoral"—in order to secure a brighter future. In a similar light, Socrates, condemned to die for corrupting the youth, challenges, with words, the moral traditions of his time.

Socrates's self-parodic philosophical stance undermines Anaximander's *archē* in favour of a non-originary epistemology based not on memory or the eternal but the changing face of the present forms of knowledge—a

suspending in and a suspending of scepticism. Without doubt, after all, I think that there cannot be a new faith in knowledge. We would be left with a faith incapable of embracing the uncertain powers of creativity. One may begin, as Socrates did, to not know, but experience leads to knowledge and then to the dawning recognition of nescience. Finally, between certainty and the knowledge of uncertainty emerges a paradoxical—in the double and split sense of suspending—suspending scepticism. This paradoxical suspending scepticism both affirms and denies scepticism, employs scepticism and shows its limits. No wonder, then, that Byron, "being of no party," or not being partisan, "shall offend all parties" (*DJ* 9.26). Byron, like Khayyam, distrusts the very language he implements to convey his thoughts and, as a consequence of his healthy distrust, deconstructs satire—as Curran points out—by flaunting the limits of the knowable and by positing the value of celebration in replacing the strings of his "trembling *Lyre* [*italics mine*]" (*DJ* 17.13). In deconstructing satire and displacing it with a narrative praxis of the aesthetic, Byron valorises the spirit of singing his cantos.

In opposition to the achievement of systematic linguistic thinking ending in closure, Khayyam too deconstructs satire and issues a caveat about the trap of language in reifying our ideas:

Nobody, heart, has seen heaven or hell,
 Tell me, dear, who has returned from there?
 Our hopes and fears are on something of which,
 My dear, there is no indication but the name.

(*R* 91)

According to Khayyam, we, in our interpretations, identify and create our own heaven and hell. Language names our desires, producing linguistic objects that influence and trace our divergent senses of being. Khayyam, like the Byron of *Don Juan* and like the Blake of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, values the spontaneous imagination and inspired sensory experience because imaginative

experience frees us from *habituating* our fears and our despair, and thereby celebrates and enriches life. Khayyam, however, does not view as optimistically as Blake does the creation of an aesthetics of definitive poetic form—Blake's "hard and wirey line" ("A Descriptive Catalogue" [1809] 550) that creates the forms of peace and poetry—yet, in keeping with the Blakean spirit, Khayyam uses poetic language to expose the limits of mechanical thinking.

Khayyam distrusts promises about a heaven divorced from the plenitude of the earth and, without reservation, recalls the import of experience in guiding the heart's potentiality for enjoyment. In this savouring of the moment, Khayyam speaks of harvesting a precious moment found in a syllable between eschatological, ontological certainty and the state of doubt:

It is a flash from the stage of non-belief to faith,
There is no more than a syllable between doubt and certainty.
Prize this precious moment dearly,
It is our life's only fruit.

(R 108)

Language, Khayyam insists, can both distinguish and suspend belief and non-belief. The molecular differences of language, the syllables of the spatiotemporal gestation of writing or speech, narrate our lives.

Psychologically, the seed of syllabic time structures the cornucopia of human experience, an experience of human discourse—not with purely methodological faith or doubt but with the play of both in the affirmation of the gift of material expression and consumption, the defining syllable, the linguistic contour in the indefinable, changing face of things. Khayyam stresses the importance of chance or unpredictability for people in seizing life's opportune moments since humanity's ontological burden subsists in the foreknowledge of death.

Human time is limited. Aware of the necessity for human interaction in the changing face of time, Byron, too, acknowledges the transiency of life: "All

things that have been born were born to die" (DJ 1.220). And, he values the ability to act in the *now* and to harvest the moment. He writes, "In short, it is the use of our own eyes, / With one or two senses added, just / To hint that flesh is form'd of fiery dust" (DJ 2.212). The formation of "fiery dust" eventually leads to the grave, to dust. Byron, like Khayyam and the early Blake, favours the energy, that is, the *spark(l)ing* dust, of the body and denounces religious systems which suppress that energy. Byron, for example, writes that tutors, confessor, and mother "tamed" Juan "down amongst them; to destroy / His natural spirit" (DJ 1.50). As we know, it is with acute purpose that Juan's spirit is connected to the spontaneity of nature and to natural things: Byron satirises Juan's mother and tutors by holding their teachings up against the standard of instinct, not against the standard of social expectations about sexual behaviour. In the Haidée episode, Byron delineates a natural world unhindered by social prohibitions—by the interdiction against premarital sexual love: "The world was not for them, nor the world's art / For beings passionate as Sappho's song" (DJ 4.27). The sericeous alliteration of "Sappho's song" contrasts with the sharp "t" of the "world's art," of contrived sexual manoeuvres.

Byron, in the spirit of *The Rubá iyat's* regenerative lyricism, uniquely constructs a narrative strategy to undermine traditional epic forms and social traditions and to promulgate an antiheroic or antiwar philosophy. He, as a case in point, does not start his epic *Don Juan* "in medias res" although "[t]hat is the usual method" (1.7). He narrates *Don Juan* with an uncanny degree of attention given to unpredictability in writing: "What is the end of Fame? 'tis but to fill / A certain portion of uncertain paper" (DJ 1.218). Similarly, when searching for a way to describe the feet and ankles of the beautiful women in Cadiz, he writes, "Thank Heaven I've got no metaphor quite ready" (DJ 2.6). Byron accentuates diverse approaches to writing and the unpredictability of

controlling the outcomes of a given narrative strategy, yet he assures his readers of the inescapable consequences of destructive human actions, namely, the glorification of war. He, in the following passage, flaunts his narrative strategy, satirises the foolishness of seeking glory in war, and reinterprets history:

History can only take things in the gross;
 But could we know them in detail, perchance
 In balancing the profit and the loss,
 War's merit it by no means might enhance,
 To waste so much gold for a little dross,
 As hath been done, mere conquest to advance.
 The drying up a single tear has more
 Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore.
 (DJ 8.3)

In satirising human pride, Byron revalues history and challenges traditionally patriarchal conceptions of the relations amongst war, power, and property. He reflexively incorporates romantic irony in deflating the role of history in presenting the truth of war, thereby questioning the true weight or "balancing the profit and loss" of social leaders' historical decisions to destroy others and presenting a fresh world order in his epic that limns a humanistic alternative to war's ostensible "merit." More specifically, "the drying up a single tear," namely, human kindness, imagistically and philosophically opposes "the shedding seas of gore," that is, war's madness.

Byron and Khayyam, as we have seen, satirise the self-destructive tendencies of orthodox religious systems. They both employ the principles of scepticism, self-reflexivity, and unpredictability in their narratives. Both authors valorise the enjoyment of life amidst incertitude. Moreover, they implement self-reflexive narrative strategies to accent the continuing import of reinterpreting the many faces of language: these are ways of demystifying the privilege of human enjoyment and refiguring the loci of human pride so that,

in the relation between the lover and the beloved, a space opens for the life of pleasure.

CHAPTER FOUR

EYE CONTACT: READING

THE LANGUAGE OF PASSION IN THE HAIDÉE EPISODE

The great secret of morals is Love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own.⁵⁷

So let us back to Lilliput, and guide
Our hero through the labyrinth of love
In which we left him several lines above.⁵⁸

Byron's strongest analysis of the relation between the lover and the beloved, as well as the healing powers of passion, may be found in the Haidée episode. In the poem, forces often contend to destroy this type of spiritual

⁵⁷Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977) 487. We can see how ecstasy—or out-of-stasis from one's own self—of love enters the picture for Shelley in the *to kalon* that underlies the appreciation of the Other, undermining the self-possession or self-obsession found in narcissism, narcissism as property or ownership of the self. Shelley, then, is concerned with acts of self-forgetting required for igniting the embers of the imagination so that one can "form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food." The *to kalon* and the void are housed in the formative relations between the world and the human imagination.

⁵⁸Byron, *DJ* 6.28.

union, and most relationships that Byron limns do not hold love but negate its experience in favour of personal lust or ambition, as in the Sultan's seraglio and Catherine's court. A turning point for Byron's treatment of Juan's capacity for human development because of Haidée's ability to draw out from Juan his better self, the Haidée episode contains Byron's ethics about love. Here, spoken language, at times, captures their developing relationship, but spoken language may also stifle it. The poetic language of love is, for Byron, beyond the unimaginative social rules that dampen mutual passion but may be found in the language of the eyes. In contrast, as chapter five will illustrate, war is the absence or the frustrated presence of the energies of passion. Chapter four, then, shows the role of the self and Other in regenerating the human experience to include the innocence of youth and unadulterated passion in the eyes of otherness.

I

Steering his narrative praxis in *Don Juan* between the Scylla of epical machismo and the Charybdis of prudery, Byron underscores the value of spontaneous passion between the lover and the beloved. He often sets morality and passion, like the binary of self-serving power and (com)passion, in progressive conflict. In Byron's liberal portrayal of conservative sexual attitudes throughout his poem, society often predictably represses the dangerously subversive element in lovers: the sexual and spiritual passion to transgress the moral code. In satirising that society, Byron creates a cutting portrait of Donna Inez, who deems social veneer more important than intimate honesty and an appearance of chastity more important than pure sexuality. In creating an atypical Juan, Byron not only satirises Donna Inez's constrained values but also

departs from usual expectations in the epic. Epic tradition seems to demand that the hero be an able warrior—in and out of bed. But Byron, in playing with language and in subverting patriarchal notions of sexuality, is not satisfied with epic tradition. He subverts this tradition by creating an unusual anti-heroic *hero* who is capable, in many instances, of retaining his innocence as he gains experience. Byron accentuates the function and the language of the eyes in delineating Juan's sexual and spiritual maturation.

In "Byron and the Epic of Negation," Brian Wilkie writes about the ways in which Byron counteracts the anti-feminism in most traditional epics in the Occidental world:

Byron observes that Juan never left women "Unless compelled by fate, or wave, or wind, / Or near relations" (VIII, 53-54). In the background, I believe, is the memory of Aeneas's abandonment of Dido so that he may fight and found an empire and perhaps of Hector's farewell to Andromache. In the context, which is Byron's savage attack on war and the ideal of martial glory through explicit parallels with epic tradition, the further implication is obvious: Byron is endorsing love as the alternative to war and thus reversing the antifeminism which is implied in one form or another by almost every traditional epic.

(76)

By countering traditional heroism in the epic, Byron's treatment of love, as Wilkie mentions, creates the opportunities for a viable mode of living.

Although we may find bumper stickers on cars with messages like "make love, not war," Byron's solution to war is not so simple or optimistic. War is symptomatic of a lack of love in the broadest, not just physical, sense, reflecting the emptiness found in the inability to share, in the desire for power over others, in the abuse of power, amongst other faults, when war serves not to defend oneself but to eliminate others for gain. These concerns are rarely addressed in the epic tradition. Sex per se does not necessarily engender deep compassion for others. In fact, sex may even impede compassion, as Juan loses

his sensitivity because he overindulges in sex with Catherine. Byron writes, "Seduced by youth and dangerous examples, / Don Juan grew, I fear, a little dissipated; / Which is a sad thing" (*DJ* 10.23). Sadly, Juan, the narrator implies, loses his exuberance for life, and he loses a sense of spiritual balance. But sex, as is apparent in the sunny Haidée episode, can also be an intimate and compassionate experience. In compassionately and incisively employing wit, Byron subverts traditional epics to value and to promote the creation of a humanely nonpossessive or unconditional passion and to undermine the injudicious exercise of power in militant psychologies.

II

Donna Inez, Juan's mother, tries to shape her son's character from infancy, and her attempts to ensure "that his breeding should be strictly moral" (*DJ* 1.39) highlight the restrictive control the mother exercises over her son. Inez's morality, however, cannot replace passion. Her moral stance excludes passion. This rigid denial of feelings itself exhibits an underlying fear of her objectives in controlling Juan's education:

Much into all his studies she inquired,
And so they were submitted first to her, all,
Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery
To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.
(*DJ* 1.39)

Byron satirises her desire to educate her son, but this educational process includes a significant omission—the forbidden fruit and branch of sexual knowledge. Having something out of sight, however, does not necessarily mean that it will be out of Juan's mind. His eyes, according to his mother, should be shielded against the light of sexual knowledge, something which his

tutors try to ensure:

Juan was taught from out the best edition,
 Expurgated by learned men, who place,
 Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,
 The grosser parts; but fearful to deface
 Too much their modest bard by this omission,
 And pitying sore his mutilated case,
 They only add them all in an appendix
 Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index.
 (DJ 1.44)

The learned editors compile these "grosser parts" into an appendix saturated with revealing images. In trying not to deface the text but to control Juan's reading and his life, his tutors selectively alter the text. Donna Inez, however, completely hides any corrupting images. The family Missal, for example, contains "figures on the margin" which would enable Juan to see them "kiss all" (DJ 1.46), but she keeps this Missal for her own reading while giving him another. Byron, consequently, draws a rather cutting portrait of the mechanical woman: "In short, she was a walking calculation, / Miss Edgeworth's novels stepping from their covers" (DJ 1.16); "she look'd a lecture, / Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily, / An all-in-all-sufficient self-director" (DJ 1.15). Donna Inez communicates her rigid morality through her eyes since each eye is a sermon, manipulating her son's exposure to sexual knowledge. According to Byron then, violence may be communicated visually with the eyes.

In Byron's unpredictable narrative, Juan, however, does not submit to his mother's coercive glances. He is a "thing of impulse and a child of song" (DJ 8.24). And in using Juan as a salient narrative focus to subvert traditional epic, Byron, according to George M. Ridenour, designs a narrative more concerned with the virtues of love than with the glory of war:

In the first five stanzas of the first canto of his satiric epic, Byron, in a kind of reversal of the Vergilian *ille ego*, elaborately draws our attention to the fact that he is deliberately turning for his organizing principle from war to love, from the warrior to the lover. (69)

We can see that Byron's shift of emphasis from war to love is one that proposes an ethical examination of traditional epic that precedes *Don Juan*. In regard to the epic tradition, Byron deliberately plays with and challenges reader expectations, and, in so doing, he employs both the principle of self-reflexivity and the principle of unpredictability, thus generating narrative praxis for valorising passion.

III

The element of passionate love connects with the principle of unpredictability in *Don Juan*. After all, love is an unpredictable thing. And Juan's encounters with love bring about inconstant conditions. Early in *Don Juan*, Juan's first love is Donna Julia, and his sexuality is awakened. With her, he finds himself in a dangerous liaison. But this affair remains just that for him, an affair and not a significant spiritual encounter with a woman.

Juan's relation with Haidée can be contrasted with his relation with Donna Julia. Juan's relationship with Haidée contains much greater spiritual significance and personal fulfilment than his relation with Donna Julia, though Julia, as her letter to him suggests, seems to be more attached to him than he to her in a personal and loving way. For Juan, his involvement with Donna Julia produces more sexual stirrings than journeys in love. In contrast, the story of Juan and Haidée admits into the relation greater wholesome passion

and human joy.

Juan and Haidée have a close relationship, one in which they reflect each other's joy, joy for the other:

They saw not in themselves aught to condemn:
Each was the other's mirror, and but read
Joy sparkling in their dark eyes like a gem,
And knew such brightness was but the reflection
Of their exchanging glances of affection.

(DJ 4.13)

Byron sets up this self-reflexive reading of innocent eyes, that is, Juan reading Haidée's eyes and she reading his, to show within the narrative frame the process of reading a microcosmic narrative. We read within a narrative frame the "exotic" (4.6) or unplanned tendencies of an enigmatic design in *Don Juan*. Byron renders an enigmatic unfoldment of the narrative because of his distrust of written language and his trust in the language of the eyes. Trust and compassion, he implies, may not necessarily be housed in written language, though words capture the proximity of intention and communication in narrative. The human relation between Juan and Haidée reflects (*com*)passion, a joyful reaching out by each one to the Other. In his narrative praxis, Byron valorises this joy, which is "not of the vain kind" (4.16), that this couple mirrors. Each one mirrors the other's eyes.

This face-to-face gazing is further exemplified in Byron's belief that a lover's passion and an individual's compassion need not be disparate:

Juan and Haidée gazed upon each other
With swimming looks of speechless tenderness,
Which mix'd all feelings, friend, child, lover, brother,
All that the best can mingle and express
When two pure hearts are pour'd in one another,
And love too much, and yet can not love less;

But almost sanctify the sweet excess
By the immortal wish and power to bless.
(DJ 4.26)

Underscoring the spiritual power of mercy, this passage exemplifies Byron's belief in a rare kindness that reaches to the social Other in a respectful way. The familial bonds mentioned stress the protective nature of those bonds. Byron believes that their speechless tenderness is a powerful healing capable of alleviating living wounds. Byron shows an inclination—though constrained by the narratorial coolness of "almost sanctify"—in this passage to accept the possibility of a higher grace or spiritual force that nourishes the lover and the beloved—acknowledges the Other—in their eyes. The eyes, in their "swimming looks," actively mirror and engage the lovers—by their not loving less than they in fact do—in a timeless or immortal wish, the quality of blessing the Other, the love beyond self. Byron notes the difficulty of articulating this mutual respect in language, thus endorsing the language of the eyes, a language, paradoxically, beyond but comparable to written language. Like Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*, Byron, in writing *Don Juan*, flaunts the limits of language in his narrative praxis. Byron wants to acknowledge the inexplicability of love while attempting in language to explain the ramifications of loving. Byron promotes a view, quite untypical of most of his other works, that there is an inherent and unsullied goodness in the state of nature for some members of humanity. But such goodness seems part of a world untouched by hypocritical social conventions. Byron connects this idea of *goodness* to narrative praxis when he shows the blossoming of communication between Haidée and Juan.

The development of this communication is particularly relevant when Haidée and Juan first meet: "fair Haidee tried her tongue at speaking, / But not a word could Juan comprehend" (DJ 2.161). When they begin to read their eye language and their intentions, they remove such absence of

communication. Their eyes hold their narrative. In showing the lovers' reading of the eyes of desire and the signs of the spirit manifesting itself through those eyes, Byron self-reflexively writes about the function of reading in the world of language and in the world beyond language:

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 exprest
 A world of words, and things at which she guess'd.
 (DJ 2.162)

The speaking eye is a teller of the face's tale, the book of both auditory and visual communication. It is in the lines of the face, as in the lines of the book, that the process of communication between two strangers unfolds. Such communication is an eye-sign language. This eye-sign language portrays a different reality than words, and these intimate episodes are more stable in meaning and intention than those of writing: "Juan learn'd his alpha beta better / From Haidee's glance than any graven letter" (DJ 2.163). Byron, however, communicates this understanding not as a playwright giving stage directions for the employed rhetoric of visual expression but with the legacy of words. Truly, this paradox consists of a double bind. First, Byron gives the self-reflexive nod to language's inability to convey reality accurately because of the gap between language and the objects to which language refers. Second, he portrays language as expressing its own limits, portraying its horizon of values. These two conditions then are at work in Byron's narrative praxis.

In stressing the latter condition, Garber shows the interconnection between the humane salvation of the self and the expressive contours of the text in the workings of narrative in *Don Juan*: "In the difficult and dangerous

world of *Don Juan* the only positive certainty sustained throughout is the relation of self and text, that making which is a making of both" (*STRI* 309). This process of becoming other-than-oneself in language, the remaking of the *textual* self, affirms the ethical relation Byron weaves not only for himself but also for his implied readers. For Garber's analysis, which focuses on the writer's creation of a self, may be extended so as to describe the experience of the text by the reader. This extension opens the horizon for the reader to interact with the author's poesis in the narrative. Found in the integrated concept of an intertextual self—that penetration of the world's influence into the text of the self and the repenetration of the self in the text of the world in a mutual process of discovery—this ethical relation restructures the interaction between the self and the text. The reader inter-acts with the text, changing, *a priori* (since the reader is unique), the shifting patterns of the text. In short, the reader re-reads her relation to the text and in so doing, she remakes her self in the narrative movement of the text. What, in this instance, is capable of working outside the text is displayed within.

According to Byron, Haidée is one such reader, and she is Juan's Other. They both produce the "sinless child of sin" (*DJ* 4.70). The ironic gesture here is that society perceives the child as a product of sin but theirs is a sinless child buried because of the tyrannical hand of an intolerant father. A Sultan of the seas, Lambro controls with a hard hand the destinies of those who oppose his will, a will without essential goodwill. What is his real piracy? He steals his daughter's hopes and passion for his own ends, thus ending the narrative of her unborn child whose eyes never will read the light of a mother's eyes because she is a fading light.

Byron describes Haidée's movement to death as a fall of nature: "fell she like a cedar fell'd" (*DJ* 4.58); "her head droop'd as when the lily lies / O'ercharged with rain" (*DJ* 4.59). The repetition of *fell* in "fell'd" and the

repetition of the images of fallen nature, that is, the cedar and the lily, show the burden of an untimely death. Further, she loses that intense spark of joy she earlier shared with Juan and that was described at the start of the relationship in these terms: "They heard the wave's splash, and the wind so low, / And *saw each other's dark eyes darting light / Into each other* [*italics mine*]" (DJ 2.185). This communication of the eyes—affirmative (e)yes to love—involves not only a figurative but literally therapeutic change of perspective. They both see their own leaping light reflected in the lover. This phenomenon displays an imaginative and therapeutic leap to the seeing of oneself through eyes of Otherness. Despite his jesting remarks about Dante in *Don Juan*, Byron, it seems to me, is not alone in his depiction of this strange phenomenon. In the *Paradiso* of his *Divine Comedy*, Dante writes, "And when, in both my eye-lights were depicted / the force and nature of the living star / that conquers heaven as it conquered earth" (23.91-93).⁵⁹ Allen Mandelbaum interprets this passage as Dante's vision of Mary (Notes 391). That may well be true, but I find it interesting that Dante is, in a transcendent moment (as one may see oneself in a dream), seeing himself, seeing his eye-lights reflect the living star. It is this light or joy that Haidée loses when she is left looking "on many a face with vacant eye" (DJ 4.63). Her living death results from her father's severe actions, an utter denial of his daughter's will and imagination.

Bernard Beatty, I should point out, thinks that Haidée is a complex but flawed character: "Haidée represents a complex image of love which is both ideal and seriously flawed" (111). He bases his conclusion on the following notion: "father and daughter glare at one another in hatred" (111). The passage to which he refers, however, reads:

⁵⁹The original passage reads: "e come ambo le luci mi dispinse / il quale e il quanto de la viva stella / che là sù vince come qua giù vinse" (DC 23.91-93).

He gazed on her, and she on him; 'twas strange
 How like they look'd! the expression was the same;
 Serenely savage, with a little change
 In the large dark eye's mutual-darted flame
 For she too was as one who could avenge,
 If cause should be—a lioness, though tame[.]
 (DJ 4.44)

Let us examine Beatty's interpretation. First, he bestows the word *glare* onto the gaze between Haidée and Lambro, her father. *Glare* is a connotatively loaded word in comparison to *gaze*. Second, Beatty does not consider the serenity in this savage or *natural* gaze. Third, he does not recognise a wildness in Haidée's character that is not based on hatred but on self-assurance since she could, albeit tame in her own way, exercise the power of a lioness. The significantly poignant problem in the above passage is Lambro's inability to see that his daughter could—"if cause should be"—avenge her father's misdeed of separating her from Juan. But she does not seek to avenge her loss. Eventually, Byron describes the conditions in which her father's refusal to accept or to respect her desire for Juan kills her.

I do not see Haidée as a seriously flawed character but, in the course of denial and death, as a victim of male power. She expresses her strength of character when she upholds her decision to love Juan: "I love him—I will die with him: I knew / Your nature's firmness—know your daughter's too" (4.42). She is not so far removed from a precocious Duchess of Malfi and is maturer than her beloved Juan. Significantly, Haidée's will does not oppose nature but is in harmony with the best that it offers. She, in essence, is a child of nature who awakens the profound in Juan—the ability to forget himself in the sensuous and spiritual service of a being brighter than himself.

IV

After his separation from Haidée, Juan laments his loss, but circumstances continually entice him to become involved with many women. Byron portrays with aplomb and panache Juan's numerous dealings with other women in *Don Juan*, but after his involvement with Haidée, Juan never again engages in a fulfilling relationship of spiritual love until his potential involvement with Aurora Raby, which is of course never explored fully because of Byron's untimely death. What remains is the large fragment entitled *Don Juan*. And in this unfinished poem, Juan, of course, experiences sexual politics and many types of love, ranging from self-love in his affair with Catherine to selfless brotherly feelings in his rescue of Leila, the Moslem orphan.

Both character and scene are central to Byron's exploration of sexual politics in *Don Juan*. And in exploring these sexual politics, Gulbeyaz is a meaningful figure. Prior to Juan's initial contact with her, Byron creates a grotesquely intriguing scene in portraying the gates to Gulbeyaz's palatial quarters. The portal itself is described as "Haughty and huge" (*DJ* 5.86), and its gatekeepers as "misshapen pigmies" (*DJ* 5.88). Such foreshadowing signals the changing winds in Juan's affairs with women. The face-to-face gaze in the Haidée episode is uplifting; in the Gulbeyaz episode, however, it potentially serves to kill. These monstrous pygmies gaze on Juan "With shrinking serpent optics"—"as if their little looks could poison" (*DJ* 5.90). The gateway to new sexual adventure, if you will, proves ominous. Gulbeyaz has "all the sweetness of the devil" (*DJ* 5.109). Her attitude is described as demanding; her actions, restrictively binding: "Something imperial, or imperious, threw / A chain o'er all she did; that is, a chain / Was thrown as 'twere about the neck of you" (*DJ* 5.110). This abrupt address to the reader and his or her experiences draws on a

universal phenomenon, on death. We can, therefore, see that the ideas of spiritual *loss* of self and of social space in the narrative unfolding of the Gulbeyaz episode—the demand from the coercive Other—in turn limn the loss of the imaginative will.

Herself obsequious to authority and expecting a similar type of compliance in return, Gulbeyaz demands that Juan sexually perform for her. Such a command reflects her attitude towards *love*. Ironically, her tyranny is "grace" (*DJ* 5.113). But Juan is her "property" (*DJ* 5.116), a plaything of her fantasy. She wields the power in her relation with Juan and ultimately attempts to dominate him in a way similar to, but not nearly to the same degree or intensity as, her own victimization under the Sultan's patriarchal manipulation.

Unlike the Sultan, Juan has very little power, except to refuse Gulbeyaz's advances. Moreover, he is languishing from the loss of Haidée. Only when Gulbeyaz cries does Juan begin to feel some sympathy for her. This fragile relation is interrupted when the Sultan enters the scene. The Sultan has real power. He is, however, bound by his malevolent exercise of it.

Obsessed and jealous, the Sultan keeps his harem of fifteen hundred under a scorpion watch. Together, the words *guards*, *bolts*, and *walls* suggest tremendous fear and possessiveness on his part:

..... but made
 More easy by the absence of all men
 Except his Majesty, who, with her aid,
 And guards, and bolts, and walls, and now and then
 A slight example, just to cast a shade
 Along the rest, contrived to keep this den
 Of beauties cool as an Italian convent,
 Where all the passions have, alas! but one vent.
 (*DJ* 6.32)

The seraglio is described as a place of "melancholy" (*DJ* 6.33). This melancholic

atmosphere results from the actions of "one good man" (*DJ* 6.33). The Sultan, of course, seeks only self-satisfaction and is the worst example in *Don Juan* of an individual who enforces mass manipulation for personal lust. The sexual politics of this scenario are such that the "one vent" undermines the right of choice that women would normally have in a humane atmosphere of courtship. Quite frankly, the sexual innuendo of the "one vent" implies coercive sexual control. The psychology of the Sultan's manipulation of his sexual objects displays a desperate fear of loss and the denial of the Other's right to choose because of the stringent demands of obsession.

Described as a master, the Sultan, ironically, cannot master his own exercise of power. Reflected in his relationship with Gulbeyaz, this lack of self-mastery exhibits itself in spousal abuse: "her great lord, / Master of thirty kingdoms so sublime, / And of a wife by whom he was abhorred" (*DJ* 6.90). Ironically, the Sultan cannot read his own wife's hate of him. Her disenchantment with his ways undermines his control over thirty sublime kingdoms since he cannot in essence control the events around him or influence freely the people closest to him. There is one main reason for her discomfort. The Sultan's probing jealous eye—his unscrupulous watching of his spouse—causes her to feel both objectified and resentful.

Gulbeyaz, without knowing it, entraps Juan in a similar way. She, consequently, is rather confused when Juan does not comply with her desires since compliance is a way of life in the expected interactions in the seraglio. In satirising these rigidly constructed relations of power, Byron undermines the Sultan's ossified patriarchal realm and, later, Catherine's matriarchal empire by suggesting a solution that both rulers refuse to see because of their particular interests in perpetuating their own respective systemic power over and coercion of others:

Had Catherine and the Sultan understood
 Their own true interests, which kings rarely know,
 Until 'tis taught by lessons rather rude,
 There was a way to end their strife, although
 Perhaps precarious, had they but thought good,
 Without the aid of Prince or Plenipo:
 She to dismiss her guards and he his harem,
 And for their other matters, meet and share 'em.
 (DJ 6.95)

In the above stanza, Byron, as Blake does in *Jerusalem*, makes a strong connection between war and sex because "there was a way to end the strife" or the fighting by not damning the libido to aggressive rage in its desire for property and conquest but allowing it to flower in more co-operative forms—the potential peace and mutual care, that is, the "good," in intercourse. Their social problems, Byron hints, could very well be worked out. What is required is dialogue, for Catherine and the Sultan to meet and to share their concerns. Problems of war are psychological or psychiatric sexual problems of one kind or another, whether they be tied to concepts of *property* and *possession* or to masochism. Byron's solution to the problems of the Sultan's and Catherine's desires to overpower the will of the social Other is to substitute the concept of sharing for that of obsession. Byron satirises the ignorance of tyrants and their inability to learn that the power to coerce another's will has a price that one may not know until one's will is, unfortunately, violated in a similar fashion.

As I have been mentioning, Byron satirises self-love as a form of ignorance or as a form of violence that closes out the space of the social Other, and he chooses Catherine as an object of attack. He describes her as a woman of "imperial condescension" (DJ 9.72) who objectifies men:

And Catherine (we must say thus much for Catherine)
 Though bold and bloody, was the kind of thing
 Whose temporary passion was quite flattering

Because each lover looked a sort of king,
 Made up upon an amatory pattern . . .[.]
 (DJ 9.70)

Byron questions Catherine's uncommitted passion for her lovers, a mechanically "amatory pattern," since, in her merry-go-round of love, each lover is a "royal husband in all save the ring" (DJ 9.70). When Ridenour addresses the general treatment of love in *Don Juan*, he writes, "Love which should be a means of overcoming self, of living in and for another person, is itself essentially egoistic. The remedy merely aggravates the disorder" (75). But love does not come primarily in one type or degree in *Don Juan*.

Although I disagree with Ridenour's critical scope since there are clear instances in *Don Juan*, such as the Haidée episode, that defy such categorisation, I think that his statement certainly applies to Byron's delineation of Catherine's malady, "her imperial condescension" (DJ 9.72):

And that's enough, for love is vanity,
 Selfish in its beginning as its end,
 Except where 'tis a mere Insanity,
 A Maddening Spirit which would strive to blend
 Itself with Beauty's frail Inanity [.]
 (DJ 9.73)

Hypocritical and self-oriented, Catherine's love fails to strengthen or to develop social relations. She fails to make authentic contact with another. And she does not love Juan as another human. Instead, she mainly objectifies Juan, as we learn from the narrator's qualification of her ostensible love, as the "or lust" for the pun on "or" (ore) materialises the lust: "the Sovereign was smitten, / Juan much flattered by her love, or lust" (DJ 9.77). Juan, who falls into the trap of self-love, becomes, in this way, her self-serving toy, a possessively quantifiable pleasure. When he becomes ill, she is morose, realising that she may "lose her minion" (DJ 10.44). *Minion* defines Juan's obsequious relation to Catherine. His energies depleted, Juan is wasting away in serving the Queen:

"she saw his dazzling eye wax dim, And drooping like an eagle's with clipt pinion" (*DJ* 10.44). Only at the prospect of death does she send him on a mission. Generally, she, a female Narcissus, practices an erotics of closure. Self-seeking in her fixed gaze, she manipulates the object of desire—Juan as a vassal, as a vessel pooling her narcissistic lust. Yet, in a figurative sense, Juan both reflects her lust and sees his own projection in her. Caught in a posture of self-adoration, he becomes a momentary victim of his own pride and loses his intensely playful energy.

Byron depicts the two extremes of self-serving love: haughty self-consciousness and self-possessing madness reflective of the myth of Narcissus. To gaze to see only oneself is the surest sign of premature closure. The myth, in this sense of closure, exemplifies the solitude that separates the self from society. This narcissism has nothing of the going-out-of-oneself or ec-static quality that infuses the Haidée episode, nothing of the generous gaze that reads and communicates eye language, nothing of the language that expresses compassion, and nothing of the signs that articulate that wordless communication with the Other's eyes, eyes changing the ways of contact.

CHAPTER FIVE

CALAMUS OF PEACE:
INTELLECTUAL WAR IN BYRON'S *DON JUAN*,
BLAKE'S *JERUSALEM*, AND SHELLEY'S *PROMETHEUS UNBOUND*

There comes a point, his drawings insist, at which the original objectives of a war waged for ideals cease to be of the smallest consequence—are, in fact, quite forgotten—as the savagery and cruelty which war engenders . . . consume everything, blind, heedless, insatiable. . . . Goya's final comment emerged in 1819 when he moved to what he called "The House of the Deaf Man" in Madrid and painted on its walls his image of the naked, unseeing, mad, and gigantic Saturn—an allegory of the Bonapartist attempt to remake the world—gobbling his children.⁶⁰

Self-love in man too beats all female art[.]⁶¹

We still have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th' inventor.⁶²

To see the concerns of the violence of language and of its implications for war in Byron's *Don Juan*, one should, I think, consider his work in light of

⁶⁰Paul Johnson, *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830*, (London: Phoenix, 1991) 69.

⁶¹Byron, *DJ* 6.9.

⁶²William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* 1.7.8-10.

Blake's and Shelley's culminating works. All three authors have significant interests in valuing art over war, but each writer has a different account of the role of women and language in the creation of peace. This idea of the import of communal relations and artistic creation for the evolvment of peace is especially poignant when, as we will see in chapter six, strategies of employing language and of the artistic process are in themselves inspirational, mysterious, and magical, even if the topics that are explored are not. The magic of the diegesis of narrative becomes the narrative of magic in the next chapter, where the solitude of the common individual arises from both unimaginative mishandlings of and strident negations of acts of communication—the subject of this chapter that broaches each author's concerns about power, art, and peace.

I

From an initial faith in and subsequent disappointment with the French Revolution, the British Romantic poets Byron, Blake, and Shelley realised in their mature literary works that peace, which requires the profoundest exercise of human co-operation, is a commodity historically rare but valuable for artistic endeavour. In short, peace enables art to flourish. Their intellectual war against physical violence defends art and its continuing dialogue with a future audience. In their culminating works, these authors share something unusual in the context of British Romanticism: all three authors see the making of narrative, namely, poiesis and praxis, as a deterrence to war and as an ethical activity that embodies humane values such as compassionate communication, social intelligence, and noncoercive peace.

In stressing that war ignobly paralyses the psyche of the individual and,

in turn, destroys the communal relation with the Other, Byron, Blake, and Shelley indicate that war often results from motivations of revenge. They denounce revenge. And when weighing the significant characters that preserve the communal peace with the Other, one notices that women, whether as characters or anthropomorphised social forces, are key promoters and inspirers of peace in *Don Juan*, *Jerusalem*, and *Prometheus Unbound*. Specifically, Byron's narrative explores the asperities of war in *Don Juan*, and Blake's vision in *Jerusalem* creates the artistic path to peace. Believing in the power of language and human tolerance to counteract political folly, Byron in *Don Juan*, like Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound* and Blake in *Jerusalem*, holds the human activity of peace in high regard, a noble art that promotes artistic freedom as a practice.

As part of the strategy of showing the artistic making of his own text and counteracting the epic convention of intellectually valorising war, Byron incorporates self-reflexive language in his first-person narration to satirise war:

When I call 'fading' martial immortality,
 I mean, that every age and every year,
 And almost every day, in sad reality,
 Some sucking hero is compelled to rear,
 Who, when we come to sum up the totality
 Of deeds to human happiness most dear,
 Turns out to be a butcher in great business,
 Afflicting young folks with a sort of dizziness.

(DJ 7.83)

Byron satirises the media or bulletins and commentaries on fame of past heroes like Bonaparte and Caesar, which were spread by their messengers. Those historical texts, Byron implies, promote heroes, whose martial deeds are in reality a fading light. Byron does not accept the rhetoric that war is heroic but offsets it with the "sad reality" that children are raised to fight. They themselves become heroes who, in turn, "afflict" or wound the next generation

with the desire for glory.

Byron continues his poetic attack on the human desire for glory, likening the glory of war to the pursuit of the piggish: "he runs before it [the wind and by analogy *glory*] like a pig; / Or, if that simple sentence should displease, / Say that he scuds before it like a brig" (*DJ* 7.85). Human avarice, he suggests with an acute self-reflexive awareness of his own writing activity, leads to the pursuit of personal glory, not to happiness. Byron then interrupts the canto in midstride and changes direction, writing that "it is time to ease / This Canto, ere my Muse perceives fatigue. / The next shall ring a peal to shake all people" (*DJ* 7.85). Byron contrasts the relentless pursuit of the glory of war to the slowing literary pace that he incorporates in his narrative praxis by decelerating his galloping Pegasus with the kinesthetic emphasis on *fatigue*. And the density of this self-reflexivity paradoxically makes such narratorial interruptions appear seamless when two stanzas later Byron appeals to the reader to consider not only what is to come in the narrative but how it will arrive. The text reads: "Here we pause for the present—as even then / That awful pause, dividing life from death, / Struck for an instant on the hearts of men" (*DJ* 7.87). The recursive *pause* begins to take on foreboding overtones, as the fear of war flashes into the hearts of the warriors; employing rhetoric effectively, Byron immediately closes the canto.

Byron, as I keep insisting, is generally keen on showing the devastating effects of war, and the recursive pauses are structural phenomena in his narrative arising from its unpredictability. These phenomena indicate turning points in the narrative. Prior to Catherine's reading of the letter that pertains to the Siege of Ismail, Byron, for example, limns her interest in Juan:

Catherine, I say, was very glad to see
 The handsome herald, on whose plumage sat
 Victory; and, pausing as she saw him kneel
 With his dispatch, forgot to break the seal.
 (DJ 9.57)

In creating narrative tension after the self-reflexive exploration of an indelicate, fragmented Horatian allusion ("'terrima Causa' of all 'belli'" [9.55]), Byron makes us pause as Catherine pauses. Juan's fortune is about to change for the worse. The predictable thing is Catherine's reaction to the letter, but the unpredictability arises in Juan's situation. His plumage, on which sits "Victory," will later echo his sickness, as an eagle incapable of flight. His sickness comes largely from his sexual activity with Catherine. The pause in the breaking of the seal is quite significant in the above passage.

In contrast to the silence before the opening of the letter, Byron describes Catherine's impassioned demeanour, after reading it, as bursting out:

Great joy was hers, or rather joys; the first
 Was a ta'en city—thirty thousand slain.
 Glory and triumph o'er her aspect burst,
 As an East Indian Sunrise on the main.
 (DJ 9.59)

Catherine's rosy complexion in the simile of the "East Indian Sunrise" serves to connect her jubilation to the earlier bloody images of war in *Don Juan* and to the image of Suvarrow's "bloody hands" that "wrote the first dispatch" "[w]hile mosques and streets, beneath his eyes, like thatch blazed": "And this is what he said: "— / 'Glory to God and to the Empress!' (*Powers Eternal !! such names mingled!*) 'Ismail's ours'" (DJ 8.133). Bernard Blackstone notes his mechanistic skills as a commander: "Souvaroff [or Suvarrow] is pure machine, a powerful servant of power, a projection into the military field of the black eunuch and the black dwarfs of the Seraglio episode. This is an imperial game of chess"

(318).⁶³ In this powerful game of chess that has profoundly devastating human consequences, he is mechanistically carrying out Catherine's orders. Byron satirises Catherine by giving an aside in parenthesis about Suwarrow's praise of God and Catherine in the same breath. In *Ruling Russia: Politics and Administration in the Age of Absolutism 1762–1796*, John P. LeDonne writes about the ruling interests that Catherine promoted during her reign: "Catherine's legitimacy was assured by the acceptance of serfdom and by a successful program of territorial expansion which brought fame and spoils to the entire ruling class" (344). Byron criticises political leaders like Catherine and the Sultan who, in their own self-interest, employ political mechanisms of war for destructive purposes rather than for self-protection.

In *Byron: A Critical Study*, Andrew Rutherford emphasises Byron's literary strength in his treatment of war and his desire for peace shown in *Don Juan's* narrative:

[T]he greatness of *Don Juan* is often the result of his combining obviously social qualities like conversational ease and lively wit with deeper feelings and profounder moral insights than one might have expected from "a broken Dandy." This is pre-eminently so in his attack on war, which is probably the most serious portion of his satire and the most impressive of all his attempts to reconcile poetry with truth and wisdom. (166)

According to Rutherford's evaluation of Byron's profound desire to articulate poetically serious values, the contagion of war destroys a people's lifeblood. Byron turns to an imaginative realism in depicting its horrifying effects. Specifically, in the account of the Siege of Ismail, he delineates the folly of pursuing human glory for mercenary and egotistical purposes. In so doing, Byron creates a detailed account of war to show its devastating effects on people's lives. And in analysing these devastating effects, Rutherford clarifies

⁶³See DJ 7.55.

the serious attitude in and purpose of Byron's war cantos: "He [Byron] insists on the wrongness and futility of fighting for any cause but that of Liberty, he emphasises the waste, suffering, and cruelty of war--the essential inhumanity of the whole business" (167). For Byron, war, in essence, becomes a human wasteland of broken hearts and severed communal bonds.

To make his point about the political motivations for war, Byron employs language as a weapon for peace, crafting his narrative with the intent to show the buffoonery of war. He carefully builds an unforgettable character in Field Marshal Souvaroff and incisively satirises Souvaroff's failings. Byron, for example, portrays Souvaroff in the following ways: a "lover of / Battles" (*DJ* 7.39); a "Hero, buffoon, half-demon and half-dirt" (*DJ* 7.55); a "Harlequin in uniform" (*DJ* 7.55). Byron creates the element of the absurd in Souvaroff's character to depict the absurdity of not only the leaders in war but war itself. Byron describes Souvaroff's actions as "praying, instructing, desolating, plundering" (7.55). The alliteration reinforces the disjunction in listing "praying" with "plundering"; the disjunction accentuates Souvaroff's irreverence for human life and his desire to teach the science of war, thus perpetuating the cycle of militaristic violence. Byron's object of attack is the foolishness of militaristic hubris that reflects a kind of idolatry, the praying for militaristic gain.

Byron shows also such irreverence in the Sultan's political handling of his empire. The self-gratifying strategies and his lust for retaining power create internal political war in his kingdom:

His sons were kept in prison, till they grew
 Of years to fill a bowstring or the throne,
 One or the other, but which of the two
 Could yet be known unto the fates alone;
 Meantime the education they went through
 Was princely, as the proofs have always shown:

So that the heir apparent still was found
 No less deserving to be hang'd than crown'd.
 (DJ 5.153)

The Sultan maintains his Machiavellian dominance by first indoctrinating his sons and then by killing them. For him, the easiest way of retaining power is to eliminate those who would threaten his hold on it. The Sultan's prison, in the figurative sense, is the destruction of innocence since his sons are imprisoned before they ever learn to bend the bow or dare to steal his throne. Byron's satiric passage highlights the psychological imprisonment of youth because of the Oedipal Complex in the father—the fear of patricide and, even more important, the fear of regicide (of losing his powerful position as head of state).

The connection between militaristic violence and sexuality that is so strong in Blake's *Jerusalem* is also a real concern for Byron in *Don Juan*. The Sultan's repressive acts exhibit his desire to control his harem or impede the women's wills. In fact, they only feel comfortable and playful when the guards depart: "The guards being gone, and as it were a truce / Established between them and bondage, they / Began to sing, dance, chatter, smile and play" (DJ 6.34). These women express their energy only after the Sultan's metaphorically watchful eyes stop gazing at them. Moreover, Gulbeyaz is not with the Sultan of her own free will. In fact, *The American College Dictionary* defines *Sultan* in the following way: in Arabic the word means "king, ruler, power." In this way, the Sultan is repressive patriarchal power—the raw power to entrap and to command, without accountability to anyone. Byron delineates Gulbeyaz's entrapped condition in her boudoir, associating this with the burden borne by decorative flowers: "many a vase / Of porcelain held in the fettered flowers, / Those captive soothers of a captive's hours" (DJ 6.97). Thus in the last two passages from *Don Juan*, the Sultan's execution of his sons and his

imprisonment of Gulbeyaz's soul indicate his abuse of power and its debilitating social effects on those people around him.

Like the Sultan, Catherine also employs callous means to retain her political dominance. She considers the war between the Sultan and herself as a form of entertainment or a "match":

And carcasses that lay as thick as thatch
O'er silenced cities, merely served to flatter
Fair Catherine's pastime,—who looked on the match
Between these nations as a main of cocks,
Wherein she liked her own to stand like rocks.
(DJ 9.29)

Besides the obvious sexual innuendoes of her sexual drive manifesting as an interest in warring cocks, Byron gives double meaning to the word *Fair*—representing war as a kind of justified pastime that serves to break her ennui. Past the apparent silence, the description of the scene is personified as *vocally* flattering Catherine's actions. It turns on the word *thatch*. The irony is that the nominalisation of *thatch* can be reversed into a verb—into an implied verbalisation for Catherine's glorified game of war. Byron seems to be implying that Catherine thatched Ismail. Byron subverts the domestic image of thatch to reveal the horrific layering of human bodies. In this regard, Byron in the earlier canto, shows the thoughtlessness of Catherine's entertainment when he focuses on Johnson's and Juan's roles in the Siege of Ismail. Employed in Catherine's army, Juan and Johnson are satirised for fighting with Souvaroff because the pair are "fighting thoughtlessly enough to win" (8.19). Ironically, if Juan and Johnson were not fighting thoughtlessly enough, then they would not be winning, thus exhibiting Byron's satiric attitude towards the mutual folly of opposing sides in a war that has no noble purpose.

In weighing the thoughtless effort of war, Byron shows how war devours the possibilities for constructive human dialogue, leaving behind the

interlude of the deafeningly muted mourning after the vociferous clanging of peoples' battle-scarred exclamations:

Short speeches pass between two men who speak
 No common language; and besides, in time
 Of war and taking towns, when many a shriek
 Rings o'er the dialogue, and many a crime
 Is perpetrated ere a word can break
 Upon the ear, and sounds of horror chime
 In like church bells, with sigh, howl, groan, yell, prayer,
 There cannot be much conversation there.

(DJ 7.58)

Note how crimes of war silence any opportunity for authentic communication and civil action in the thetic line of the above stanza: "There cannot be much conversation there." The simile of the death knoll of church bells emphasises the drowning out of human dialogue. Sounds of horror destroy hope and communication. Moreover, in a Shakespearean allusion that echoes the slaughter of Macduff's children in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, Byron describes how the sounds of war are part of the mutilation of lives of future generations. He writes that "babe and mother / With distant shrieks were heard Heaven to upbraid" (DJ 8.69).⁶⁴ With his emphasis on the horrific sounds of war, Byron crafts his narrative to stress how war uproots generations by severing the relation between mother and child.

Byron employs not only sounds but also imagery to depict war. Several powerful images in *Don Juan* express the destructive aims of war and its fatal outcomes. Take, for example, the description of the army in the Siege of Ismail which wreaks its serpentine chaos: "A human Hydra, issuing from its fen / To

⁶⁴In *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, Rosse tells Macduff: "Where [Scotland] sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air / Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems / A modern ecstasy" (*The Riverside Shakespeare*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) 4.3.168-170.

breathe destruction on its winding way" (DJ 8.2). The fighting itself is described as "shedding seas of gore" (DJ 8.3) and as autumnal death when "Thicker than leaves the lives began to fall" (DJ 8.9). Once again, Byron depicts war as a grim reaper: "They fell as thick as harvests beneath hail, / Grass before scythes, or corn below the sickle" (DJ 8.43). War, Byron seems to be saying, deadens our basic sense of humanity toward the Other. For Byron, as for Blake, war is primarily an unimaginative act. Byron's narrative imaginatively counteracts the futility of mass destruction in the name of economic or political gain. At one point in *Don Juan*, he writes that the soldiers "were heated by the hope of gain" (8.103). Ironically, theirs is a hope that destroys the hope of others. At another point, Byron writes about the characterless soldiers who are easily persuaded to fight for money or political ends: "most mortals after one / Warm bout are broken into their new tricks, / And fight like fiends for pay or politics" (DJ 8.22). His images range from the grotesque to those of natural destruction. Unlike nature, however, humanity's violence proliferates beyond the pursuit of mere survival. In short, too many human beings—not that any number is excusable—have the habit of killing for unnatural ends. The images in *Don Juan* portray war's devaluation of the irreplaceable character of each human life, leaving only numbers of the faceless and nameless dead in a "marsh of human blood" (8.73).

Byron's writing exemplifies the powerful bond that he forms between imagery and narrative praxis. His writing is praxis that embodies social responsibility. He creates, in this sense, a poignant moment after the fall of Ismail:

Ismail's no more! The crescent's silver bow
Sunk, and the crimson cross glared o'er the field
But red with no *redeeming* gore: the glow
Of burning streets, like moonlight on the water,
Was imaged back in blood, the sea of slaughter.

All that the mind would shrink from of excesses;
 All that the body perpetrates as 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.
 (DJ 8.122-23)

The silver crescent contrasts with the crimson cross both in shape and colour. One is light and curving; the other, dark red and rigid as a sword struck into the ground. Only the dark side of the moon may remain to be seen as the cross ironically bears testimony to the slaughter. The synecdoche of the fallen bow-moon, that is, the inevitable gravitation toward a hell of war's tools, captures the eerie and gruesome account of the bloody night burning red under the moonlight. The crimson cross serves as an anti-Christian symbol, one no longer of hope but despair. Further, this insane fury of war is likened to the uncontrollable energies of the perpetrators of hell on earth. Even in a self-reflexive statement that they mute or "[defy] the worst which pen expresses" (DJ 8.123), Byron implies the horrors of war without describing them. His narrative praxis attributes these hellish scenes to inhumane acts, to a truly human phenomenon, namely, the unjust application of power.

As we shall see in the passage below, the realism of Byron's literary canvas of war is strengthened by the principle of self-reflexivity. In this way, Byron employs self-reflexivity to display his distaste for the very topic he broaches, and statistically five words—*name* (twice), *couplet*, *elegy*, *lexicon*, *story*—metalinguistically trace the narrative:

But here I leave the general concern,
 To track our hero on his path of fame:

He must his laurels separately earn;
 For fifty thousand heroes, name by name,
 Though all deserving equally to turn
 A couplet, or an elegy to claim,
 Would form a lengthy lexicon of glory,
 And what is worse still, a much longer story[.]
 (DJ 8.17)

Byron's language, which is not thersitical but poignantly self-reflexive, points both to its creation and to the reader's imagined or lived experience of war. In tracing or giving form to the chaotic letting loose of hell's energies, Byron's self-reflexive narrative praxis denounces human carnage by writing about it but refusing to write about it at great length. While acknowledging the limits of language to capture fully the shocking scenes of war, Byron must wield language to reveal these horrors. In *The Style of Don Juan*, Ridenour attributes Byron's undermining of traditional epic forms to a narrative strategy that pits the merit of ethical action against the vicissitudes of war: "Again and again Byron associates war with the epic and suggests that the traditional heroic poem compromises itself morally by its apparent glorification of bloodshed" (91). As the above passage depicts, Byron's narrative questions our interpretations of heroism, injecting new life and sensitivity into views and actions that oppose intolerance and the desire to kill others.

With regard to this problem, Byron, in examining his own life, introspects about changes in his own character and his subsequent maturation into a greater tolerance for others.⁶⁵ For example, he writes the following lines about his desire to promote peace at a mature age instead of the trivial skirmishes of the fist or pen he preferred when a boy:

As boys love rows, my boyhood liked a squabble;

⁶⁵In the above passage, Byron, not the single, cosmopolitan, and sometimes sardonic narrator, speaks in one of his own autobiographical voices.

But at this hour I wish to part in peace,
 Leaving such to the literary rabble,
 Whether my verse's fame be doom'd to cease,
 While the right hand which wrote it still is able,
 Or of some centuries to take a lease;
 The grass upon my grave will grow as long,
 And sigh to midnight winds, but not to song.
 (DJ 4.99)

Byron's self-reflexive hand appears in accentuating diegesis. In this passage, he celebrates the crafting of his narrative. In this way, *Don Juan* exudes a canorous festivity or "song" in its comedic vision of the world. Byron's narrative hand plays his "trembling Lyre" (DJ 17.13). Poetically emblematic, the grass, which he hopes will grow as his poem is read over centuries, becomes an embouchure for the inspirational wind of his narrative. His message seems clear: fame, in the prostituted sense, is a kind of desire for recognition without scruples; peace, a hard won lesson about tolerance. Byron may be partially guilty of the former, but he certainly whole-heartedly espouses the latter. He captures the vital attitude in his narrative praxis that could turn the sorrows of war into the peace that only a mature patience fosters.

The absence of war's destruction is nowhere felt so acutely as when Byron depicts the bond of passionate peace between Juan and Haidée: "They fear'd no eyes nor ears on that lone beach, / They felt no terrors from the night, they were / All in all to each other" (DJ 2.189). There is a coupling of peace and passion. Their togetherness, though bound in time, is eternal in its own sense:

Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,
 So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
 Was that in which the heart is always full,
 And, having o'er itself no further power,
 Prompts deeds eternity can not annul,
 But pays off moments in an endless shower
 Of hell-fire—all prepared for people giving

Pleasure or pain to one another living.
(DJ 2.192)

On the surface, Byron appears to say that passion leads to "an endless shower / Of hell-fire." There may be more, however, to this than first meets the eye, for eternity cannot annul the deeds of such passion; passion, in a sense, then lives beyond the allegedly eternal fire of hell or the passionless sphere of a traditional heaven. Byron, it seems to me, values the deeds of passionate and peaceful lovers, showing how their deeds counteract war's "endless shower / Of hell-fire" and create the nexus of beneficial action. In her vigilant watchfulness, Haidée, in fact, is Juan's protector, providing him spiritual succour and tranquility: "And when those deep and burning moments pass'd, / And Juan sunk to sleep within her arms," he feels "so tranquil, so beloved" (DJ 2.195-197). This peace is part of Byron's narrative praxis, and Byron accentuates a woman's role as a protector of the passion that leads to peace.

A poignant example of Byron's sensitivity to a woman's relation to a man (although I do not consider it to be consistent throughout *Don Juan*) emerges when he undermines Lambro's love of Haidée: "He loved his child, and would have wept the loss of her, / But knew the cause no more than a philosopher" (DJ 3.26). This intensely patriarchal, rather than protective, love of his daughter is further undermined as Lambro walks toward his home:

A band of children, round a snow-white ram,
There wreath his venerable horns with flowers;
While peaceful as if still an unwean'd lamb,
The patriarch of the flock all gently cowers
His sober head, majestically tame,
Or eats from out the palm, or playful lowers
His brow, as if in act to butt, and then
Yielding to their small hands, draws back again.
(DJ 3.32)

Sounding realistic but not too sentimental, Byron, perhaps in a therapeutic

address to the agonising loss of his own childhood to molestation, paints a picture of peace that only the children who encircle the ram can hold for the future—in their collective "eye that speaks, / The innocence which happy childhood blesses" (*DJ* 3.33).⁶⁶ Its venerable horns wreathed with flowers, the patient and unintimidating old ram is contrasted to the figure of Lambro, "who lay coil'd like the boa in the wood" (*DJ* 3.48). This much is clear from Byron's adumbrating Lambro's potential to strike: the circle of children is the circle of innocence which will be broken in his own lineage as his only child will die along with her child. Lambro is "an enslaver" (*DJ* 3.53) who lives for the "love of power" and "rapid gain of gold" (*DJ* 3.54). And the abuse of power constricts peace.

In contrast with her father, Haidée exudes a rare and vibrant personality:

Round her she made an atmosphere of life,
 The very air seem'd lighter from her eyes,
 They were so soft and beautiful, and rife
 With all we can imagine of the skies,
 And pure as Psyche ere she grew a wife—
 Too pure even for the purest human ties;

⁶⁶See D. L. Macdonald's "Childhood Abuse as Romantic Reality: The Case of Byron," *Literature and Psychology* 40.1-2 (1994): 24-47. After giving a biographical account of the poet's childhood abuses, Macdonald analyses Byron's projection of himself as "a passive victim at the mercy of aggressive women [including Haidée]. . . in *Don Juan*" (34). He also draws some connections between unpredictability, namely, the narrator's aging, and Byron's experience of abuse. Overall, the article is perceptive in many places but does not differentiate between Juan's experience in relation to the poem's group of aggressive women—one of whom he names as Haideé, but who is a character I see as being *assertive*, honest, and natural—and the therapeutic working out of Byron's pain in the scenes of sexual healing or resistance to patriarchal abuse in the Haidée episode.

Her overpowering presence made you feel
It would not be idolatry to kneel.
(DJ 3.74)

Imagistically, in this passage with chivalric overtones, Byron connects the idea of *life* to *eyes* and then the image of the *eyes* to both the expansiveness of the human *imagination* and, through the coupling rhyme, *skies*. In this sense, Haidée, the strongest woman character in *Don Juan*, becomes a figure beyond human proportions, as the representative of the rare combination of passion and peace. But, generally speaking, that peace, without the circle of protection that the patient old ram's horns offer to the children who touch them, is at risk before the snake. Lambro is infuriated by the overturning of the staid patriarchal order. And his piracy brings, ironically, the power to command his men to ensure that his daughter fall into her *proper* place. Her death or the fall of nature is the loss of not only passion but peace.

II

Blake's artistic and intellectual vision in *Jerusalem* is the enemy of physical war. In confronting inhumane and intolerant attitudes towards art, Blake accentuates praxis and poesis in the narrative of *Jerusalem*. His prophetic poem consists of one hundred plates and is an apocalyptic vision of liberty and artistic endeavour. Like Byron, he focuses on the devastating effects of war and the merits of peace. He envisions an ethical role for imagination. In his self-created and hence unique mythic vision, Blake creates a spokesman, Los, the fallen form of the Eternal Imagination or Urthona. Blake announces that the purpose of his labour of love is "To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes / Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity

/ Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination" (*J* 5:18-20). For Blake, ethics are inherently part of artistic labour, and artistic labour creates new possibilities of seeing the world by integrating artistic innocence with the skill of experience.

Blake formulates a truth/error distinction in his view of the relation between art and ethics. Truth, being the solid arrangement of minute particulars, has an outline. Moreover, he is wary about the destructive effects of chaos. Yet, despite disagreement about the role of chaos in art and life, Byron would agree not only with Blake's belief that art reflects life but also with Blake's insistence that art expresses its own medium. Byron, for example, writes that "an outline is the best, / A lively reader's fancy does the rest" (*DJ* 6.98). Byron accentuates the process of creating his narrative in *Don Juan*. However, in employing the concept of an outline, there is an important difference between the two authors. For Byron, an outline is secondary in his account of the imagination's role in writing and reading, but for Blake it is central to his account of art. Interestingly, Blake, in plate 1 of "The Ghost of Abel," etches the following inscription:

To LORD BYRON in the Wilderness:

What doest thou here, Elijah?
Can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah? Nature has no Outline,
but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune, but Imagination has.
Nature has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity.

Blake's two-page leaflet is dedicated to Byron, "whom he hailed as a true poet . . . [and who] is the only contemporary poet whom Blake named in his publications" (Damon 63). Blake gives form, as Shelley does, to inanimate objects: "All Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal, Earth & Stone: all / Human forms identified, living" (*J* 99.1-2). If we look closely at Blake's argument in *Jerusalem*, we can see that Byron is, in one respect, distant from the solidity of the Blakean outline but not so distant in delineating the energy

that forms the outline in the natural image of the ocean. For Byron, the writer's outline is in rhythmic flux, and this is expressed metaphorically when, in a passage we shall look closely at later, he employs the image of the ocean's waves in describing the ocean as "That Watery Outline of Eternity" (*DJ* 15.2); for Blake, the outline is solidly eternal. In *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), Blake takes the idea of an *outline* and shows the very basis of the possibilities for peace in human bonds depicted in art. According to Blake, an agent's action creates both art and character, intentional certainty and human honesty. The human character is formed from out of the clear, solid lines of artistic vision. The artist must be decisive, delineating the sharp, definitive forms of narrative in art:

The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling. . . . What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions? Leave out this line, and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again[.]

(*DC* 15)

Los works in Golgonooza, the city of art, with the fiery line of creation for the "peace without vengeance" (*Erdman* 462) that characterizes the New Jerusalem. In *Jerusalem*, moral virtue is contrasted with uncodified ethics, and peace without vengeance exists only where a free and spontaneous imagination creates its own spiritual habitation, focusing on minute particulars.

Art and war are at odds with one another. For Blake, art is the cohesive force in a society: "All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of / Los's Halls, & every Age renews its powers from these Works" (*J*16.61–62). In contrast, physical war is the antithesis of art:

When Satan first the black bow bent

And the Moral Law from the Gospel rent,
 He forg'd the Law into a Sword
 And spill'd the blood of mercy's Lord.
 (J 52:17-20)

According to Blake, Satan is self-centred and unimaginative. And the resulting loss of benevolence from this self-centredness is the loss of minute particulars which arise from the imaginative hand of art: "Genius forbidden by laws of punishment" (J 9.16). By denying minute particulars, conservative powers deny individuality and a healthy communal place for individuality to flourish and contribute to the greater whole in which it thrives. On his notes to *The Laocoön*, Blake writes about the violent refusal of war to permit artistic activities: "Art Degraded, Imagination Denied, War Governed the Nations." In general terms, art engages in truth; war, in error. In consideration of these implications of his assertion, Blake accepts and forgives the individual's errors in the quest for imaginative truths of human existence. He writes, "The force of Los's Hammer is eternal Forgiveness" (J 88.50). Byron too, by valorising the reader's or seeker's role in securing the narrative grail of the imagination in *Don Juan's* exploratory ethics, perceives art as an ethical activity, not a moral prescription. For Blake, art involves the pain and the patience, that is, the necessary fight, to control the destructive elements in one's personality to achieve something more than despair. That fight means contending with one's Spectre to imagine truths—just as for Byron contending with cant opens the imaginative possibilities of unveiling human truths. In *Jerusalem*, Los must, according to Blake, spiritually wrestle with the Spectre, containing its destructive energies.

In plate 6 of *Jerusalem*, Los's Spectre hovers over him; thus, he impedes Los's attempt to regain fourfold vision by entertaining mostly cynically, but at times agonizingly and helplessly, despairing arguments. The Spectre is entrapped within the chaotic, labyrinthine arguments resulting from unbelief.

Paralysed in the twofold world of Generation, he enchains himself in jealousy and unorganised vision: "Los reads the Stars of Albion, the Spectre reads the Voids / Between the Stars" (J 91.37-38). Los the creative artist must contend with his Spectre and gain mastery over it to free himself from the limits of fallen vision.

As a result of the fallen state of the Zoas, fallen vision becomes manifest in the extreme in the form of physical warfare for Blake⁶⁷. The gist, for example, of plate 73 is that imagination cannot be abnegated without serious repercussions, namely, entrapment in the rational power and engagement with physical war:

The Four Zoas clouded rage

.....

Entering into the Reasoning Power, forsaking Imagination,
They became Spectres, & their Human Bodies were reposed
In Beulah by the Daughters of Beulah with tears & lamentations.

The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man, & when separated
From Imagination and closing itself as in steel in a Ratio
Of the Things of Memory, It thence frames Laws & Moralities
To destroy Imagination, the Divine Body, by Martyrdoms &
Wars. [t/o]

(J 74.1-13)

In a literally reductive and representational industrial simile, Blake warns his readers of the closure that results when human beings sever imagination from reason, linking closure to the past or to memory, resulting in the enshrining of morality in traditional practices. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake challenges traditional morality and coded behaviour with a new vision, a new interpretation, of the Bible.

⁶⁷In *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence: Brown UP, 1965), S. Foster Damon writes, "Zoa is a Greek plural which Blake used as an English singular" (458).

The bounding line which Los draws represents benevolent creation, for without it there would be no limit to the fall of humanity. In drawing that line with precision, Los simultaneously destroys error and delineates truth. In his creative acts, Los builds with language the poetic imagination. The rebellious Spectre, however, does not want to partake in the strenuous work required to create art for the purpose of seeking salvation until Los calms him. In a touching scene, Los wipes the tears from the face of his Spectre, after the Spectre acknowledges his own misdoings: "I am Despair / Created to be the great example of horror & agony; also my / Prayer is vain. I called for compassion: compassion mock'd" (*J* 10:51-53). But Los does not mock. Instead of mockery, Los offers compassion. In *Jerusalem*, Los's act of touching his Spectre's face foreshadows a spiritual development which leads to their eventual reintegration.

Jerusalem's dramatic closing plates reflect the movement toward the reintegration of Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre in the Form of Urthona. From his exuberance and compassion evident in the text and design of the closing plates in *Jerusalem*, Blake, figuratively, builds Jerusalem, the eternal city of peace. As David V. Erdman points out, in plate 92 of *The Illuminated Blake* Jerusalem's open-palmed, upraised hands show "creative compassion" (371). She, choosing to be unhindered by Vala, begins to act from individual impulse, or imaginative spontaneity, to express divine mercy. This notion of *opening* into eternity through compassion is one side of the contrapuntal dialectic between mercy and wrath. For example, Los's Spectre, who has no capacity to envision unfallen humanity, is carefully directed and vigorously shaped by Los's artistic labour:

Los reads the Stars of Albion, the Spectre reads the Voids

 His heav'd Hammer; he swung it round & at one blow
 In unpitying ruin driving down the pyramids of pride,

Smiting the Spectre on his Anvil & the integuments of his Eye
 And Ear unbinding in dire pain, with many blows
 Of strict severity self-subduing, & with many tears labouring.
 (J 91.37-47)

In the above passage, Los employs wrath to *organise* innocence from the chaotic depths of his Spectre's despair.

In plate 95, after Blake's momentous proclamation that "Time was Finished!" (J 94:18), Albion rises, and he is rejoined with England. The design of plate 95 emphasises Albion's stupendous gesture of openly reaching with his outstretched right hand for divine aid and pushing with his left hand against his tomb in an attempt to stand upright. In the next plate, textually, Jesus, in Los's similitude, appears to Albion as the Good Shepherd. No longer does Albion's selfhood or self antagonise him: "Self was lost in the contemplation of faith / And wonder at the Divine Mercy & at Los's sublime honour" (J 96:31-32). Error, not self, is completely "lost." More precisely, error is destroyed so that the individual can re-vision the bounding line of artistic labour and human action. The self is not destroyed but re-employed; moving beyond itself, it acts in wonder and "in contemplation" of the horizon of human compassion and artistic action. Los's Spectre is praised for co-operating with Los to redeem Albion. Earlier in *Jerusalem*, the reasoning Spectre failed to commit itself to artistic action, to employing its energies in the service of the Human Imagination. Without this Imagination, reason creates havoc and despair. Blake does not reject reason per se, but rather he re-employs it when the Four Zoas regain their original positions. Plate 97 shimmers. Albion/Los has the sun in his left hand. Energy exudes from his bounding stance because he seems to be running; with his right foot planted, he is high on the toes of his left foot. A waxing moon to the right of his right elbow is perhaps part of an eye of a peacock's spanning feather. The colours and the rays from the sun

Blake writes that "every Man [person] stood Fourfold . . . / . . . rejoicing in Unity / In the Four Senses, in the Outline, the Circumference and Form" (J 98.12-22). Blake employs synesthesia to illustrate the functioning unity between the senses and synecdoche to illuminate the "Visionary forms" as the "Universal Family": "they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic" (J 98.28). The language of imaginative eyes is central in both the Haidée episode in *Don Juan* and in *Jerusalem's* closing plates.

Clearly, in the closing plates of *Jerusalem*, unity is stressed thematically in both text and design.

In plate 100, which is the final plate, but contains no text per se, Los's tongs and hammer rest on a solid line, the forming line of artistic labour. Enitharmon exuberantly extends her arms upwards, and the moon and the stars surround her. Now unchained, Los's Spectre carries the disc of light, the same disc with which Los entered the world of imagination in the frontispiece (plate 1); the message resounds that the peace of the Universal Family is a profound *building* (in the double sense of the word) named *Jerusalem*.

In *Jerusalem*, Blake gives to design, voice, and to the voice of the text, he gives vision.

III

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, like William Blake's *Jerusalem*, celebrates the social import of language. Further, Shelley upholds love and mercy, constituents of the Promethean ethic, as potentially strong forces in creating a new order of humanity. With our modern sensibility, we recognise the difficulty of creating change solely through our application of language, yet we realise also the inevitability of change. In practical terms, language has legal

and ethical applications. Shelley does not have our modern eyes to see what the centuries after his time held. His experience was that revolutions were possible on an unprecedented scale, thus partly explaining his optimism in *Prometheus Unbound*. More precisely, *Prometheus Unbound* delineates the power of language, especially of reading and writing, and the power of love to reinterpret the past, to change the history and the order of humanity. Toward these ends, Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*, like Byron and Blake in *Don Juan* and *Jerusalem* respectively, connects ethics with the language of poetic discovery, the poetic arts of reading and writing. The question, for Shelley, is not a juvenile one, whether love alone can solve problems, but rather how the lack of love could create the conditions of a fall that would lead to a new order. The combined Promethean and Asian (in reference to the character in the text) awareness and sensitive employment of language constellate this new order.

Ellen Brown Herson describes this redemptive but unpredictable journey of Shelley's new order in the following way:

The oxymoronic journey of *Prometheus Unbound* is a journey toward perfection without a single reference point for perfection, a path without an ultimate goal, a theodicy without a god. Poetry is the prime mover here, the force of primordial love and justice. As such it displaces heaven rather than justifying it or enabling a movement toward it. Poetry restructures the cosmos, rather than merely representing a passage through it.

(374)

The force of poetry lies in its ability to create change. Poets are lawmakers for Shelley because they are social communicators who attempt to re-vision the old in redemptive acts. The process, however, of discovering that uncertain way to redemption through the language of poetry is significant. The poet takes risks with words in order to challenge and change the systemic problems in a social order that works only for the few. Out of the poet's experience with

words is the possibility for ameliorating the social order.

Now Prometheus values experience because he realises that "misery made me wise" (*PRU* 1.1.60). He salvages his dignity by retracting the curse he swore against Jupiter. More importantly, Prometheus's wise use of words reaches beyond Jupiter's ken, creating the necessary condition for a natural harmony which undermines Jupiter's domain. In such a cosmic struggle, Jupiter pits his tyrannical and idolatrous methods of maintaining control against the Promethean ethic, an ethic requiring the resources of both language and human character—that is, kindness in words and action. Because language empowers Prometheus, he reinterprets his own history to overcome his linguistic blindness and achieve insight and liberation.

A similar type of personal empowerment, in touch with the universal forces of nature and language, valorises the role of the poet in "Ode to the West Wind," wherein Shelley examines the power of words to shape perception. The speaker of the poem, in asking the wind to "[m]ake me thy lyre" (57), desires contact with the elemental forces of nature because he seeks self-expression. In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley writes about the unpredictable qualities and evolving creativity of the human mind: "the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed" (503-504). For Shelley, the act of writing is spiritually inspired, creating "a being within our being" (*DP* 505). And when we read, we read the intertextual being of our selves. In "Ode to the West Wind," the speaker dares the wind of inspiration to be his or her spirit. The scattering of the withered leaves, that is, the pages of dead metaphors, of poetic making, become the narrator's fiery dissemination of words amongst humanity. The strong links connecting the Promethean fire of language in *Prometheus Unbound*, the image of a fading and re-igniting coal in

A Defence of Poetry, and the self-conscious act of writing in "Ode to the West Wind" create an intertextuality that reaffirms the intricate web of self-reflexivity in Shelley's works, a self-reflexivity necessary in developing an awareness about the social applications of language, an awareness enabling Prometheus to survive amongst a throng of hostile voices.

Despite the harassment, the linguistic arrows, from the furies, Prometheus proclaims, "Yet am I king over myself, and rule / The torturing and conflicting throngs within / As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous" (*PRU* 1.1.492-94). Prometheus's fortitude builds the changes necessary for a new order of humanity. A fury, dimly aware of the power of language and silence, says, "But to speak might break the spell / Which must bend the Invincible" (*PRU* 1.1.535-56). Ironically, to name Prometheus "the Invincible" is to break the furies' silencing and despairing antics. Prometheus, bound in language and time, perceives, in addressing the tyrant Jupiter, that "[t]he sights with which thou torturest gird my soul / With new endurance, till the hour arrives / When they shall be no types of things which are" (*PRU* 1.1.643-45). Although language binds Prometheus to listening to the furies' verbal abuses, he, in a strongly ethical act, manages to wield language to deflect their verbal onslaughts; to Panthea, he says, "There are two woes: / To speak and to behold; thou spare me one. / Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords" (*PRU* 1.1.646-48). In short, Prometheus would rather forget his terrifying perceptions and concentrate on strengthening his spiritual resolve to create a new order of humanity by drawing on his tangible resource, words.

The First Spirit tells of the connection between the sound, the source of spoken language, and the "soul of love" (*PRU* 1.1.705), and both sound and love begin and end, the alpha and omega, in Prometheus's union with Asia. Consequently, Prometheus is part of the circle of language, the endless process of perceiving and enacting truths. As we know, however, truths are not easily

written or spoken in language and, as is the case in Shelley's text, proliferate in the form of paradoxes. Such difficulty with the dangerously slippery slopes of language is further articulated in Byron's *Don Juan* when the narrator spins the narrative while telling of the intimate silence beyond language that both Juan and Haidée share. For Shelley, this silence enables the shaping of language in creative directions.

In the opening of act 2, scene 1, Asia's and Panthea's dialogue, for example, creates many interesting paradoxes about language, being, and silence. To Aeolian music, Panthea enters, accentuating her presence as inscribing language, for Asia exclaims, "How late thou art! the sphered sun had climbed / The sea, my heart was sick with hope, before / The printless air felt thy belated plumes" (*PRU* 2.1.32-34). Significantly, the "printless air" shows the potential of writing in the calamus of presence, the beating of Panthea's wings, the paradoxical *dis-(s)playing* of presence in language. This paradox about language, metaphorically, extends into the limits of spoken language, which sustains the music of silence or "wordless converse": "But not as now since I am made the wind / Which fails beneath the music that I bear / Of thy most wordless converse" (*PRU* 2.1.50-52). As in Byron's depiction of the limits of spoken language but of the power of language in eye-signing in the Haidée episode in *Don Juan*, so too Shelley marks the limits of speech and of dialogue that supersedes the verbal. Consequently, language, whatever its form, falls into the abyss, the silence eluding the limits of the sayable, but, according to Shelley, not before the sayable creates social action.

In "On Life," in accentuating the limited power of language, of knowledge and words, Shelley writes, "We are on that verge where words abandon us, and what wonder if we grow dizzy to look down the dark abyss of—how little we know" (478). Language, however, is all we have to express most of our human concerns, something which Shelley is cognisant of in "To a

Sky-Lark": "Like a Poet hidden / In the light of thought, / Singing hymns unbidden" (36-38). Language, in other words, may simultaneously reveal our singing and blind us with the brightness of our own thoughts. Consequently, the art of interpretation forces every poet to self-examine her or his employment of language and the paradox of its limits.

Despite the paradox of the limits of language, Asia, understanding the rhetoric of gesture, says, "Lift up thine eyes / And let me read thy dream" (PRU 2.1.55-56). Panthea contains a mirroring piece of the script, the text, for Prometheus's book, the circle of language within which both Asia and Panthea engage their visions of the new order of humanity: "each are mirrors of / The fire [love] for which all thirst" (Adonais 484-5). Asia, unsatisfied with the spoken word, wants to read the text of Prometheus's soul: "Thou speakest, but thy words / Are as the air. I feel them not. . . . oh, lift / Thine eyes that I may read his written soul!" (PRU 2.1.108-110). This reading of the soul that Shelley alludes to in *Prometheus Unbound* is readily apparent in the Haidée episode when Juan and Haidée mirror each other's joy (DJ 2.162, 2.163, 4.13, 4.26). The verbally silent but visually creative dialogues between these lovers enable them to develop an intimate contact, one beyond the ken of social speech, with each other. The paradox remains that the reading of another language, that is, the language of the Other, continues to make its impact known. Better still, writing and speech give significance to those silent spaces in social communication. In this way, *Prometheus Unbound*, like *Don Juan*, stresses the rebirth of silence beyond but initially coming from language, from the poesis of language. In *Wordsworth's Influence on Shelley: A Study of Poetic Authority*, Kim Blank writes, "Prometheus is a textual symbol for both utterance and writing, for the possibility of signification" (145). Prometheus is a site for dialogue and signification and for the writing and re-writing of dialogue.

Asia's words on reading Prometheus's textual self imply that the

visual/written is passed along a mirroring chain of communication from eyes to eyes to different eyes in endless possibilities based on both expression and interpretation in an act of metareading:

Thine eyes are like the deep blue, boundless Heaven
 Contracted to two circles underneath
 Their long, fine lashes—dark, far, measureless,—
 Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.—
 (PRU 2.1.114-17)

In the above passage, eyes, blue leaves of the boundless ocean, can, paradoxically, both contain and interpret writing, "inwoven" in the structure of the text and the process of reading. And reading is a kind of weaving, creating a never-ending excess of interpretation that often requires a metareading.

The self-reflexive act of reading, inscribed in Panthea's second dream, proliferates both in the sphere of human endeavour and nature's domain: "on each leaf was stamped—as the blue bells / Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief— / O follow, follow!" (PRU 2.1.139-41). Further, in Asia's dream the message is written on the "shadows of the morning clouds" (PRU 2.1.151), which are cast on a purple mountain slope. A second level of reading, then, takes place in dreams that are themselves the first level of reading.

One key passage in *Prometheus Unbound* displays self-reflexivity extensively; specifically, Asia recognises Prometheus's gifts to humanity, and one gift, language, especially makes possible the measuring of the universe with the instruments of speech and thought: "He gave man speech, and speech created thought, / Which is the measure of the universe" (2.4.72-73). Demogorgon, which I read as the "wind of eternity," however, shows the limits of language—that language cannot capture the "deep truth" (PRU 2.4.116), for truth is "imageless" (PRU 2.4.116) in the valley of language, the abyss. And love, according to Demogorgon, forever changes in shape, not substance. Shelley writes:

—If the Abysm

Could vomit forth its secrets: but a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? what to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

(*PRU* 2.2.114-20)

According to Demogorgon, the secret of language is a Pandora's box, without a bottom, without imaged truths. For Demogorgon, words signify relative to the ever changing world. More specifically, even Demogorgon must use language to say the basic truth that continues to empower yet escape language: "All things are subject but eternal Love." Demogorgon's statement alerts Asia to the difficulty of explaining the unchangeable in terms of the transitory. Demogorgon is an enigma, just as his use and views of language are enigmatic.

Significantly, Panthea, in act 2, scene 5, delineates the fullness of the relation between language and nature, a perspective that exists dialogically with Demogorgon's awareness of the limits of metaphoric truths:

How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel, but see thee not.
.
Thy presence thus unveiled.—The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veined shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the chrystal sea,
Among the Aegean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name, love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined Earth and Heaven[.]

(*PRU* 2.5.16-28)

In her recounting of Asia's nacreous birth from the world of the sea into the world of wind and land, Panthea tells of the linguistic gestation of power with

Asia's presence, especially since the shores both hold and, in that not so subtle pun, reveal her name. In *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis: The Maturing of an Epic Vision*, Stuart Curran explores some pertinent etymological branches of the name *Asia*:

Shelley's sources for Asia have been much debated but are unlikely to be easily settled, since again he means to multiply allusions rather than restrict them. . . . Other affinities abound in eastern religions. *Isha* is the term for woman when she is first mentioned in Genesis (2.23), and *Aish* is Hebrew for man: both terms derive appropriately from *Aesh*, meaning fire. *Asa-devi* was remarked to be the Indian goddess granting man's *asa*, or desire; *Hasya* to be the Indian muse of love [.] (45-46)

Asia, with the various resonances that Curran indicates, arises into the worlds above the waves by breaking the surface of the sea, standing in a "veined shell". She sails on the sea and, metaphorically, inscribes the shores with her presence, for they bear her name and her progeny, words. Shelley's metaphor extends to the worlds of winds above the land, for they carry the sounds of the birth of language, sounds which speak of love. It seems significant, then, that Prometheus is not the only one to provide humanity with the gift of language. Asia's presence is likened to the radiant atmosphere of the sun's fire. Asia's presence or love "illuminated Earth and Heaven." Moreover, Asia, as nature, is part of the circle of language, and the articulation of love, paradoxically, can be felt from inanimate winds. Asia is Prometheus's Other in *Prometheus Unbound*, something which Prometheus recognises: "Asia, thou light of life, / Shadow of beauty unbeheld" (3.3.6-7). Once Prometheus and Asia are free to join each other, their spiritual union, "the embrace of beauty" (PRU 3.3.51), creates the children of expression: "the progeny immortal / Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy / And arts, though unimagined, yet to be" (PRU 3.3.54-56).

As the quality of the human imagination becomes refined, so too does

the expression and reception of sensory language, whether that encoded language is pigment, stone, or sound. In a Blakean sense, Shelley, for example, describes "swift shapes and sounds which grow / More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind / And veil by veil evil and error fall" (*PRU* 3.3.60-61).⁶⁸ And, as Shelley shows in *Prometheus Unbound*, error can fall only after it comes into the consciousness and then is recognised and eliminated. In "On Life," Shelley affirms the role of philosophy in eliminating error: "Philosophy, impatient as it may be to build, has much work yet remaining as pioneer for the overgrowth of ages; it destroys error, and the roots of error" (477). Consequently, in the elimination of error, language plays a principal role in developing the imagination, the "great instrument of moral good" (*DP* 488).

Prometheus must repent and recognise that forgiveness as an act of compassion will set in motion the awakenings of a new order of humanity. He must, in a sense, learn "[t]o forgive wrongs darker than Death / or Night" (*PRU* 4.1.571). To free himself, he must envision in his imagination something greater than the wrongs done against him. In short, Prometheus must, according to Demogorgon, learn to love or abide by all else that is less, namely, rage, hate, fear, and pain. For Prometheus, then, the "means of achieving freedom, of becoming unbound, are thus other creative acts of language" (Blank 136). Finding himself bound in a dark time, Prometheus, as we have seen, acquires the responsibility for rewriting the script of his destiny. He detaches himself from the verbal force of Jupiter's "sneer of cold command" ("Ozymandias" 5). The beginning of the end of the Jovian rule of language

⁶⁸In *Jerusalem*, William Blake writes: "One Error not remov'd will destroy a human Soul!" (46.11). Los works to create a language for redeeming Albion from self-despair: "Los built the stubborn structure of the Language, acting against / Albion's melancholy, who must else have been a Dumb despair" (*J* 40.59-60).

occurs when the Phantasm of Jupiter delivers the curse that Prometheus swore against Jupiter. But, significantly, a power beyond the Phantasm's, an unknown being within the being, discloses the original Promethean rage and misuse of language against Jupiter: "A spirit seizes me, and speaks within: / It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud" (*PRU* 1.1.254-55). The reference to lightning, I think, alludes to Demogorgon because Asia's descent to the abyss of language is like "veil'd Lightning" (*PRU* 2.4.83), and speaks of the necessity of striking out the curse, a preliminary condition to Prometheus's freedom. In addition, Apollo describes Jupiter in the process of being dethroned as an eagle "blinded by the white lightning" (*PRU* 3.2.14-15) on his way to the void of language, unable to understand the new order of humanity, unable to read the new applications of language.

Prometheus's freedom, then, is contingent on both retracting the curse and re-igniting his will and imagination, creating the opportunity for a reunion with Asia in a way in which the veiled maid and the Poet in *Alastor* never can. Both Asia and Prometheus change social conditions through the regenerative strength of love. Love, then, transmutes the fallen condition of humanity in *Prometheus Unbound*, ensuring that there is social responsibility in humanity's employment of language and power.

In his poem, Shelley envisions individual and universal liberation, founded on the premises that love and compassion create attitudinal changes in the use of language and correspond with words and human action. Shelley's desire conceives a literary world in which those words and human actions *should* design humanity's economic, political, and social realities. *Prometheus Unbound* renders a piquant vision in which humanity becomes "Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed. . . / Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless" (*PRU* 3.4.95), sustaining the self-conscious limits of the Shelleyan voice admonishing us to discover love when in crisis. And from this crisis, as we have seen, the

Shelleyan liberty in language resides in continuously reading and rewriting our textual selves.

This rewriting of our textual selves has social implications for Byron, Blake, and Shelley. When it furnishes the reasons for social action, writing is a political agency for social change. Language is, in this sense, a spark for social revolution, not those revolutions that leave a legacy of bloodshed but those that shed the stagnant social skins of brute power. Language, Byron, Blake, and Shelley imply, is the Promethean fire: a gift with which to create social interactions from the extreme of volatility to that of serenity. Consequently, instead of peace being the absence of war, peace, according to these Romantics, becomes narrative praxis against human attitudes that unthinkingly or willfully promote war. The ultimate purpose of this narrative praxis is not the liberation of mental activity but mental activity realised materially in social acts. One is no longer merely reading to receive insights but reading to rewrite one's place in the cultural lexicon of *real* action.

This romantic *audacity* challenges some of our modern critics' romance with professional pessimism, a pessimism denouncing the material responsibility of self in relation to the Other. Byron's narrative praxis in *Don Juan* is combined with scepticism to counteract despair. In *Jerusalem*, artistic effort is rewarded with faith in the artist's ability to realise peace. In *Prometheus Unbound*, the giver of language is not just a man but a woman. And a woman—even when anthropomorphically portrayed as a city—embodies that rare peace that some of the major characters such as Juan, Albion, and Prometheus in these works are inspired to reach: Haidée, Jerusalem, and Asia. In each of the cases I have considered—Byron's *Don Juan*, Blake's *Jerusalem*, and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*—a woman embodies not the peace that a man has but, in these British Romantic writers' sober reflections about the asperities of war, that he lacks.

CHAPTER SIX

BYRON'S ETHICAL IMAGINATIVE REALISM
IN *DON JUAN* AND GLOBAL MAGIC REALISM

To withdraw *myself* from *myself* (oh that cursed selfishness!)
has ever been my sole, my entire, my sincere motive in
scribbling at all.⁶⁹

I think composition a great pain.⁷⁰

Between two worlds life hovers like a star . . . [.]⁷¹

He had written it in Sanskrit, which was his mother tongue, and
he had encoded the even lines in the private cipher of the
Emperor Augustus and the odd ones in a Lacedemonian military
code. The final protection, which Aureliano had begun to glimpse
when he let himself be confused by the love of Amaranta Úrsula,
was based on the fact that Melquíades had not put events in the
order of man's conventional time, but had concentrated a century
of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant.
. . . Then the wind began, warm, incipient, full of voices . . . [.]⁷²

⁶⁹Byron, 27 November 1813, *BLJ*, 3: 225.

⁷⁰Byron, "To Thomas Moore," 2 January 1821, *BLJ*, 8: 55.

⁷¹Byron, *DJ* 15.99.

⁷²Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* 382.

Chapter six seeks to show Byron as a coincidental but significant precursor to the high density of narrative diegesis, political efficacy, and reader-writer relations found in some global magic realist texts. I begin with explanations and analyses of the functioning of magic realism in world literature. I compare Byron's *Don Juan* and some key texts of the global magic realists. By looking at images of flight, political implications of cooking, the writer's role in hosting—perhaps even figuratively seducing the reader—in particular, I show how Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* shed light on Byron's innovative narrative strategies in Byron's *Don Juan*.

I

What, if anything, does Byron have to do with writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, Italo Calvino, and Salman Rushdie? The question may be asked, why study *Don Juan* in relation to the global magic realists' texts such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, and *Midnight's Children*? Two prime reasons surface. One, both Byron's *Don Juan* and these other texts display the self-reflexive imaginative hand of the writer that traces the processes of writing. Two, in light of the current understanding of the residual traces and positioning of the elements of the real world in enriching the self-reflexive narrative of texts that employ magic realism, the process of comparison should help us to re-evaluate Byron's *Don Juan*, for it is an imaginative, realistic poem, as well as employing playfully an ethically sustaining self-reflexivity; in this way, the poem is a harbinger of the ethically exploratory, immensely self-conscious and realistic narrative found in global magic realist texts. In weaving this self-reflexive ethical narrative, Byron's *Don*

Juan employs *imaginative realism*. His writing is *imaginative* in the sense that it significantly transforms the particulars of mimesis and reshapes them to emphasise, through praxis and self-reflexive poiesis, the diegetic power of the imagination, the realm of mythology, or the creative power of language—all factors capable of shaping reality, re-visioning it, or flaunting the limits and process of writing; it is *realistic* in the sense that he attempts to describe objects or events of the real world, portraying this real world with substantial detail or with lived experience, an experience born from an interactive relation between the self and the world.

In this realm of imaginative realism, we can find kindred spirits in writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, Italo Calvino, and Salman Rushdie, who all employ magic realism to explore seriously the critical social issues relevant to their respective writing. The texts that I want to examine are *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Midnight's Children*, and *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* in their aesthetic and ethical relation to *Don Juan*. The aesthetic relation consists mainly of the principle of self-reflexivity but is also influenced, in many instances, by the combination of the principles of scepticism, unpredictability, and digression between or amongst these texts; the ethical relation stresses the active role of the reader.

The main difference between Byron's imaginative realism and magic realism resides in the casual attitude that narrators in magic realist texts exhibit toward magical phenomena; this attitude does not appear in quite the same way in Byron's texts, and is a feature of a distinctively *modern* kind of writing. Byron, however, although he was unaware of the potential impact of these magical elements in writing, is a remarkably modern writer, accenting the playful role of imagination and passion in the exploratory narrative impetus in *Don Juan*.

To capture *Don Juan's* narrative diversity and ethical playfulness with

language, let us employ our modern sensibilities and work back into the text of *Don Juan*. To do this, I want to explore critically the notion of *magic realism*, and to use that notion in order to show how *Don Juan*'s narrative captures the enspirited play of imaginative, bold, and innovative narrative strategies that house his ethics of mutability.

II

With its definition under substantial contention, some critics associate the phrase *magic realism* with fantastic elements in a literary work. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (5th ed.), M. H. Abrams writes that magic realism involves "a sharply etched realism with fantastic and dreamlike elements" (122). Similarly, Geoff Hancock, in his introduction to *Magic Realism: An Anthology* states that magic realism "is a blend of fantasy and everyday reality, and indeed [that] magic realism is the conjunction of these two worlds in one place" (7). Without entering fully into the debate about whether magic realism does or does not incorporate fantastic elements and without inadvertently becoming a victim of semantics, I think that it is crucial to recognise other strong factors at work in magic realism and even to consider placing essentially fantastic literature, which maintains its own consistent laws in a self-contained world, at a realm removed from the serious and realistic social import of magic realism. In magic realism, words amplify or accentuate reality to give it an added dimension of magic and of wonder.

Today, one of the best writers of magic realism is Gabriel García Márquez, and he believes in the necessary connection between magic and realism. In *García Márquez: Writer of Columbia*, Stephen Minta delineates the significant task of making the magical real in language:

The term *magic realism* has frequently been applied to books like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and the following pages are certainly not intended to deny the importance of the imagination, of myth and magic and wonder, in such a work. They should, however, provide the basis for an understanding of something which is also important, to which García Márquez has drawn attention many times over the years, often in the face of disbelief or incomprehension: "every single line. . . in all my books, he has said, "has a starting point in reality." (2)

Magic realism thus does not seek to evade reality but to confront it, expose it, and enrich it, questioning and exploring the serious, as well as the humorous, aspects of our everyday world.

The imagination shapes reality. The idea that magic transforms the real is nowhere more definitively stated than in Márquez's words with Mendoza in

The Fragrance of Guava:

[Márquez]. . . Over the years, however, I discovered that you can't invent or imagine just whatever you fancy because then you risk not telling the truth and lies are more serious in literature than in real life. Even the most seemingly arbitrary creation has its rules. You can throw away the fig leaf of rationalism only if you don't then descend into total chaos and irrationality.

[Mendoza] Into fantasy?

[Márquez] Yes, into fantasy.

[Mendoza] You loathe fantasy. Why?

[Márquez] Because I believe the imagination is just an instrument for producing reality and that source of creation is always in the last instance, reality. . . . children don't like fantasy either. What they do like is imagination. The difference between one and the other is the same as between a human being and a ventriloquist's dummy. (31)

Márquez makes a case for literary truths, collectively a formative power in constructing social attitudes and shaping, interacting, and revisioning the role of the imagination in social relations. Without drawing an elaborate scheme, I think that Márquez retains two vital distinctions in his writing. The first distinction is between truth and error. The second distinction is between

imagination and fantasy. The relation between these two distinctions may be bridged: solitary illusion, according to Márquez, is associated with error and fantasy, communal love with truth and imagination.

III

In *The Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon refers to Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as "that most influential of postmodernist novels" (88). And his influential novel treats solitude in a seriously engaging light. With the constant burgeoning of magical phenomena, Márquez's novel does not attempt to alter reality to confound his readers but to create a human richness that substantially shapes that reality. In this way, the novel explores the hardship of undeveloped social relations. The hardship is not in enduring solitude but in learning how to overcome it in a broader communal experience of love. Márquez depicts the Buendías' failings in the latter. The narcissism born in solitude is a self-destructive gazing upon the self, revealing the narcissistic desire to control exteriority exclusively through self-interpretation. Márquez connects this excessive self-love to aggression against the Other. In a fashion that is similar to Byron's treatment of the language of the eyes in the Haidée episode, Márquez shows that self-concern should balance itself with concern for the Other. In helping to improvise one's relation to the Other, compassion creates a humane social continuity in which one may expect, in return, the same acceptance. Yet personal obstacles, usually in the form of self-serving power and tyrannical narcissism, abound in fragmenting and thus alienating the relation between self and Other.

In the *Fragrance of Guava*, Márquez provides insights into the kind of egoism which undermines solidarity and promotes an aggressively self-serving

alienation:

[Mendoza] Let's talk about the book [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*]. Where does the solitude of the Buendia family come from?

[Márquez] From their lack of love, I think. You can see in the book that in a whole century the Aureliano with the pig's tail is the only Buendia to have been conceived with love. The Buendias were incapable of loving, and this is the key to their solitude and their frustration. Solitude, I believe, is the opposite of solidarity. (75)

Love, according to Márquez, may save human beings from their own self-destructive and outwardly aggressive tendencies. The gypsy sage Melquíades understands the cycle of violence better than any other character in the novel. The unknown narrator, with the structural reflexivity of the making of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* from his commentary about the sage's acts to secure the benefits of language for the Buendías, shows us Melquíades's understanding of human compassion and language in his role as a teacher:

. . . Santa Sofía de la Piedad thought that Aureliano was talking to himself. Actually, he was talking to Melquíades. One burning noon, a short time after the death of the twins, against the light of the window he saw the gloomy old man with his crow's-wings hat like the materialization of a memory that had been in his head since long before he was born. Aureliano had finished classifying the alphabet of the parchments, so that when Melquíades asked him if he had discovered the language in which they had been written he did not hesitate to answer.

"Sanskrit," he said.

Melquíades revealed to him that his opportunities to return to the room were limited. But he would go in peace to the meadows of the ultimate death because Aureliano would have time to learn Sanskrit during the years remaining until the parchments became one hundred years old, when they could be deciphered. (328-329)

The prophetic voice of the unknown narrator makes itself known in the novel. The unknown narrator and the magical sage are linked. Melquíades has the

power to exit and enter the novel despite claims about his death. Subdued by the state of affairs that creates the Buendías' solitude, he attempts to teach Aureliano. In this sense, the magical sage is a prophet of reading signs and teaching them to Aureliano, who had the impression of the linguistic magician long "before he [Aureliano] was born." The womb, by implication, is the chamber of communication and communion. In the above passage, he returns to teach Aureliano how to read the secret linguistic codes of the parchments or "the speaking mirror" (OHYS 383). Melquíades performs the role of the prophet of peace who, according to the unknown narrator, "would go in peace to the meadows of the ultimate death." This entry into peace is contingent on Aureliano deciphering the sage's parchments, and the bond between teaching and learning creates solidarity.

The process by which the ever mutable and magical sage Melquíades teaches Aureliano to read the parchments is also the process by which the novel that we read comes into being and eventually finishes on the final page. Such self-reflexivity, in our reading that oversees or connects with other readings in the structure of the novel, brings to light the workings of language. Specifically, "Melquíades, the great operator of exchange, does not found the signified but the sign that produces it. His function is to demonstrate the interchangeable character of signs, the perpetually substitutive nature of writing" (Ortega 9). In *Don Juan*, Byron, as narrator, often writes self-reflexive passages about the changing context of the written word in its ability to depict accurately social relations, yet the changing face of language reflects the heterogeneous responses that the evolving social use of language brings forth. The imaginative application of language reconstructs social relations. In a similar light, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* limns Melquíades's noble and creative efforts to change the stagnant, unimaginative relations in which the Buendías find themselves entrapped. He brings to Macondo an awareness

about language as a gift. *Kondo*, which is the singular of *makondo*, "means 'banana'" (Minta 144). Within this banana-company town, strange events occur because of Melquíades, whom Márquez describes as a "heavy gypsy with an untamed beard and sparrow hands" (OHYS 11). The image of the sparrow hands is magic realism at work. These hands write the magical parchments, the reading of which becomes at the end of the novel the reading of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. His appearance is timely, for he initiates the exchange of words, thereby creating a cultural exchange of memories and of histories in a "world so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point" (OHYS 11). Shaman, sage, and analyst, he creates with his magic in Macondo both an order for creative expression and an awareness about language and perception. Moreover, as we shall soon see, he challenges the laws in Macondo that promote solitude. He uses magic drinks, employs printed plates from a daguerreotype machine, and chants encyclicals to help the Buendías gain an awareness of the social and pragmatic workings of language.

Colonel Aureliano Buendía, Melquíades's pupil at the start of the novel, shows a desire to assimilate knowledge and to uphold liberal ideals. Things, however, change, because, although his political intentions at the outset of the novel are basically humane, over time Colonel Aureliano Buendía loses his interest in language by abandoning his poetry and turns to casual sex, self-aggrandizement, and fear of the Other, thus demarcating his solitude:

Only he knew of that time that his confused heart was condemned to uncertainty forever . . . he decided that no human being, not even Ursula, would come closer to him than ten feet. In the centre of the chalk circle that his aides would draw whenever he stopped, and which only he could enter, he would decide with brief orders that had no appeal the fate of the world. (OHYS 159)

The ring of solitude affirms Colonel Aureliano Buendía's narcissism and the

law of solitude. And this narcissistic solitude is a *fixed* stance against the Other. Lacan writes that the narcissistic image, constituted such because of the lack of love in the subject, becomes "fixed, the ego's ideal, from the point at which the ego stops as ego ideal. From this point on, the ego is a function of mastery, a play of presence, of bearing (*prestance*), and of constituted rivalry" (E 307). It is in "constituted rivalry" that the specular image and the ego, which is the "golem of narcissism" (E 124), create the gossamer fantasies of procuring chosen objects from demands originating in Lacan's imaginary register.⁷³

In contrast to Lacan's imaginary register, his Symbolic Order⁷⁴ is not

⁷³In his "Translator's Notes" to *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), Sheridan writes, "Lacan regarded the 'imago' as the proper study of psychology and identification as the fundamental psychical process. The imaginary was then the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined" (ix). The ego, as an "organization of passions" (E 19), in desiring the objects desired by the other competes aggressively for those objects. Lacan writes about the solitude of the ego created by the mirror stage as it begins to define the ego's relation to the imaginary register: "It is clear that the promotion of the ego today culminates, in conformity with the utilitarian conception of man that reinforces it, in an ever more advanced realization of man as individual, that is to say, in an isolation of the soul ever more akin to its original dereliction" (E 27). Lacan limns his mirror stage in the following way: "The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation—and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic—and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development" (E 4).

⁷⁴In *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), Malcolm Bowie writes: "Lacan calls the domain of the signifier, in which this perpetual restructuring of the subject takes place, the Symbolic order" (115). Further, Alan Sheridan writes, "The notion of the 'symbolic' came to the forefront in the Rome Report. The symbols referred to here are not icons, stylized figurations, but signifiers, in the sense developed by Saussure and Jakobson, extended into a generalized definition: differential elements, in

pertinent to my analysis of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, for it cannot explain the self-reflexive structure of the novel. Specifically, I do not agree with some of Lacan's views on the psycholinguistic functioning of the Symbolic Order, especially with the belief that we lack a metalanguage⁷⁵ to articulate our desires, but I do see considerable merit in his view of the ego as a mechanism of frustrated energy which alienates itself in the imaginary register from the flow of *jouissance* (E 42) and from the ensuing flow of images. This imaginary register is pertinent to Márquez's treatment of solitude as a destructive activity in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Showing the way out of this quagmire of solitude, Melquíades teaches the living arts of self-knowledge, of mutual concern, and of social communication with the Other.

themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations, and forming a closed order—the question is whether this order is or is not complete. Henceforth it is the symbolic, not the imaginary, that is seen to be the determining order of the subject, and its effects are radical: the subject, in Lacan's sense, is himself an effect of the symbolic" (ix).

⁷⁵Lacan writes, "Let us set out from the conception of the Other as the locus of the signifier. Any statement of authority has no other guarantee than its very enunciation, and it is pointless for it to seek it in another signifier, which could not appear outside this locus in any way. Which is what I mean when I say that no metalanguage can be spoken, or, more aphoristically, that there is no Other of the Other" (E 310-11). The problem with Lacan's account is that we have, in a culturally accepted context, words that refer to other words and such self-reflexivity is something Lacan relies on to get his message across in reference to "metalanguage"; by positing that the gap is absolute between signifier and signified—in taking Saussure's initial postulation—and inverting that relation Lacan does not question the premise on which he bases his outlook. Is the gap between the signifier and the signified absolute? Can we genuinely substitute *any* signifier for any signified. Yes, theoretically, it is possible, but practically speaking, it is impossible when the reader of the signifiers does not have the cultural tools to read them with comprehension—often from lack of sufficient cultural experience that broaches the reading experience. Moreover, taken to the extreme, Lacan's position leads to solipsism.

Melquíades, prior to his death and after spending numerous hours writing his "enigmatic literature" (*OHYS* 75), ages quickly: "His skin became covered with a thin moss, similar to that which flourished on the antique vest that he never took off" (*OHYS* 75). Melquíades's narrative praxis enables José Arcadio Segundo to learn the history of Macondo, and it is the fabric of narrative—exemplified by the mossy vest and the mossy face of the dying sage—which holds the truths about Macondo that José Arcadio Segundo teaches to Aureliano Babilonia who begins to emerge out of his cocoon, out of his "cloister of solitude" (*OHYS* 321):

Actually, in spite of the fact that everyone considered him mad, José Arcadio Segundo was at that time the most lucid inhabitant of the house. He taught little Aureliano how to read and write, initiated him in the the study of the parchments José Arcadio Segundo had managed, furthermore, to classify the cryptic letters of the parchments. He was certain that they corresponded to the an alphabet of forty-seven to fifty-three characters, which when separated looked like scratching and scribbling, and which in the fine hand of Melquíades looked like pieces of clothing put out to dry on a line[.] (*OHYS* 322)

It is during this critical passage in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* that Melquíades is resurrected when "both [Aureliano and José] had the atavistic vision of the old man" (*OHYS* 322). Such intersubjective experience of knowledge breaks the circle of solitude for little Aureliano, who learns to read the old man's parchments. Moreover, Márquez maintains the necessity of communicating knowledge and history to the community, creating the rich texture of this communication with socially humane ideas. According to Márquez, then, the role of the reader involves communal responsibility, a responsibility akin to that which Byron proposes in *Don Juan*, where the action of language forms an indelible bond with the language of action.

IV

Central to the creation of social values in Byron's *Don Juan*, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is the courting of the reader. In employing self-reflexivity and unpredictability and in housing social concerns about the acts of reading and writing as they pertain to narrative, the aforementioned texts comparably and distinctively court readers in accentuating diegesis. The ethical narrative tendencies in these texts arise from a cultural, as well as a crosscultural, diegetic appeal to respective readers.

Midnight's Children, like *Don Juan*, forges an ethics of reader-response that questions and explores the act of writing in relation to its readers. Early in its narrative, Saleem Sinai, the narrator, articulates: "I mustn't reveal all my secrets at once" (14). This remark follows in the spirit of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where narrative time is instrumental in unfolding the secret of Melquíades and of the unknown narrator. Saleem connects this self-reflexivity to cooking up an edible narrative, thus emphasising figuratively the diegetic poiesis of the text:

And my chutneys and kasaundies are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribblings—by day amongst the picklevats, by night within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks.

But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next.

(MC 38)

This narratorial consciousness about the reader shows the function that the writer is fulfilling in creating a narrative praxis that preserves and alternatively renews cultural insights and values. In the metaphoric depiction of cooking as a writer's task in feeding his or her audience, Rushdie revels in the playfulness

of feminising, in his traditionally familial society, a patriarchal task by inscribing the communication or, if you will, the flavour of ideas in the linguistic kitchen of exotic words. Allegorically employing synaesthesia, Rushdie beckons his readers, as not only digesters of the visual white spaces and dark curving ink but also participants in a rich, sensory mental world, to partake figuratively of his salt-and-pepper text. We are, in essence, provided with the opportunities for savouring the writer's prepared linguistic feast. Rushdie, like Byron in his subversions of epic tradition, undermines the notion of writing as a purely male occupation. The literary kitchen preserves the truths of fiction. Cooking, so often an Indian woman's task, preserves familial relations. Rushdie appreciates this role reversal and writes sensitively of the task of cooking while making jocular remarks about being bullied into linear narrative. Here, the writer, as feminine host, feels the demands of Padma's expectations and of his broader audience. And in satirising or in delineating the narrator, Rushdie shows the import of fiction in embellishing—or spicing up—reality in the passing of time.

His employment of magic realism somewhat similar to Rushdie's, Italo Calvino playfully reveals diegesis in *If on a Winter's Night A Traveller (IWNT)* in the figure of the hand: "If I were only a hand, a severed hand that grasps a pen and writes . . . Who would move this hand?" (171). Implicit in Calvino's question is the role of the author in producing the text, of the inevitability of human experience, and of the human employment of language. So, in this sense, Italo Calvino portrays the complexities of self-reflexive writing, showing the intricacies of narratorial—and reader-oriented—decisions which influence the process of writing and hence the process of decoding the writer's text.

The ethics of writing come into play for Calvino in making the reading experience an intimate and valuable one that delineates the cultural role of the writer in making the text and of the reader in re-creating it. The praxis of

narrative is valorised in the reader's consciousness about the role of the reader in relation to the writer's text. Amplifying reality, the spyglass in the passage below serves as the writer's imaginative lenses into the narrative of the world. The narrator shows his passion for the woman he is watching, and speaks of her actions in watching the butterfly as the transformative moments that give birth to the words that express his thoughts:

I put my eye to the spyglass and train it on the reader. Between her eyes and the page a white butterfly flutters. Whatever she may have been reading, now it is certainly the butterfly that has captured her attention. The unwritten world has its climax in that butterfly. The result at which I must aim is something specific, intimate, light.

(IWNT 172)

It is this creation of a frame-within-a-frame that captures, to borrow a phrase from Genette, a *narrative metalepsis*. Calvino focuses on the image of the butterfly. This image captures the climax of the unwritten world and the imagistic seed of its written futurity. He shows the intangible flux of events beyond the reach of "unwritten words," but writing is the rhythmic movement of words that become known, seductively invading the reader's silence. And they may *enlighten* the reader because without light, words cannot be read, cannot be intimate, cannot be specific but an unread mass of undifferentiated space. Spying across the horizon of space in order to write, the narratorial consciousness, in metaphorically stressing the idea of reading and writing as vigilant watchfulness and reading of the linguistic landscape, reads the woman who reads the movement of the white butterfly—allegorically and ambivalently *light*—captured in narrative transformation. In *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, this process of reading the Other Reader leads to the intricate courtship of these two lovers: "Now you are man and wife, Reader and Reader. A great double bed receives your parallel readings" (260). As his excerpt suggests in its transformative seeing of or feeling for the Other,

Calvino promotes the ethics of intimacy in his writing. This intimacy between the two lovers stresses the irreplaceability of each reader, who enables a courtship that manifests itself in parallel readings.

In *Don Juan*, Byron explores in images of flight or travel the supple courtship between writer and reader, promoting the ethics of mutability in the praxis of his unpredictable narrative. Crafting a diegetic narrative with a diversity of muses, he aims to create qualitative change in the relation between the reader and the writer. Byron employs the image of a butterfly to underscore the power of narrative, over time, to create unpredictability and to create imaginatively a sense of surprise in the reader: "My Muse, the butterfly hath but her wings, / Not stings, and flits through ether without aim, / Alighting rarely" (*DJ* 13.89). Rarely, Byron seems to be suggesting, does his narrative employ predictable means. Further, the purpose of his narrative is not to sting but to stress, like Shelley, the bountiful opportunities for the intricate exploration of language and society in his narrative's excess and in his resilient ethics of mutability.

Rushdie acknowledges the unpredictable narrative sites of change in language. His references to time⁷⁶ and writing proliferate in *Midnight's Children*, and he shows the narrator's *tamasha* in creating a narratorial web or in employing *maya*—as a cultural trickster—and filling in his narratorial gaps⁷⁷ to enlighten the reader about the imaginatively fictional quality of recounting

⁷⁶Rushdie writes that "no people whose word for 'yesterday' is the same as their word for 'tomorrow' can be said to have a firm grip on the time" (*MC* 106). Although he does not mention it, the word that Rushdie is referring to is *kul*. The absence of the clue *kul* like the word itself simultaneously accentuates polysemy and the spatial compression of narrative time.

⁷⁷Rushdie writes, "Most of what matters in our lives takes place in our absence: but I seem to have found from somewhere the trick of filling in the gaps in my knowledge" (*MC* 19).

human truths.⁷⁸ But, at times, Rushdie simply leaves or advertently creates narratorial gaps. The former is apparent when he writes, "To save time, I shall place all of us in the same row at the Metro cinema" (MC 180); the latter in the words, "Sabkuch ticktock hai" (MC 97). Rushdie translates these words in his next sentence, and reveals, since the unfolding of the freedom at midnight may not occur as well as many may anticipate, that they contain a satiric crosscultural pun. The English "ticktock," spoken by Mr. Methwold about the transference of power or India's independence, refers to the Punjabi/Hindi *teak ta(l)k* or wellness as expressed in Indian time—as in the translation "Everything's just fine" (MC 97). But purposefully this translation, like the miscalculation of Mahatma Gandhi's death⁷⁹ (deliberately uncorrected since no

⁷⁸"Tamasha," in this context, is a playful joking or the tricks that the narrator plays on his audience. "Maya" refers to the concept of veiled illusion or the philosophical notion that life is "karmic [karma is the law of compensation for good and evil deeds] illusion." In the time of Kali-Yuga [the dark age], karma exerts considerable control in spellbinding the spiritual seeker to seek material gain: "Padma, who along with the yaksa genii, who represent the sacred treasure of the earth, and the sacred rivers, Ganga Yamuna Sarasvati, and the tree goddesses, is one of the Guardians of Life, beguiling and comforting mortal men while they pass through the dream-web of Maya . . . [.] Padma, the Lotus calyx, which grew out of Vishnu's navel, and from which Brahma himself was born; Padma the Source, the mother of Time!" (MC 194). Rushdie's narrator in *Midnight's Children* spins the web of his magic realist fiction with the intention to mislead his readers at times and then to tell them he has done exactly that or to simply admit that there are things and events he does not know or understand: "I must content myself with shreds and scraps: as I wrote centuries ago, the trick is to fill in the gaps, guided by the few clues one is given" (427).

⁷⁹Rushdie deliberately lies or distorts truths in order to show the fictionality of writing or the metaphoric content of reality: "Reality can have metaphoric content; that does not make it less real" (MC 200). We can apply his statement to narrative as well. He writes, "But today, I feel confused. Padma . . . and in her absence, my certainties are falling apart. . . . Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi

day is a good day for Gandhi to die), is not quite accurate because Rushdie keeps an eye on his reader who can cross the boundaries of two languages; hence the translation should be "Everything is fine," and the literal translation of "Everything's just fine" is "Sabkuch an teak [pronounced 'antique'] hai." The missing *just* turns on the question, is partition just? Is the time the right time now? What narrative time is just right for the freeing of the children of midnight? But events do not go like clockwork, and Rushdie places his discursive, diegetic narrative into emerging and evolving patterns that explore writing as the chutnification of narrative.

About the chutnification of narrative and its open-ended creativity, Rushdie writes:

What is required for chutnification? Raw materials, obviously—fruit, fish, vinegar, spices. . . . I am able to include memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass-production all who consume them will know what pepperpots achieved in Pakistan, or how it felt to be in the Sundarbans . . . believe don't believe but it's true. Thirty jars stand upon a shelf, waiting to be unleashed upon the amnesiac nation.

(And beside them, one jar stands empty.)

The process of revision should be constant and endless; don't think that I'm satisfied with what I've done! . . .

There is also the matter of the spice bases. . . . In the spice bases I reconcile myself to the inevitable distortions of the pickling process. To pickle is to give immortality, after all, fish, vegetables, fruit hang embalmed in spice-and-vinegar; a certain alteration, a slight intensification of taste, is a small matter, surely? The art is to change the flavour in degree, but not in kind; and above all (in my thirty jars and a jar) to give it shape and

occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date . . . Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" (MC 166). In "Abracadabra," the final chapter of *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie writes, "To tell the truth, I lied about Shiva's death" (443). That writing is fictional does not mean that it offers less real experiences than life does—just different ones.

form—that is to say, meaning. (MC 460-61)

Rushdie shows the writer infusing narrative with the flavour of meaning. The thirty jars are his thirty chapters in *Midnight's Children*. Just as cooking recreates food into various blends of flavours (and some of them yet to be discovered), writing, in its power to draw on unpredictable resources and prepare them endlessly for another empty jar, revises the cultural contexts of words. The distortions of cooking accent, in a manner of speaking, certain tastes—diegesis accents the making of narrative. According to Rushdie, the text is cooked for consumption. It takes time to make, and it takes time to digest the victuals of reading.

His readers—with their particular penchant for or disliking of the courses of certain narrative—engage at the writer's festival of food. Rushdie explores a simile about language, likening narrative to a *laddoo*.⁸⁰ He writes about the various tastes of different readers:

Reverend Mother began to dream her daughters' dreams. (Padma accepts this without blinking; but what others will swallow as effortlessly as a laddoo, Padma may just as easily reject. No audience is without its idiosyncrasies of belief.)

(MC 55)

Rushdie seems to be implying that the writer cooks up certain narrative beliefs that any audience is capable of accepting or rejecting. The really interesting point is that in Rushdie's view of his audience, he is, in essence, serving them a variety of narrative dishes, whether they be laddoo (Anglicised *laddoos*) or something to the other extreme—red peppers to stimulate the tongue. Culturally, the sharing of food is a prelude to intimate dialogue. Take, for

⁸⁰Laddoo is an Indian sweet. It is often given to guests at tea time or before, during, or after festive occasions such as the birth of a child or first born, an engagement, or a wedding.

example, Byron's narrator in *Don Juan*: "I'm fond of fire, and crickets, and all that, / A lobster-salad, and champagne, and chat" (*DJ* 1.135). Byron's conversational tone continues throughout his poem to maintain the reader's interest and, more important, to play the role of the host who expects his readers to read interactively with the text for both entertainment and social examination. In the English Cantos, Byron introduces his desire to explore the world of fine cuisine by stating that he must find a way to get through his "gourmand stanza" and decides in the next stanza that he will settle on a moderate account:

But I must crowd all into one grand mess
 Or mass; for should I stretch into detail,
 My Muse would run much more into excess,
 Than when some squeamish people deem her frail.
 But though a 'bonne vivante,' I must confess
 Her stomach's not her peccant part: this tale
 However doth require some slight refection,
 Just to relieve her spirits from dejection.
 (*DJ* 15.64)

Byron's Muse figuratively requires refreshment for the continuation of "this tale" or narrative. She needs "slight refection" to lift "her spirits from dejection." And the Muse's good life has nothing to do with the diseases of the stomach. Byron focuses on the human condition that enables narrative to take place and food becomes fuel for narrative. What is being accentuated? Byron accents narrative as a process of arrangement—with differences—and consumption: "The guests were placed according to their roll, / But various as the various meats display'd" (*DJ* 15.74). "Roll" is a brilliant pun that cascades in a number of directions, ranging from the scroll of guests and its self-reflexive printing to any food that is rolled up. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* displays a similar tendency. Rushdie exploits the diegetic expression of reading as the cultural sampling of texts, texts contingent on heterogeneous responses to the passive

or varying degrees of interactive consumption of narrative. His narrator is, after all, "a [mischievous] lexicographer of the nose" who invents "the science of nasal ethics" (MC 318), pressing for the chutnification of narrative, smelling with "a nose capable of discerning the hidden languages of what-must-be-pickled, its humours and messages and emotions" (MC 460). One purpose of Rushdie's narrative is to offer figuratively the patterning of narrative, the "pickles of history" in "acts of love" (MC 461)—to give form to the writer's journey.

Byron's *Don Juan* displays a similar form of acute ethical self-reflexivity in his playful address to his audience about some of the virtues of fine cuisine in comparison to the spoils of war:

And then there was Champagne with foaming whirls,
As white as Cleopatra's melted pearls.

Then there was God knows what 'a l'Allemande,'
'A l'Espagnole,' 'timballe,' and 'Salpicon'—
With things I can't withstand or understand,
Though swallow'd with much zest upon the whole;
And 'entremets' to piddle with at hand,
Gently to lull down the subsiding soul;
While great Lucullus' *Robe triumphal* muffles—
(*There's Fame*)—young Partridge' fillets, deck'd with truffles.

What are the *fillets* on the victor's brow
To these? They are rags or dust. Where is the arch
Which nodded to the nation's spoils below?
Where the triumphal chariot's haughty march?
Gone to where victories must like dinners go.
Further I shall not follow the research:
But oh! ye modern heroes with your cartridges,
When will your names lend lustre even to partridges?

Those truffles too are no bad accessories,
Followed by 'Petits puits d'Amour'—a dish
Of which perhaps the cookery rather varies,
So every one may dress it to his wish,

According to the best of dictionaries,
 Which encyclopedize both flesh and fish;
 But even sans 'confitures,' it no less true is,
 There's pretty picking in those 'petits puits.'
 (DJ 15.65-68)

Byron sets up his criticism of Lucullus by stressing the open choices available to the diners at the party, admitting that he falls to the temptation of these dishes without necessarily understanding what is in them. Lucullus' *Robe triumphal* is a jab at his conquests of the Orient while spreading cherry trees to other lands. In *Lucullus: A Life*, Arthur Keaveney often writes admiringly of Lucullus—even defending the latter's war with Tigranes, which Byron is, in part, implicitly satirizing—and is quick to point out that Ammianus Marcellinus "knew Lucullus not just as a soldier but as the benefactor of the cherry" (154). Yet Tertullian criticizes Lucullus' bacchanalian extravagance with cherries, and Athaneus criticizes the commander for his luxurious living (Keaveney 153). Byron's rather different mode of criticism carries over to the next stanza where fillets mean nothing to Lucullus' brow or "the victor's brow" as he pushes Roman boundaries eastward and Roman soldiers to the point of extreme exhaustion and hunger. Byron then intrudes into the narrative to proclaim that partridges are more worthy of our appreciation than "modern heroes" with their "cartridges." The truffles are the kind of accessories Byron values, not the accessories for rifles, and he suggests that these truffles be followed by the varied 'Petits puits d'Amour' with or without jam or with dressings of various sorts. As is apparent in the English Cantos, Byron's ethics come to the forefront with his emphasis on diegesis or on his business of writing: "my business is to *dress* society / And stuff with *sage* that very verdant goose" (DJ 15.93). Displaying his spice of humour and conversational facility by lightly broaching serious topics, Byron is cooking in the linguistic kitchen and presenting to his audience his social values. In the above passage,

the diegesis appears in Byron's narrative in reference to the cataloguing of food and to the unpredictable combinations of the diners' taste or goût and the choosing therein, something which Lucullus' soldiers had lost in the face of an ambitious commander.

To express the motif of writing as diegetic journey and to show an emerging narratorial voice, Rushdie chooses the metaphor of birth to depict Saleem's creative powers in producing narrative:

By the time the rains came at the end of June, the foetus was fully formed inside her womb. Knees and nose were present; and as many heads as would grow were already in position. What had been (at the beginning) no bigger than a full stop had expanded into a comma, a word, a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter; now it was bursting into more complex developments, becoming, one might say, a book[.]
(MC 100)

Interestingly, the small mark or full stop elongates into a trace of a comma and then into the preludial narrative built from the syntax of sentences, proliferating into the self-reflexive poesis of a book. Uncovered in the moment of birth is the social nexus between life and language. This narrative develops degree by degree into Saleem's narrative secrets that are ripe for the telling, for diegesis. Rushdie's metaphor focuses on the hidden psychological, linguistic currents of life's expression in art. For Rushdie, art's imaginatively diegetic power unveils its poesis. This salient connection between the narrator and the production of writing is central to Rushdie's exploration of the diegesis of narrative, offering both the exigencies of clarifying history and the delicacies of reader interpretation.

Calvino traces a similar path in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. The writer courts the reader; the implied reader, the implied writer. This courtship between the reader and the writer is poignantly expressed in Calvino's extrapolation of the process of putting thought into words:

It is only through the confining act of writing that the immensity of the nonwritten becomes legible, that is, through the uncertainties of spelling, the occasional lapses, oversights, unchecked leaps of the word and pen. Otherwise what is outside of us should not insist on communicating through the word, spoken or written: let it send its messages by other paths.

There: the white butterfly has crossed the whole valley,
and from the reader's book has flown here, to light on the page I
am writing. (IWNT 183)

The courtship between the reader and the writer is embodied in the transformational space between *there* and *here*, embodied in the fluttering and ambivalently light butterfly that anchors on the page as narrative, as the imaginative, *penned*—that confining act—playfulness with words. After crossing the paradoxical valley of thought (w/hole valley) and the immense realm of the intangible, the writer's words are anchored in the sea of white space but open to interpretation in the courting of the reader. Calvino's ethics, which combine self-reflexivity and unpredictability in the relation between the reader and the writer, are enacted in communicating the sensuous and the refinedly erotic. Such ethics focus on the pleasurable and ec-static (that movement out of the all too familiar sequence or outworn employment of words) relation in the reading experience. Roland Barthes, in *The Pleasure of the Text*, makes a similar point about the *jouissance* of reading: "The text you write must prove to me *that it desires me*. This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of the various blisses of language, its Kama Sutra (this science has but one treatise: writing itself)" (6). Calvino extends Barthes's point to include the interactive relationship between writing and reading.

Many magic realist writers, it seems, want to take imaginative flight with words, not as an escape but as an affirmation of the transformative power of words in depicting reality. Butterflies are a popular image in magic realist texts whether in Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or in Calvino's *If on a*

Winter's Night a Traveller. Márquez, in a telling passage, writes:

That night the guard brought down Mauricio Babilonia as he was lifting the tiles to get into the bathroom where Meme was waiting for him, naked and trembling with love among the scorpions and butterflies as she had done for almost every night for the past few months.

(OHYS 271)

The scene in the above passage shows the ardently dangerous possibilities in love and Meme's trembling signifies her courage in nakedly facing and developing the transformational opportunities in her relation with Mauricio Babilonia. Fernanda, Meme's mother, sets the trap that eventually kills Meme's lover and condemns her daughter and him to the solitude of an early death by reducing him to a bed-ridden condition, to the solitude not only of unfulfilled eros but also of unmet needs. Her mother's actions silence Meme since she never speaks after the fatal shot that lodges a bullet in her lover's spine. Moreover, Meme loses sight of the beautiful in her quotidian existence. Márquez writes, "When her mother ordered her out of the bedroom she did not comb her hair or wash her face and she got into the train as if she were walking in her sleep, not even noticing the yellow butterflies that were still accompanying her" (OHYS 273). According to Márquez, this loss of magic, when magic serves to instill life with wonder, diminishes the rich narrative of Meme's life with a hollow speechlessness and a deafening blindness.

Not without his own form of mythological magic with reference to Pegasus, Byron crafts his diegetic narrative to show another winged muse, the inspiring and unpredictable butterfly. As I have mentioned earlier, Byron has "more than one Muse at a push" (*DJ* 10.5). His diegetic, changing artistry is part of his ethics of mutability. He valorises this ethical communication by showing the dramatic function of poetry in reflecting upon the stage the relation between theatre and life. In echoing Shakespeare's *As You Like*

It⁸¹—"All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (2.7.139-40)—but with a twist of his own ingenuity, Byron, feeling an authorial concern about the psyche of his readership, writes metaphorically about the intellectual challenge of good companionship:

Good company's a chess-board—there are kings,
 Queens, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns; the world's a game;
 Save that the puppets pull at their own strings;
 Methinks gay Punch hath something of the same.
 My Muse the butterfly hath but her wings,
 Not stings, and flits through ether without aim,
 Alighting rarely . . . [.]

(DJ 13.89)

The above passage explores the dramatic action of writing and reading; on both sides, there is the anticipation of narrative unfolding. Narrative works somewhat like chess, with move and countermove in a dynamic between the writer's words and the reader's responses. Leslie Brisman cites Andrew Elfenbein in mentioning the social freedom working in the above passage for those who choose good company.⁸² From one perspective, the metaphor of the

⁸¹In *Byron: Don Juan* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), Anne Barton writes, "He [Byron] could afford, in Italy, to shock Leigh Hunt by pointing out that he did not own a copy of Shakespeare because of the massive amount already stored in his memory, most of it (as *Don Juan* continually demonstrates) on hair-trigger, associative recall. The poem is seamed, to an extent rivalled only by its use of the Old Testament, with Shakespearean quotation and allusion. . . . Shakespeare's generosity towards his characters, that reluctance to pass final judgements on them which Keats described as 'negative capability', was on the other hand something Byron found increasingly sympathetic. Certainly it is the way in which he looks at individuals in his own poem" (33).

⁸²In "*Maud: The Feminine as the Crux of Influence*," Leslie Brisman writes, "Elfenbein points out that 'Byron's tricky passage allows freedom to those in 'the world,' meaning the social world of 'good company,' ' whereas 'Tennyson's speaker characteristically deflects the social criticism latent in Byron's lines to a universal condition; the terrible game is not high society but existence itself.' [quoted from Andrew Elfenbein, *Byron: Byronism, and the Victorians* (Yale

chess game suggests a stimulating intellectual sparring that exists between the members that are good company. From another perspective, the microcosmic board reflects the macrocosmic relations of power, whether they be powers within the psyche or forces within the larger world. From a third perspective, Byron shifts the structural relation between the players of the game, that is, the writer and the reader, and the pieces on the narrative board by speaking of his winged muse, emphasising the constant change of narrative in creating narrative detours when courting the reader. Moreover, Byron relates the concept of unpredictability—within the probabilities held by the total moves on the board—in chess to that of reader courtship, changing the direction of narrative so that it challenges reader expectations of story-telling. Oddly, even the concept of an affected self-animation is an artistic concept: if we, in Byron's paradoxical sense, are puppets on life's stage and formed out of its ensuing forces, then we are makers of our own artistic action because we pull our own strings. The borders of the game change, however, as Byron moves from the metaphor of the chessboard to that of the butterfly, from the two dimensional world to the unpredictable trajectory of the Muse in the metaphoric third dimension—space, that is, narrative space—and the spacing of the plot in the fourth dimension of narrative time. Ultimately, Byron shows that human beings as players on the stage of life with their own texts have a limited freedom, but one for which they are responsible. Narrative's intertext is the

University Dissertation, 1991) 307]. Yet if *Don Juan* Canto XIII lightens the issue of freedom, it is taken a little more seriously in Canto V, where Juan and Johnson are manipulated on another gameboard, the slave market: 'Like a backgammon board the place was dotted / With whites and blacks, in groups on show for sale' (v 73-74). Johnson and Juan cannot (at least not at this point) determine their fate. They are, literally, slaves whose destiny lies in the eyes of the beholder—Gulbeyaz, who admires and buys. But they are also philosophers, pondering the relationship between their romantic adventures and the romanticism of the mind apart' (35).

cosmopolitan board of life, and the dynamic forces on this narrative board may create social praxis, constellating a heterogeneous social narrative.

The global magic realists and Byron articulate the ethical role of the writer in hosting the reader. These writers make way for their readers' active roles in the process of exploring the text. The adventures of those roles are mapped in the diegetic appeals to their readers. These appeals trace the social locus of narrative, for, despite the unpredictable, interpretative outcomes, the texts are served in due course with signs of their own making.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DON JUAN'S TRAVELLING SIGNS:
THE BANISHMENT OF TRUTH AND THE ETHICS OF MUTABILITY

A man must travel, and turmoil, or there is no existence.⁸³

I cannot help thinking that the *menace* of Hell makes as many devils as the severe penal codes of inhuman humanity make villains.— —Man is born *passionate* of body—but with an innate though secret tendency to the love of Good in his Main-spring of Mind.— —But God help us all!—It is at present a sad jar of atoms.⁸⁴

Don Juan speaks to its audience through the motif of travel. We are asked to take the narrative journey of self- and social examination. Byron is a cartographer of ethical concerns about the human will and its relations of power to others in instances of slavery and colonization. Byron analyses the coercive politics of the British in their colonies. While we journey within Byron's narrative, he creates rich, self-reflexive contexts that enable his readers to see the ethics—or lack thereof—in certain types of travels that range from Ariosto's narrator's narrative journey in *Orlando Furioso* to de Foix's ambition in

⁸³Byron, "To Thomas Moore," 31 August 1820, *BLJ*, 7: 170.

⁸⁴Byron, "Detached Thoughts," no. 96, *Selected Letters and Journals*, 278.

conquering Ravenna. In the case of the latter, he explores the stagnant philosophical frame that promotes human bloodshed and severs the potential for dialogue at the human roundtable that should reflect the healthy evolution of social relations in a pluralistic society. Byron's ethics resist human certainty, without making uncertainty into an absolute condition, and subvert human complacency. In the poem's courtship, Byron voices his ethical concerns about the dangers of accepting an unexamined, appropriated systemic violence in social relations that serves the few, not the individual, not the poet, not the reader.

I

Journey—the word depicts Byron's narrative address to his reader about the act of writing for the purposes of both humorous social examination and serious reassessment of social failures. In *Byron's Don Juan and Eighteenth-Century Literature*, A. B. England delineates the relevance of the voyage metaphor to Byron's exploration of social values: "In *Don Juan* Byron often uses the voyage metaphor simply as a means of suggesting that humanity is engaged in a continuous attempt at successful navigation" (29). In *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, Camille Paglia states that, "[l]ike *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which made Byron famous, *Don Juan* is structured by the archetypal journey theme. But *Don Juan's* journeying has *speed*" (355). She even touts the poem's appearance as a watershed of a changing perception of space: "*Don Juan* marks the first appearance in art of modern speed" (355). In travelling through the narrative of *Don Juan*, the reader embarks upon the social roads of language and society. The territory is not always mapped out fully, however. What is left for us to

imagine is almost as important as what is given. The narrative journey is meant to be both an intellectual exercise and an experience of rhythmic feelings. Intellectual passion and human emotion are not fallen angels for Byron. As well as a prolonged, changing, complex deliberation, without general, conclusive prescriptions, about human action, the narrative examination of social values entails, figuratively speaking, a travelling through and with both the ideas that the poem presents and the emotions that it evokes. More precisely, Byron wants his readers to examine the social norm in order to promote individuality in the passionate pursuit of social good.

Displaying a flair for conversational ease, Byron appeals to the reader and *writes* her into the process of reading narrative. Juan, for example, departs from St. Petersburg, and Byron appeals to the reader to join in the journey:

While this high post of honour's in abeyance,
 For one or two days, reader, we request
 You'll mount with our young hero the conveyance
 Which wafted him from Petersburgh . . . [.]
 (DJ 10.49)

Byron employs the word *conveyance* in a double sense in affirming the reader–writer compact. We imaginatively see ourselves not only riding in a mode of transportation (a carriage) from St. Petersburg but also participating, figuratively speaking, in a mode of communication or in his writing that carries us, after the supposed inter-*mission* or transformative pause of the implied "one or two days," through narrative time. Byron's address to the reader—that is, "we request / You'll mount with our young hero"—typifies Byron's courting of the reader in persuasive acts of communication. The rhetorical "we request" holds out the invitation to take the diegetic, imaginative journey.

Byron writes, for example, about the discursive quality of his narration and of the thinking that goes into the act of writing his narrative:

So on I ramble, now and then narrating,
 Now pondering:—it is time we should narrate:
 I left Don Juan with his horses baiting—
 Now we'll get o'er the ground at a great rate.
 I shall not be particular in stating
 His journey, we've so many tours of late:
 Suppose him then at Petersburg; suppose
 That pleasant capital of painted Snows;

Suppose him in a handsome uniform;
 A scarlet coat, black facings, a long plume,
 Waving, like sails new shivered in a storm . . . [.]
 (DJ 9.42-43)

The immediacy of the narrating is apparent with the word *now*, which also reflects the diverse narrative levels in *Don Juan*. The repetition of *now* gives the poem a synchronic but ordered immediacy from the narrating action to the authorial involvement in the story and back to the action of the story itself: from "now and then narrating" to "Now pondering" and from the latter to "Now we'll get o'er the ground." We travel in the narrative moments that continue to unfold the reflexive language that tells the story. The imaginative appeal or repeated "Suppose" addresses the reader to join in the diegetic exploration of the producing action that tells the story. Juan's plume serves as a *mise en abyme* of the journey motif, creating the frame within a frame that bespeaks the narrative impetus for the imaginative, self-reflexive travel in *Don Juan*.

Byron, as I have been saying, relies heavily on diegesis to emphasize the idea that the journey, not the destination, is the important matter; Byron writes that on his journey through England Juan "paused—and so will I" (DJ 10.84). Byron hints at this connection between writing and travelling earlier in canto ten when he writes:

Now there is nothing gives a man such spirits,
 Leavening his blood as Cayenne doth a curry,

As going at full speed—no matter where its
 Direction be, so 'tis but in a hurry,
 And merely for the sake of its own merits:
 For the less cause there is for all this flurry,
 The greater is the pleasure in arriving
 At the great *end* of travel—which is driving.
 (DJ 10.72)

By way of comparison with travelling, the writer's crafting of narrative, as has been apparent in the numerous references throughout *Don Juan*, charts the experiential voyage that the reader is encouraged to embark upon. Byron implies that the reader's journey, like the writer's, or the leavening of blood, is transformative in much the same way as cayenne gives zest to a curry. Thus, in accentuating praxis and poiesis, Byron believes in the practice of writing "for the sake of its own merits [.]". Like Rushdie's in *Midnight's Children*, Byron's enspirited exploration of the explosive cayenne pepper of the narrative dish implies the writer's task, in the rhetorical art of courtship, of cooking for the reader and whetting her interest. We may be travelling with Byron's narrative at the beginning with energetic speed, but it certainly takes many slow motion turns as it develops into a journey of exploring language, not with the initial "flurry" but with *settled* travelling. The journey motif accentuates *Don Juan's* changing narrative praxis.

Well into the narrative of *Don Juan*, Byron, for example, displays this praxis by writing, "But now I will begin my poem" (DJ 12.54); and later he writes, "Here the twelfth Canto of our introduction / Ends. When the body of the book's begun, / You'll find it of a different construction" (DJ 12.87). Byron works often with the idea of changing the poem in the middle of the narrative to give it new beginnings and to accent the process and purpose of writing the poem. And this regeneration of the narrative gives *Don Juan* its rare ethical quality. Providing an unusual perspective, Byron is inspired not only by his muses but also by the opportunity to teach them: "'Tis a 'great moral lesson'

they [muses] are reading" (DJ 12.55). Yet the ambivalence of the passage works also to imply that the Muses are reading these lessons to their audience. This self-reflexive poetic interlude draws attention to the musical poiesis of the text and to the gentle narratorial cantering as the producing action of the narrative leading into and through the overture:

But now I will begin my poem.—'Tis
 Perhaps a little strange, if not quite new,
 That from the first of Cantos up to this
 I've not begun what we have to go through.
 These first twelve books are merely flourishes,
 Preludios, trying just a string or two
 Upon my lyre, or making the pegs sure;
 And when so, you shall have the overture.

.....
 I thought, at setting off, about two dozen
 Cantos would do; but at Apollo's pleading,
 If that my Pegasus should not be foundered,
 I think to canter gently through a hundred.
 (DJ 12.54-55)

This close connection between reading and writing as a journey of implied companionship—of "what we have to go through"—plays a significant role in Byron's humorous courtship of the reader and in the reader's recognition of the writer's rhetorical pauses or transformative moments in composing the poem for its audience. In the above passage, there is a strong connection between song—"trying just a string or two / Upon my lyre"—and imaginative flight, the cantering of Pegasus. The author controls this rhythmic ottava rima because he thinks to canter through—and he canters to write—his cantos. He rides the imaginative poetic flight that is offered to his audience as, figuratively speaking, words take wings.

Don Juan is a journey that explores social values. In Byron's varied repetition and employment of the principles of scepticism, unpredictability,

digression, and self-reflexivity, he creates an ethical rendition of an artist's journey with playful language. For Byron, words, with the agency for social change being in their *productive* relation to people (the social agents of those linguistic seeds), are in a sense social actors which form the narrative of our lives and both clarify and complicate the role of the aesthetic in the realm of the quotidian real. And in light of these productive social relations, the above principles are an extension of the ideas that narrative can express certain values and appeal to our passion and intelligence. Byron's narrative strategies express the values of narrative interaction between the reader and the text, and such narrative interaction consolidates the ethical import of the reader-writer compact. In general terms, he employs narrative strategies infused with satiric import to create a self-reflexive poetic modernity unparalleled in his time, a poetic modernity exploring social hypocrisies in linguistic dress. Writing, for Byron, is an evaluative art, creating the possibilities for the restructuring of the relationships between (or amongst) the self—or multitude of selves—and the Other. The reader-writer compact connects with the values of not only human tolerance, human regeneration, and human co-operation but also social justice, and these values are fundamental to Byron's narrative impetus in *Don Juan*.

The question of social justice prevails at the end of the poem, as Byron reflects on a cause célèbre—on Galileo's trial for heresy in 1633—and on humanity's ironic habit of placing itself at the centre of things instead of travelling outside of its fixed ignorance:

Great Galileo was debarred the Sun,
 Because he fixed it; and, to stop his talking,
 How Earth could round the solar orbit run,
 Found his own legs embargoed from mere walking:
 The man was well-nigh dead, ere men begun
 To think his skull had not some need of caulking;
 But now, it seems he's right—his notion just:
 No doubt a consolation to his dust.

(DJ 17.8)

Although the Roman Catholic Church shut out the sun from Galileo's life and prevented him from disseminating his beliefs after his publication in 1632 of *A Dialogue on the Two Principal Systems of the World*, and although the Church prohibited him from walking as a free individual, the enlightened mind, according to Byron, is willing to risk offending ignorant people. Galileo finds the solution for a problem which the Europeans had not yet fathomed, and, in return, he is imprisoned in his villa. He fixes the sun and the problem of the earth's orbit around it, but the Church sends inquisitors to guard him. Now that dialogue is absent from the scientific community and the world at large, Galileo is deprived of the right to walk freely upon the earth. By implication, the closing out of dialogue signals the loss of freedom in travelling in the realm of human truths and in affirming different points of view. The Church's intolerance of the idea that the Earth travels around the sun leads to Galileo's loss of physical freedom, but the mind may travel to spaces where others have never been. The eventual desire to caulk his skull is ironic, for the sealing of the skull has nothing to do with the living knowledge that the man offered to humanity, for the eventual acceptance of the truth cannot provide "consolation to his dust." Penning his thoughts about social reformation, Byron, as we shall see later, writes with a critical eye about British colonialism in a similar light to his treatment of the Church's abuse of Galileo. Byron's defense of free speech is central to his aesthetic exploration of how narrative may in fact achieve that.

II

This defense of free speech and social examination forms *Don Juan's* reader-writer compact: it signals a "counter-heroic humanism" and an aesthetic impulse for social reformation (Cooke, *BMTC* 182). Byron underscores some

primary beliefs about the value of aesthetic enterprises for social action: "And I will war, at least in words (and—should / My chance so happen—deeds) with all who war / With Thought" (*DJ* 9.24). In *The Ethics of Romanticism*, Laurence Lockridge reveals the British Romantics' desire to reassess ethical questions and to go beyond the limits of standard social responses to the application of ethical ideas for social change:

The Romantics have left a fair amount of their own willful theoretical discourse in the field of ethics. They write 'metaethical' commentary that goes beyond normative recommendation to questions concerning the nature and justification of moral statements and the meaning of moral terms. (8)

Byron explores ethical problems to redefine ethics as a field of writing—as-social-action that not only should but must undergo revaluation for the purposes of personal and social growth. Contingent on our collective social responsibility and tolerance, this social growth fosters the reassessment and crystallisation of abstract terms such as *justice, morality, truth, freedom, goodness, power, passion*, amongst others. For Byron, the self and Other become intensely significant in their relations that make the prospective opportunities for social peace, for intellectual vigour, and for the affirmation of the Other. The emphasis, according to the maturely articulated values in *Don Juan*, should be increasingly placed on the Other instead of the self to create better social balance.

For Robert Gleckner, as he limns in *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise (BRP)* the significance of compassion to Byron's enterprise in *Don Juan*, ethics enter the text in acts of compassion more than in subversive manoeuvres: "for whatever else it is (a satire upon society's foibles, man's inhumanity to man, cant and hypocrisy, political tyranny, etc.), *Don Juan* must also be seen as an immensely compassionate poem" (336-337). And I agree, in the main, with Gleckner's sensitive assessment of Byron's compassion.

In *Fiery Dust* (FD), Jerome McGann, in the spirit of Gleckner's aforementioned remark, argues for Byron's valorisation of balance, producing, in acts of compassion, the acceptance of the multitude of others. I am reminded of Burke's remark that "the only thing that makes sense is a sense of moderation."⁸⁵ Byron, McGann writes, acknowledges in *Don Juan* that tolerance—and more importantly, when it leads to acceptance—creates social balance and an ensuing freedom that may be maintained by self-discipline or intelligent *self-control*:

His equilibrium [Byron's] is a function of his tolerance and forgiveness. Only Romilly, Castlereagh, and the spirit of tyranny remain unforgiven. . . . Byron's view is that one can only establish a sovereignty of the self by acknowledging the sovereignty of others. (296)

Self, then, acts in relation to others, and this central tenet fuels the narrative engine in *Don Juan*. Byron does not advocate solipsism. He does not advance cynicism as a viable alternative to social customs. The relation between the sovereignty of the self and the sovereignty of others indicates Byron's defense of free speech and of individual freedom, both of which are continually exercised and supported when one employs imaginative energy to regenerate the human spirit. He does not attribute to self a place higher than should be accorded to the throng of others, both the voiced and the voiceless searching for a voice.

Byron valorises this sovereignty of others in the episode of Gulbeyaz's purchase of Juan. Baba, the black eunuch, eyes Juan as a prospective sex slave. In this episode, Johnson is *conversing* with Juan:

⁸⁵Personal communication with Kenneth Burke in the spring of 1989 at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., when asked about the possibility of the ethical in the rhetoric of the image in comparison with the power of the negative in language.

'All this is very fine, and may be true,'
Said Juan; 'but I really don't see how
It betters present times with me or you.'
'No?' quoth the other; 'yet you will allow
By setting things in their right point of view,
Knowledge, at least, is gain'd; for instance, now,
We know what slavery is, and our disasters
May teach us better to behave when masters.'
(DJ 5.23)

Central in the above passage is the notion that knowledge and experience may bring a better understanding or "right point of view" in mitigating and eventually removing social repression such as slavery. This appreciation of and concern for the workings of power in social relations—of the relation between master and slave—may create the opportunities to bear the responsibility to balance concern for one's self with concern for the Other. And Byron continues with Johnson's response in this dialogue:

'But after all, what is our present state?
'Tis bad, and may be better—all men's lot:
Most men are slaves, none more so than the great,
To their own whims and passions, and what not;
Society itself, which should create
Kindness, destroys what little we had got:
To feel for none is the true social art
Of the world's stoics—men without a heart.'
(5.25)

Johnson sees value in creating conditions for acts of social good and human kindness, although society promotes stoicism and, in the process, destroys kindness. Byron then questions people's acts of slavery—in particular the merchant's in his haggling for more money from Baba, who is there to procure chosen objects for Gulbeyaz's desires. Note that the grumbling between Baba and the merchant contrasts with the dialogue between Juan and Johnson:

At last they settled into simple grumbling,
And pulling out reluctant purses, and

Turning each piece of silver o'er, and tumbling
 Some down, and weighing others in their hand,
 And by mistake sequins with paras jumbling,
 Until the sum was accurately scann'd,
 And then the merchant giving change, and signing
 Receipts in full, began to think of dining.

I wonder if his appetite was good?
 Or, if it were, if also his digestion?
 Methinks at meals some odd thoughts might intrude,
 And conscience ask a curious sort of question,
 About the right divine how far we should
 Sell flesh and blood. When dinner has opprest one,
 I think it is perhaps the gloomiest hour
 Which turns up out of the sad twenty-four.

(5.29-30)

Byron examines the psychology and political economy of slavery. The merchant's mercenary "signing" or signature enslaves Juan to a new master and the divine right has been transposed for us to see Byron's scepticism in questioning the "right divine," which is contrasted with Johnson's "right point of view," to "Sell flesh and blood." Baba and the merchant, who both seem to share "their hand," seem like stumbling fools inarticulately closing their transaction almost like the rumblings of a stomach. Byron plays on Gulbeyaz's and the merchant's appetite for slaves and money, but cannot but wonder if there is not any remorse in creating such socially confining chains of slavery when one sits down to eat. There seems to be a link between cannibalism and slavery here. To sell flesh and blood is to devour the hope of freedom and responsible individuality in human beings and make the hour of dinner a sad and oppressive one. One is, in the languages of political economy and human psychology, indebted to a master who cannot control his or her own appetite. Figuratively speaking, slavery devours dialogue, but it is not the sole phenomenon that does so in *Don Juan* by placing power of the self over the other.

War, like slavery, severs this nexus of dialogue between self and other, but, according to Byron, regeneration through compassion strengthens that social bond. As we have seen, Byron's narrative landscapes in the Siege of Ismail denounce the forces of tyranny and of war, and Juan's rescue and defence of the Moslem girl Leila bespeak his desire to protect the innocent. In "Quiet Cruising O'er the Ocean Woman": Byron's *Don Juan* and the Woman Question," Caroline Franklin writes:

For as an anti-epic the poem as a whole calls into question the *masculine* ethos of love as a "thing apart" and in inevitable conflict with duty. The masculine honor of the court, camp, church, vessel, and mart will each be shown in the poem to have degenerated into pragmatism and selfish materialism, as a result of relegating subjectivity to the inferior sphere of the private life. Military glory, fame and ambition are contemptuously portrayed by Byron as motivating the men of an age of bronze, in *Don Juan*, instead of true patriotism and love of liberty. A further irony is that Juan does not fill up his heart with public affairs like most men anyway, but by adopting the female role of a life devoted only to love, manages to keep his innocence and natural goodness. (624)

Franklin identifies the progressive energies of Byron's poem which not only satirise the shortcomings of the Homeric accounts of the hero but also replace them with a hero sympathetic to women and to the possibilities for regeneration through love.

The possibility, then, for regeneration forms a significant feature of Byron's *Don Juan*. Showing an attitude like Byron's distaste for the religious indoctrination of fear of punishment and eternal damnation, Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* identifies the error that God is an eternal tormentor of those who follow their energies (see plate 4). Moreover, like Blake in *Jerusalem*, Byron recognises the critical role human kindness plays in opening the dialogue between self and others, in both accepting and listening to the polyphony of others. Frederick Garber, in *Self, Text, and Romantic Irony*:

The Example of Byron, writes that "the irony of Schlegel and Byron . . . is not a dead end [like de Man's *aporia*] but a very lively one, a dialectic of break-up and renewal that, we recall, Schlegel identifies with a plethora of possibilities" (258). Byron makes regeneration not only possible with his linguistic play with words but probable in the context of valuable human action.

In "Byron and the Phenomenology of Negation," John Watkins notes that "*Don Juan* accepts the limits of our incarnation in time; his encounter with the abyss ultimately affirms the possibility of regeneration" (410). Without the ethics of change or mutability, the regeneration of Byron's narrative becomes impossible. Not once in the broader structures throughout *Don Juan* does Byron simply spin in the abyss—of literary exhaustion—without a way out of it with words. He knows the abyss operates in the language of exchange, but he does not pay eternal homage to it since he wants to show how even the abyss or emptiness can serve as a human tool:

I won't describe—that is, if I can help
 Description; and I won't reflect—that is
 If I can stave off thought, which, as a whelp
 Clings to its teat, sticks to me through the abyss
 Of this odd labyrinth; or as the kelp
 Holds by the rock, or as a lover's kiss
 Drains its first draught of lips;—but, as I said,
 I *won't* philosophize, and *will* be read.
 (DJ 10.28)

That refusal to treat narrative as purely an emptying of his thoughts, since he cannot stave off thought and does indeed reflect, upon paper is part of Byron's creative energies behind his ethics of mutability. He cannot but write passionately of the thoughts that he feels others should read and will read. The similes of the kelp against the rock or of lover's lips drinking passionately a kiss from another generate, in Byron's use of the present tense (*holds* and *drains*) and the word *first*, both the nowness and the newness of passion. Through the abyss and the odd Borgesian labyrinth of language, Byron, with

his critical eye toward social folly, courts his reader to dance the dance of self-examination to partake in the erotics of intellectual interaction with his text. *Don Juan* is not a degenerative but a regenerative poem.

In view of this regenerative energy of his poetry, E. D. Hirsch, Jr. explicates the positive face of Byron's preoccupation with humanity's fall from grace: "in all of Byron's poetry the periodic recurrence of a Fall is predicated on the periodic recurrence of a Redemption. Byron, for all his protective irony, hated the idea of a permanent Hell" (qtd. in Bostetter *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Don Juan* 107). In *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire*, Nigel Leask writes about the "urbane irony" and the "critical reflection" in *Don Juan* that turns Byron's bitterness into laughter:

We saw at the beginning how Byron regarded "mobility" as "a most painful and unhappy attitude": the most that Byron can hope to do in *Don Juan* is to transmute his spleen into laughter and ceaselessly unravel the illusions of his age by acknowledging "the constellation of his own social determinants," to become "the man who discovers his voice in a conscious and dialectical act of poetic ventriloquism" [McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections* 278]. In *Don Juan*, Byron disengaged himself from the varieties of modern cant by holding out the dyer's hands for all to see. (63)

Leask perceptively analyses the relation between Byron's self-reflexivity and his desire to combat social hypocrisies, from the cant in the gazettes to the superficial talk at dinner parties. But I find his statement about Byron's capacity to transmute pain into laughter too safe and a partial truth. Byron's acts of writing *Don Juan* are not hopeful acts but a concentrated practice of reaffirming change as a dialogic force in renewing social relations. This ethical impetus in the poem is nothing less than refulgent. In view of the ethical impetus of *Don Juan*, Garber clarifies the role of a romantic ironist like Byron in revitalising the systemic relations amongst social members in their resistance to change: "It is in gestures of fruitful mockery, images of disorder that are

canny parodies of order, that the work of the romantic ironist finds its function and moral force" (157). Byron's disorder does not descend into hell to exhaust itself in fruitless acts but, by changing the pain inherent in social relations because individuals have once fallen, seeks some grace in the intensity of human passion and intellectual energy.

With war serving as the extreme obstacle to human compassion, I find Byron, the rebel who self-reflexively satirises tradition, culture, and human action, seriously engaged in the attempts to expose the folly of formulaic thought and action. Within the epic form, then, Byron draws our attention to the language of war: " Oh, ye great bulletins of Bonaparte! / Oh, ye less grand long lists of killed and wounded!" (*DJ* 7.82). As we can see, Byron subverts that language, reconstituting the epic to valorise the strength of disciplined human passion which leads to "honest fame" (*DJ* 8.3)—that little kindness which, in an act of spiritual balance, far outweighs the glory of war.

III

As an unpredictable cartographer of narrative who engages our attention in its creation and as a critical analyst of social relations, Byron displays an ethical attitude in his writing which comes to the forefront in his polemic against tyranny and against British colonialism. He condemns the imperialistic venture to secure new lands and its ensuing intolerance towards free thought and self-determination, both necessary to developing a foundation of strong social relations maintained by the liberalisation of responsible individuality in every society:

For I will teach, if possible, the stones
To rise against Earth's tyrants. Never let it
Be said that we still truckle unto thrones;—

But ye—our children's children! think how we
Showed *what things were* before the world was free!

That hour is not for us, but 'tis for you:
And as, in the great joy of your millennium,
You hardly will believe such things were true
As now occur, I thought that I would pen you 'em;
But may their very memory perish too!—
Yet if perchance remembered, still disdain you 'em
More than you scorn the savages of yore,
Who *painted* their *bare* limbs, but *not* with gore.
(DJ 8.135-36)

Byron criticizes in general terms the expropriation of power for self-indulgent ends or for fame. He criticizes, for example, the Sultan and Catherine for their incapacity to distribute and to share power—"mere mortals who their power abuse" (DJ 8.123). In *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur offers a perceptive insight into the workings of power in language and society:

The occasion of violence, not to mention the turn toward violence, resides in the power exerted over one will by another will. . . . The power-over, grafted onto the initial dissymmetry between what one does and what is done to another—in other words, what the other suffers—can be held to be the occasion par excellence of the evil of violence. The descending slope is easy to mark off, from influence, the gentle form of holding power-over, all the way to torture, the extreme form of abuse. (220)

In Ricoeur's sense of coercive power-over, Byron criticises the aforementioned leaders and the social damage resulting from their exercise of power-over against the progressive general will of the people. Byron turns his attention to his future readers to appeal to their sensibilities, aiming for a better future. The self-reflexive act of penning his thoughts into a tangible poetic history of humane values is a serious endeavour, and he depicts the British exerting power over the aboriginal people. He protects a sacred value of the aboriginals, who may have been perceived as being savages for painting their

bare limbs, against their conquerors' aggressive ravaging. The figurative paint is ironically reduced to real consequences. It is reduced to not only the sign of death but, by the sign's absence in the *figured* narrative of the aboriginal people, real blood. In turning the entire meaning of the passage on the "but *not* with gore[.]" Byron satirises the assumption of scorn towards "the savages of yore" by showing the harmlessness of painted bodies and bare limbs in contrast with the bloodshed of colonisation.

By employing the striking image of the volcanic smoke of a country's hellish commercial desire, Byron attacks the British empire to convey the fury with which it seized foreign property and created its own tarnished wealth:

The sun went down, the smoke rose up, as from
 A half-unquenched volcano, o'er a space
 Which well beseeemed the 'Devil's drawing-room,'
 As some have qualified that wondrous place.
 But Juan felt, though not approaching *home*,
 As one who, though he were not of the race,
 Revered the soil, of those true sons the mother,
 Who butchered half the earth, and bullied t' other.
 (DJ 10.81)

It is not hard to imagine why many British critics have simply detested the wit of an extraordinary poet with humane concerns. And in the above passage, the figure of the home country is the mother, whose sons destroy the earth's people, and whose avarice and commercial success outweigh the protection of the earth's soil and the Other in the figure of the East, in the figure of the West, from India to America. Byron is a transnational poet with ethical concerns, seeking the "glowing India of the soul" (DJ 13.39) or underlying ethical fire and light beneath what he characterises as the surface ice of the British: "And your cold people are beyond all price, / When once you have broken their confounded ice" (DJ 13.38). The North-West Passage for this ethics is the enigmatic ocean—"ocean woman" (DJ 13.40)—where the "quiet

cruizing" is a journey of listening to rhythm that prepares the voyage of discovering ethics: "For if the Pole's not open, but all frost, / (A chance still) 'tis a voyage or vessel lost" (DJ 13.39). Byron's Muse has sought to enter into the "hidden nectar under a cold presence" with an ethical passion, to melt, as Byron perceived, the human frigidity of the British. Byron offers his Muse a toast, "a glass of Weatherology" (DJ 13.43). The perspective changes from the coldness of ice to the fluidity of the nectar of champagne, from ice to the broad horizon of the changing elements of weather and to the "glowing India of the soul" (DJ 13.39).

As part of this global outlook, Byron portrays the ocean as an image of transformation, acting as a vehicle that promotes the ethical journey which may serve to counteract human complacency with the imaginative powers of human thought and emotion expressed in narrative. He, as Mark Storey in *Byron and the Eye of Appetite (BEA)* comprehensively demonstrates, counteracts ennui with "emblems of Emotion" (DJ 15.2). In counteracting boredom, we may change, or break our bubbles, and glide along the ocean. And, as I have been arguing throughout this study, Byron values the interconnection between playful creativity in writing and the exuberance of living:

But, more or less, the whole's a syncopé,
 Or a singultus—emblems of Emotion,
 The grand antithesis to great Ennui,
 Wherewith we break our bubbles on the ocean,
 That Watery Outline of Eternity,
 Or miniature at least, as is my notion,
 Which ministers unto the soul's delight,
 In seeing matters which are out of sight.
 (DJ 15.2)

Byron's critical insight is that we break the limits of our previous thoughts. We play with words as bubbles on the ocean, creating in the process the opportunities to capture thoughts, to form and to re-form the new bubbles of

writing, coming from the homogenous ocean of intangible thought to the miniature emblem of human emotion and, of course, human intellect. Byron's "Watery Outline of Eternity" captures those creative and unpredictable contours of narrative. The soul's delight is formalised in the rhythmic ottava rima but made unpredictable in the rhyme scheme. The decentred forms in *Don Juan* give substance to Byron's ethics of mutability. Moreover, it seems to me, this maternal oceanic image of providing succour for the writer's soul is part of the rhetorical *we* of sharing the writer's activity by not only thinking about but also feeling the implications of his words in "emblems of Emotion." The ocean acts as an emblem of eternity, for eternity is out of the sight of human beings. The ocean is a powerful, expansive image of the human mind and provides delight to the human soul because of this. By implication, the action of the ocean—the waves—produces the energy of the human mind to discover the particulars of emotions and thoughts—the effervescence of "our bubbles on the ocean" and the rhetorical "our" in sharing that immense energy.

Notice how common accounts of journeys are in literature, both prose and verse, from antiquity to the present. Byron employs the journey motif with its ensuing change of scenes to quicken the reader's experience of the narrative journey and the narrative pace of his ottava rima. In *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*, Peter Vassallo writes:

Don Juan has much in common with the Italian tradition of narrative romance as exemplified in Ariosto and Berni and as parodied by Casti and Forteguerra. . . in the Catalogue of his books drawn up in 1816, Byron possessed two Italian editions of the *Furioso*. As Giorgio Melchiori pointed out, Byron admired Ariosto's loose, sprawling method of composition and occasionally imitated it implicitly in *Don Juan*.⁸⁶

(94)

⁸⁶See G. Melchiori's "Byron and Italy" in *Byron Foundation Lecture* (University of Nottingham Press, 1958).

The connections between the style of *Don Juan* and of *Orlando Furioso* can, Vassallo argues, be explicitly qualified by studying the mutability that creates a sense of high-paced, random narrative travel in both poems:

The abruptness of the transition from the episode with Gulbeyaz to Juan's sudden appearance at the Court of the Russian Empress has been considered to be a flaw in the narrative structure of the poem attributed to Byron's hasty method of composition. It is possible to argue, however, that Byron was consciously following Ariosto's method of a quick shift of scene from love to war and vice-versa, bridged by a casual and almost inconsequential digression in which the author-narrator picks up the thread of narrative. . . . What Professor Brand says of Ariosto's style could, I think, with some modification be applied to the style of *Don Juan*:

With Ariosto we jump backwards and forwards apparently at random through a bewildering array of episodes in which a love story is followed by a battle or some feat of magic, a tragical suicide, or a farcical knockabout. But it is precisely through this kaleidoscope that a convincing pattern emerges. Ariosto sees life as a random succession of tragic and comic, serious and frivolous elements, and he blends his collection of tales and adventures so as to represent life as it appears to him.⁸⁷ [qtd. in Vassallo 99]

The organising principle of Byron's narrative is equally episodic, and it is in keeping with Byron's own observation that Ariosto's plan was in fact "no plan at all." (99)

This seemingly haphazard wandering is in fact not inconsequential but efficacious, for it is a quality of *Don Juan* and *Orlando Furioso* that reflects the spontaneity of both the courtship of the reader and the mutability of art—art traversing, highlighting, and altering the self-reflexive forms in which it conveys life. The concerns within the poem and the rhetorical dialogues with the reader develop together to show that poetry is meant to be read with the

⁸⁷ See C. P. Brand's "Ludovico Ariosto, Poet and Poem in the Italian Renaissance" in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, January 1968, 4:99-112.

self-reflexive poiesis of the poem in the reader's mind. Byron draws his audience into the text in a way comparable to Ariosto's treatment in *Orlando Furioso* of the poet's charting of his travels over the ocean that serves as the poetic medium for journeying through the changing trials of the social relations of the human heart and the human mind:

I, if my chart deceives me not, shall now,
 In a little time behold the neighbouring shore;
 So hope withal to pay my promised vow
 To one, so long my guide through that wide roar
 Of waters, where I feared, with troubled brow,
 To scathe my bark or wander evermore.
 But now, methinks—yea, now I see the land;
 I see the friendly port its arms expand.

.....
 All seem rejoiced my task is smoothly done,
 And I so long a course have smoothly run.
 (46.1-2)

Ariosto, whose writing is at moments self-reflexive and often discontinuous in *Orlando Furioso*, writes about the task of writing as a sailor of letters who depends on the creative cartography of his discontinuous narrative and on the expectations of his audience to propel him forward in the telling of his story.⁸⁸

⁸⁸The original passage reads as follows:

Or, se mi mostra la mia carta il vero,
 non è lontano a discoprirsì il porto;
 sì che nel lito i voti scioglièr spero
 a chi nel mar per tanta via m'ha scorto;
 ove, o di non tornar col legno interno,
 o d'errar sempre, ebbi già il viso smorto.
 Ma mi par di veder, ma veggo certo,
 veggo la terra, e veggo la terra, e veggo il lito aperto.

Sento venir per allegrezza un tuono
 che fremer l'aria e rimbombar fa l'onde:

On the uncertain waters of creativity, he fears shipwreck and chaotic wandering, but employs his imagination to "see the friendly port its arms expand." His chart or narrative plan leads him back to his readers. Although through force of circumstance Byron never chooses to close his poem, he is a "Columbus of the moral seas" (DJ 14.101). Figuratively speaking, Byron offers the reader the opportunity to sail on the oceanic narrative of his poem:

And wherefore this exordium?—Why, just now,
 In taking up this paltry sheet of paper,
 My bosom underwent a glorious glow,
 And my internal Spirit cut a caper:
 And though so much inferior, as I know,
 To those who, by the dint of glass and vapour,
 Discover stars, and sail in the wind's eye,
 I wish to do as much by Poesy.

(DJ 10.3)

Byron wants to "sail in the wind's eye" and to examine social values with the instrument of poetry, poetry that enables his readers to constellate his acts of writing by giving regenerative contexts to the relations between language and society. In offering *in-sights* into the implied dialogues that take place between the reader and the writer, Byron, with his masterful employment of the ottava rima, explores the spectrum of feelings and ideas that should matter to the human heart and to the human mind.

Byron's courting of the reader is significant in his view of the emotional power of words to evoke change. He courts the reader in the following

odo di squille, odo di trombe un suono
 che l'alto popular grido confonde.
 Or comincio a discernere chi sono
 questi che empion del porto ambe le sponde.
 Par che tutti s'allegriano ch'io sia
 venuto a fin di così lunga via.

(46.1-2)

passage: "And even my Muse's worst reproof's a smile; / And then she drops a brief and modern curtsy, / And glides away, assured she never hurts ye" (*DJ* 11.63). Near the end of the opening canto in *Don Juan*, Byron makes it clear that the writer writes for his readers and must, with the reader's permission, employ his linguistic resources to appeal to the reader to read on:

But for the present, gentle reader! and
 Still gentler purchaser! the bard—that's I—
 Must, with permission, shake you by the hand,
 And so your humble servant, and good bye!
 We meet again, if we should understand
 Each other; and if not, I shall not try
 Your patience further than by this short sample—
 T'were well if others follow'd my example.
 (*DJ* 1.221)

Byron speaks of his economic debt and personal gratitude to the "gentle purchaser" of his text. And later in the poem, Byron acknowledges the diversity of his audience in stressing the different backgrounds of the good people "of every degree," from the readers to the critics: "Good People all, of every degree, / Ye gentle readers and ungentle writers" (*DJ* 12.20). In the above examples, Byron's address to the ideal implied reader is different from his pointed attacks on Castlereagh, Wordsworth, Keats, and other figures in *Don Juan*. In his poem, Byron often persuades his readers tactfully.

In a serene and definitively self-reflexive moment of courting the reader, Byron turns away from that warfare which is hostile to art and turns to an unusually pronounced idealistic image, bestowing on a Keatsian touch a stark message, namely, that Truth with a capital T is a banished woman, whose condition Byron believes he inevitably and rightly shares:

'Tis time we should proceed with our good poem,
 For I maintain that it is really good,
 Not only in the body, but the poem,
 However little both are understood
 Just now,—but by and by the Truth will show'em

Herself in her sublimest attitude:
 And till she doth, I fain must be content
 To share her Beauty and her Banishment.
 (DJ 9.22)

To proceed with Byron's poem is to share Truth's "Beauty and her Banishment"—to journey and to create a new poetic horizon of the relation between self and Other by regenerating the fallen world that is divorced from Truth. Byron is a banished voice speaking imaginatively of the enduring reasons for passionate serenity and for compassion: the repetition of the word *good* accentuates the form or body, from the beginning of the poem, in which Byron is casting the narrative journey of self-examination. In his narrative, Byron limns an enigmatic faith in the potential for good in self-examination, in appealing to the reader to make an imaginative leap to the changing world outside the text, to the humane texture of the Other in the world: "Apologue, fable, poesy, and parable / Are false, but may be render'd also true / By those who sow them in a land that's arable" (DJ 15.89). Human truths may eventually be found by working the imagination—like Socrates's self-examination and social outlook for improving the polis—and sowing the treasured seeds of future insights. Poetry may, according to Byron, reveal contextual truths about the human condition and its correspondingly complex problems and opportunities for continuing resolutions. Not removed from the world of serious social concerns, *Don Juan* is a complex narrative exploration of human power and human peace. Byron's writing may be violently opposed to war, but it is not opposed to the intelligent employment of peace—peace that Byron did not find in writing but sought to fight for by writing *Don Juan*. In the wind's eye, Byron writes with words from that calamus of peace, creating an ethical narrative. This narrative is the textual and social body (no pun intended) for the courtship of the Other. In the figurative world of his narrative in *Don Juan*, Byron is not wondering if truth were a woman but how

she is indeed a banished woman.

With the workings of the four principles, his writing of his epic poem has, according to him, its own moments of paradoxical banishment in the silent struggle to articulate in his narrative praxis social values such as tolerance, compassion, and peace in dialogues with his readers. *Don Juan* is a social and ethical act, from Byron and beyond him, wringing, in the diegetic ethical exploration of narrative, poetic insights and images from out of the ugliness of war and from out of the unexamined exercise of power. Imagine and examine—these two words pulse in the rhetorical courting of the reader through the four principles threading the narrative strategies in *Don Juan*. As Byron's "Muse the butterfly. . . flits through ether without aim" (*DJ* 13.89), he writes a self-reflexive and transformative poem with strongly ethical tendencies. And with Byron's imaginative realism, the narrative flight to the world of the Other is the real journey, the tracing action that breaks from monologue. *Don Juan* breaks the boundaries of human complacency and predictable narrative, serving to highlight the import of human solicitude in narrative art, not for the one who writes but for the Other who reads. Byron's Truth, with its labouring narrative and developing voices, is closely associated with Woman. Apropos of his life and to the narrative in *Don Juan*, Byron does not court us with a premeditated last word, only openings with implied dialogues—dialogues against which critics such as T.S. Eliot⁸⁹ and Malcolm

⁸⁹T. S. Eliot writes, "All things worked together to make *Don Juan* the greatest of Byron's poems. The stanza that he borrowed from the Italian was admirably suited to enhance his merits and conceal his defects, just as on a horse or in the water he was more at ease than on foot. His ear was imperfect, and capable only of crude effects. . . . The continual banter and mockery, which his stanza and his Italian model serve to keep constantly in his mind, serve as an admirable antacid to the high-falutin which in the earlier romances tends to upset the reader's stomach; and his social satire helps to keep him to the objective and has a sincerity that is at least plausible if not profound" (qtd. in

Kelsall have simply reacted and closed out.

Despite some of the bitter lines in his poem, Byron's narrative continues to appeal to and to challenge readers to examine with an ethical eye the world of language. He struggled in the course of his writing. *Don Juan*, I believe, is Byron's attempt to heal himself by forgetting about himself, to find greater courage in facing the fear of destructive change, and to write for an Other the narrative praxis of articulating values such as compassion and tolerance. That he knows he will be read is part of his strategy to write about the way in which we may be reading his writing. His ethics in *Don Juan* are borne from this awareness and penned into his thoughts about the process of writing.

Don Juan creates successfully a narrative ethics of mutability rarely found in literature, focusing on narrative praxis and its relation to the Other beyond itself, to the reader, to social change. The changing mirror and medium of narrative occurs in Byron's ambivalent employment of the word *glass*: "here I must aver / My Muse a glass of Weatherology" (*DJ* 13.43). Alongside the affirmation of change, these lines draw an analogy to the bubble metaphor, to the energetic ocean, and to the champagne glass when Byron offers "another figure in a trice" (*DJ* 13.37). To enter the changing body of the text and its world of ethics, to play with the world of words, to kindle social action—all these reasons intensify Byron's quest for the writer's grail to change what he sees as social hypocrisy—the unexamined acceptance of the human masquerade that is so apparent in the *English Cantos*. Beneath that masquerade is some form of regenerative human energy that may create comedic perspectives. *Don Juan* is Byron's comedic road to reshaping human narrative so that it depicts a cosmopolitan, poetic existence. Life becomes a form of art, and art becomes a form of life—the differences and the dialogues

Bostetter *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Don Juan* 96).

between the two revitalise both. Paradoxically, Byron therapeutically seeks to forget himself in the pleasure of narrative courtship and narrative transformation: woman is a matrix for banished truth and, as forsaken Haidée discovered, homeless passion. However tortured at certain moments by the failure of language to articulate his vision, Byron seeks to constellate the changing social relations and transformative sites of narrative in the ethics of mutability for his audience.

And this ethics of mutability—in the poem's narrative journey of drawing the companionship of the reader into the changing contexts of its travelling signs—may be cause for work and for celebration. The poetry of *Don Juan* is an appeal to examine the mirror or "glass" of our world to see our relation to others in the light of the changes that could produce a broader horizon for both personal and social freedom, without divorcing them from responsibility. Byron chooses the metaphor of the richly coloured poetic mirror to depict the transformative journey that poetry offers:

I canter by the spot each afternoon
 Where perish'd in his fame the hero-boy,
 Who lived too long for men, but died too soon
 For human vanity, the young De Foix!
 A broken pillar, not uncouthly hewn,
 But which neglect is hastening to destroy,
 Records Ravenna's carnage on its face,
 While weeds and ordure rankle round the base.

I pass each day where Dante's bones are laid:
 A little cupola, more neat than solemn,
 Protects his dust, but reverence here is paid
 To the bard's tomb, and not the warrior's column:

.....

With human blood that column was cemented,
 With human filth that column is defiled,
 As if the peasant's coarse contempt were vented
 To show his loathing of the spot he soil'd;

Thus is the trophy used, and thus lamented
 Should ever be those blood-hounds, from whose wild
 Instinct of gore and glory earth has known
 Those sufferings Dante saw in hell alone.

Yet there will still be bards; though fame is smoke,
 Its fumes are frankincense to human thought;
 And the unquiet feelings, which first woke
 Song in the world, will seek what then they sought;
 As on the beach the waves at last are broke,
 Thus to their extreme verge the passions brought
 Dash into poetry, which is but passion,
 Or at least was so ere it grew a fashion.

If in the course of such a life as was
 At once adventurous and contemplative,
 Men who partake all passions as they pass,
 Acquire the deep and bitter power to give
 Their images again as in a glass,
 And in such colours that they seem to live;
 You may do right forbidding them to show' em,
 But spoil (I think) a very pretty poem.
 (DJ 4.103-107)

Byron, as narrator, recalls a memory of the column near Ravenna, where he rides each afternoon.⁹⁰ The narrator's riding is, of course, connected to his inspirational and ethical muse, Pegasus: "My Muse by exhortation means to mend / All people, at all times, and in most places; / Which puts my Pegasus to these grave paces" (DJ 12.39). Gaston de Foix, the Duke of Nemours, fell in the Battle of Ravenna in 1512, when thousands of individuals were killed. Byron writes about de Foix's human vanity in wanting to conquer and to

⁹⁰In *Conversations of Lord Byron* (London: Henry Colburn, 1824), Thomas Medwin writes about Byron's reflections on Ravenna: "Except Greece, I never was so attached to any place in my life as to Ravenna. . . . I was never tired of my rides in the pine-forest: it breathes of the Decameron; it is poetical ground. Francesca lived, and Dante was exiled and died at Ravenna. There is something inspiring in such an air" (26-28).

deface Ravenna. Inscripted upon the face of the deteriorating monument is the carnage of Ravenna. The broken monument speaks of Ravenna's broken spirit and the unbecoming scars of war. Byron contrasts the power of poetry with the glory of war. He contrasts the column with the little cupola that honours Dante. The differences lie not only in the shape of the column but also in the subtext. The script of war is not that of poetry. De Foix sees Ravenna as a trophy but Dante sees the hell created by war. And despite the sufferings of humanity and the power of the warrior to record victories on columns (to tabulate human deaths), the impassioned words of the singing poet live on. In the last two lines of canto 4, stanza 107, to censor poetry is, according to Byron's humorous point, to court neglect and to spoil the beauty of a poem that reaches for a diverse range of realistically colourful and imaginatively powerful effects.

It is possible to court the truth in a context that may lead to the beautiful but banished woman who exudes it. The ethical journey of human passion that is expressed in narrative does indeed appeal to the reader's imagination. As McGann says about the "poetry of energy and strength" in *Don Juan*, Byron's "aesthetic is moral," and "the virtue that a traveller must have is to see everything with attention once."⁹¹ Byron's ethics of mutability demand from his readers such vigilance. He compares poetry to the shore that catches the rhythmic action of the waves or the diverse range of human *e-motions* and to the artistic mirror that portrays both thought and action. By denying the work of the poet, Byron insists, one denies the beautiful banished woman who is Truth and, by implication, the courage to look and to see anew in human narrative that which is captured in the enspirited words of *Don Juan*.

⁹¹Personal interview with Jerome McGann at the University of Victoria on November 3, 1994 from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

One must go beyond what is in vogue to find the poetic, not to follow fashion but to create it in humane and innovative ways. In this sense, Byron succeeds in writing a rich, complex, and brilliant poem with deep social concerns.

The poem's success lies in its resistance to certainty and human complacency. As Byron judges in *Don Juan*, the collective sorrow of systemic intolerance, psychological repression, and physical war created by the injudicious exercise of the human will and human power is a terrible crime, and yet we are not without the laughter and the means to change folly into acts of social good that breathe life into a narrative where the forgetting of the self gives birth to the ethical dialogues with the Other.

Byron's dialogues seek to stress in *Don Juan* the ethics of mutability and the light they shed on the banishment of the truths of self- and social examination.⁹² We may navigate over the waves, where these changing truths may be found in the play of effervescent bubbles or where "we break our bubbles on the ocean, / That Watery Outline of Eternity" (*DJ* 15.2). Byron employs the metaphor of the ocean to accentuate the significance of personal vigilance in contrast with ennui; the human masquerade of polite society or "cold people" (*DJ* 13.38) found in the English Cantos presents the human (*sur*)face of complacency. The ocean, because it is not without its treasures, provides opportunities for the journey to self-discovery and to the discovery of the Other. In the literary pearls embedded in the poem's unyielding, paradoxical narrative surfaces, an Other's face appears and beckons speech from beyond human vanity and objectification, and bestows on the

⁹²Some examples that illustrate the dynamics of Byron's exploration of truth are offered below: "Adversity is the first path to truth" (*DJ* 12.50); "And, after all, what is a lie? 'Tis but / The truth in masquerade" (*DJ* 11.37); "As these new Cantos touch on warlike feats, / To *you* the unflattering Muse deigns to inscribe / Truths that you will not read in the Gazettes" (*DJ* 9.10).

regeneration of both narrative and the human heart the insurmountable opportunities for human generosity, human laughter, and human intellect in dialogues arising from the serious playing with words.

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