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Attraction vs. Repulsion: The Narrative Ambivalence of Gender in Byron's "Don Juan".

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ATTRACTION VS. REPULSION: THE NARRATIVE AMBIVALENCE OF GENDER IN BYRON'S DON JUAN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in

The Department of English

by
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ABSTRACT

Previous studies of gender in Byron's *Don Juan*, such as those by Susan Wolfson and Louis Crompton, have concentrated primarily on identifying gender ambivalence and attributing that ambivalence to factors outside the text, such as Byron's ambivalence toward his personal homoeroticism as well as to the social attitudes of Regency England toward questions of gender ambiguity. In this dissertation, I propose to turn the critical gaze back to the text in order to go beyond identifying gender ambivalence to track how that ambivalence works within *Don Juan*.

In order to bring into focus the serial and episodic nature of Byron's narrative and the consequences that nature has for the presentation of gender, femininity in particular, I look to the theories of Freud and Lacan regarding the oedipus complex and language acquisition. The various episodes of the poem circle around key concerns with the attraction to and the threats from the feminine. In the course of this study, I will look to the narrator's presentation of femininity in the text and give special attention to the simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from the feminine which characterizes its appearance throughout *Don Juan*. 
In chapter 2 I look to the narrator’s presentation of feminine language in *Don Juan* to develop an understanding of the narrator’s presentation of the feminine through the language of women. In chapter 3 I analyze the different modes of masquerade that the narrator uses both to mask Juan and to control femininity in the text. In chapter 4 I evaluate the undercurrent of violence to masculinity which has appeared in the narrator’s presentation of femininity through feminine language and masquerading appearance. While feminine appearance and feminine language can be life affirming and filled with communion and joyful play, the same qualities, by virtue of their attractiveness, can turn in a moment to threaten the men of the narrative with emasculation and annihilation.
Chapter 1
Introduction

In Don Juan, gender representation is complicated by Byron's satirical position with respect to the text, the shifting identity of the narrator, the patriarchal biases that appear in almost all Romantic texts, and the tension created by Byron's own homoeroticism. In recent years, several critics such as Susan Wolfson and Louis Crompton have addressed the ambiguous and even ambivalent depiction of gender in Don Juan by paying specific attention to the influence Byron's homoeroticism had on

1 All quotations of Don Juan are from volume 5 of Jerome J. McGann. Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). For quotations from other poems, I have used the same edition of Byron's works.

2 The problem of the narrator's identity in Don Juan is a difficult one which involves a degree of tension between the voice of Byron and the voice of the narrator as a character, and is one that I will be unable to address in this dissertation. I believe that George Ridenour, in The Style of Don Juan, comes close to a coherent formulation of the narrator by referring to "public" and "private" Byronian voices within the text. When, in the course of my discussion, I refer to the narrator of the poem, I mean to indicate the character, in whom are combined public and private voices, who performs the role of narrator in Don Juan. Accordingly, I consider the narrator the voice of the poem, except when it is very clear that the narrator is ventriloquizing Byron by voicing thoughts which are implicitly Byron's and which conflict with the expressed opinion of the narrating character. When such a conflict occurs, I refer to Byron as the voice of the poem.
that depiction. Although studies such as these have illustrated some of the ways that gender ambivalence operates within the text, they have primarily done so by arguing that Byron blurs gender categories, thus confusing the distinctions between masculine and feminine. Wolfson in particular argues that when such blurring of gender occurs within the text, i.e. when Juan cross-dresses in the Oda scenes, Byron sets in motion certain normalizing forces that sort out the blurred distinctions. I agree with Wolfson’s assessment, that gender ambivalence often appears when Byron blurs the distinctions between gender categories. I would also assert, however, that the very gestures of normalization to which Wolfson points suggest that there are impulses to conserve categories of gender as distinct within the text. This conservation of gender categories illustrates Byron's own patriarchal and aristocratic biases. That there are dual impulses within the narrative, gestures that disrupt and gestures that conserve gender categories, is merely one site of gender ambivalence within the text.

Central to Byron’s questioning of gender categories is Juan’s appearance in the poem. Throughout the poem, in terms of his appearance

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and his actions, Juan remains poised on the border of manhood. Although he ages in the course of the poem, from sixteen in Canto I to his mid-thirties in the English cantos, his developmental age seems consistently that of an adolescent. From beginning to premature end, Don Juan is always a young “Werter” who “trusts all to love,” and even toward the end of the poem, in the Catherine cantos “he was of that delighted age / Which makes all female ages equal” (IX. 69). This youthfulness of spirit is matched by Juan’s youthful appearance, and he retains a boyishly beardless look well past “The usual hirsute season which destroy, / With beards and whiskers and the like, the fond / Parisian aspect” (IX. 53).

By fixing Juan’s developmental, as opposed to chronological, age in adolescense, Byron accomplishes several things, besides the poem’s humor by having literature’s great seducer, Don Juan, be a mere boy. Juan’s juvenile status makes it easier for Byron to leave it up to the women to do the seducing in the narrative, since psychologically speaking, all of the women, even Haidee, are older than Juan. Byron claimed that this version of the myth, with women rather than men playing the role of seducer, is closer to “real life” dramas of seduction. In writing Don Juan, he was “true
to Nature in making the advances come from the females," an arrangement which also allows him to question sex roles in society. Adolescence is also the time when gender definition is incompletely determined. It is the time when castrati are formed, as in Balzac's "Sarasine," and so it is the best time for interrogating the manner in which gender manifests itself.

In the course of this study, I refer often to Lacan's myth of language acquisition because of its pertinence to the structure of the *bildungsroman*, a category to which Juan's story, if only mockingly, belongs. If, as Peter Manning comments, "Juan's education is his experience with women," then Juan is, throughout the poem, the youthful pupil, and all the women of the text hold positions of authority over him. Lacan's theory is further relevant to Byron's poem by virtue of its structuring myth. The Don Juan myth relies heavily on the assumption that one woman can be replaced by any other woman. This assumption is at the heart of the dramatic impetus of the various incarnations of the myth which all depict Don Juan, the

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libertine, moving from woman to woman to woman with no sense of what could be wrong with an infinitely substitutable model of womanhood. Like other Don Juans and maybe more so than many, Byron’s hero gives little thought to the individual identities of the women he encounters in the various cantos of the poem.

The substitutable model of womanhood, which is so necessary to the Don Juan myth, finds its mythic justification in Lacan’s theory of language acquisition. Lacan’s model of language acquisition centers on the oedipal moment, the moment at which the son trades the penis for the phallus, or less cryptically, the moment at which the son resolves/renounces his desire for his mother in order to participate in the symbolic order of language or the law of the father. Once the son has willingly, but with the coercive threat of castration as encouragement, given up his original object of desire, he embarks on a lifelong quest both to replace the absent mother in language with an endless chain of signifiers and to replace her in his sexual life with a string of substitute women. Man’s sexual life is defined by the quest to replace the lost mother, the mother who has been lost to the son because she is not an acceptable object of desire.
In this study, I propose to use Lacan’s, as well as Freud’s, reading of the oedipus myth to analyze Byron’s presentation of Juan’s education by women throughout the text. While doing so I will draw on the femininist rereadings of psychoanalytic theory by Nancy Chodorow, Margaret Homans, Madelon Sprengnether, and Jane Gallop. In so doing, I hope to shed light on the structure of Byron’s ambivalence in matters of gender, first by addressing the narrator’s presentation of the feminine through speech and appearance, and then analyzing the ambivalent undercurrent to that presentation of the feminine with specific attention to the threat that the feminine represents to masculinity. Informing my discussion of Byron’s depictions of gender are Peter Manning’s and Susan Wolfson’s studies of Don Juan, Marjorie Garber’s study of cross-dressing in Vested Interests, and Claude Levi-Strauss’s record of tribal myths as related to depictions of women and the feminine. Where Wolfson and Crompton, in their new historicist approaches, look without the poem, to Byron’s ambivalence toward his own homoeroticism and to the ambivalence of Regency society toward issues of sexual ambiguity, I propose to look inward. In turning the critical gaze back to the poem, I hope to go beyond identifying ambivalence to formulate the way in which that ambivalence
operates within the text. In this study, I will use the theories of Lacan and Freud to bring into focus the ambivalence behind the serial and episodic nature of this narrative. The various episodes in the poem operate according to contrary impulses of attraction toward and repulsion from the feminine. These impulses, sites of gender ambivalence, can be most clearly seen in episodes concerned with language, masquerades of appearance, and emasculation by and engulfment into the feminine body.

In chapter 2, I discuss the nature of feminine language within Don Juan, concentrating on the Haidee, Oda, and English episodes. In presenting a model of feminine language, the narrator divides it ostensibly into two kinds, ideal and real. Ideal language is confined to Haidee's island and depends upon the maternal nature of Haidee's relationship with Juan. Off the island, feminine speech is far from ideal, and the narrator makes frequent reference to the prevalence of lying among women. This association of women and lying refers back to the trope of the lying woman and culminates in the narrator's depiction of women as deceivers of men and as sirens who would compromise masculine virtue. The machinations of gender ambivalence cause the categories of speech to collapse upon themselves in a such a way as to highlight those same machinations.
Throughout my discussion in this chapter, I refer to Lacan's myth of language acquisition and its feminist revisions, most explicitly with reference to Byron's depiction of ideal language on Haidee's island.

In chapter 3 I discuss the ways in which the narrator uses Juan's feminine appearance, which aids the success of his cross-dressing episodes, to question gender's correlation to biological sex and to blur the boundaries between masculine and feminine. In particular, I discuss Juan's cross-dressing episode in the Turkish Oda along with episodes in which a covering of feminine clothes acts as a masquerade of Juan's gender. The narrator associates these acts of cross-dressing and masquerade with acts of feminine deception, most clearly in the Julia, Haidee, and Catherine episodes. The narrator simultaneously treats the episodes with a playful tone while instituting plots that will normalize the gender inversions. While putting on feminine attire might be fun and potentially subversive, the possibility for gender-bending play to point toward a psychological rather than merely an external confusion of gender is something that the narrator moves quickly to suppress. To help elucidate the power of clothing in determining gender, I draw on Marjorie Garber's discussion of cross-dressing, both directly about Byron as well as in general, in her
informative text, Vested Interests. Susan Wolfson's discussion of gender and cross-dressing in Don Juan is extremely helpful in providing a social situation and agenda for Byron's transvestite plots.

In chapter 4 I discuss what has appeared around the edges of my study of presentations of the feminine in Don Juan, namely the threat femininity poses to masculinity by virtue of the feminine's overwhelming and seductive presence. The women whom Juan encounters threaten the masculinity of all the men of the narrative, from Juan with his already effeminate appearance, to the women's husbands or favorites, to the narrator. The narrator prepares the reader to perceive the feminine threat by depicting many of the women as phallic and capable of castrating the men with whom they come into contact. In order to understand the nature of the narrator's presentation of femininity's threat to masculinity, I turn to Claude Levi-Strauss's discussions of images of the vagina dentata within primitive myth. The threat of castrating women and the overall threat of femininity, whether depicted as a toothed vagina or as the momentum behind the son's quest within the symbolic realm, is ultimately the threat of the feminine body.
In my conclusion, I discuss how Lacanian and Freudian myth describes the path of a circular argument. Just as Margaret Homans notes, in *Bearing the Word*, that Lacan's myth of language acquisition requires simultaneous and impossibly circular events and occurrences within the development of a child, so the quest which the acquisition of language initiates is circular as well. In running from the body of the mother in his quest to replace the mother lost upon his entrance to the symbolic realm, the son is eternally running towards her. This simultaneous movement toward and movement from, a simultaneous attraction and repulsion, forms the essential nature of gender ambivalence in *Don Juan*. 
Chapter 2
The Language of Paradise: Feminine Speech in Byron's *Don Juan*

In *Don Juan*, Byron presents his reader with two models of feminine speech: ideal and real. Byron confines the former to his depiction of Juan's island idyll with Haidee in cantos II-IV. "Real" feminine speech appears throughout the poem, but I will concentrate on Juan's episodes in the Oda and in the English cantos, and to some of the direct references to women speaking in the many digressions. Although the narrator's presentation of feminine speech, especially on the ideal level, reveals part of the attraction femininity holds for him throughout *Don Juan*, feminine speech is not entirely free from the ambivalence which appears in the narrator's presentation of gender, specifically the feminine, within the text. When, as I will illustrate in the course of this chapter, the categories of ideal and real speech collapse, the essential ambivalence of the narrator's depiction of feminine language becomes apparent. It is also important to consider that all speech in the poem is filtered through the narrator, and so it is necessary to evaluate the way in which he depicts speech whether through quotations or through his second hand paraphrasing of conversations. With the problems of the narrator's filtering function in mind, in this
chapter, I will discuss how the narrator approaches the feminine by presenting ideal and real levels of feminine speech and the ambivalence which lays behind such a structure.

Before I move on to the body of the chapter and its discussion of feminine communication, however, I would like to explore “masculine speech” within Don Juan as a point of reference. The first “pure” example of masculine speech occurs at the end of the Haidee episode in a passage that acknowledges Lambro’s authority. The narrator describes Lambro as a person used to much command--

To bid men come, and go, and come again--
To see his orders done too out of hand--
Whether the word was death, or but the chain. (III. 47)

This example of masculine speech hinges on the direct relation of authoritative speech to action and most often appears in the form of a command or in the narrator’s reference to commands which are successfully fulfilled. When Lambro commands his henchmen to attack, they attack, and the action of the poem itself, i.e. when Lambro’s soldiers take Juan into custody (“chains”) and when Haidee dies (“death”), testifies to the “masculine” authority of Lambro’s language.

At the center of masculine language is the authority of the law, the law of the father, which is represented in Lambro’s position as father figure
within a patriarchal society. The narrator draws specific sanction for this authoritative language from Biblical reference. In an aside in Canto V, the narrator refers to the death of a commander:

'Can this be death? then what is life or death?  
"Speak!" but he spoke not: "wake!" but still he slept:--  
But yesterday and who had mightier breath?  
A thousand warriors by his word were kept  
In awe: he said, as the centurion saith,  
"Go," and he goeth; "come," and forth he stepp'd  
The trump and bugle till he spake were dumb.' (V. 36)

In this passage, the narrator refers to the Bible, in itself a guarantor of patriarchal authority, and the story of Jesus healing the centurion. By referring explicitly to the Bible, the narrator underscores the place of authoritative language within a culture organized according to patriarchal order.

"Masculine" language is not confined to men alone, however, and it, like many gender characteristics, does not correlate exactly to biological sex. Gurbeyaz, one of the more "masculine" women of the narrative, also speaks with this kind of authority. As for Lambro, for the sultana, and more specifically for her subjects, desire equals action, and Gurbeyaz need only express the most casual wish for it to be fulfilled. When Gurbeyaz
first sees Juan in the slave market, she commands Baba to bring him to her, and Baba immediately complies with her wishes:

Whate’er she saw and coveted was brought;
Whate’er she did not see, if she supposed
It might be seen, with diligence was sought,
And when ‘twas found straightway the bargain closed:
There was no end unto the things she bought,
Nor to the trouble which her fancies caused. (V. 113)

At the end of the harem scenes, Gulbeyaz’ authority is questioned by Baba—he chooses not to fulfill her command to drown Juan and Dudù—but at the beginning of the episode, she speaks with the voice of masculine authority. Although Haidee confronts Lambro in her defense of Juan, unlike Gulbeyaz, Lambro never relinquishes masculine language: Juan is in chains and Haidee is dead at the end of the episode.

In contrast to masculine language, within this chapter I am going to explore the nature of what the narrator presents as feminine language within Don Juan. As I have indicated by including Gulbeyaz in the list of

6The narrator has prepared the reader to accept this shift in Baba’s loyalties, since over the course of the episode, the narrator himself questions Gulbeyaz’ inherent masculinity, in effect cutting her down to size, a fate which meets several of the women whose masculinity or phallic femininity threatens the men of the narrative.

7Gulbeyaz’ authority is due in part to her presence as a phallic woman within the poem. See chapter 4 for my analysis of phallic femininity in Don Juan.
masculine speakers, I want to emphasize that the ideas of “masculine” and “feminine” communication do not conform rigidly to biological sex for Byron, and are not reserved for either male or female characters.

Byron’s New Eden: A Paradise of Maternal Communion

In the Haidee episode, the narrator presents his reader with an ideal woman, an ideal love relationship, and an idyllic setting. As a womanly ideal, Haidee possesses many attributes assigned to the virgin mother. The narrator creates, as well as justifies, the comparison within images that locate Haidee as an ideal mother figure to Juan, her overgrown and oversexed child.

Byron prepares his reader to accept the mother-child relationship of the two by turning Juan’s violent arrival to the island into a version of childbirth. After the shipwreck of Canto II, Juan symbolically loses first his family when his fellow castaways divy-up the family spaniel and then his education when they proceed to cannibalism and eat his tutor as well. With the connections of youth devoured, Juan is ready for a new birth, both baptismal and biological, during which he proceeds through the rough watery canal of the bay and is thrown onto land by the rhythmic action of the waves. Juan, who is all but naked, completely helpless and hovering
between life and death, lies on the beach until he is claimed by Haidee.

The initial contact between Juan and Haidee, once Haidee has discovered the unconscious Juan on the beach and brought him into the shelter of a secluded, womb-like cave near the shore, is one of bringing, or restoring, to life. Haidee's ministrations "Recall'd his answering spirits back from death" (II. 113), and with the help of Zoe, her maid, Haidee feeds and clothes the weak Juan.

While Juan remains within the cave, the narrator maintains his status as helpless infant while positioning Haidee as the perfect mother figure, specifically with respect to their relationship to each other:

   And when into the cavern Haidee stepp'd
   All timidly, yet rapidly, she saw
   That like an infant Juan sweetly slept;
   And then she stopp'd, and stood as if in awe,
   (For sleep is awful) and on tiptoe crept
   And wrapt him closer (II. 143).

The narrator returns again and again to this Madonna-like imagery: "she bent o'er him, and he lay beneath, / Hush'd as the babe upon its mother's breast" (II. 148). As I mention above, there are ambivalent elements to the narrator's depiction of even ideal feminine language and communion within the text. Although the narrator's depiction of Haidee emphasizes the gentle ministrations associated with the maternal, within these images
of maternal care for a helpless infant is a level of violence. In *Reading Romantics*, Peter Manning identifies vampire-like aspects in Haidee’s care for Juan. Like a vampire, Haidee pries into Juan’s mouth for breath, and as she bends over him she watches him with her deathly eyes.\(^8\)

For the most part, however, the narrator presents Haidee both as an ideal of motherhood and as an ideal of feminine beauty:

Her brow was white and low, her cheek’s pure dye
Like twilight rosy still with the set sun;
Short upper lip--sweet lips! that make us sigh
Ever to have seen such; for she was one
Fit for the model of a statuary. (II. 118)

It is on this ideal level that the episode primarily proceeds, and it is on this level, that the narrator presents Haidee as the ultimate mother figure whose beauty and purity rivals that of the Virgin Mary:

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;

Her overpowering presence made you feel
It would not be idolatry to kneel. (III. 74)

Haidee, as the maternal ideal, is a life-giving force.

In all of these passages, Haidee, whether saint or sinner, has been shown to play her mothering role well, and in fact the motherless Haidee's willingness to accept the child-like charge of Juan enacts the mode described by Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* in which the daughter seeks in her relationship with her own child an extension or reenactment of her relationship with her mother and a continuation of maternal presence. Chodorow reinterprets Freud by proposing that instead of viewing a woman's desire for a child as a form of penis envy, one might view it as a desire to continue the mother-child relationship experienced in childhood. In this way, Haidee's position as mother figure to the newly [re]born Juan would reenact her relationship with her own mother, who within the narrative is mentioned only in terms of her absence: "for [Haidee] had no mother" (II. 175). Haidee is able, through her mothering of Juan, to recreate her prior relationship to the mother she lost.

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*Nancy Chodorow. The Reproduction of Mothering* (London: California UP, 1978). Most of Chodorow’s discussion of this theory can be found in the chapters “Gender Differences in the Pre-oedipal Period” and “Object-Relations and the Female Oedipal Configuration.” Margaret Homans provides a useful discussion of Chodorow’s theories in her introduction to *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writings*. (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986).
This creation or recreation of relationship is at the heart of ideal feminine communication. In *You Just Don’t Understand*, Deborah Tannen defines feminine conversation as “negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support.”¹⁰ Women, unlike men, attempt to create relationships within the symbolic structure of language. This sense of communion reflects what Margaret Homans, in the introduction to *Bearing the Word*, identifies as the literal communion that a mother and child share in the pre-oedipal, pre-symbolic phase of childhood, which I will discuss below.¹¹

**Juan and Haidee’s pre-Language of Love**

The growing relationship between Haidee and Juan, and specifically the communication they share, seems to enact the mode Lacan describes between a mother and her child, particularly in the period prior to speech-acquisition during the pre-oedipal phase. The original communication between Juan and Haidee when she watches him sleeping

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¹⁰Deborah Tannen. *You Just Don’t Understand* (New York: William Morrow, 1990) 25. Tannen suggests that masculine language, unlike feminine language, is based upon gestures of one-ups-manship which reflects the sense of hierarchical structures, almost a pecking order, with which men competitively approach their interaction with the people around them.

¹¹Homans 1-39.
on her breast parallels the pre-oedipal communication which passes
between a nursing infant and his mother. Even when Juan and Haidee
attempt to speak, they can communicate only through nonverbal gestures
since they lack a shared spoken language:

Her eyes were eloquent, her words would pose,
Although she told him, in good modern Greek,
With an Ionian accent, low and sweet,
That he was faint, and must not talk, but eat.

Now Juan could not understand a word,
Being no Grecian; but he had an ear,
And her voice was the warble of a bird,
So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear,
That finer, simpler music ne'er was heard;
The sort of sound we echo with a tear,
Without knowing why--an overpowering tone,
Whence Melody descends as from a throne. (II. 150-151)

Haidee’s speech is turned into a pre-linguistic lullaby of nature, the song of
a bird or even the harmony of the spheres, not simply as the result of Juan’s
ignorance of Greek12 but also as the result of Haidee’s role as the ideal
mother figure.13 The narrator finds himself seduced by his own nostalgia

12As a Greek, Haidee speaks what the Romantic poets considered to
be the “mother language” of European poetry and art.

13Margaret Homans discusses the close connection between pre-
oedipal communication and a literalization of nature which exists for both
daughters and sons before the son’s initiation into the realm of the
symbolic by the father’s threat of castration. For the daughters, the literal
relationship of speech and nature continues, but for sons like Juan, pre
for the pre-oedipal phase of development, and he pulls his reader along with him: “the sort of sound we echo with a tear.” As Juan wakes to hear the “lullaby” he is yet in an infantile state, “doubting if he be / Not yet a dreamer,” and the “spell” of Haidee’s rhythmic “language” is only broken, as it might be for an infant, by Juan’s “most prodigious appetite” (II. 152-153).

Once Juan’s appetite is satisfied, Haidee and Zoe set about dressing their charge. The clothes with which Haidee and Zoe replace Juan’s diaper-like “rags” extend his childish relationship to them, Haidee in particular. Although they dress him “for the present, like a Turk,” they omit the articles of clothing—“turban, slippers, pistols, dirk”—that would mark him as an adult male (II. 160).14 In this way, Haidee acts in a manner that extends her mothering role to Juan as well as ensures his dependence on her for safety.

14The selective omission of these articles of clothing not only infantilizes Juan but also feminizes him, as Susan J. Wolfson discusses in her article, “Their She Condition’: Cross-dressing and the Politics of Gender in Don Juan.” ELH 54 (1987) 585-617. For a more extensive discussion of cross-dressing refer to Chapter 3 and for the implications associated with the threat of the over-protective mother refer to Chapter 4.
Juan's transition from diapered infant to toddler is also marked by the gradual acquisition of language. Haidee approaches communication from her own spoken "Romaic," but she quickly realizes that she must first teach Juan the language using a non-verbal approach that parallels pre-oedipal communication:

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. (II. 162)

The mothering Haidee is adept at non-verbal communication with her "child," and she reads a "world of words" in a glance.

It is Haidee's non-verbal gestures that help Juan to learn Haidee's Greek dialect, and his acquisition of this second language closely resembles primary language acquisition by a child:

And now, by dint of fingers and of eyes,
And words repeated after her, he took
A lesson in her tongue; but by surmise,
No doubt, less of her language than her look;
As he who studies fervently the skies
Turns oftener to the stars than to his book,
Thus Juan learn'd his alpha beta better
From Haidee's glance than any graven letter. (II. 163)
Like a child who has not yet learned to read a language, Juan must learn from a source other than the "graven letter." He must acquire Haidee's language as a child who has no prior knowledge of the construction of language. According to the narrator's tongue-in-cheek account, this method of language acquisition from an attractive instructor is the best or at least the most enjoyable:

'Tis pleasing to be school'd in a strange tongue
By female lips and eyes—that is, I mean,
When both the teacher and the taught are young.
As was the case, at least, where I have been;
They smile so when one's right, and when one's wrong
They smile still more, and then there intervene
Pressure of hands, perhaps even a chaste kiss;--
I learn'd the little that I know by this. (II. 164)

This pleasurable form of teaching depends heavily on a sexualized student-teacher/child-mother relationship, and the narrator's deliberate ambiguity with respect to the lesson learned by this method, signals to the reader that with the normal acquisition of language comes initiation into a world governed by sexual politics, the post-oedipal symbolic order.

It is the non-verbal, pre-linguistic (and thus non-symbolic) communication through the glance that permeates Juan's and Haidee's affair, as opposed to the sophisticated repartee of the other affairs, and their "ideal" love is not plagued by language difficulties, such as lying.
which complicate Juan's other affairs. This idealistic communion beyond
(or before) verbal communication which Juan and Haidee share makes
their relationship ideal, but it also produces the incestuous undercurrent
which necessitates Haidee's death and Juan's imprisonment which end the
episode. The narrator's descriptions of Haidee's enjoyment of her
relationship with Juan at times reflect the possibility for tragedy:

It was such pleasure to behold him, such
Enlargement of existence to partake
Nature with him, to thrill beneath his touch,
To watch him slumbering, and to see him wake:
To live with him for ever were too much;
But then the thought of parting made her quake:
He was her own, her ocean-treasure, cast
Like a rich wreck—her first love and her last. (III. 173)

Haidee's passionate attachment to Juan goes beyond that of beloved for
lover. She is the mother who knows she must allow her child to grow up
but who is terrified by the thought of separation, which will ultimately
require her own absence and death.

Lambro's departure enables the physical consummation of Juan's and
Haidee's affair, and his return will bring the affair to an end. The
temporary absence of the father combined with the eternal absence of the
mother signals the absence of social rules on the island, including the
prohibition against incest. When her father departs, Haidee becomes "The
freest she” (II. 175). With the parents away, Juan and Haidee “must talk” so that Juan can grow into full manhood and propose “a walk” which leads rapidly to their sexual encounter.

At this point, Juan’s and Haidee’s communication hovers between pre-oedipal communication and fully symbolic speech. Since Juan’s presence on the island is kept secret until after the temporary absence of Lambro, there is never really an oedipal crisis, a direct confrontation between Juan and Lambro, that would separate Juan-as-child from Haidee-as-mother and force him into the realm of symbolic language. Because Juan is not forced by Lambro, the closest father figure, to separate from the mother figure, he is also not forced into the realm of the symbolic which is precipitated by the loss of the mother. In Bearing the Word, Margaret Homans discusses the literal language which characterizes the communication between mother and daughter both in the pre-oedipal and oedipal configuration. Because the daughter, unlike the son, is not threatened by castration anxiety and forced into separating from the mother, the daughter is able to maintain, for a longer period than the son can, the literal communication with the mother that she enjoys in the pre-oedipal phase. Although the daughter engages in symbolic
communication with her father, with her mother she can retain the comforting sense of their literal bond. In a sense, then, keeping Chodorow’s theory of the daughter’s oedipal configuration in mind, Juan linguistically “cross-dresses” in his relationship to Haidee. He is a linguistic daughter as well as son, and as a daughter, he is not forced by the father to separate from his mother. Thus the speech that passes between Haidee and Juan remains highly literal, fostering a sense of communion between them, instead of moving into the realm of the symbolic. Even though Juan and Haidee “must talk” as the narrator observes, their talk only extends so far as “to propose to take a walk” (II. 176). The couple takes the walk, and their verbal communication and even their sexual encounter retains the literal sense of their presymoblic communion which resembles that between mother and daughter and which outlasts the oedipal configuration.

Even after Juan has “grown up,” he still preserves an incestuous tie to Haidee. Byron depicts the couple’s sexual encounter as a perfect pre-linguistic communion:

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: though their speech
Was broken words, they thought a language there,
And all the burning tongues the passions teach
Found in one sigh the best interpreter
Of nature’s oracle--first love,--that all
Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall. (II. 189)

The love between Juan and Haidee is that love which forms the daughterly
inheritance from the first mother, Eve, and figuratively, their initial sexual
exchange is both incestuous and lesbian, as it extends the mother-daughter
oedipal configuration that maintains a literal form of communication,
while sexualizing that relationship.

Besides pre-linguistic, “they thought a language,” Juan’s and Haidee’s
sexual encounter is also pre-social, far removed from the social and
religious contract of marriage, a contract fully invested in the symbolism of
the law of the father:

Haidee spoke not of scruples, ask’d no vows,
Nor offer’d any; she had never heard
Of plight and promises to be a spouse,
Or perils by a loving maid incurr’d;
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
And flew to her young mate like a young bird;
And, never having dreamt of falsehood, she
Had not one word to say of constancy. (II. 190)

The narrator depicts this kind of relationship as the ideal, and it is ideal in
contrast to the other episodes with Julia, Gulbeyaz, Catherine the Great,
Fitz-Fulke, and so on. For the narrator, the possibility for false language
and deceptive behavior seems to exist in an outside world away from the island, and thus it lies in the symbolic order that structures the "real" world. In the pre-symbolic world of Juan and Haidee, falsehood and inconstancy are unknown and unthought. Deception, particularly verbal lies, requires the structure of symbolism in order to exist, and it is impossible to lie when the literal relationship of language to nature is preserved. Although the narrator portrays as ideal the complete communion of Juan and Haidee, a communion that rejects the possibility of difference and in which "Their intense souls, into each other pour'd," he also recognizes that this ideal is an impossibility in any arena other than Haidee's pre-linguistic, pre-social island. The following two stanzas each begin with "Alas," which the narrator uses both in recognition of the pressures of reality and to interrupt the sentimentality that has threatened to overwhelm the idealism of the episode. He thereby turns his stance toward the entire episode, with its romantic excess, into a satiric one. But the "Alas" also serves its function as a literary device by foreshadowing the rapidly approaching end of the idyll. Lambro, the threat of the real world and of society, will return. Until the father's return, however, Juan and Haidee live in a paradise of the literal and enjoy its perfect communion.
Lambro’s Return: The Delayed Oedipal Crisis

In his return, Lambro performs a dual role in the episode. He acts as the catalyst, the ultimate father figure, that will force Juan to reject the ideal maternal language which characterizes his communion with Haidee, so that he may enter the symbolic realm of language and the world of the adult male. Lambro thus serves as the Byronic antidote to romantic excess, for Lambro’s return initiates the return of the “real world.” As the narrator welcomes Lambro back to the island, he portrays the island, yet in the pre-oedipal state of Juan and Haidee, as a pre-lapsarian paradise. The sights which first meet Lambro’s eyes show “unwonted signs of idling”: music, dancing, laughter, which even the domestics enjoy (III. 28). There are lavish meals that end with a dessert of fruit which “Dropp’d in their laps, scarce pluck’d” from the trees that shadow the table (III. 31). The domestics are free from work and are not required to earn their bread or even dessert, by the sweat of their brows. The idyllic depiction extends to the children (all people within the pre-oedipal paradise are in a sense children) and animals:

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. (III. 32)

With this description, the narrator is also able to portrays an Edenic reduction of the signs of masculine, even Biblical, authority. Unlike Lambro, this patriarch lowers his brows only in play and participates in the peaceful festivities. Lambro, however, views the "pretty pasttimes" with the eye of experience and reality, and his response is

aversion,
Perceiving in his absence such expenses,
Dreading that climax of all human ills,
The inflammation of his weekly bills. (III. 35)

Lambro's thoughts immediately turn from the lamb-like ("snow-white") ram to the financial and to the ultimate symbol of adult authority, money.

By depicting Lambro's response to the pre-lapsarian household economics on the island, Byron presents his readers with a comparison of the economies of Haidee's maternal and Lambro's patriarchal households. After she receives the report of Lambro's death and after the appropriate time of mourning, Haidee "kept house upon her own account" (III. 38). Haidee is far more lavish as head of the household than Lambro had been:

Hence all this rice, meat, dancing, wine, and fiddling,
Which turn'd the isle into a place of pleasure;
The servants all were getting drunk or idling,  
A life which made them happy beyond measure.  
Her father's hospitality seem'd middling,  
Compared with what Haidee did with his treasure;  
'Twas wonderful how things went on improving,  
While she had not one hour to spare from loving. (III. 39)

The lifestyle Haidee cultivates on the island rejects the rule and class structure of the previous patriarchy. The servants share in the abundance of the island, and their happiness, unlike their previous work, cannot be quantified, is "without measure." In Haidee's economic structure, pleasure and loving have a higher value than the pursuit of further gain, and the ironic "'Twas wonderful how things went on improving" could be taken literally, as Haidee's idyllic world is an improvement over the violence of Lambro's piratical/patriarchal order.

The narrator clearly styles Haidee's household economy as a realm of the feminine. He avoids mentioning Juan while he constructs the contrast between the two ways of running an estate. The depiction of the white ram emphasizes the "femaleness" of this island paradise. The ram which represents patriarchal authority becomes a pacified "still unwean'd lamb" within Haidee's paradise. This image of the unweaned lamb recalls the previous madonna-like image the narrator uses to depict the early stages of Juan's and Haidee's relationship and represents what Homans considers the
literal, pre-linguistic communication of mother to nursing child. The ram, although patriarch in one sense, is able to play with the Greek children on this pre-linguistic, communal level. The narrator's description of the children continues the idealization of the pre-linguistic, maternal childhood, and although the children are depicted as angelic, he locates the source of their angelic natures in their childish innocence, an innocence that Haidee's maternal household fosters:

Their classical profiles, and glittering dresses,
Their large black eyes, and soft seraphic cheeks,
Crimson as cleft pomegranates, their long tresses,
The gesture which enchants, the eye that speaks,
The innocence which happy childhood blesses. (III. 33)

At this point, however, and even a little before, the narrator reveals his ambivalent attitude toward this maternal and ideal state. He confines the children by "[Making] quite a picture of these little Greeks," and their energetic playing becomes a static image. The link to death is present, as it is in the earliest depictions of Haidee, in "Their large black eyes," and the beholder of the scene, Byron's narrator, "Sigh'd for their sakes--that they should e'er grow older." The narrator seems all too aware that the ideal, the maternal society, is merely an illusion that will be shattered with age, with the arrival of the father who will force them from the
pre-symbolic, pre-linguistic Eden and into the fully symbolic and patriarchal world.

Immediately before Lambro discovers Juan’s and Haidee’s nuptual activities, the narrator again emphasizes the Edenic, pre-linguistic nature of their relationship and its underlying maternal element. Once all the servants and guests have left the banquet hall, and Juan and Haidee are alone, they turn to each other; “for them to be / Thus was another Eden” (IV. 10). With this Eden in mind, Byron alludes to the inevitable end of the paradise in a way that recalls the maternal element of Juan’s and Haidee’s relationship. The narrator compares the couples’ impending separation to “the child from the knee / And breast maternal wean’d at once for ever” who “Would wither less than these two torn apart” (IV. 10). This image captures both the child-like innocence of Juan and Haidee and the changing dynamics of mother and child that occur with weaning and the acquisition of language.

Throughout the episode, the communion between Juan and Haidee has been figured as that between a mother and first her nursing child and then her daughter. This pre-linguistic literalization of nature that forms
the basis for their communication is further emphasized when Byron compares Juan and Haidee’s speech to the language of birds:

The gentle pressure, and the thrilling touch,
The least glance better understood than words,
Which still said all, and ne’er could say too much;
A language, too, but like to that of birds,
Known but to them, at least appearing such
As but to lovers a true sense affords;
Sweet playful phrases, which would seem absurd
To those who have ceased to hear such, or ne’er heard. (IV. 14)

The nonverbal aspect, the cooings of “baby talk,” underscores the literal condition of the communication between Juan and Haidee, and although in the next stanza the narrator attributes this ease of communication to their status as “children still,” it more accurately reflects the mother-child or mother-daughter structure of their relationship. Further, the narrator seems to view Juan’s and Haidee’s relationship as completely separate from the real world, and he locates his and the reader’s interest in such a love as a wish to escape the confines of adulthood’s pressures:

Oh beautiful! and rare as beautiful!
But theirs was love in which the mind delights
To lose itself, when the old world grows dull,
And we are sick of its hack sounds and sights,
Intrigues, adventures of the common school,
Its petty passions, marriages, and flights,
Where Hymen’s torch but brands one strumpet more,
Whose husband only knows her not a whre.
Hard words; harsh truth. (IV. 17-18)
Within this passage, the narrator clearly places the kind of language that Haidee and Juan share on the opposite end of the spectrum from that of the real world from which “we” would escape through reading the poem. The language of the real world is “hack sounds” and “Hard words,” and on the language spectrum it is as far as possible from the warbling, bird-like communication that passes between the young lovers.

By returning to the problems of worldly marriages, the narrator locates the real world and its hard words in the realm of the symbolic which provides the structure for the name of the Father. Although marriage would seem to ensure fidelity of wife to man, and of word to referent, in actuality, “Hymen’s torch but brands one strumpet more,” and true fidelity lies in “The faithful and the fairy pair,” Haidee and Juan. In a similar way, the law of the father actually distances the referent from the signifier, and a true literal relationship between word and referent can only exist in pre-symbolic communication, such as that shared by Juan and Haidee. In introducing the problems of marriage, the narrator seems here to echo and perhaps to justify his satiric disclaimer from the beginning of Canto III:

Haidee and Juan were not married, but
The fault was theirs, not mine: it is not fair,
Chaste reader, then, in any way to put
The blame on me, unless you wish they were;
Then if you'd have them wedded, please to shut
The book which treats of this erroneous pair,
Before the consequences grow too awful;
'Tis dangerous to read of loves unlawful. (III. 12)

It is specifically that Juan and Haidee are not married which allows them to find happiness in their "unlawful" state. The very fact that they are unmarried and happy in their state questions the law of the father which underwrites and requires the marriage contract. Haidee's and Juan's rejection of the law of the father is literalized, appropriately so, in the nonsymbolic, pre-linguistic nature of their communion, which further undermines the law by breaking the taboo of incest and by enacting a literal language that would reject the symbolic order.

Like Juan and Haidee, however, Lambro is also a lawbreaker, and the narrator is careful to remind his reader at this point that Lambro is a pirate. Although Lambro is a representative of the real world, of the law of the father, he also undermines the law he represents. The narrator presents Lambro's dual position as a flaw inherent in the social structure by asserting, with reference to Lambro's law-breaking piracy, that "into a prime minister but change / His title, and 'tis nothing but taxation" (III. 14). The narrator thus criticizes the law-abiding citizens who would
condemn the pair as he mocks the prudish people who would reject a book that treats of such an illicit affair.

In true Romantic fashion, the Byronic narrator ties Haidee’s and Juan’s affair to the natural world and distances it from how it would be perceived by those, he includes himself in the number, who would consider this type of a romance “frantic” even while envying the pair their innocence:

This is in others a factitious state,
An opium dream of too much youth and reading,
But was in them their nature, or their fate;
No novels e’er had set their young hearts bleeding,
For Haidee’s knowledge was by no means great,
And Juan was a boy of saintly breeding;
So that there was no reason for their loves
More than for those of nightingales or doves. (IV. 19)

Haidee and Juan are here again linked to birds, so that their “natural love” is a product of nature not of society. The narrator wants to distance their love from the “frantic” kind produced by “too much youth and reading,” and although Juan and Haidee are young, he seems to wish to reject their youth as the underlying cause of their passion. Although Byron, through the voice of the narrator, most likely means his satiric dig at novels, and hence the women who wrote and read them, as a criticism of the sentimental novel, it is equally applicable to his own poem with its
treatment of “love unlawful” whose “danger” lies in its “propensity” for exciting young women to passionate, and sexual, love.\textsuperscript{15}

The above stanza with its mocking tone is troubling, because it raises questions about the purity of Juan’s and Haidee’s affair. Both the narrator and the reader know that Juan is far from “a boy of saintly breeding.” Juan, by the time he arrives on Lambro’s island, is no saint, and the narrator has made explicitly clear that Juan’s “breeding,” whether in terms of lineage—with the hints of his mother’s affair with Alfonso and of his father’s numerous affairs—or in terms of his upbringing, which the narrator ridicules mercilessly in Canto I, is dubious at best. The issue is further complicated by the circumstances which make Haidee’s and Juan’s idyllic, prelinguistic and incestuous love possible. The absence of paternal authority is confirmed by a false report. This tension between the “honesty” and “naturalness” of the affair and the lies on which it is founded initiates the collapse of the island idyll.

\textsuperscript{15}For one example of the public’s perception of the insidious nature of \textit{Don Juan}, refer to Mary Chestnut’s diary of her experiences during the Civil War. “Fancy such a man finding his daughter reading \textit{Don Juan}. ‘You with that unmoral book!’ And he orders her out of his sight.” Woodward, C. Vann, ed. \textit{Mary Chestnut’s Civil War} (London: Yale UP, 1981) 168. Byron’s publishers often attempted to censor his work in response to the public’s perception of scandal.
The impending threat of the real world and the end of their affair even creeps into Juan’s and Haidee’s consciousnesses as premonitions of the destruction of their ideal state. For Juan, the premonitions only produce “a faint low sigh” (IV. 21), but for Haidee what begins as a tear becomes a terrifying omen when “That large black prophet eye seem’d to dilate / And follow far the disappearing sun” (IV. 22). In his description of Haidee’s nightmare, the narrator mingles the realm of dream, what should as premonition be fully symbolic, with the literalizing, pre-linguistic murmurings that characterize communication between the young couple:

And Haidee’s sweet lips murmur’d like a brook
A wordless music, and her face so fair
Stirr’d with her dream as rose-leaves with the air;

Or as the stirring of a deep clear stream
Within an Alpine hollow, when the wind
Walks o’er it. (IV. 29-30)

In this description, the symbolism of dream merges with the literalization of natural images, and this alerts the reader to the fact that Haidee’s dream, the symbolic premonitions, will ultimately be literalized within the plot of the episode. Within Haidee’s dream, the face of her lover, Juan, is gradually transformed into the face of her father. This transformation becomes literal when Haidee wakes to meet her father’s eyes. Her
immediate response is to shriek, a response that still locates her within the
pre-linguistic mode, and it is not until her father speaks, initiating the
separation of child-Juan from the mother-Haidee, and introducing Juan
into the realm of the symbolic, that Haidee follows with spoken language.

Lambro’s first words depict him as a source of authority for whom
language is a reliable tool. As I have discussed above, Lambro is like the
centurion in the Bible story to which the narrator alludes in Canto V, and
his word is enough to ensure obedience: “Within my call, / A thousand
scimitars await the word” (IV. 37). The word they await is, of course, the
word of the father, Lambro’s call. It would seem that the perfect pairing of
word to deed, Lambro’s beckoning call to the immediate response of his
men, places Lambro’s communication on a literal level. Within Lambro’s
statement, however, the narrator emphasizes the symbolism of his words.
By using metonymy—“A thousand scimitars”—for the men who carry them,
he locates Lambro’s words within the symbolic mode. The use of
“scimitars” in particular calls the reader’s attention to the phallic element
of the symbolic, and so the scimitars become a fitting symbol for Lambro’s
position as the law of the father.
What follows Lambro's first words is an almost perfect enactment of language acquisition on a Lacanian model. Lambro asks Juan for his sword, which, with the above signification of "scimitars," is clearly linked to a threat of castration, the castration which will propel Juan into the realm of the symbolic with its never-ending search for phallic replacement. The resulting conflict, Juan's refusal, ultimately ends in the "mother's" absence, in this case, Haidee's all too literal death. Lambro appeals to duty--

'Not I,' he said, 'have sought this stranger's ill; 'Not I have made this desolation: few Would bear such outrage, and forbear to kill; But I must do my duty--how thou hast Done thine, the present vouches for the past. (IV. 46)

He also appeals to the law of the father--"Let him disarm; or, by my father's head, / His own shall roll before you like a ball" (IV. 47)--as he condemns Haidee and orders Juan's arrest. The symbolic, phallic law of the father is also present in Lambro's arms, "like a serpent's coil," that grab Haidee. Juan is relatively safe--"for the present, safe-- / Not sound"--once he has been removed from the mother, Haidee, and he once again returns to the realm of the symbolic in which he will attempt to replace the lost mother with Gulbeyaz, Catherine, and Fitz-Fulke.

Inheriting the Wilderness: Haidee's Maternal Legacy
Unlike Juan, Haidee is not safe within the law of the father or in its symbolic language. Her Eden turns into a wilderness, a fate passed to her from her mother, “a Moorish maid, from Fez, / Where all is Eden, or a wilderness” (IV. 54). As a result of Lambro’s fury with her for turning from the patriarchal order within which he would be the one to select her husband, Haidee suffers a stroke and is thrust out of the symbolic order with its system of signification:

Days lay she in that state unchanged, though chill
With nothing livid, still her lips were red;
She had no pulse, but death seem’d absent still;
No hideous sign proclaim’d her surely dead. (IV. 60)

Haidee has neither the sign of life, a pulse, nor any sign that would signify her as dead. Her existence either as a living being or as a corpse is without signification. Yet even while she is rejected by the law of the father, she also actively rejects it:

Yet she betray’d at times a gleam of sense;
Nothing could make her meet her father’s face,
Though on all other things with looks intense
She gazed. (IV. 68)

Haidee’s rejection of the symbolic mode leads to her death, the literalization of her dreams, but she does not die alone, for she held within

A second principle of life, which might
Have dawn'd a fair and sinless child of sin;
But closed its little being without light,
And went down to the grave unborn, wherein
Blossom and bough lie wither'd with one blight;
In vain the dews of Heaven descend above
The bleeding flower and blasted fruit of love. (IV. 70)

The death of this child with Haidee grimly represents the fulfillment of the mother-child relationship when there is no threat of separation. The communication of mother and child, on its most literal level, really a pre-literal level, through the umbilical cord, will never be violated by the child's entrance into the symbolic realm, a process which not only separates the child from the mother but requires the mother's absence or death.

Life in the Real World: Feminine Language off the Island

Unlike speech on the island paradise, feminine speech in the real world is associated with the realm of the symbolic and its distancing of signified from signifier. In the real world, feminine speech, not necessarily female speech, exists on two levels: silence or lying. The two types of feminine speech overlap, and silence can be viewed as an extension of lying in that it fails to communicate "truth" by communicating nothing.

Throughout Don Juan, the narrator jokes about women's veracity or lack thereof. From Julia's lying to her husband while Juan hides in her bed,
to digressions about a feminine blush, to the deception of Fitz-Fulke's masquerade, the narrator disassociates women from the truth, and particularly the ability to speak the truth, whatever that might be. The narrator draws on stereotypes of women and lying to remove them from the truth:

there is a tact...
Which keeps, when push'd by questions rather rough,
A lady always distant from the fact--
The charming creatures lie with such a grace,
There's nothing so becoming to the face. (I. 178)

In this way, the narrator associates lying with a woman's charm. It is part and parcel of the attraction of feminine appearance.

The narrator links the charm behind a woman's telling a lie to an appearance-enhancing blush: "They blush, and we believe them" (I. 179). The blush, however is an ambiguous communicator and is open to multiple interpretations. In this instance, as in others, the narrator implies that the only interpretation of a blush open to him and other men is that of the

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16 A further extension of the implication of a blush as a marker of infidelity to the truth is its association with make-up. The blush itself might be painted on, might be part of the "second" face a morally suspect woman puts on to "deceive the world." The underlying implication is that a woman's face cannot be taken "at face value." She may not be that which she appears, i.e. an honest woman. According to the narrator's stereotypes, all women are suspect, and none can be trusted to tell the truth.
virgin's virtuous blush, but the action of the narrative, for example when
Juan blushes in the Oda scenes, takes advantages of the blush's ambiguity as
a sign. The narrator's "they blush and we believe them" distances women
from participation in communicating truth in that he implies belief in a
woman's story to be more a function of her appearance than of her
veracity. "They blush, and we believe them," neither truly attests to the
possible honesty of women that the virtuous blush is supposed to signify,
nor does it recognize the potential meaning of a blush as reflecting a
woman's anger. The possibility for a blush to reflect anger forms the
humor in the scene that leads to the narrator's digression on the feminine
blush. The passage follows the narrator's description of the lie that Julia
tells to Alfonso in Canto I, and the scene for the lie is an angry one in
which Julia draws on feminine rage, both at her husband and at the
representative society he has brought into her bedroom in his attempt to
catch her in infidelity, to throw her husband off Juan's tracks. Although
Alfonso accepts Julia's lie, the narrator, who knows of course that Juan is
hiding in Julia's bed, rejects it. The narrator then uses the brief digression
on blushes to silence women in general in a gesture that implies that it is
easier to accept women at face value, the value of the blush, rather than
looking any deeper for meaning within them. After the woman blushes,

“and we believe them,” the narrator continues,

’tis of no great use,
In any case attempting a reply,
For then their eloquence grows quite profuse;
And when at length they’re out of breath, they sigh,
And cast their languid eyes down, and let loose
A tear or two, and then we make it up;
And then--and then--and then--sit down and sup. (l. 179)

The blushing women are thus limited to non-verbal communication. They are silenced, either through the implied sex or dinner, and all that is left them for communication is the misinterpreted blush. The narrator, as a representative man, is able to contain the anger of women within an inexact sign, the blush, that he is then free to interpret as he wishes.

Within these passages that address the feminine blush, the narrator is playing a complicated game. By tying feminine veracity to a “charming” blush, the narrator links a woman’s degree of honesty, or her “believability,” to her physical attractiveness. Although the movement to confine a woman’s expression to non-verbal signifiers and to her appearance, such as the blush, is a misogynistic one, the matter is not left at that. Within the poem are other examples of a playful attitude toward the stereotype of blushing women which turn on a blush’s ambiguity. In
Canto XI, the narrator again links lying and women, but this time he emphasizes the instability of “Truth”:

Now what I love in women is, they won’t
Or can’t do otherwise than lie--but do it
So well, the very Truth seems falsehood to it. (XI. 36)

That the narrator cannot decipher truth in a woman, or prefers to accept her on a superficial level, has less to do with her inherent falsehood, although that misogynistic view is still present, than with the complicated, incomprehensible, and incommunicable nature of “Truth.”

The issue of blushing and its relationship to feminine veracity, or at least as an indicator of virginal purity and innocence and thus as a guarantor of the “honesty” of a woman, is further clouded by its ability to cross the dividing line of biological sex, to appear on the face of a man as

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The slippery nature of “Truth” is at issue throughout Don Juan and merits an entire dissertation in itself. The narrator repeatedly insists that the story he tells is true. The reader, however, knows that the story of Don Juan is a myth, and knows also that this particular version, in which women perform the role of seducer and Don Juan appears as a relatively bumbling and naive lover, is not even true to the accepted pattern of the myth of the great seducer. If, on the other hand, the narrator means his assertions of truth to apply to his observations in the digressions, the question of truth is still slippery, since he digresses with a tongue-in-cheek, off-hand manner, as well as with many contradictions. To untangle what is meant to be true within those statements is close to impossible. Peter Manning addresses the problem of truth in Don Juan by deconstructing Byron’s language in his chapter, “Don Juan and Byron’s Imperceptiveness to the English Word,” from Reading Romantics.
well as on that of a woman. As I have said above, masculine and feminine communication is only imperfectly aligned with the male and female characters in *Don Juan*, and this misalignment extends to the title character himself. As I will discuss more thoroughly in chapter 3, Juan’s successful cross-dressing in Cantos V and VI blurs the divisions of masculine and feminine, male and female. Juan’s cross-dressing episode also enables Byron to interrogate some of the stereotypes, such as blushing, that link silence and feminine communication.

When in the Oda scenes the cross-dressing Juan, as the latest addition to the sultana’s “damsels,” meets the sultan, Juan’s newly found “feminine” ability to deceive through his gender transformation is so proficient that “she” fools the sultan:

His Highness cast around his great black eyes,
And looking, as he always looked, perceived
Juan amongst the damsels in disguise,
At which he seemed no whit surprised nor grieved,
But just remarked with air sedate and wise,
While still a fluttering sigh Gulbeyaz heaved,
‘I see you’ve bought another girl; ‘t is pity
That a mere Christian should be half so pretty’ (V. 155).

Juan’s response to the sultan’s compliment operates on two levels. On one level, it indicates his successful transformation into the female: “This compliment, which drew all eyes upon / The new-bought virgin, made her
blush and shake" (V. 156). Not only is Juan dressed as a young girl, but he has also learned how to behave like one when complimented by responding with a non-verbal gesture, a blush, and as I have stated above, with a blush which the male viewer interprets as a guarantor of virginity. On another level, however, the narrator plays with gender-based stereotypes since Juan also acts as a man in defense of his masculinity: the blush indicates his sense of outrage at being mistaken for a woman. The narrator confuses gender definition by making the simple blush stand both for a “masculine” expression of anger and for a “virgin’s” virtuous blush. Anger and modesty, even though they are ostensibly specific gender-linked emotions, produce the same external sign. The signifying blush applies to both genders, and the narrator uses the doubling of meaning to reveal the instability of behavioral stereotypes.

Both Juan’s blushing response to the Sultan’s compliment and Juan’s ability to assume the feminine and to fool the Sultan, the representative of social authority and the law of the father in this episode, seem to indicate that the division between masculine and feminine is more flexible than Juan’s (and Byron’s) society would like to allow. The narrator acknowledges this Byronic flexibility with respect to language and lying in an aside, “They
lie, we lie, all lie” (VI. 19). Although the narrator would usually assign lying as a “feminine” gender-trait only to women, he is unable to maintain the neat definition, and the feminine trait begins to slip across the division of biological sex. Katrina Bachinger suggests a Byronic flexibility of gender definition in “‘The Sombre Madness of Sex’: Byron’s First and Last Gift to Poe,” when she observes that Byron “draws on the awareness that personality traits cross conventional gender lines far more than the stereotypes credit and that Regency society as a whole was sustained by ideological implications of a female-male dichotomization that the practices of other societies equivocated.”

The narrator again plays with this gender flexibility in the scene that follows the sultan’s entrance, when all the young “ladies” retire to their own room. On one hardly conscious level, the girls seem to sense that “Juanna” is really a male, but the narrator keeps the extent of their awareness ambiguous: “All felt a soft kind of concatenation, / Like Magnetism, or Devilism, or what / You please” (VI. 38). What is undisputed is that “they all felt for their new / Companion something newer still” and felt that they would prefer “Juanna” to masculine royalty (VI. 39). Nineteenth-century

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British social norms require Byron to keep the narrator's allusions to lesbian activity as unstated as he can, and so the narrator writes around the complicated issue of lesbian attraction between "Juanna and the ladies" which covers the heterosexual attraction between "Juan and the ladies."

The narrator hints at lesbian attraction first as the "odalisques" return to their chamber by comparing them to

> beauties cool as an Italian convent,
> Where all the passions have, alas! but one vent.

> And what is that? Devotion, doubtless--how Could you ask such a question?--but we will Continue. (VI. 32-33)

The narrator feigns shock at the implication which he suggests and returns to the narrative.

Instead of explicitly identifying the presence of lesbian attraction as such, the narrator suggests that there is some sympathy between Juanna and the other girls that allows them to detect Juan's masculinity beneath his disguise. This sympathy seems to be related to the feminine "affinity" for lying--"what I love in women is, they won't / Or can't do otherwise than lie" (XI. 36). According to the narrator's model of gender and gendered communication, Juan's deceptive appearance and the feminine "affinity" for lying, create the sympathy which allows the girls to see through Juan's
disguise. The narrator strengthens this link in the scene in which the sultan enters and "perceiv[es] / Juan amongst the damsels in disguise" (V. 155). The ambiguous punctuation of these lines implies that the damsels, like Juan-na, are disguised and thus not what they seem.

In their conversations, the young women of the harem further reflect the association of feminine language with silence and lying. Even when they speak without consciously telling a lie, the women are unable to speak the truth. When Katinka asks "Juanna" where Spain is, Lolah interrupts her:

"Don't ask such stuff,
Nor show your Georgian ignorance--for shame!
...Spain's an island near
Morocco, betwixt Egypt and Tangier." (VI. 44)

Dudù is smart enough not to reveal her ignorance, but she does the equivalent of not speaking the truth: she

said nothing, but sat down beside
- - Juanna, playing with her veil or hair;
And, looking at her steadfastly, she sighed. (VI. 45)

When the time comes to assign Juanna to a bed, Dudù wins the prize because she plays her role. She is, as the "Mother of the Maids"...
describes her, “quiet, inoffensive, silent, shy” (VI. 49). Even when asked a
direct question—“What say you child”—Dudù does not speak, “as / Her
talents were of the more silent class” (ibid). The other two, Katinka and
Lolah, who lose to Dudù’s silence, are not given the truth about why their
beds are passed over: “You, Lolah, must continue still to lie / Alone, for
reasons which don’t matter; you / The same, Katinka” (ibid). Their
comprehension of the situation is unimportant, and the truth is not for
them to know. The truth is also not theirs to speak, and Katinka and
Lolah learn their lesson about the feminine role they are to play as women
and as members of the harem. When Dudù retires to her bed with Juanna,
Katinka and Lolah adopt her silence in their disappointment and hold
“their tongues from deference” (VI. 50).

Dudù is, in many ways, the “perfect” woman, or at least the most
perfectly feminine in the real world outside Haidee’s island:

Dudù, as has been said, was a sweet creature,
Not very dashing, but extremely winning,
With the most regulated charms of feature,
Which painters cannot catch like faces sinning
Against proportion—the wild strokes of nature
Which they hit off at once in the beginning,
Full of expression, right or wrong, that strike,

who called her mother” (VI. 31). In the real world away from Haidee’s
island, reliable mother figures are hard to come by.
And pleasing, or unpleasing, still are like.

But she was a soft landscape of mild earth,
Where all was harmony, and calm, and quiet,
Luxuriant, budding; cheerful without mirth,
Which, if not happiness, is much more nigh it
Than are your mighty passions and so forth,
Which, some call “the Sublime”: I wish they’d try it...

But she was pensive more than melancholy,
And serious more than pensive, and serene,
It may be, more than either—not unholy
Her thoughts, at least till now, appear to have been.
The strangest thing was, beauteous, she was wholly
Unconscious, albeit turned of quick seventeen,
That she was fair, or dark, or short, or tall;
She never thought about herself at all. (VI. 52-55).

Not only is Dudù deprived of an articulated name, she is deprived of all
form of personal identity. Even in the excess of description, there is no
detail that the reader can truly perceive, and more importantly, the
narrator presents her as incapable of representation—“Which painters
cannot catch.” Her physical appearance mimics her silence, and she is
deprived of concrete representation and of speech in general until she has
sex with Juan.

“Deep Silence”: Let Sleeping Beauties Lie

One of the inherent problems with depicting feminine
communication in terms of speechlessness is that this silence ultimately
leads to the silence of death. The narrator describes the "living" or "lively"
Dudù only in vague, non-representational terms. Once she and the other
women of the harem have slipped into a death-like slumber, though, he
begins to describe them with specific attention to detail:

There was deep silence in the chamber: dim
And distant from each other burned the lights,
And Slumber hovered o'er each lovely limb
Of the fair occupants: if there be sprites,
They should have walked there in their spriteliest trim,
By way of change from their sepulchral sites,
And shown themselves as Ghosts of better taste
Than haunting some old Ruin or wild Waste.

Many and beautiful lay those around,
Like flowers of different hue and clime and root,
In some exotic garden sometimes found,
With cost and care and warmth induced to shoot.
One with her auburn tresses lightly bound,
And fair brows gently drooping, as the fruit
Nods from the tree, was slumbering with soft breath
And lips apart, which showed the pearls beneath.

One with her flushed cheek laid on her white arm,
And raven ringlets gathered in dark crowd
Above her brow, lay dreaming soft and warm;
And smiling through her dream, as through a cloud
The Moon breaks, half unveiled each further charm,
As slightly stirring in her snowy shroud,
Her beauties seized the unconscious hour of night
All bashfully to struggle into light....

A third's all pallid aspect offered more
The traits of sleeping Sorrow, and betrayed
Through the heaved breast the dream of some far shore
Beloved and deplored; while slowly strayed
(As Night Dew, on a Cypress glittering, tinges
The black bough) tear-drops through her eyes’ dark fringes.

A fourth as marble, statue-like and still,
Lay as in a breathless, hushed, and stony sleep;
White, cold and pure, as looks a frozen rill,
Or the snow minaret on an Alpine steep,
Or Lot’s wife done in salt,—or what you will;—
My similes are gathered in a heap,
So pick and chuse—perhaps you’ll be content
With a carved lady on a monument. (VI. 64-68)

The women in this passage are not identified by name, but the narrator
describes them in more concrete terms than “a soft landscape of mild
earth.” It is in a death-like slumber that the women of the Oda can be
most concretely represented within the text. It is as if their deathly
silence, their stillness opens them to representation within the narrative.

The narrator’s original simile which compares the sleeping women to
flowers in a garden seems to conflict with the increasingly death-like
images that follow. As the narrator moves through the room and inspects
the sleeping women, he seems to see in them a link to death, and he moves
from “flushed cheek” to “snowy shroud” to “breathless, hushed, and stony.”
This movement toward death in the narrator’s description of the sleeping
women reveals the violence that lurks behind the idealization of women,
including Haidee in her island idyll. By idealizing the women, the narrator
removes them from a context of reality to a greater extent than just their physical confinement in the harem represents. The ideal is also removed from the world of change, and so the harem scene is filled with sleeping beauties who are static, lifeless, dead, and most importantly for the feminine context, silent. Even the woman who is crying in her sleep makes no sound. Instead, the narrator ventriloquizes her dream and gives the external marks of her internal state his own interpretation. Ultimately, the ideal is silent, and by idealizing the femininity of women Byron represents them as silent.

Dudù maintains her silence throughout most of her appearance in the poem; the only time she speaks, she lies. In the middle of the night, Dudù “screamed out,” and when the Mother of the Maids asks her the reason, Dudù hesitates to tell her the truth of her sexual tryst with Juanna, the phallic woman. This hesitation points up the tension between her previous silence and her painful coming to self-expression. The narrator at once empowers her to speak and undercuts the feminine ability or right to speak in that the enabling agent of her speech, though dressed as a woman, is a man, and Dudù’s first speech act within the poem is a lie. By first presenting Dudù as an ideal within the harem and then linking her
initiation into speech to her initiation into sexuality, the narrator reinscribes the stereotype of women as liars. As a virginal ideal, Dudù is a child and easily manipulated by the masculine representative within the poem, the narrator. Once she becomes a woman, through the agency of a man, Dudù is no longer an ideal. She can no longer be so easily controlled, and so her speech is dismissed as a lie.

When first questioned by the Mother of the Maids, Dudù stumbles over the words with which to explain her situation. Dudù’s difficulty in first speaking reflects the abrupt end of the silence she has maintained up to this point in the poem. As she awakens to her own sexual power, power which the narrator repeatedly associates with the “feminine affinity” for lying, she devises an elaborate lie involving a suitably Freudian dream (VI. 77). The narrator is conscious of Dudù’s hesitation to relate the “incident”--whether dream or actual sexual encounter--and remarks that “All this she told with some confusion and / Dismay, the usual consequence of dreams”--or lies (VI. 78) The narrator seems as hesitant as Dudù to name the incident for what it is, and he never explicitly accuses Dudù of lying. The narrator seems to be uncomfortable with the new Dudù who has been removed, through her sexual encounter with Juan, from the easily
controlled realm of the sleeping/dead statue. Even if Dudù were not lying, and she did have the dream she relates, there is still a sense in which she does not tell the truth. As the idealized representative of femininity within the harem, Dudù speaks dreams instead of reality and tells lies instead of speaking the truth.

The Woman Within: Feminine Language and Juan

As I have maintained throughout the chapter, Byron does not consistently correlate the gender categories of masculine and feminine to male and female characters in Don Juan, and the blurring of gender extends to Juan as well. Like the women of the text, Juan, when femininized, is either speechless or forced into a lie. During the English cantos, Juan is feminized by his own mothering role toward Leila, the child he saves during the Seige of Ismail; by Lady Adeline’s social machinations; and finally by his fear of the Black Friar who appears to be stalking him in the last cantos of the poem.

The appearance of the “ghost” of the Black Friar terrifies Juan, and his fear and the speechlessness it produces feminize him. When the Black Friar first passes before him,

Juan gazed upon it with a stare,
Yet could not speak...
He taxed his tongue for words, which were not granted,  
To ask the reverend person what he wanted. (XVI. 23)

Even the next morning Juan can do little more than stutter, and he is  
incapable of completing a thought, let alone an entire sentence. The gender  
dynamics of speech around the breakfast table aligns Juan's speechlessness  
with the garbled speech of the women who are unable to speak clearly.  
Lord Henry speaks explicitly about his poorly buttered muffin,20 but the  
women are silent:

She [Adeline] looked, and saw him pale, and turned pale  
Herself; then hastily looked down, and muttered  
Something, but what's not stated in my tale.  
Lord Henry said, his muffin was ill buttered;  
The Duchess of Fitz-Fulke played with her veil,  
And looked at Juan hard, but nothing uttered.  
Aurora Raby with her large dark eyes  
Surveyed him with a kind of calm surprise. (XVI. 31)

When Adeline finally breaks the feminine silence, she speaks with little  
coherence. When she inquires about Juan's health, she only stammers, "If  
he were ill?" (XVI. 32). Juan is similarly afflicted, and in answer to  
Adeline's question stutters, "Yes--no--rather--yes," and when again asked  

20 Even this utterance fails to be fully "masculine" with its salacious  
connotation indicating Lord Henry's lack of sexual gratification. The  
phallus has failed him sexually, and it fails in his utterence as well. The  
double entendre refers also to the narrator's suggestion that Lord Henry's  
marriage is troubled by sexual ambiguity. Henry's comment seems to  
indicate he is aware of the friar's unsuccessful sexual visit.
about his health only manages, "Quite well, yes,--no" (XVI. 32). Later in the day, Juan is still without full control over his speech, and the narrator remarks on the rarity of his silence:

And Juan, too, in general behind none
In gay remark on what he had heard or seen,
Sate silent now, his usual spirits gone:
In vain he heard the others rail or rally,
He would not join them in a single sally. (XVI. 105)

In his silence, Juan occupies a feminine position opposite the more masculine position Adeline occupies within this scene as she applies her razor-sharp wit to the reputations of her departed guests.21

Juan "regains" his manhood, however, with the second visit from the Black Friar which enables him first to discover the truth of the "ghost's" identity and then to seduce the Duchess once she resumes her original gender. When the friar returns, "Juan, eager now the truth to pierce"

21 Earlier, when I suggest that Juan's silence and garbled speech align him with Adeline according to the gender dynamics of conversation around the breakfast table, Adeline occupies a feminine position within language. As I have maintained throughout this chapter, gender categories do not uniformly conform to categories of biological sex. Thus, Adeline's ability to move from a feminine to a masculine position in language reflects the instability of gender categories within the poem, even in the same person from stanza to stanza. Where her silence and stuttering (like Dudu's in the Oda) marks her as feminine at the breakfast table, so her vicious wit at the dinner table marks her as masculine. I more fully address Adeline's presence as a phallic woman, with specific reference to the dinner scene, in chapter 4.
follows the ghost (XVI. 119). The pursuit of the truth, unlike lying or silence is linked to the masculine, as the phallic verb “to pierce” indicates, and Juan regains his manhood when he seeks to discover Fitz-Fulke’s true identity beneath her disguise. Once he returns to his masculinity and the stereotypes belonging to it, Juan stretches out his hand to touch the ghost, and

Back fell the sable frock and dreary cowl,
And they revealed— alas! that e’er they should!
In full, voluptuous, but not o’ergrown bulk
The phantom of her frolic Grace--Fitz-Fulke! (XVI. 123)

Don Juan is no longer feminized, and his truth-seeking masculinity discovers the truth behind Lady Fitz-Fulke’s deception.

It is unfortunate that Byron’s poem is incomplete and ends in the middle of the English cantos. The potential episode with Aurora Raby (and innumerable other potential episodes) is left dangling, and the reader is left to fend for herself in an attempt to follow the leads Byron left. There is a possibility, of course little more than speculation, that with Aurora Byron might have presented his readers with a third reading of feminine speech, one that would link feminine silence with a kind of power rather than deception.
In her silence, Aurora is like a Haidee brought into the reality of Regency England. The silence between Juan and Haidee is temporary and stems from their lack of a common language, and it is their love that allows them to communicate first with glances and then with the shared literal language they create from pieces of their respective languages. The narrator describes the initial communication between Juan and Haidee as a kind of creative silence with “nods, and signs, / And smiles, and sparkles of the speaking eye” (II. 162). Like Haidee, Aurora is an idealistic innocent:

She gazed upon a World she scarcely knew,
As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
And kept her heart serene within its zone.
There was awe in the homage which she drew;
Her Spirit seemed as seated on a throne
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong
In its own strength--most strange in one so young! (XV. 47)

The narrator is careful to exclude from Aurora the threat of death that lurks in Haidee’s eyes and that haunts their love affair, and he also avoids the threat of a returning father, such as Lambro, by making the young Englishwoman an orphan.

In the highly social banquet scene, Aurora is seated next to Juan but at first pays him little attention. Instead of flirting with Juan, she sat with that indifference
Which piques a preux chevalier—as it ought:
Of all offences that’s the worst offence,
Which seems to hint you are not worth a thought...

To his gay nothings, nothing was replied,
Or something which was nothing, as Urbanity
Required. Aurora scarcely looked aside,
Nor even smiled enough for any vanity.
The Devil was in the girl! Could it be pride?
Or modesty, or absence, or inanity?
Heaven knows! (XV. 77-78)

Aurora and her speech do not seem to correspond to any of the previous
categories of femininity and feminine expression. Her silence cannot be
interpreted in any one manner, as the multiplication of the narrator’s
questions indicates. This silence, unlike the silence of the previous women,
does not feminize Aurora or Juan. Juan proceeds with his seduction, and

Aurora at the last (so history mentions,
Though probably much less a fact than guess)
So far relaxed her thoughts from their sweet prison,
As once or twice to smile, if not to listen.

From answering she began to question: this
With her was rare; and Adeline, who as yet
Thought her predictions went not much amiss,
Began to dread she’d thaw to a coquette. (XV. 80-81)

Aurora exchanges her silence for speech, and the stanza implies that her
questions, rare to Aurora and uncharacteristic of the poem’s depiction of
feminine speech, are free of the coquettishness that Adeline fears. Both
Aurora's silence and her speech seem different from the other models of feminine communication throughout the poem, but because the poem ends before Byron's depiction of Aurora is finished, it is impossible to know what conclusions to draw from this new kind of feminine communication. Since Don Juan is incomplete, we must return to the finished episodes to form conclusions about Byron's presentation of feminine communication in Don Juan.

The Categories Collapse and the Real Becomes Idealized

By originally dividing my discussion of feminine communication into pairs "ideal" vs. "real" and "silence" vs. "lying" I wanted to create the illusion that Byron, through his narrator, is working with antinomic pairs to present a coherent picture of feminine communication. In my conclusion, however, I want to show how these "opposing" elements are really only further developments of the same idea, and that they open femininity to wider implications which allow the narrator to approach the feminine through his depiction of feminine language, while keeping it at a controlled distance.

Although silence and lying at first glance appear to be distinct "modes" of communication, on closer inspection, the two begin to merge,
as do ideal and real forms of communication. As I indicated in my
discussion of the Oda scenes, the silence of the seraglio women shares
many of the same characteristics of communication on Haidee’s island.
Both are nonverbal and originate in images of a Romanticized version of
the natural world that emphasizes literalizing “presence.” Byron compares
the sleeping women of the Oda, like Haidee, to exotic flowers, and he
describes both Dudù and Haidee as “nature’s children.” Haidee’s bird-
like chirping and cooing echo in Lolah and Katinka’s meaningless chatter
when Juan-na enters the Oda. Byron’s first description of the women of
the seraglio compares the women to birds and depicts the seraglio as a
place of naturalness, free of inhibition, and full of uncontrolled impulses:

But when they reached their own apartments, there,
Like birds, or boys, or bedlamites broke loose,
Waves at spring-tide, or women any where
When freed from bonds (which are of no great use
After all) or like Irish at a fair,
Their guards being gone, and as it were a truce
Established between them and bondage, they

22Throughout the island idyll, Byron depicts Haidee as a child of
nature, a kind of Rousseauian noble savage. In Canto II, Byron refers
explicitly to Haidee’s tie to nature: “Haidee was Nature’s bride, and knew
not this / Haidee was Passion’s child, born where the sun / Showers triple
light, and scorches even the kiss / Of his gazelle-eyed daughters” (II. 202).
Similarly, Dudù’s innocence associates her with the realm of romanticized
nature: “In perfect Innocence she then unmade / Her toilet, which cost
little, for she was / A Child of Nature, carelessly arrayed” (VI. 60).
Began to sing, dance, chatter, smile and play. (VI. 34)

This bubbling over of feminine communication, with its preference for singing, chattering and smiling, resembles Haidee's communion with Juan and the creation of relationships which Tannen identifies as the purpose of feminine speech. Through their playful noise-making, the women establish a sense of community.

Although it seems as if the incoherent noise of the Oda is far from the silence of Dudù, both feminine noise and feminine silence develop from the state-of-nature language of Haidee. Haidee's pre-verbal communication combines silent gestures with repetitive, bird-like noises, such as cooing. Homans, working with the semiotic theory of Julia Kristeva, describes this type of communion as "linguistic pleasure...[the] use of rhythms and sounds that violate symbolic 'sense' with their sensual 'nonsense' as a return of and to the 'forbidden' maternal body."23 The silence of pre-verbal communion, the chattering of women which creates a sense of community without insisting on symbolic meaning becomes, for the narrator, a state of Romanticized nature and a means of re-approaching the maternal or feminine body.

23Homans 18.
Chapter 3  
The Lure of the Petticoat: Feminine Masquerade in *Don Juan*

In *Don Juan* appearance is an unstable marker of sex. With the proliferation of cross-dressing, deceptive uses of clothing, and cross-gendering descriptions, Byron distances the gender categories of masculine and feminine from strict correlation to biological sex while he simultaneously blurs those distinctions to show the inadequacy of gender categories in defining human sexuality. Although much critical attention has previously been paid to Juan's extended cross-dressing episode in Cantos V-VI and its usefulness in approaching Byron's depiction of gender in *Don Juan*, there are several other instances of cross-dressing and modes of cross-dressing, such as the use of feminine clothing as a disguise and cross-gendering descriptions, which serve to question the biological definition of gender categories and which bear inspection as well.

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24 For example, Susan J. Wolfson's article, "'Their She Condition': Cross-dressing and the Politics of Gender in *Don Juan*" offers an insightful discussion of gender and cross-dressing in *Don Juan*. As I discuss in Ch. 1, Wolfson approaches Byron's definition of gender as a blurring of categories, citing for instance Derrida's discussion of genre-mixing. Where Wolfson looks outside of the text, to Byron's ambivalent attitude toward his own homoeroticism and to his society's attitudes toward gender ambiguity, in identifying gender ambivalence, I look to the text to determine how that ambivalence operates within the text.
Catherine episode, the narrator uses masquerading imagery that depicts Juan as a kind of Cupid to create a point of contrast to his position as Catherine's gigolo. In both the Julia and Haidee episodes, Juan is covered by feminine clothes, a state, as in his cross-dressing in the seraglio, that is both feminizing and tied to acts of deception. These instances in which Juan is covered by feminine clothing or feminine property reveal a clearly defined, underlying pattern to cross-dressing within the poem. In each instance, Juan's appearance in feminizing clothing enables or initiates some kind of deception, whether the deception of a spouse, guards, father, or self-deception. The narrator's stance toward these acts of deception is complex and often ambivalent. At times he approaches the deceptions with a tone of playful mock anger, and at other times his satire is more bitter. In many ways the narrator's attitude toward these various acts of deception parallels his ambivalent attraction to figures of masquerade. I will refer to these instances when characters put on a false appearance, whether playfully or in earnest deception, as masquerades of gender. In this chapter, then, I will argue that masquerades of gender in Don Juan function both as extensions of what the narrator considers the feminine affinity for deception and as the means by which the narrator responds to
and attempts to alleviate the fear that all forms of gendered appearance are illusory. While the narrator enjoys the play of masquerade and Byron takes advantage of the blurring of gender distinctions to satirize society, the plots which act to normalize disruptions of gender point again to the ambivalence which characterizes presentations of gender throughout the poem.

The Truth About Blushing, According to Byron’s Narrator

Throughout Don Juan, the narrator would link women and deception, either the deception of lying, which I discuss in chapter 2, or the deception of appearance, and often the two are intertwined. In a digression on feminine lying, the narrator ironically proposes the blush as a woman’s guarantor of truth: “they blush, and we believe them” (l. 179). Since the digression occurs in the middle of Julia’s elaborate lie to Alfonso in her attempt to prevent him from discovering Juan in her bed, the narrator can be sure that the reader will take his comment as facetious, or that quite literally, the reader will not take his comment at face value. Since the narrator has reminded his reader of the blush’s ability to deceive through his positioning of the digression within a narrative act of feminine deception, a willingness to accept a blush as a marker of truth, as proposed
in the digression, would be a form of self-induced deception, for both the narrator and his reader. The narrator is aware of this level of self-deception, and he justifies the self-deception on the basis that lying, like blushing, is simply part of a woman’s charm. Men must be willing to deceive themselves in order to receive the full benefit of womanly attraction. When a woman lies, “there’s nothing so becoming to the face” (I. 178), and what the narrator loves in women “is, they won’t / Or can’t do otherwise than lie--but do it / So well, the very Truth seems falsehood to it” (XI. 36). There is a sexual agenda that lies behind the narrator’s taking these women at face value, at the value of a blush. Once the everyman of the narrator’s original digression accepts the lie on the basis of the woman’s blush, joining the narrator in a universal “we,” “we make it up; / And then--and then--and then--sit down and sup.” This kind of narrative stuttering frequently occurs when the subject of sex comes up directly in the text and is further exaggerated in narrative anxiety about matters of sex and gender, as I will explore below.

The narrator leaves no room for his reader to doubt that the feminine ability to manipulate external appearance, as with a blush, in order to deceive men is a conscious one which a woman uses to her own
advantage. All women are like Antonia, Julia's maid, adept at deception (I. 140), but some have more success than others. If skillful, a woman can use her external features to underwrite her verbal lies about the nature of her affections. Like the outside appearance, feminine emotions are as changeable and untrustworthy as a blush:

for howe'er
Kisses, sweet words, embraces, and all that,
May look like what is--neither here nor there,
They are put on as easily as a hat. (VI. 14)

The narrator changes the masculine "hat" for the more feminine bonnet, which the fair sex wear,
Trimmed either heads or hearts to decorate,
Which form an ornament, but no more part
Of heads, than their caresses of the heart. (ibid)

Opposite his depiction of the woman whose professions of love should not be trusted, the narrator offers his reader surer "signs" by which to ascertain a woman's honesty: "A slight blush, a soft tremor, a calm kind / Of gentle feminine delight...Are the best tokens...Of love, when seated on his loveliest throne, / A sincere woman's breast" (VI. 15). The reader, carefully schooled by the narrator in the ways of women, knows better than to accept a blush as a guarantor of truth, and in fact, deception is still at the heart of these signs, since a woman is to "hide what pleases most unknown" (ibid).
Within the narrator’s many digressions there is a repetitive correspondence of blushing as part of a woman’s feminine charm to a feminine affinity to deceive. It is only natural, then, that such a connection should occur within the action of the narrative itself. In several of the narrator’s descriptions of female characters, feminine beauty masks an inner threat. Within the descriptions of their beauty lie indirect indicators of potential violence which threaten the men of the narrative, from Juan to the women’s husbands to the narrator. Even Haidee, whom the narrator presents as a feminine ideal, has eyes “black as death” and possesses a glance like “swiftest arrows” or “the snake late coil’d, who pours his length, / And hurls at once his venom and his strength” (II. 117). Gulbeyaz’s feet “trod as upon necks” and her presence throws a chain about the masculine neck (V. 111), while Adeline is the “fair most fatal Juan ever met” (XIII. 12). The narrator specifically links the tension between Gulbeyaz’s beauty and the threat behind it to a form of masquerade and compares the “sweetness” of her features to “the devil, / When he put on the cherub to perplex / Eve, and paved...the road to evil” (V. 109). Although masquerade does not have the negative connotation of lying that deception does, the narrator’s repeated conflation of femininity
and deception and then his corresponding use of metaphors of masquerading women transfers a level of deception to the masquerade, an implication I take advantage of in my use of the term “masquerades of gender.”

All of the narrator's misogynistic threads come together in one of his many digressions that allude to masquerading. The narrator begins the digression on feminine dress by remarking that the profusion of pins needed to hold it in place make “a woman like a porcupine, / Not to be rashly touched” (VI. 62). From this opening comment he tells of his own experience when as a youth he acted as “a lady's maid...In tricking her out for a masquerade” (ibid). The narrator rejects these musings on feminine clothing as effeminate25 and as “foolish things to all the wise” which brings him into a secondary digression on the nature of widom, “the spouseless Virgin Knowledge” who flies from his grasp (VI. 63). By feminizing knowledge, the narrator does not make it a feminine trait; instead he makes knowledge something to grasp and contain. In a sense, then, the ungraspable knowledge is like the untouchable, “porcupine-like” woman in

25The narrator refers to himself as boyish, a description he primarily uses to indicate Juan's femininity. For a more complete discussion of the implications of the term “boy” see footnote 32 where I refer to Marjorie Garber's evaluation of the term.
masquerade who appears in the first half of the digression. The narrator cannot know truth, and as much as he flies after both virgin knowledge and unknowable women, neither of whom can be trusted to reveal their true selves, the more he knows he can never catch either.

The narrator digresses often about “Truth” in masquerade, particularly when in the main narrative he discusses the nature of feminine attraction. The personified, masquerading Truth is consistently female. For example, in the Haidee episode, the narrator pauses to contemplate the charm “fresh features / Have...for us poor human creatures,” meaning men (II. 208), a charm which compels men to transfer their affections from one woman to another. Within the digression on masculine as opposed to feminine inconstancy,26 the narrator introduces a figure of masquerading philosophy, “masqued then as a fair Venetian” (II. 210), who tries to stop him from his own inconstancy. Personified Philosophy’s attempts only serve to move the narrator from “I hate inconstancy--I loathe, detest, /

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26Within the narrative, the narrator characterizes inconstancy in women as shameful. When Juan slips from Julia’s bed and her adultery is known, the narrator condemns her and all women with her: “Oh sin! Oh sorrow! and Oh womankind! / How can you do such things and keep your fame?” (I. 165) For men, however, inconstancy can be excused, since what “Men call inconstancy is nothing more / Than admiration due where nature’s rich / Profusion with young beauty covers o’er / Some favour’d object” (II. 211).
Abhor, condemn, abjure” (II. 209) to “inconstancy is nothing more / Than admiration” (II. 211). When truth or philosophy is in masquerade, it is easy to dismiss, and according to the narrator, the difference between truth and lie is sometimes only a masquerade, since a lie is “but / The truth in masquerade” (XI. 37). It becomes apparent that the narrator associates lies as a form of truth in masquerade with women when you look at the broader context of his remarks, since he uses the connection between the two to sympathize with the women who “won’t / Or can’t do otherwise than lie, but do it / So well, the very truth seems falsehood to it” (XI. 36).

**Masquerading as Women: The Nature of Feminine Duplicity**

Throughout *Don Juan*, the narrator alludes to the fact that feminine appearance is a masquerade or at least filled with pretense. From Haidee with her tinged eyelashes and her nails “touch’d with henna” (III. 75) to the rouged cheeks of the English matrons who blush with “less transitory hues” (XI. 48), the narrator repeatedly calls attention to the artifice that makes up feminine appearance. He even gives advice for proper procedures: “The henna should be deeply dyed to make / The skin relieved appear more fairly fair” (I. 76). Even Juan’s radical artifice in the harem scenes only mimics what women ordinarily do with “false long tresses”
combed and oiled and “some small aid from scissars, paint and tweezers” (V. 80).

According to the narrator, women’s ability to change their own appearance spills into their evaluation of a man’s appearance, including Juan’s, for “he was what / They pleased to make or take him for” (XV. 16). If woman’s “phantasies be brought to bear / Upon an object,” the object in question being a man, she will “transfigure [him] brighter than a Raphael” (XV. 16). Adeline is one of the women who improves upon the truth of a man’s complexion and “Was apt to add a colouring from her own” (XV. 17).

This notion of mutable coloring, of a woman’s ability to change the color of a man to one more representative of femininity, reveals the narrator’s underlying anxiety about the consequences of gender masquerades, cross-dressing, cross-coloring and the potential effect on a man’s masculinity. Wolfson discusses Byron’s repeated use of the phrase “coleur de rose” in Don Juan with its implications of flirtation and a chameleon-like ability to change colors or adapt to please the partner of the moment. Byron gives all of these characteristics to Juan, and the narrator simultaneously condemns them in women while celebrating them
within the variability of his own text. Further, Caroline Lamb once applied the phrase to Byron in describing his behavior at a party.²⁷ The sense of variability and mobility that "colur de rose" implies is not entirely a negative one. Byron, Juan, the narrator all share an ability to adapt to new situations, and as Wolfson notes, this ability is at the heart of the pleasure that Don Juan gives its readers and is something the poem celebrates. Although the notion that men can take on the colors of women creates anxiety in the narrator as he tells the tale, at the same time he exults in the "feminine" mobility of his own narrative.

When women take on masculine coloring, however, it is another story entirely. Opposite the women who are "colur de rose," the narrator describes the Blues. When women take on the masculine "color" of learning, "blue," it is a thing to be repudiated. The term "bluestocking" indicates to the narrator a woman's pretension to masculine learning and an attempt to cross into the intellectual territory of men. Although above I discuss the positive connotation of mobility associated with "colur de rose," but, as often happens when the narrator discusses matters that pertain to gender behavior, his overall attitude to the woman who appears "colur de

"rose" is ambivalent at best. Like "bluestocking," the term "coleur de rose" at times represents the threat of cross-gendering, specifically when it threatens to afflict the men of the poem with feminine deception and masquerade. In a digression about the primary occupation, the incessant pursuit of a husband, of young English women in Canto XII, the narrator discusses some of the dangers a single man of marriageable age must face. One of these dangers is the woman who presents an "outward grace" that masks the interior "amphibious sort of harlot / 'Coeur de rose,' who's neither white nor scarlet" (XII. 62). Like the bluestockings who would cross into the intellectual region of masculinity and make it their own, the "coleur de rose" flirt threatens to compromise, by virtue of the indeterminant sexuality of her flirtation, the masculinity of the single men who fall into conversation with her. The "coleur de rose harlot" deceives by not playing true to the assumed modesty of her sex, and the narrator and the single men for whom he speaks are unable to discern her intentions. She "keeps you on and off-ing," and her indeterminate flirtation is like a masquerade that prevents the men from accurately reading her availability. The "coleur de rose" flirt is masculinely sexual where the bluestocking is masculinely intellectual.
Juan and Cross-dressing: Wearing Deception

For Juan, then, putting on feminine dress or being dressed by force as a woman operates on two levels. On the one hand, he cross-dresses literally by wearing women's clothes, but he also cross-genders within the very process of masquerade and the deception it entails. Since for the narrator, the primary purpose of feminine appearance, particular feminine beauty or feminine charm, is to deceive, masquerading as a woman or putting on a feminine disguise is a kind of double deception. As I indicated earlier, Juan's episodes of cross-dressing correspond to instances in which the woman of the episode attempts to deceive someone else. This deceit adds a third level of deception to the above two. This underlying pattern of deception behind masquerades of gender is most clearly elucidated in Juan's cross-dressing in the harem, which makes it the appropriate place to begin my discussion of that pattern.

Byron begins Juan's most explicit cross-dressing episode in the slave market of Canto V when Juan is paired with Johnson and brought for sale. In contrast to the effeminate Juan, still weak from his run in with Lambro in the previous canto, Johnson is the consummate man and carries the mark of masculine experience, a wound received during battle: "One arm
had on a bandage rather bloody" (V. 11). Juan has suffered a similar injury and loss of blood at the hands of Lambro, but this blood leaves no external mark other than a feminine pallor, and it further contributes to Juan’s feminization by making him weak. Johnson, by contrast, is strong, and he brags that it took “Six Tartars and a drag chain” to bring him to the market (V. 15). Once off Lambro’s island, however, Juan offers little resistance.

It is Baba, a “neutral personage of the third sex” who makes a commercial “pair” of Juan and Johnson by bidding on them together: “The eunuch, having eyed them o’er with care, / Turned to the merchant, and began to bid / First but for one, and after for the pair” (V. 28). As a eunuch, Baba represents a neutral value in Byron’s conception of gender, and the pair he creates in his bidding seems to be an extension of his own sexual neutrality in that Johnson’s masculine strength is balanced by Juan’s feminine weakness.

Once Baba takes the pair to the palace, he dresses Johnson as “a Turkish Dandy,” complete with

A candiote cloak, which to the knee might reach
And trowsers not so tight that they would burst,
But such as fit an Asiatic breech;
A shawl, whose folds in Cashmire had been nurst,
Slippers of saffron, dagger rich and handy. (V. 68)

This outfit, although feminizing in its foppish detail, emphasizes Johnson's masculine status, particularly the dagger. Baba instructs Juan, however, to put on clothes "In which a Princess with great pleasure would / Array her limbs" (V. 72). After a protest which I will treat more fully below, Juan swears, a masculine outburst, then sighs, a more feminine and wordless response that indicates his submission to Baba's order, and then begins to dress in chemise, petticoat, lace, and gems. With the help of "scissors, paint, and tweezers, / He looked in almost all respects a maid" (V. 80). The physical transformation is complete, and the narrator subsequently refers to Juan as a woman named Juanna.

In Juan's original protest against being transformed into a female, Byron plays with gender symbols. When Baba points to the clothes that he wants Juan to put on, Juan gives them a feminine kick, and says "'Old gentleman, I'm not a lady'" (V. 73). Instead of affirming Juan's masculine status, Baba, the eunuch who is outside the give-and-take between the 

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28The dagger which Baba gives to Johnson is particularly significant since that is one of the items that Haidee omits from Juan's ensemble when he is dressed by Haidee and Zoe in Canto II. The dagger represents Johnson's status as a man who is allowed to defend himself, unlike the women who must be confined to the Oda where protection is provided by a eunuch.
"first" two sexes, replies "'What you may be, I neither know nor care'" (V. 74). Baba "strokes down" Juan's last masculine outburst-- "'What, Sir!...shall it e'er be told / That I unsexed my dress'"--with the threat of castration: "'Incense me, and I call / Those who will leave you of no sex at all'" (V. 75). Just before this exchange, Baba suggests that it might be helpful to both Juan and Johnson to submit to circumcision, a symbolic castration, in order to better their situation and curry favor within the Moslem palace. This suggestion of symbolic castration is transformed into Baba's threat of actual castration when Juan refuses to dress as a woman. The castration again becomes symbolic, instead of actual, when Juan agrees to put on the feminine clothes.

The narrative purpose of this episode of cross-dressing is one of deception. Baba dresses Juan as a woman in order to deceive the guards before the Oda door and to sneak him into the seraglio to satisfy Gulbeyaz's sexual appetites. Repeatedly, the narrator calls Juan's transvestism a disguise, emphasizing both the concealment of the phallus and the deception behind it. Juan's disguise is so proficient that he fools the Sultan when he pays Gulbeyaz a conjugal visit. Although the sultan "perceived / Juan amongst the damsels in disguise,...he seemed no whit
surprised nor grieved” but merely compliments Gulbeyaz on “Juanna’s” beauty (V. 155). The narrator agrees with the sultan’s assessment, noting that Juan’s “youth and features favour’d the disguise” (V. 115), and so it is not surprising that Juan is able to successfully maintain his masquerade. Juan’s masquerade or disguise, besides being overtly feminine, links him to the feminine masquerade of Gulbeyaz, like the devil who put on the cherub to deceive Eve, and of the women of the seraglio who according to the syntax of the narrator’s description—“Juan amongst the damsels in disguise”—are implicated in their own masquerade.

As in the Gulbeyaz episode, Don Juan’s first masquerade of gender is clearly tied to an act of feminine deception. When Alfonso breaks into his wife’s apartment “With torches, friends, and servants in great number” to accuse Julia of having an affair (I. 138), Julia and her maid, Antonia, hide Juan in the bed. While Julia rails against her husband for his accusations, “is it thus a faithful wife you treat?” (I. 150), Juan huddles under the covers which Antonia “contrived to fling...in a heap” to conceal him (I. 140). Although a covering of bed clothes is only a tangential form of cross-dressing, covering Juan with feminine articles in attempt to disguise his presence is a form of gender masquerade, particularly since, as the narrator
notes, the presence of the feminine Antonia, as opposed to that of Juan, is considered unremarkable by the vigilante crew Alfonso assembles in Julia's bedroom (l. 141 and 156). In addition, Alfonso and his posse search through various feminine articles of dress in their attempt to find Juan:

*He search'd, they search'd, and rummaged every where,*
*Closet and clothes'-press, chest and window-seat,*
*And found much linen, lace, and several pair*
*Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete,*
*With other articles of ladies fair,*
*To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat.* (l. 143)

Although Juan is not to be found among these feminine articles, he is hiding in Julia's bedclothes, and if you take Byron at his bawdiest-- "But pity him I neither must nor may / His suffocation by that pretty pair" (l. 166)--Juan is literally hiding within the feminine.

Juan's second hiding place in Julia's bedroom only extends his gender masquerade:

*Antonia's patience now was at a stand--*
*'Come, come, 'tis no time now for fooling there,'*
*She whispered, in great wrath--'I must deposit*
*This pretty gentleman within the closet.'* (l. 170)

Not only is Juan a "pretty gentleman" with a "half-girlish face," but Antonia conceals him within Julia's clothes, and feminine clothing become again Juan's disguise. The contrast between Juan's covering of feminine
articles of dress after his liason with Julia and the masculine clothing in
which he arrived at Julia's bedroom, is highlighted by the manner in which
Alfonso discovers Juan's presence. When Alfonso returns to apologize to
his wife, he trips over Juan's shoes which "Were masculine" (I. 181). Juan
had gone to Julia's bedroom with his masculine shoes, but the sexual liason
and the deception it entailed forced him, via Antonia, to disguise himself
with feminine coverings. The masquerade is incomplete, Juan's masculine
properties cannot be disposed of thoroughly, and Alfonso discovers his
wife's infidelity and Juan's part in it.

When Alfonso finally chases Juan from his wife's bedroom, Juan is
naked, since during his fight with Alfonso, "his only garment gave way" (I.
186). Juan's nakedness reoccurs before Juan's next episode of cross-
dressing or masquerading. When Juan arrives on Haidee's island in Canto
II he is half-naked and nearly drowned. When Haidee and Zoe find him,
Haidee "stripp'd her sables off to make / His couch" and both "gave him a
petticoat apiece" as covering (II. 133). As in Julia's bedroom, Juan must
hide from the nearest representative of masculine authority, this time
Lambro, Haidee's father, and so his clothing options are limited to those
elements of feminine apparel that Haidee and Zoe can spare. Juan wears
petticoats because he must hide from Lambro, and the necessity to
disguise himself limits his access to masculine clothing. As in the episode
in Julia's bedroom, Juan must use feminine articles of clothing for a
covering, and Haidee's gesture to cover Juan with her petticoats is a
function of Juan's overall feminization within the episode. What most
feminizes Juan on the island is Haidee's mothering relationship to him, and
her gesture to cover him is also her first gesture of mothering.29

When Haidee is able to give Juan more masculine clothes, she merely
extends her mothering of him by dressing him with the help of Zoe; Juan
does not dress himself:

Next they [Haidee and Zoe]--he being naked, save a tatter'd
Pair of scarce decent trowsers--went to work,
And in the fire his recent rags they scatter'd,
And dress'd him, for the present, like a Turk,
Or Greek—that is, although it not much matter'd....
They furnish'd him, entire except some stitches,
With a clean shirt, and very spacious breeches. (II. 160)

29In chapter 2 of this dissertation, I discuss the way in which Haidee
and Juan's non-verbal communication throughout the island idyll resembles
the communication of mother and child, and more specifically it resembles
the communion of mother and daughter as defined by Nancy Chodorow
and Margaret Homans. I refer to the specific gendering factor of this sort
of language as a linguistic masking of Juan's gender, since his relationship
to Haidee and the communion they share figures him as a daughter. In
this way, Haidee's mothering gesture, her covering of Juan with Zoe's and
her own petticoats to protect him from the elements is the first act leading
into Juan's linguistic masquerade.
As they dress him, they omit "turban, slippers, pistols, dirk" (ibid), the items that would mark him as an adult Greek male. The childish nature of his apparel is further aggravated by the spaciousness of the breeches which seem to be meant for a much bigger and more fully developed man, most probably Haidee's father. Since Haidee's maternal attentions to Juan infantalize him by propelling him back to a kind of pre-oedipal, pre-verbal state, Juan's effeminate and childish clothing serve to mimic this child-like relationship to Haidee and, especially in the absence of pistol and dirk, his corresponding dependence on her for his safety and sustenance, a dependence, which according to Byron's depiction of gender, is more feminine than masculine.

It is not until the end of the episode that Juan appears in his own Greek clothes, but some of the ambiguity of cross-dressing remains in the similarity of male and female dress on the island. In Vested Interests, Marjorie Garber discusses the similarity of gendered attire in the Orient with specific reference to Juan's episode of cross-dressing in the harem scenes. Garber brings to the forefront the parallels between Juan's clothing and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "Turkish Habit" to which

Byron explicitly refers at the outset of Juan's transformation. Garber notes that although Juan protests to the "effeminate garb" Baba instructs him to wear, "Lady Mary donning her new habit, is conscious that a Turkish woman wears trousers, smock, and waistcoat--items of clothing that in Europe would describe the wardrobe of a man." In the Haidee cantos and particularly in the banquet scene, Byron calls attention to the minimal difference in male and female Greek attire. Although Juan wears a turban in these scenes, one of the previously omitted items whose absence

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As Byron sets the episode in Turkey, he describes it as the place that "charmed the charming Mary Montagu" (V. 3). Lady Montagu lived in Turkey with her husband Edward Wortley Montagu who held an embassy position there. While in Turkey, Mary Montagu adopted native dress and in a letter to her sister which was dated April 1, 1717, she described her "Turkish Habit": "The first piece of my dress is a pair of drawers, very full, that reach to my shoes and conceal the legs more modestly than your petticoats. They are of a thin, rose-colored damask brocaded with silver flowers, my shoes of white kid leather embroidered with gold. Over this hangs my smock of a fine white silk gauze edged with embroidery. This smock has wide sleeves hanging half-way down the arm and is closed at the neck with a diamond button, but the shape and colour of the bosom very well to be distinguished through it. The antery [i.e., entari] is a waistcoat made close to the shape, of white and gold damask, with very long sleeves falling back and fringed with deep gold fringe." To Lady Mar, Adrianople, 1 April, 1717. Embassy to Constantinople: The Travels of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, ed. Christopher Pick (London: Century Hutchinson, 1988) 108-109. Marjorie Garber provides an insightful discussion of oriental dress in her chapter, "The Chic of Araby," in Vested Interests.

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32Garber 320.
signals his child-like status, the rest of his attire bears a striking resemblance to Haidee’s lavish dress:

Of all the dresses I select Haidee’s:
She wore two jelicks—one was of pale yellow;
Of azure, pink, and white was her chemise—
‘Neath which her breast heaved like a little billow;
With buttons form’d of pearls as large as peas,
All gold and crimson shone her jelick’s fellow,
And the striped white gauze baracan that bound her,
Like fleecy clouds about the moon, flow’d round her. (III. 70)

Juan’s dress resembles Haidee’s:

Juan had on a shawl of black and gold,
But a white baracan, and so transparent
The sparkling gems beneath you might behold,
Like small stars through the milky way apparent. (III. 77)

Juan also wears Haidee, as he wore Julia in the previous episode, in the form of “An emerald aigrette with Haidee’s hair in’t” (ibid).

Juan’s feminized state extends beyond his outward appearance and the clothes he wears, although both signal his feminization. When Lambro returns to the island and inquires of a guest “the meaning of this holiday,” the guest’s reply insinuates that it is Haidee who is the new authority on the island: “You’d better ask our mistress who’s his heir” (III. 43). Although another guest would correct the first—“’Our mistress!—pooh!—/
You mean our master—not the old but new’” (ibid), the poem supports the
first’s response. It is Haidee who “now kept house upon her own account” (III. 38), and it is Haidee’s management that the narrator compares to Lambro’s: “Her father’s hospitality seem’d middling, / Compared with what Haidee did with his treasure” (III. 39). Juan has no influence on how the island household is run. It is entirely kept according to Haidee’s economy. She is “princess of her father’s land,” and Juan is under her care (III. 72).

Juan’s Internalizing and the Narrator’s Externalizing of Masquerade

Juan’s masquerades of gender that follow the Gulbeyaz episode with its explicit cross-dressing vary from the pattern formed in the Julia and Haidee episodes. In the Russian and English cantos, the nature of Juan’s masquerades of gender becomes much more social in context, and Byron, through the voice of the narrator, uses the figure of masquerade as more of a social critique. The deceptions involved also become both more social and more internalized as Juan begins to take part in acts of self-deception within an arena that Byron chooses to satirize on a social level. In the earlier cantos there is an earnestness to Juan even in the midst of his deceptive masquerades, an earnestness that comes both from youth and the youthful propensity to fall unquestioningly in love. The literal cross-dressing in the Oda is of a different sort which is signalled by Juan’s
opportunistic use of his position to live out the male fantasy, as Garber notes, of “the disguised man in the harem.”

Where in the early cantos Byron is careful to preserve at least the semblance of innocence, Juan’s later affairs are clearly opportunistic, and Juan’s masquerades become increasingly calculating. In the Catherine episode, when the empress falls in love with Juan, he falls into self-love, and the masquerading imagery the narrator uses to describe Juan’s appearance in the episode reveals a new level of narcissism which corresponds to Juan’s self-deception. When Catherine first sees him, the narrator invokes an extended metaphor in which Juan “masquerades” as Cupid:

Suppose him in a handsome uniform;  
A scarlet coat, black facings, a long plume,  
Waving, like sails new shivered in a storm,  
Over a cocked hat in a crowded room,  
And brilliant breeches, bright as a Cairn Gorme,  
Of yellow cassimere we may presume,  
White stockings drawn, uncurdled as new milk,  
O’er limbs whose symmetry set off the silk:

Suppose him sword by side, and hat in hand,  
Made up by Youth, Fame, and an Army tailor--  
That great Enchanter, at whose rod’s command  
Beauty springs forth, and Nature’s self turns paler,  
Seeing how Art can make her work more grand,  
(When she don’t pin men’s limbs in like a jailor)--  
Behold him placed as if upon a pillar! He

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33Garber 320.
Seems Love turned a Lieutenant of Artillery!

His Bandage slipped down into a cravat;
His Wings subdued to epaulettes; his Quiver
Shrank to a scabbard, with his Arrows at
His side as a small sword, but sharp as ever;
His Bow converted into a cocked hat;
But still so like, that Psyche were more clever
Than some wives (who make blunders no less stupid)
If She had not mistaken him for Cupid. (IX. 43-45)

Although in itself the image of Cupid is not implicitly feminine, it is Juan’s boyishly feminine appearance that attracts Catherine and which initiates the narrator’s comparison. Juan’s effeminate appearance enables the masquerade, and the narrator’s explicit reference to mistaken identity in the last line only strengthens the implication that Juan is masquerading as Cupid.  

Both Juan and Catherine in a sense mistake Juan for Cupid, and the narrator seems to be willing to make the same mistake in the

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34 In literature, Cupid himself has been known to use masquerade to influence the sexual lives of those around him according to his mother’s orders. In Virgil’s Aeneid, Venus instructs Cupid to appear to Dido as Iulus, Aeneas’ son, to “dupe” her:

“You counterfeit his figure for one night,  
No more, and make the boy’s known face your mask,  
So that when Dido takes you on her lap  
Amid the banqueting and wine, in joy,  
When she embraces you and kisses you  
You’ll breathe invisible fire into her  
And dupe her with your sorcery.” (1: 660-666)

proliferation of his references to Cupid throughout the episode: Catherine
drinks “from Cupid’s cup...A quintessential laudunum” (IX. 67) and in her
sexual voracity

could repay each amatory look you lent
With interest, and in turn was wont with rigour
To exact of Cupid’s bills the full amount
At sight, nor would permit you to discount. (IX. 62)

This passage indicates that Juan becomes Cupid as the result of Catherine’s
voracious sexual appetite; only Eros incarnate can satisfy her. Juan must
play Cupid, according to narrative metaphor and imagery, so that
Catherine can exact the full payment of his bills. Further, by figuring Juan
as a Cupid whose bills must be paid, the narrator alludes to what will
become the economic nature of Juan’s sexual relationship with Catherine.

The narrator again furthers a sense of Juan in masquerade when he
compares him to Catherine’s usual sexual fare. Most of Catherine’s
innumerable lovers, with the exception of the fair-faced Lanskoii, her
favorite, were “mostly nervous six-foot fellows, / All fit to make a
Patagonian jealous” (IX. 46). Juan, by contrast “was none of these, but
slight and slim, / Blushing and beardless” (IX. 47). The narrator makes it
clear however that this external delicacy of appearance is only a cover:
yet ne'ertheless
There was a something in his turn of limb,
And still more in his eye, which seemed to express
That though he looked one of the Seraphim,
There lurked a Man beneath the Spirit's dress. (ibid)

Here the narrator calls attention to Juan's "masquerade" in which his
eexternal and slightly feminine or boyish appearance covers his internal, and
more manly, properties. Juan's external femininity covers the "Man
beneath," which is almost an exact figure of the phallic woman, the
essential cross-dresser. Catherine's final reason for desiring Juan returns to
this external feminine appearance: "the Empress sometimes liked a boy, /
And had just buried the fair faced Lanskoi" (ibid). Juan is the boy to
satisfy her, since, according to the narrator "Juan was a most beauteous
Boy" whose beardless complexion has outlasted the "usual hirsute season"
(IX. 53).35

35In her chapter on "The Transvestite's Progress," Marjorie Garber
discusses the socio-gender implications of the term "boy" as used by
various critics specifically with respect to the "phenomenon of the boy
actor on the English Renaissance stage": "For that matter, what is a 'boy'? You might think this was a simple matter. A boy is a male child below the
age of puberty. But the term 'boy' was also used to designate a servant or
slave (especially in colonial or post-colonial Africa, and India, and parts of
China, as well as in southern parts of the United States); in other words,
'boy' functions as a term of domination, a term to designate an inferior, to
create a distinction between or among men--of any age" (89). As Garber
suggests, 'boy' as a marker of 'inferiority' was also applied to the male
actors of the Elizebethan stage apprenticed to more experienced actors and
Juan’s initial feminization by Catherine, with the narrator’s help in the extended metaphor, is only exacerbated by the economic basis of their relationship and Juan’s role as a prostitute or gigolo. Catherine exacts full payment for Cupid’s bills while simultaneously paying off Cupid himself, since “Love had made Catherine make each lover’s fortune” (IX. 81). In his descriptions of the kind of prostitute Catherine creates in the men/boys she uses, the narrator puns on his conflation of money and the penis:

If once beyond her boudoir’s precincts in ye went,
Your ‘Fortune’ was in a fair way ‘to swell
A Man,’ as Giles says; for though she would widow all
Nations, she liked Man as an individual. (IX. 63)

For Catherine, money and penis are interchangeable; one may be traded for the other and due payment rendered.

Within the Catherine episode, Juan’s sexual favors are thus bought and granted. In the Gulbeyaz episode, however, Juan balks when he

who on stage portrayed women. “What, then, if the ‘boy’ of ‘boy actor’ fame, appropriated by some recent historicist critics as a sign of the homoerotic subtext of Renaissance theater, and by some feminist critics as a sign of female power and agency—what if that ‘boy’ were to be taken seriously as what it most disturbingly represents: the figure of the transvestite?...a provoker of category crises, a destabilizer of binarisms, a transgressor of boundaries, sexual, erotic, hierarchical, political, conceptual” (Garber 90). In Don Juan the narrator’s “boy” seems to function as the designator of “anything but a man” (89); he is both an inferior and the transgressor of boundaries. The narrator applies it to Juan because of his transgressive, sexually ambiguous appearance.
recognizes his status as the sultana's property. Wolfson suggests that within the Gulbeyaz episode Byron presents his readers with a figure of his own service as a cavaliere servente. Just as Gulbeyaz asks "Christian, canst thou love?" and expects that "that phrase was quite enough to move" (V. 116), so for the cavaliere servente, as Byron describes in "Beppo," "the only law which he obeys" is his mistress's command. Wolfson includes Juan's employment in Russia as Catherine's "man-mistress" in the same category as his service to Gulbeyaz, but I would argue for a difference between the two episodes. Where with Gulbeyaz, the phrase is not enough to move, with Catherine it is plenty, and Juan, with a new attitude toward his ability to become a phallic woman, willingly complies. I would also not categorize Juan's prostitution by Catherine as a form of cavaliere servente. Instead, Juan's serving as gigolo to Catherine represents his own sexual opportunism. He sees in his false feminine state, in his veiling boyishness, the opportunity of the phallic woman. He can again and again live out the transvestite fantasy Garber describes with reference to Juan in the harem, a fantasy he will live out again and expand in the English cantos.

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36 Wolfson 604-605. For more information about Byron's service as a cavaliere servente, refer to Marchand's Byron's Journals and Letters.
At the opening of the English cantos, the first thing the narrator does is to have Juan fulfill his "mothering role" of Leila, the young girl Juan saves in the Siege of Ismail, in the best way he can, by passing her off to a widow to raise. As his vicarious surrogate mothering of Leila suggests, in his entrance to England, Juan is again marked as feminine, this time as the sexual property of Catherine the Great. Juan is "young, handsome, and accomplished" and "was said / (In whispers) to have turned his Sovereign's head" (XI. 32). Catherine rewards Juan generously for services rendered with gifts, particularly jewels, which give Juan the air of a well-kept mistress. When he reaches London,

his dress
And mien excited general admiration--
I don't know which was most admired or less:
One monstrous diamond drew much observation,
Which Catherine in a moment of 'ivresse'
(In love or brandy's fervent fermentation)
Bestowed upon him, as the public learned;
And, to say truth, it had been fairly earned. (XI. 39)

Juan's position as Catherine's well remunerated man-mistress, in itself a gender masquerade, associates him with the politician's underlings of the following few stanzas who "Were hardly rude enough to earn their pay" but who were nonetheless bought and sold as much as Juan (XI. 40). It is in this turn of the stanzas that Byron's critique of masquerading acquires
broader social implications. At this point, the voice of the narrator, and
Byron’s satire behind it, becomes more bitter. Where before Juan’s
masquerades had been treated with a relatively light hand, the narrator uses
his masquerade as Catherine’s personal Cupid as a platform for more
serious social criticism, and he trades a playful tone for one of sarcastic
contempt.

When “Juan presented in the proper place...every Russ credential”
(XI. 35), credentials which signify his position as ambassador and as
Catherine’s prostitute, he is met by “placemen” who enact their own
masquerade, a “double front” (XI. 36), with “due grimace” (XI. 35). For
the narrator, this kind of calculated masquerade is implicitly feminine and
compromises the masculinity of those who turn the masquerade to their
advantage. In mock contrast to the politicians “Who live by lies, yet dare
not boldly lie” (XI. 36), the narrator switches abruptly to praise women for
their entertaining lies, which are (as I quote above) “but / The truth in
masquerade” (XI. 37). The woman who most embodies the narrator’s
mocking ideal of masquerading success is Adeline, who he describes as true
only to the extent that she reflects her own society:

So well she acted, all and every part
By turns--with that vivacious versatility,
Which many people take for want of heart. They err--'tis merely what is called mobility...
And false--though true; for surely they're sincerest, Who are strongly acted on by what is nearest. (XVI. 97)

That this mobility, in itself a form of masquerade, really is "want of heart" is confirmed in the narrator's early descriptions of Adeline that emphasize her coldness toward Lord Henry and the emptiness of her heart, which is "vacant, though a splendid mansion" (XIV. 85). Like Adeline, Juan shows his own mobility in possessing "like Alcibiades, / The art of living in all climes with ease" (XV. 11). They share a similar masquerade.

In a sense, the narrator engages in his own masquerade, shows his own mobility, and wears his own double front, but he does so in a satirical manner:

Praised be all liars and all lies! Who now Can tax my mild Muse with misanthropy? She rings the world's 'Te Deum,' and her brow Blushes for those w'ho will not:--but to sigh Is idle; let us like most others bow, Kiss hands, feet, any part of Majesty, After the good example of 'Green Erin,' Whose Shamrock now seems rather worse for wearing. (XI. 35-38)

Like Juan, Adeline, the politicians, and the women who can't help but lie,

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37 The context for the narrator's description of Adeline's mobility is strictly political. It occurs in the middle of a dinner Lord Henry Amundeville hosts in an effort to insure his success in the next election.
the narrator gives evidence of his own mobility. He too seems able to change his opinions and contradict himself, as he does throughout Don Juan. Unlike Juan and Adeline, for whom mobility is “A thing of temperament and not of art,” the narrator’s mobility is pure art and wholly conscious. I disagree in my reading of these stanzas and of the narrator’s variability throughout the narrative with Wolfson who argues that the narrator’s mobility suggests evidence of his own feminization. Instead, I see the narrator’s approach to this mobility, in contrast to that of a feminine Juan and the women of the narrative, as a factor of Byron’s satire.

The above passage which I quote at length again returns to an image from the episode during which the implications of Juan’s masquerade shift. The last stanza introduces an image of the local politicians kissing “hands, feet, any part of Majesty” in their hypocritical efforts to welcome George IV to Ireland. The specificity of the image refers back to Juan balking at kissing Gurbeyaz’s feet—“It grieved him, but he could not stoop / To any shoe unless, it shod the Pope” (V. 102)—and the episode in which Juan learned how to take advantage of his own appearance as a phallic woman

Adeline’s mobility in this situation serves a political function (XVI. 96-97).

38 Wolfson 589.
and of his masquerades of gender. He learns the benefits to be had from living in all climes with ease, and the narrator mockingly encourages him:

But 'Carpe diem,' Juan, 'Carpe, carpe!'
To-morrow sees another race as gay
And transient, and devoured by the same harpy.
'Life's a poor player,'--then 'play out the play,
Ye villains!' and above all keep a sharp eye
Much less on what you do than what you say:
Be hypocritical, be cautious, be
Not what you seem, but always what you see. (XI. 86)

To adapt to the English political climate, Juan must attempt a new masquerade, the masquerade that Adeline perfects in acting well "all and every part." This masquerade is, according to the narrator's association of mobility and deception with women, implicitly feminine.

The simultaneously feminine and political nature of this mobility links it with a complex form of political "cross-dressing" that appears throughout the poem, beginning with the dedication to Southey. In discussing various forms of cross-dressing within Don Juan, Wolfson remarks that when Byron wishes to attack a political opponent such as Southey or Castlereagh, he does so in terms that imply transvestism and emasculation:

The overstrained laureate Southey, 'quite adry, Bob,' is of a piece with the 'intellectual eunuch Castlereagh' (Dedication
3; 11). The former figure is in fact stigmatized further by transvestite practice—'turncoat Southey'—and thus scorned for lacking both political and sexual integrity (11.56).

Castlereagh and Southey are like the English politicians with their double fronts who compromise their masculinity in their political masquerades.

Returning the Players to their Proper Attire, or the Shortcomings of Masquerade

Ultimately, despite the playfulness with which the narrator presents cross-dressing in the poem, Juan’s stints at masquerades of gender are unsuccessful, and they are resolved in a way that attempts to normalizes gender, usually Juan’s. In the Julia episode, Juan’s stray shoe alerts Alfonso to the deception of his wife, and Juan is forced to flee naked when “his only garment quite gave way,” a state in which there is no chance for Juan to disguise his sex (1. 186). Juan’s cross-dressing in the Haidee episode is cut short by Lambro’s violent return, and when Lambro orders him to throw down his sword, Juan responds heroically and masculinely, “Not while this arm is free” (IV. 40). The gestures toward normalization of gender, toward remasculinizing Juan, become more explicit when Juan’s masquerades are more explicitly episodes of cross-dressing. Thus in the Gulbeyaz episode, Juan’s quite literal cross-dressing is normalized in the

30Wolfson 595.
transvestite pleasure of revealing the phallus, an unmistakable assertion of
Juan's masculine characteristics.

Juan's presence as the phallic woman in the harem normalizes more
gender difficulties than simply Juan's transvestite appearance. When the
narrator first introduces Juanna into the Oda, he draws on Juan's and the
damsels' shared masquerade. On one hardly conscious level, the girls seem
to sense that "Juanna" is really a male, but the narrator is careful to keep
the extent of their awareness ambiguous: "All felt a soft kind of
concatenation, / Like Magnetism, or Devilism, or what / You please" (VI.
38). What is undisputed is that "they all felt for their new / Companion
something newer still" and felt that they would prefer "Juanna" to
masculine royalty (VI. 39). The narrator implies a sympathy between the
women which arises from their shared masquerade, and he vaguely alludes
to the possibility for a lesbian attraction between the odalisques.

Whenever the issue of homoeroticism, whether between women or
men, appears in the text, the narrator expresses a kind of anxiety by
writing around the incident, thus preventing it from being an explicit part
of the text. In the English cantos, the narrator vaguely implies that the
reason for coolness in Adeline and Lord Henry's marriage is the result of
homoerotic impulses on Henry's part. The implications of homoeroticism, however, are limited to a "something which was nothing, " a "je ne sais quoi" (XIV. 72). This kind of reticence or not saying also appears when the narrator alludes to lesbianism among the odalisques who are "beauties cool as an Italian convent, / Where all the passions have, alas! but one vent." The narrator responds by writing around the situation and leaving it for the reader to draw the homoerotic implications: "And what is that? Devotion, doubtless--how / Could you ask such a question?" (VI. 32-33).

Part of the anxiety that the narrator's question reveals is mitigated when Juan turns his masquerade to his own benefit within the Oda. The narrator gives the reader some premonition of the farce to follow soon after Juan obeys Baba's order to dress as a young woman. Once Juan and Johnson have put on the clothes Baba indicates, they turn their situation into a joke by parodying a scene from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "the Sultan's self shan't carry me, / Unless his highness promises to marry me" (V. 84).

This movement toward farce is also a movement toward the carnivalesque, and Juan's attitude, no longer "my soul loathes / The effeminate garb" (V. 76), turns toward the joke of the phallic woman. Wolfson discusses theories of transvestism, such as those of Robert Stoller,
in conjunction with Byron's possible psycho-biographical reasons for including scenes in which the transvestite Juan reasserts his masculinity. Robert Stoller argues that while dressing as a woman the transvestite is always aware of the penis beneath the feminine clothing and looks for opportunities in which he can reveal his identity as a "'male-woman'" for his own enjoyment or amusement. The joke, however, needs an audience which is provided when Juan and Johnson joke about the truth behind Juan's disguise. Stoller argues that this fantasy of the male-woman or phallic woman is a means for the transvestite to compensate for feminine traits within himself, traits he fears are inferior or emasculating. Wolfson, then, attributes Byron's inclusion of feminine traits in Juan as a narrative acknowledgment of his own "'propensity toward being reduced'" to the inferior state of femininity. and Juan's presence in the poem as a phallic woman and his reassertion of the phallus act to remedy the anxiety the "inferior" state produces.

Although Juan's change in attitude, as revealed by his ability to joke about his cross-dressing, indicates Juan's willingness to play the game of the phallic woman, it is not until Juan enters the harem that he is able to take

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40Wolfson 607.
advantage of his identity as a phallic woman. Once Juan enters the Oda, the chamber of the women among whom he is disguised, Juan is able to reveal the phallus under the petticoat by means of a sexual tryst with Dudù. With this gesture, the narrator restores Juan’s masculine gender and assures his audience that the women of the Oda prefer heterosexual sex when available.

But Is Juan the Only Cross-Dressing/Masquerading Man?

Underlying all of Juan’s episodes of cross-dressing I have discussed throughout this chapter is the hint that masquerades of gender might not be limited strictly to Juan. Throughout Don Juan, the narrator has prepared the reader to accept Juan’s episodes of masquerade. From the beginning, when Juan is only sixteen to the end when he is well into his thirties, Juan’s appearance remains that of the sexually ambiguous adolescent. It is as if he is stuck in the pubescent years in which secondary sex characteristics are only incompletely developed for both male and female. In Canto I Juan is “Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit / ...almost a man” (I. 54) and in the final canto, he still wears a “virgin face” (XVII. 13). In the Catherine episode Juan appears “Blushing and beardless” but a “Man beneath” (IX. 47), and in Juan’s most explicit turn at cross-dressing
in the seraglio, the narrator remarks that “His youth and features favour’d the disguise” (V. 115). Juan’s willingness to risk all for sex also marks him as young: “For no one, save in very early youth, / Would like (I think) to trust all to desire” (VI. 16).

Juan’s youthful appearance at sixteen and at thirty-three suits his cross-gendering masquerades. The narrator’s worry, however, is that feminine traits which are suitable to cross-dressing might extend to men of all ages. Even Johnson, who by appearance should be thoroughly masculine, is feminized by the foppish clothes Baba gives him and becomes quite passive, willing to put off escape for dinner, while earlier he feels a feminine and homoerotic “compassion for the sad / Lot of so young a partner [Juan] to the woe” (V. 13). Lord Henry, like Johnson, is a soldier and “in each circumstance of love or war / Had still preserved his perpendicular” (XIV. 71), but the narrator implies sexual ambiguity in him as well, a “Je ne sais quoi,” (XIV. 72). This indefinable something in Lord Henry is allied with sexual ambiguity with the following stanza’s reference to Tiresias, who is

41The narrator’s description of Lord Henry as having “something wanting on the whole,” as Susan Wolfson notes “was normally ascribed in the dominant discourses of Byron’s era to the female rather than the male” (595). This lack indicates a femininity within Lord Henry, the sexual ambiguity to which I refer above, that the narrator tries to contradict with later baudy and phallic images.
deemed the only one to "[prove] / By turns the difference of the several
sexes" (XIV. 73).

As the instances of feminine masquerade and deception pile up, the
narrator's repeated reaching for the trope of feminine deception and the
possibility for that trope to cross the boundaries of sex and age create an
anxiety of sexual instability within the text. The repeated instances of
cross-dressing imply a flexibility of gender definition, a disassociation of
gender from biological sex, which threatens to spread from Juan to the
other "masculine" men of the narrative. In response to the pressures of an
anxiety of sexual ambiguity, the narrator, and Byron behind him, set into
motion plots which address the anxiety and act to suppress it. Juan's gender
masquerades are either interrupted by an assertion of masculine authority
or are remedied by Juan's own assertion of the phallus beneath the
petticoat, whether borrowed from Julia, Haidee, an unspecified odalisque;
even Catherine's prostituting petticoats, or Adeline's petticoat influence.

Feminine undergarments, such as the petticoat, have long fascinated
transvestites. In *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from
the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age*, Valerie Steele speculates that the appeal
underclothing has for the transvestite is its status as the last veil for
feminine sexuality. Lingerie covers the "veiled, secret part, the desired
indescretion."\textsuperscript{42} For the narrator of \textit{Don Juan}, the petticoat performs a
similar role, and it is the phallus under the petticoat which provides the
most explicit gesture of gender normalization, of retaking the upper hand
from women. In canto XIV, the narrator digresses about the charm of the
petticoat:

\begin{quote}
But, since beneath it upon earth we are brought
By various joltings of life's hackney coach,
I for one venerate a petticoat--
A garment of a mystical sublimity,
No matter whether russet, silk, or dimity.

Much I respect, and much I have adored,
In my young days, that chaste and goodly veil,
Which holds a treasure, like a Miser's hoard,
And more attracts by all it doth conceal--
A golden scabbard on a Damasque sword,
A loving letter with a mystic seal,
A cure for grief--for what can ever rankle
Before a petticoat and peeping ancle? (XIV. 26-27)
\end{quote}

The attraction of a petticoat is its ability to conceal, whether female
genitalia ("beneath it upon earth we are brought") or male genitalia
("golden scabbard on a Damasque sword"), its mystic seal and mystical
sublimity. As a concealer of the phallus, the petticoat is best able to

\textsuperscript{42}Valerie Steele. \textit{Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty
from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age} (New York: Oxford UP, 1985)
207.
neutralize the "'Petticoat Influence,'" that "great reproach" with which the narrator opens the first of the two stanzas above. And it is Juan's penis beneath the petticoat that is the narrator's and Byron's antidote for the pressure of feminity, pressure exerted by the women of the narrative and which threatens to overtake all the men associated with the text.
Chapter 4
The Emasculating Threat of the Feminine in Don Juan

Throughout Don Juan, the narrator presents his readers with a cast of strong women with whom Juan interacts both to his benefit and to his harm. These women are, with the exception of the narrator, the most fully developed characters of the poem. The femininity, or rather a corresponding masculinized or phallic femininity, which characterizes these women threatens the men of the narrative by virtue of its potential ability to feminize the masculine. In chapters 2 and 3 I have analyzed the narrator’s presentation of “the feminine” in terms both of appearance and of language. It is through women’s speech and their appearance that the narrator is able to approach the feminine by defining it according to the narrow parameters and stereotypes which I have discussed in the previous chapters. When femininity threatens to overstep its bounds and to threaten the masculinity of the men of the narrative by virtue of its seductive attraction, the narrator pushes it away either through flippant remarks or plots that serve to remedy gender anxiety. The narrator’s presentation of femininity within Don Juan is thus complicated as well as defined by simultaneous gestures of attraction and repulsion.
The Oedipus Complex and the Threat of Castration

In chapter 3 I have discussed Juan's feminine state which is preserved throughout much of the poem in his dealings with the strong women of the text. Although Juan himself is prone to feminization by virtue of his youthful appearance, the strong women of the narrative threaten to emasculate him further by placing him in feminized sexual or social positions. At its most explicit, this threat takes the form of castration anxiety as defined in the theories of Freud and Lacan. Although it is impossible for Byron to have been aware of the work of Freud much less Lacan, it is not surprising to find the structure of the Oedipus myth to which both refer operating within the writings of a nineteenth century poet. By looking at the Oedipus myth or complex in relation to Don Juan, I hope to analyze the way in which castration anxiety within the oedipus complex operates within the poem as an instituter of gender ambivalence, particularly ambivalence toward femininity.

For Freud the oedipus complex occurs as a child first discovers sexual impulses within himself, at approximately eighteen months of age. At this time, the male child\(^{43}\) begins to desire his mother and wishes to replace his

\(^{43}\)As Margaret Homans says in the introduction to Bearing the Word, I use the masculine pronoun advisedly in this instance, since Freud
father in his mother’s affections. In order to avoid the taboo of incest, the father threatens the male child with castration unless he relinquishes his attraction for his mother. The oedipus complex is resolved when the child acquiesces to his father’s order to relinquish his desire for the mother.

Once the child has resolved the complex by giving up the mother, according to Lacan, he then begins a never ending quest to replace the lost mother with symbols of her. It is in this way that the child enters the symbolic realm of language, and he must continuously attempt to replace the lost mother with a string of signifiers in language and with a string of substitute women in his sexual life.

Before the resolution of the oedipus complex, “the mother is considered, by both sexes, as possessing the phallus, as the phallic mother.”44 While the child, the boy in particular since he is at the center of both Freud and Lacan’s use of the oedipal myth, remains within the structure of the oedipus complex, he views his mother as a phallic mother, and it is as such that he desires her. At the time of the child’s resolution originally proposed the oedipus complex as the structuring element of the male psyche. In terms of Don Juan and this chapter, the male oedipus complex is more relevant, therefore, it is the one to which I will refer in the course of most of this discussion.

44Lacan 282.
of the oedipus complex, his desire for the phallic mother provokes the father's threat of castration, and the son relinquishes the mother, whom the son has discovered with horror does not in fact have a penis, in order to enter the symbolic realm, according to Lacan, or within Freud's schema, to continue his psychological development. For the son, castration anxiety remains tied to the image of the phallic mother or the phallic woman, and the son maintains his horror and revulsion at the discovery of the mother's "essential" lack.

Although castration anxiety appears in various episodes of Don Juan, it reaches its height in the cantos preceding Juan's cross-dressing episode in the seraglio when Juan appears as a slave. In chapter 3 I have discussed the narrator's use of Juan's presence in the seraglio as a phallic woman to remedy narrative anxiety about confusions of gender, an anxiety most clearly expressed as the fear of castration.

Carnival Play or the Threat of Castration

After Lambro's henchmen have arrested Juan in Canto IV, they sell him to pirates to be sold as a slave. While Juan is on the slave ship, the narrator creates an air of carnival, in spite of the obvious signs of oppression. There is however, a dual impulse in the narrator's treatment of
the inversions of the slaveship which at once signal the playful inversion of
gender signs popular in the carnival and the threat of castration. Susan
Wolfson acknowledges the double nature of Byron’s satire that at once
enjoys exploring the chaotic inversions of the carnival-like atmosphere
while it simultaneously expresses “nervous force,” or anxiety, when those
inversions threaten to “erode male privilege” and to make the playful
inversions permanent.45

The carnivalesque scene on the slave ship forshadows the upcoming
transgressive scene in the Oda which will present Juan in drag, both by
virtue of its own transgressive inversion of hierarchies and by the
castration anxiety which threaten to make those inversions permanent.
While Juan is on the slave ship, the narrator spends little time discussing
his captors. Instead, he describes Juan’s “fellow captives” who are carnival
figures, a travelling band of Italian singers who, en route to an engagement
in Sicily, were sold to the pirates “by the impresario at no high rate” (IV.
80). The various singers are introduced as caricatures: the dissipated
prima donna, the beautiful but shallow dancers, the tenor and his
affectations, the bass hired through nepotism, the conceited baritone.

45Wolfson 600.
Byron himself introduces the subject of carnival in an aside about the
tenor's beautiful wife who

with no great voice, is pleasing to behold;
Last carnival she made a deal of strife
By carrying off Count Cesare Cicogna
From an old Roman princess at Bologna. (IV. 83)

The carnival atmosphere on the slave ship is slightly ironic when compared
to Bakhtin's description of carnival:

one might say that carnival celebrates temporary liberation
from the prevailing truth of the established order; it marks
the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and
prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of
becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was
immortalized and complete.46

On the slave ship, social rank is irrelevant, since the well-born Juan is a
slave just like the carnival performers. Sexual and gender definitions are
slippery, as I will explore below, and the air is charged with erotic potential,
as the narrator's move to usher Juan off the ship in response to the
censoring pressures of his publishers indicates.47


47 According to the narrator's sarcastic remarks, the public had been
affronted by the presence of too much "truth," or rather too much censor-
worthy material, in the first few cantos of *Don Juan*. In response to the
publisher's claim that "Through needles' eyes it easier for the camel is / To
pass, than those two cantos into families" (IV. 97), the narrator assures
The slave ship is obviously not literally a place of liberation, but it is a scene of liberation from prohibitions, particularly from sexual prohibitions and sexual hierarchies. The narrator calls into question the sexual “purity” of the women on the ship, first with “the Nini” who he hints “more than one profession gains by all,” then “that laughing slut the Pelegrini,” and also “the Grotesca--such a dancer! / Where men have souls or bodies she must answer” (IV. 84). The narrator questions the men’s sexual conduct in a different manner by introducing the “Musico,” a member of “the third sex” and a male “soprano,” who’s sexuality or gender definition frustrates the captor’s efforts to categorize him.

Immediately before the ship reaches the port, the captors divide the cargo into pairs to facilitate their transfer to the slave market. All of the cargo, except for Juan and his partner, are chained “Lady to lady, well as man to man” (IV. 91). In the course of pairing the couples, the captors are left at the end with “an odd male, and odd female” (IV. 92), and the musico. “[A]fter some discussion and some doubt, / If the soprano might be deem’d to be male” (ibid), Juan, the odd man, is paired with the odd woman (ibid), and the musico is “placed...o’er the women as a scout” that he will get Juan off the slave ship before he succumbs to the Romagnole’s charms.
(ibid). At issue in this stanza is how to categorize gender, where the lines between gender categories should be drawn. The categorization is complicated by the presence of the sexually ambiguous musico. Not only is the musico a member of the “third sex” (IV. 86), but his voice, “a crack’d old basin” (ibid) calls into question his very status as a castrato, since he is not the soprano he was meant to be.

The woman with whom Juan is paired is a “Bacchante blooming visage,” and the narrator refers to the pairing as “an awkward thing at [Juan’s] age” (IV. 92). The narrator ignores the true “awkwardness” of the situation--the “unlawful” world of the slave ship on which homosexual pairing is the norm while a heterosexual couple is an abberation--by calling attention to the supposed sexual discomfort of Juan in being paired with a beautiful woman. Juan fails, however, to fulfill the narrator’s expectations of teenage lust. He suffers no sexual uncertainty when paired with the woman, because he fails to experience sexual attraction in his weakened condition. The narrator excuses Juan’s immunity to the woman’s charms by attributing his inattention to his wounds, although his lack of interest reflects the femininity with which the narrator characterizes him throughout the poem and which will be exaggerated in the cross-dressing
scenes of the next canto. The narrator also suggests that Juan's inattention might be the result of his sorrow over losing Haidee (IV. 95). For the narrator, this kind of sorrow is femininely pathetic, and when he recognizes it in himself at the very end of the Haidee episode, he quickly suppresses it by "chang[ing] this theme, which grows too sad" (IV. 73).

There seems to be more going on in the pairing of Juan and the Romagnole than the narrator directly expresses in his disappointment at Juan's asexual behavior. The situation on the slave ship, as I have indicated above, is unstable, at least in terms of the "accepted" model of sexuality, with the abundance of homosexual pairs and relative dearth of heterosexual ones. Byron at first inverts the accepted structure of sexuality and gender while maintaining some form of gendered ordering, but then he erases the boundaries of gender definition, which is highlighted in the captors' inability to force the gender of the musico to correspond to his biological sex. Juan's gender definition is also slippery since he is paired with a woman in a situation that normalizes homosexual pairings, and his gender definition is again destabilized in his lack of attraction to the Romagnole, an attraction the narrator had anticipated as the inevitable result of Juan's raging hormones. Through the transgressive, carnivalesque world of the
slave ship, Byron suggests a flexibility of gender traits which prepares his readers for the upcoming masquerade in which Juan will assume the clothing and mannerisms of a woman.

On this level, the world of the slave ship is merely a satirical portrayal of gender as it is dislocated in festivals of carnival. At carnival time, inversions of gender in both behavior and appearance are tolerated because it is understood that the situation will, at the end of carnival, return to normal; the hierarchies will be restored in proper order. Beneath the playful confusion of gender in these scenes, however, castration anxiety threatens to render the social inversions of carnival permanent, a possibility, despite the transgressive and subversive elements of Byron's own satire, that excites the "nervous anxiety" to which Wolfson refers.

In order to more fully explore the relationship between castrating and castrated in the slave ship and slave market scenes of Don Juan, it is helpful to look to Roland Barthes's discussion of the nature of that relationship within Balzac's story, "Sarrasine," in S/Z. In his section on the "Castration Camp," Barthes proposes that Balzac provides his reader with "a complete structure of the sexes (two opposing terms, a mixed and

a neuter)." After looking more closely at this structure, Barthes rejects it and in its place proposes reading the "structure of the sexes" in terms of the "women's camp." This camp is led by Madame de Lanty who dominates time...radiates...bestowing praises, making comparisons, instituting the language in relation to which man can recognize himself, she is the primal Authority, the Tyrant, whose silent numen decrees life, death, storm, peace; finally and above all, she mutilates man....Mme de Lanty is the castrating woman, endowed with all the hallucinatory attributes of the Father: power, fascination, instituting authority, terror, power to castrate.

Thus Barthes resolves the question of how to organize the symbolic field of "Sarrasine" as "that of castration: of castrating/castrated." Madame de Lanty's presence within the story threatens all of the male characters with castration, including the narrator, and at some point, all the "women" of the narrative are members of her camp.

To borrow from Barthes, the episode of Juan's slavery, from ship to market to his ownership by Gulteyaz, operates according to a symbolic field of castration: on one side are the castrating, and on the other side are

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40Barthes 35.

50Barthes 36. When I refer to the text of "Sarrasine," I refer to the one included in Barthes' S/Z.

51Ibid.
the castrated. The women on the slave ship all symbolically threaten to castrate men, whether by “answering” for the men’s souls and bodies like the Grotesca or the prima donna who usurps the authority of hiring, or the Romagnole who is like a Bacchante, a woman who wounds. On the side of the castrated are all of the male singers who are feminized either by virtue of their broken voices or their feminine vanity, or literally, as is the case with the musico. Juan also seems to be symbolically castrated on the slave ship by virtue of his lack of desire, his wounds, and his overall femininity.

Castration Anxiety and Symbolic Castration: From the Market to the Oda

The problem of pairing, which undermined the captors’ efforts to define gender on the slave ship, is complicated on a different level when Juan reaches the slave market. By pairing Juan with the unquestionably masculine Johnson, it would seem that the narrator corrects the initial heterosexual pairing of Juan with the Romagnole. Once away from the subversive world of the slave ship, however, the homosexual pairing is unable to help Juan regain his masculinity, and the narrator highlights the contrast between feminine Juan and his new masculine partner, Johnson, who is “stout and hale, / With resolution in his dark gray eye” (V. 10).
The man who bids on Juan and Johnson in the slave market, although a eunuch himself and a member of what Byron calls "the third sex," belongs, as Zembellina occasionally does in "Sarrasine," to the castrating camp. Once Baba takes his purchases back to the palace, he threatens both symbolic and actual castration. On the symbolic side, Baba "Hinted... "Twould greatly tend to better their condition, / If they would condescend to circumcision" (V. 69). Although Johnson is diplomatic in his response to Baba's suggestion, Juan reacts violently and in a way that acknowledges his anxiety at the threat of even symbolic castration: "Strike me dead, / But they as soon shall circumcise my head!...Cut off a thousand heads before--"" (V. 72). Baba also gives both Juan and Johnson emasculating clothing. He gives Johnson a foppish suit which would "form a Turkish Dandy" (V. 68) and Juan "a suit / In which a Princess with great pleasur would / Array her limbs" (V. 73). As with the hint about circumcision, Juan balks at his transvestite attire and its "castrating" affects: "'shall it e'er be told / That I unsex'd my dress?'" (V. 75). Byron's narrator jokes with the renewed image of symbolic castration-- "But Baba stroking / The things down"--and then replaces it with Baba's threat of actual castration-- "Incense me, and I call / Those who will leave you of no sex at all" (V. 75).
It is Baba's threat of actual castration that induces Juan to consent to the temporary, symbolic castration of cross-dressing.52

The fear of castration and the anxiety it creates increases as Baba leads Juan to the Oda and to Gulbeyaz, who like Madame de Lanty is a castrating woman. In front of the doors to the Oda, acting as guards to the femininity within, are two pygmies whom Juan must fool by stinting "That somewhat manly majesty of stride" (V. 91). The dwarves, whose "serpent optics on him stared...as if their little looks could poison / Or fascinate whome'er they fix'd their eyes on" (V. 90) and who threaten to "pierce those petticoats" and discover Juan's disguise in an intentionally sexual metaphor, allow "the lady" to pass unmolested (V. 92).

52The way in which Juan and Baba linguistically negotiate the levels of castration reflects the process by which the son enters the symbolic realm of language with its law of the Father as proposed by Lacan. The son renounces his mother, thus giving up the phallus willingly, in response to the father's threat of castration. The structure of this myth, which Byron could not have known in its theoretical form but which most definitely could have influenced his own approach to issues of gender definition and castration anxiety, is at the heart of the narrator's ambivalent depiction of femininity in the poem, which I will explore in more detail below. That the act of putting on feminine clothing is symbolically castrating is not contradicted by Juan's use of his transvestite appearance to live out the fantasy of the phallic woman. The narrator's presentation of Juan as a phallic woman is a gesture of normalization, one that in fact emphasizes Juan's masculinity, in response to the castration anxiety produced by the act of "unsexing [Juan's] dress."
Although the dwarves are "the least you could suppose," their sudden appearance horrifies the narrator, and he projects his fear onto the reader:

You started back in horror to survey
The wond'rous hideousness of those small men,
Whose colour was not black, nor white, nor gray,
But an extraneous mixture, which no pen
Can trace, although perhaps the pencil may:
They were misshapen pigmies, deaf and dumb--
Monsters, who cost a no less monstrous sum. (V. 88)

The dwarves are horrifying in their indeterminacy which threatens to subvert the narrator's symbolic economy by escaping his ability to represent them. They have neither an articulable shape nor a definite color, thus costing a "monstrous sum" within the narrator's economy of representation. The dwarves' silence hints at a deathly power--"To give some rebel Pacha a cravat; / For mutes are generally used for that" (V. 89), aligning them with the silent women of the Oda, which I have discussed in chapter 2, and it is suggested that they might be the ones who if called by Baba "would leave [Juan] of no sex at all." The dwarves are both the palace castrators and truncate the narrator's descriptions.

In spite of their horrifying appearance and their piercing eyes, the dwarves allow Juan to pass through the door to the Oda and to enter the enclosed feminine space of the harem. The door represents both the gates
of hell, a hell of the feminine, and the boundaries of time. Byron first describes the door as “Haughty and huge,” and it lowers in the distance. The narrator attempts to turn the scene into a religious one-- “It seem’d as though they came upon a shrine / For all was vast, still, fragrant, and divine”--but his efforts are overwhelmed by a palpable but unidentified threat (V. 85). The outside of the door is gilded bronze and carved with scenes of furiously battling warriors, victors and the vanquished, and captives with downcast eyes. In essence, the door depicts scenes in which masculine domination asserts itself, and it is such an assertion of masculine dominance that keeps the women enclosed within the Oda. In spite of this masculine, sabre-rattling show of strength, the men who pass through the door, Baba and Juan, are either literally (the eunuch) or symbolically (Juan in drag) castrated.

The door of the Oda is intended to enclose the women of the harem, to prevent them from escaping. The massiveness of the door and the scenes of masculine domination that decorate it attest to a level of anxiety in the effort to contain the feminine, and this anxiety appears in all the gestures with which the narrator contains women throughout the poem: Julia in the convent, Haidee on the island, Adeline and Aurora in the
monastery. Behind these gestures of containment lies a basic narrative fear of the feminine and the threat that the feminine represents to the masculine characters of the poem. Castration anxiety is one aspect of the threat that women represent, and it is the threat which is highlighted in the Oedipus myth. The threat which infuses feminine presence in Don Juan and the anxiety with which the narrator responds surpasses the threat of castration. The threat comes from femininity itself.

The Threat of the Phallic Mother

In the course of Don Juan, there are three primary mother figures whose presence in the poem the narrator negotiates: Haidee as the ideal mother figure, Juan's mother, Inez, and Byron's mother, Catherine Gordon, images of whom along with images of Byron wife, Annabella, appear in the narrator's depiction of Inez. The identity of the latter two as mother figures is unquestionable, and in chapter 2, I have discussed how the narrator structures Haidee's relationship to Juan as that of mother to child. In that discussion I concentrate primarily on the narrator's presentation of Haidee as an ideal, and as an attractive, attracting image. In this chapter, however, I want to address ways in which the narrator compromises Haidee's mothering role and how that role ultimately threatens Juan with
emasculating and leads to his symbolic castration. In so doing, I will
discuss both Byron's mother and Inez, since Haidee as mother figure is
constituted both in contrast to and, in some respects, as an extension of
Byron's ridicule of his own mother, as well as all mothers, in his
characterization of Inez. It is almost as if in depicting Haidee as an ideal
of motherhood, Byron is free to follow the faults of his own mother and
Annabella as presented in Inez to their worst and final expression in the
threat that Haidee represents to the young Juan.

Byron never disguised his animosity toward his mother, and
particularly in his letters to his half-sister, Augusta, he vilified her. He
describes his mother as "Mrs. Byron furiosa," a "tormenter whose diabolical
disposition...seems to increase with age, and to acquire new force with
Time. The more I see of her the more my dislike augments."53 Byron
seeks to assure his sister that he has adequate grounds for the strength of
his dislike:

I assure you on my honour, jesting apart, I have never been
so scurriliously and violently abused by any person, as by that
woman, whom I think, I am to call mother, by that being who
gave me birth, to whom I ought to look up with veneration

53 All references to Byron's letters to his sister Augusta are from
Leslie Marchand, ed. Byron's Letters and Journals (Cambridge, MA:
and respect, but whom I am sorry I cannot love or admire.  

Byron also gives both proof of Catherine Gordon’s violence and reveals his own feelings of outrage at being at the mercy of her whims:

she flies into a fit of phrenzy upbraids me as if I was the most undutiful wretch in existence.... Am I to call this woman mother? Because by natures law she has authority over me, am I to be trampled upon in this manner? Am I to be goaded with insult, loaded with obloquy, and suffer my feelings to be outraged on the most trivial occasions?"  

Susan Wolfson compares Byron’s descriptions of his mother to images of a phallic woman. In her discussion of Juan’s transvestite appearance in Cantos IV-V, Wolfson refers to Robert Stoller’s argument that transvestites cross-dress in order to be “phallic women” or better women than biological females. Stoller proposes that a model of the phallic woman, often his mother, exists in the transvestite’s past, and that by presenting himself as a phallic woman he seeks to gain the upper hand in his dealings with strong and powerful women in the present. Wolfson reads Juan’s cross-dressing as Byron’s surrogate transvestism and cites his amply expressed feelings of being dominated by his mother, the phallic woman in his own past. Byron,

54BIL 1: 66.

55BIL 1: 56.
then, explores plots in which Juan appears as a phallic woman in order to redress the psychic injuries he sustained from his own "phallic" mother.\textsuperscript{56}

Instead of villifying Inez, as Byron does his mother within the letters to Augusta, he chooses to ridicule her. Throughout the first canto, Inez's attempts to raise Juan are either controlling, foolish, vain or ignorant.\textsuperscript{57}

Like the Mrs. Byron furiosa, Donna Inez is strict: "Some women use their tongues-- she look'd a lecture, / Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily" (I. 15).\textsuperscript{58} In her attempts to control Juan's education, a particularly futile endeavor, Inez most fully performs the role of phallic mother. When she instructs his tutors to excise the salacious parts from Juan's mythology


\textsuperscript{57}According to Stoller, part of the appeal of cross-dressing is the possibility for the transvestite to create himself as a better woman than a biological female. The narrator presents himself as a better mother for Juan than his biological mother, Inez, when he gives advice about Juan's upbringing, such as sending him to public school or giving the "imp" a sound whipping. The narrator repeatedly criticizes Inez and Jose for their poor parenting of Juan.

\textsuperscript{58}Donna Inez is most often thought to represent the other Mrs. Byron, Lady Byron, Byron's wife, a facet of her character I will explore within this chapter. As a literal mother figure within the text, however, I think that a reading of mothers in Don Juan, would be remiss if it omitted reference either to Byron's mother or to Inez.
texts, her efforts only make the “grosser parts” more accessible, since the “learned men” who teach Juan simply place those parts in an index (I. 44-45). By censoring all sexuality from Juan’s education, Inez would provide her son with what Peter Manning in *Byron and his Fictions* calls Juan’s “deliberately emasculated education.” Manning also refers, although not in so many words, to Inez as a phallic mother:

Inez’s desire to have Juan taught all the skills of manhood while yet insisting that he remain a child points to a type-constellation larger than the personal satire of this canto: the overly protective mother and the son whom she will at all costs make ‘quite a parragon’ (I. 38) but keep utterly dependent on her. Like Byron’s mother, Inez would keep the young Juan close to her, forever a child, and she “flew into a rage” whenever any one suggested Juan was becoming a man (I. 47).

Unlike Inez and her real life counter-part, Catherine Gordon, on the surface Haidee appears to be the ideal mother. Her heart beats in unison with Juan, and she feels his pain watching “with eagerness each throb that drew / A sigh from his heaved bosom—and hers, too” (II. 114). Together


60*Reading Romantics* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990) 181-182. As I discuss in chapter 2, Haidee would keep Juan dependent on her by excluding pistol and dirk from the suit of clothes she originally gives him.
with her maid, Zoe, Haidee "tended him, and cheer'd him both / With food and raiment, and those soft attentions, / Which are...of female growth" (II. 123). As Haidee bends over the sleeping Juan he is

Hush'd as the babe upon its mother's breast,
Droop’d as the willow when no winds can breathe,
Lull'd like the depth of ocean when at rest,
Fair as the crowning rose of the whole wreath,
Soft as the callow cygnet in its nest. (II. 148)

Haidee is the perfect mother to guard Juan's sleep.

It is exactly to the extent that Haidee is a perfect and seductive second mother to Juan that she threatens him with emasculation. If she is to be Juan's mother, he must become Haidee's child, and his relationship to Haidee pulls him back to a state of childishness, particularly the pre-oedipal state before the child recognizes a difference between him and his mother, and before he has a sense of his own sexual identity. The pre-oedipal child is neuter in the sense that he is unaware of sexual difference. By returning Juan to this pre-oedipal, pre-verbal state, Haidee feminizes him, just as Inez's desire to keep Juan boyishly innocent through her control over all facets of his life, especially his education, emasculates him in Canto I.61

61In her discussion of Freud in the second part of The Spectral Mother, Madelon Sprengnether equates Freud's depiction of infantile
Because Haidee's mothering of Juan threatens his masculine identity, at times the narrator figures Haidee's ministrations as destructive to Juan's survival. As I note in chapter 2, Juan's arrival on Haidee's island is like a second birth, but this figure too is fraught with suggestions of violence to Juan's life. He is pushed by the rhythmic action of mother ocean's waves through the rough canal waters of the bay onto the dry land of the beach, close to dead but still breathing. Even mother ocean is fickle in her gift of life, and the same waves that help push Juan to shore threaten to suck him back to a death by drowning:

There, breathless, with his digging nails he clung  
Fast to the sand, lest the returning wave,  
From whose reluctant roar his life he wrung,  
Should suck him back to her insatiate grave. (II. 108)

This giving and taking of life, a mirror figure of the narrator's attraction and repulsion to the feminine, becomes even more exaggerated in Haidee's ministrations to Juan.

When Haidee first finds the sleeping Juan on the beach, it is as if she would drain what little life remains in him:

A lovely female face of seventeen.

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‘Twas bending close o’er his, and the small mouth
Seem’d almost prying into his for breath. (II. 112-113)

The narrator’s subsequent descriptions of Haidee invest her with latent violence, the masquerade I have discussed in chapter 3 in which Haidee’s beauty masks an inner threat. The motivation behind the narrator’s conflation of beauty and violence forms the inextricable knot of attraction and repulsion that this chapter will attempt to if not untangle at least to define. Essentially, Haidee’s mothering of Juan both gives and takes life. When Haidee bends over the sleeping Juan, she is both ideal mother and vampire, as Peter Manning discusses in Reading Romantics: “Even Haidee’s most maternally protective gestures bear, in exact relation to their nurturing power, vampiric suggestions.”62

When she is not prying the life out of him, Haidee’s generous mothering threatens to kill Juan, and Zoe must prevent her from overfeeding the starving boy:

He ate, and he was well supplied; and she,
Who watch’d him like a mother, would have fed
Him past all bounds...
But Zoe, being older than Haidee,
Knew ...
That famish’d people must be slowly nurst,

62 Manning, Reading Romantics, 119.
And fed by spoonfuls, else they always burst. (II. 158)

The possibility for the feminine and the maternal, specifically mother’s milk, to threaten the identity of a man with destruction, as Haidee’s overfeeding threatens to “burst” Juan, also appears in some of Byron’s letters. In a letter to Hobhouse, Byron describes his service as *cavalier servente* to Teresa Guiccioli as threatening to his masculinity, and the images he uses clearly links the relationship of *cavalier servente* to his mistress to the dependence of child on mother for sustenance: “But I feel & feel it bitterly--that a man should not consume his life at the side and on the bosom--of a woman--and a stranger.”

Haidee most embodies the threat of the phallic mother when she defends Juan from her father, Lambro. At first Haidee attempts to placate Lambro:

> Oh! dearest father, in this agony  
> Of pleasure and of pain--even while I kiss  
> Thy garment’s hem with transport, can it be  
> That doubt should mingle with my filial joy?  
> Deal with me as thou wilt, but spare this boy. (IV. 38)

When Lambro continues to threaten Juan, Haidee becomes the phallic mother. Where once “she had been all tears, / And tenderness” (IV. 43)

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63Marchand, BLJ, 6: 214. The institute of *cavalier servente* reverses sexual roles, and Byron links this ambiguity of gender roles to the maternal.
she becomes “Pale, statue-like, and stern,” “And tall beyond her sex” (ibid).
The narrator depicts Haidee as the mirror of her father “How like they look’d! the expression was the same; / Serenely savage” (IV. 44). While the overt motive behind Haidee’s actions is to protect Juan, her presence as the tigress-like phallic mother threatens him more.

The threat to Juan in these scenes is castration at the hands of Lambro, who is, according to the narrator’s imagery, the duplicate of Haidee the phallic mother. In a sense then, the threat of castration comes from the mother, from Haidee, and through the hand of Lambro, which is also a snake-like phallus coiling around Haidee. Although Juan makes a good show of defending himself from Lambro’s soldiers, who are themselves at Lambro’s command and depicted with phallic imagery: “‘Within my call, / A thousand scimitars await the word’” (IV. 37)—he is ultimately wounded, “two smart sabre gashes, deep and red-- / One on the arm, the other on the head” (IV. 47)—that is, symbolically castrated. Juan is saved from the castrating effects of the mother only by virtue of a symbolic castration. Lambro rescues Juan from the infantilizing pressures of Haidee’s feminine affections and ministrations, and although with his wounds Juan is not “sound,” he is “for the present safe” (IV. 54).
'Ladies Lucubrations': The Threat of Intellectual Women

As I indicated above, in depicting Inez, Byron draws on his relationship with his wife as well as his mother. The other Mrs. Byron furioso, Annabella Milbanke, contributes those aspects of Inez's character that refer to her marriage to Don José. Inez has a penchant, like Annabella the Princess of Parallelograms, for math, and Inez, like Annabella, tries to prove that "her loving lord was mad" (I. 27). Peter Manning reads the conflation of Annabella and Lady Byron in the character of Inez as Byron's subconscious recognition that "the crisis of his relationship with Annabella grew out of much earlier psychic conflicts with his mother." Inez is thus both phallic mother, Catherine Gordon, and phallic woman, Annabella.

Inez's status as a phallic woman, and what Byron considered one of Annabella's greatest faults, is associated with feminine intellect. In Don Juan, Byron's narrator treats Inez's pretensions to learning with disdain:

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic all,
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy. (I. 12)

Marchand, BLJ, 2: 231.

Manning, Lord Byron's Fictions, 181.
The narrator further reviles Inez by revealing that her pretensions to learning are false: the extent of her Latin is the Lord’s prayer, and her brush with Greek is the alphabet. In what is arguably the most famous couplet of the poem, Byron identifies the trouble behind “learned virgins”: “But--Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual, / Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck’d you all?” (I. 22).

The hen-pecking, intellectual wife threatens to subsume her husband’s identity in her own as Lady Bluebottle does to Sir Richard in Byron’s satirical poem, “The Blues”:

Was there ever a man who married so sorry?
Like a fool, I must needs do the thing in a hurry.
My life is reversed, and my quiet destroy’d;
My days, which once pass’d in so gentle a void,
Must now, every hour of the twelve, be employ’d
The twelve, do I say?--of the whole twenty-four,
Is there one which I dare call my own any more?
What with driving and visiting, dancing, and dining,
What with learning, and teaching, and scribbling, and shining
In science and art, I’ll be cursed if I know
Myself from my wife. (II, 1-11)

This confusion of identity, although meant humorously, masks a deeper confusion of gender. The intellectual woman threatens to become indistinguishable from a man, and more frighteningly, a man might become indistinguishable from an intellectual woman.
Intellectual women appear throughout Don Juan as "bluestockings," and they receive a large share of the narrator’s ridicule, most pointedly in the digressions of the English cantos. One of the earliest references to bluestockings, however, occurs in a digression in the Haidee episode. Within this digression on love’s less fortunate victims, Byron refers to “Saphho the sage blue-stocking, in whose grave / All those may leap who rather would be neuter” (II. 205), an image that unites castration anxiety with the threat of feminine intellect.

Bluestockings also threaten to cut short poetic careers, and the narrator mocks their influence within literary circles. He seems to blame at least some of fate’s vagaries in literary matters on the control of intellectual women:

What, can I prove ‘a lion’ then no more?  
A ball-room bard, a foolscap, hot-press darling?  
To bear the compliments of many a bore,  
And sigh, ‘I can’t get out,’ like Yorick’s starling;  
Why then I’ll swear, as poet Wordy swore,  
(Because the world won’t read him, always snarling)  
That taste is gone, that fame is but a lottery,  
Drawn by the blue-coat misses of a coterie. (IV. 109)

Byron’s most common method for attacking the “learned ladies” is, to borrow from Adeline (XVI. 104), to damn with faint, or occasionally exaggerated, praise:
Oh! 'darkly, deeply, beautifully blue,'   
As some one somewhere sings about the sky,   
And I, ye learned ladies, say of you;   
They say your stockings are so (Heaven knows why,   
I have examined few pair of that hue);   
Blue as the garters which serenely lie   
Round the Patrician left-legs, which adorn   
The festal midnight, and the levee morn.

Yet some of you are most seraphic creatures--   
But times are alter'd since, a rhyming lover,   
You read my stanzas, and I read your features:   
And--but no matter, all those things are over;   
Still I have no dislike to learned natures,   
For sometimes such a world of virtues cover;   
I know one woman of that purple school,   
The loveliest, chastest, best, but--quite a fool.

Humboldt, 'the first of travellers,' but not   
The last, if late accounts be accurate,   
Invented by some name I have forgot,   
As well as the sublime discovery's date,   
An airy instrument, with which he sought   
To ascertain the atmospheric state,   
By measuring 'the intensity of blue:'   
Oh, Lady Daphne! let me measure you! (IV. 110-112)

By linking the bluestockings to an unsuccessful scientific endeavor, the narrator is able to attack both what he considers the blues' false-pretension and their inaccurate and incomplete grasp on the sciences.66

66That at least part of Byron's aggressiveness toward “bluestockings” or intellectual women stems from a fear of intellectual inferiority can be seen in a letter to Annabella Milbanke, soon to be his bluestocking bride, in which he reveals his mathematical difficulties to the Princess of Parallelograms: “The only part [of mathematics] I remember which gave
More damning however is the narrator’s assessment of the bluestockings as bored women who have too much time on their hands.

The narrator speculates on the nature of love, particularly women’s responses to it, in a digression following his assessment of Adeline and Lord Henry’s polite but cold marriage:

A something all-sufficient for the heart
Is that for which the Sex are always seeking;
But how to fill up that same vacant part
There lies the rub--and this they are but weak in.
Frail mariners afloat without a chart,
They run before the wind through high seas breaking;
And when they have made the shore through ev’ry shock,
‘Tis odd, or odds, it may turn out a rock.
(XIV. 74)

This “vacant part” that needs to be filled with something, love is the suggestion, reflects the stereotypical image of women as lacking some vital part. Corresponding to this vital feminine lack is the masculine fear that because women are missing some vital part, they will seek to absorb the masculine into themselves in order to make up for what is missing. In the process of absorbing the missing part from men, the women will call into question the very nature of masculinity.

me much delight were those theorems...in which after ringing the changes upon --A-B & C-D &c. I at last came to ‘which is absurd--which is impossible’ and at this point I have always arrived & I fear always shall throughout life” (BLJ 3. 159).
Byron does not limit this feminine or effeminate lack to women, although they carry most of the burden. Instead, he presents it as an ailment of the gentrified class:

Eureka! I have found it! What I mean
To say is, not that Love is Idleness,
But that in Love such Idleness has been
An accessory, as I have cause to guess.
Hard labour's an indifferent go-between;
Your men of business are not apt to express
Much passion, since the merchant-ship, the Argo,
Convey'd Medea as her Supercargo. (XIV. 76)

Byron here turns his attention to the benefits of labor:

'Beatus ille procul' from 'negotiis,'
Saith Horace; the great little poet's wrong;
His other maxim, 'Nascitur a sociis,'
Is much more to the purpose of his song;
Though even that were sometimes too ferocious,
Unless good company he kept too long;
But, in his teeth, whate'er their state or station,
Thrice happy they who have an occupation!

Adam exchanged his Paradise for ploughing,
Eve made up millinery with fig leaves--
The earliest knowledge from the tree so knowing,
As far as I know, that the Church receives:
And since that time it need not cost much showing.
That many of the ills o'er which man grieves,
And still more women, spring from not employing
Some hours to make the remnant worth enjoying.

And hence high life is oft a dreary void,
A rack of pleasures, where we must invent
A something wherewithal to be annoy'd.
Bards may sing what they please about Content;
Contented, when translated, means but cloyed;
And hence arise the woes of sentiment,
Blue devils, and Blue-stockings, and Romances
Reduced to practice and perform'd like dances. (XIV. 77-79)

Idleness and sentimentality or the cult of sentiment are responsible for the proliferation of blue-stockings and romances. The common denominator is the emptiness of the feminine/effeminate as opposed to the masculine ideal of a man of action as Byron characterized himself. The "lack" of the bluestockings threatens to invade the masculine space and render it, like the lords of ladies intellectual, hen-peck'd and without a separate identity.

By "pretending" to pursue intellectual matters, the bluestockings wander into what Byron would preserve as purely masculine territory. The reference noted above to women's influence on literary circles and the literary success of men reveals the deeper fear that these women would be able to usurp the masculine role of poet. Just as the narrator ridicules the blues, so he satirizes their literary attempts, such as the gothic novels of Anne Radcliffe, in Adeline's supremely gothic tale of the Black Friar. At the same time, however, Byron writes a gothic novel of his own in the English cantos.
Who Wears the Pants, or the Threat of the Phallic Woman

The threat that all of the mother figures and intellectual women represent is that of the phallic woman whose masculinity threatens to further feminize the already effeminate Juan. The more "masculine" the women of the narrative become, the more feminine Juan is in response. From Julia in the opening cantos to Grace Fitz-Fulke in the last, all the women that Juan encounters are to some extent presented as masculine whether by virtue of their heighth and size and the strength of their presence, or through their cross-dressing and the phallic imagery with which the narrator associates them.

Most of the women with whom Juan comes into contact are either tall or large, with the exception of Leila and Aurora Raby. Julia possesses "stature tall" (I. 61); Haidee's stature is "Even of the highest for a female mould" (II. 116); Dudù possesses a soft bulk, "large and languishing and lazy" that threatens to engulf Juan (VI. 41); Catherine's figure is majestically plump with an "imperial condescension" (IX. 72); and Fitz-Fulke is "a full blown blonde" with almost "o'ergrown bulk" (XIV. 42). By contrast, Juan is slight of build, "slender, and pack'd easily...in little compass, round or square" (I. 166). His steps are chaste and "scarce
skimm'd the ground,” and he “rather held in than put forth his vigour” (XIV. 39). These women tower over him.

Although the narrator assures his reader that he prefers tall women to short--“I hate a dumpy woman” (I. 61)--that heighth and general bulk seem ready to smother Juan throughout the poem. In Canto I, Juan is almost crushed by the bodies of Julia and her maid when they try to hide his presence from Alfonso, Julia’s husband (I. 165-166). Besides being pornographic, this image of Juan being smothered by “that pretty pair” is also a sexualized depiction of child birth, an association picked up in the narrator’s portrayal of Haidee’s suffocating, deadly motherhood and echoed in the waves that would suck the almost dead Juan into a watery and womb-like grave. It is as if the feminine body that gives life threatens to force the men of the narrative to return to the womb where they will be once again dependent on the female body for sustenance.67

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67 In “Anxiety and Instinctual Life,” Freud discusses the relationship between anxiety, especially castration anxiety, and repression. Freud describes as typical “the repression of wishful impulses [love of the mother] arising from the Oedipus complex.” The anxiety that produces the repression is the threat of castration, or castration anxiety. Love of the mother and the “frequent phantasy of returning into the mother’s womb” as a “substitute for [the] wish to copulate” is threatened by “the loss of the male organ,” and thus repressed. The desire to return to the body of the mother is met then by the threat of castration. Peter Gray, ed. The Freud Reader (W.W. Norton: New York, 1989) 777-778.
The narrator repeatedly returns to these images that portray the female body as a drowning ocean:

what a stranger
Is woman! What a whirlwind is her head,
And what a whirlpool full of death and danger
Is all the rest about her! (IX. 64)

This same death and danger appears in the narrator's sarcastic suggestion to men unfamiliar with the dangers of the sea or women, “And young beginners may as well commence / With quiet cruizing o’er the ocean woman,” in contrast to those men with more experience who have “sense / Enough to make for port” (XIII. 39). At times the violence of an angry woman seems to outstrip that of the ocean, and the narrator attests, “I’ve seen your stormy seas and stormy women, / And pity lovers rather more than seamen.”68 Woman and her sexual appetites are for the narrator an engulfing, turbulent ocean, and it is in fact the feminine sexualized body that threatens Juan with physical annihilation throughout the poem.

68By rhyming women and seamen (semen) in the final couplet, the narrator conflates the images that according to the structure of his metaphors in the stanza he would maintain as distinct. Semen is as much to be pitied as lovers since it must venture into the center of the whirlpool-like feminine body. All of these images, the engulfing womb, the threatened semen will be brought together in the images of vagina dentata which occur throughout the poem, most conspicuously in the stanza’s leading up to the Oda scenes.
This motif of the smothering feminine body occurs in many of Juan’s sexual episodes. Juan’s attempts to satisfy the voracious Catherine leaves him in a “condition / Which augured of the dead” (X. 39). Similarly, his sexual encounter with Dudù leads Gurbeyaz to order the couple sacked and thrown into the sea. When Juan explores Grace Fitz-Fulke’s masquerade as the Black Friar, in itself a figure of death, the resulting sexual exchange leaves Juan “wan and worn, with eyes that hardly brooked / The light,” while Fitz-Fulke “had a sort of air rebuked-- / Seemed pale and shivered” (XVII. 14). Encounters with the feminine body are for Juan life draining instead of life affirming.

Linked to the threat of height and bulk of the feminine body is the commanding presence that many of these women share and which the narrator presents as a decidedly masculine characteristic. In the case of Fitz-Fulke masquerading as the Black Friar, her presence which at first “petrified” Juan, is “masculinized” in her transvestite appearance. The friar masquerade lends Fitz-Fulke a masculine air of authority which her otherwise feminine appearance would deny. Her masculine authority feminizes Juan and leaves him speechless with fear.
Just as Grace Fitz-Fulke derives her “masculine authority” from an external authority figure, so too do Haidee and Gulbeyaz. When Juan first sees Haidee, “in her air / There was a something which bespoke command, / As one who was a lady in the land” (II. 116). Haidee is in fact a lady on the island, and as the daughter of the master of the island, she has borrowed authority by virtue of her paternity. When later in the episode, Haidee is shown as the mistress of the island, the governor in her father's place, the narrator's initial depiction of her personal authority is reinforced. Apart from her authority as Lambro's daughter, Haidee's overly idealized beauty and her position as an idealized Madonna figure commands respect from both the narrator and Juan and gives her an "overpowering presence [that] made you feel / It would not be idolatry to kneel" (III. 74).

In Gulbeyaz, the commanding presence is more distinct, and Juan and Baba are forced to their knees in her presence:

In this imperial hall, at distance lay
Under a canopy, and there reclined
Quite in a confidential queenly way,
A lady; Baba stopp'd, and kneeling sign'd
To Juan, who though not much used to pray
Knelt dow by instinct. (V. 95)
All those around Gulbeyaz “bow’d obeisance” to her “presence...lofty as her state” and to her beauty, like Haidee’s, “of that overpowering kind” (V. 97). The authority in Gulbeyaz is attributable, like the poniard at her side (V. 111), to her status as the bride of a sultan, although her perception of her own authority began with her spoiled childhood:

‘To hear and to obey’ had been from birth
The law of all around her; to fulfil
All phantasies which yielded joy or mirth,
Had been her slaves’ chief pleasure. (V. 112)

The narrator suggests that it was Gulbeyaz’s spoiled childhood filled with servants willing to fulfill her whims which exacerbated her appetites both material and sexual.

Like Haidee’s mothering which threatens to suffocate Juan,

Gulbeyaz’s commanding air threatens to choke him. When Gulbeyaz looks at any man, according to the narrator,

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. (V. 110)

Her feet, although tiny, “trod as upon necks” (V. 111). Gulbeyaz’s choking presence is clearly masculine and not feminine, because although her “form had all the softness of her sex,” “there was something somewhere wanting, /

As if she rather order’d than was granting” (V. 109). Gulbeyaz’s choking
presence becomes sexual and predatory when she commands Juan, "Christian, canst thou love," to satisfy her desire (V. 116).

As with their phallic commanding presence, both Haidee and Gulbeyaz share phallic, snake-like features. Haidee’s eyes are like snakes, and her hair is like Medusa’s, twining and unbelievably long: “Her clust'ring hair, whose longer locks were roll’d / In braids behind, and though her stature were / Even of the highest for a female mould, / They nearly reach’d her heel” (II. 116). When Gulbeyaz learns that Juan has spent the night in Dudu’s bed, she becomes “a Pythoness” (VI. 107) poised to wrap around Juan and strangle him.

The Threat of the Feminine Body

On one level, the threat that the phallic mothers and phallic women of Don Juan represent is the threat of castration, which is in essence what forces the male child to negotiate the oedipal crisis. In the oedipal crisis, desire for the mother leads the father to threaten the son with castration as the punishment for incest, and the son willingly renounces his desire for the mother in order to avoid castration. The taboo desire which prompted the oedipal crisis does not vanish once the child has renounced his desire for his mother. Instead, that desire is displaced. Once ushered into the
symbolic realm by the father, the son seeks for an acceptable object for the displaced desire, and he finds one in the feminine body.

The feminine body, however, holds a threat of its own. Parallel to the (Western) mythic concatenation of desire and castration anxiety are primitive images of the vagina dentata which depict the vagina as a mouth that is capable of cutting off the male member, capable of castration. In many of his collections of primitive myths, Claude Levi-Strauss notes the recurrence of images of the vagina dentata, an image that reflects the ability of women to wound and destroy masculine virility, to compromise the nature of masculinity.

This type of imagery that presents women as literal castrators or as compromisers of masculinity occurs throughout DonJuan. On either end of the spectrum/spectre of castration and wounding are Catherine, who makes sick those who come into sexual contact with her, and Adeline, who verbally tears men to shreds. Just as her prudish coldness has rendered Lord Henry, with his poorly buttered muffin, impotent, so her shrill tongue wounds the men at whom she directs her wit and her "'faint praise,' so wont to damn" (XVI. 104). Similarly, the narrator depicts Adeline's attempts to marry Juan off as threatening to his sexual satisfaction and his
virility, since by marrying him to an innocuous woman she hopes to avert his sexual relations with the predatory Grace Fitz-Fulke.

Although all the women threaten Juan’s masculinity, the narrator simultaneously depicts them as beautiful and attractive. Juan is drawn to them, and his desire for them is born out by the action of the narrative. These beautiful women are the objects for Juan’s displaced desire, and it is as objects of desire that the women ultimately threaten Juan with the extinction of his masculinity.

If the vagina dentata threatens to cut off the male member in primative myth, the womb threatens to engulf masculinity in Don Juan. Throughout the poem, the narrator compares the ocean to the womb and the womb to the ocean. Stormy seas, whirlpools, violent tides are feminine throughout the narrator’s digressions. In the Haidee episode, the ocean is figured both as an unsatiable grave and as a giant womb that would pull the half-dead Juan back into it. Juan’s attraction to the maternal in Haidee with the alluring physical pleasures of the womb-like cave in which she first hides him threatens him both with castration and with death. In canto 6, the narrator conflates images of the ocean and the womb: “I’ve seen your stormy seas and stormy women / And pity lovers rather more than seamen”
(6. 53). The stormy woman/womb becomes like a stormy sea which would
devour/destroy the seamen/semen who venture into it.

On a symbolic level, the narrator presents the Oda as a womb, an
enclosed feminine space from which escapes “a rich perfume,” the scent of
the women within (V. 86). In The Daughter's Seduction, Jane Gallop
evaluates Michelle Montrelay's discussion of “odor di femina” and the
anxiety it creates in men:

The ‘odor di femina’ becomes odious, nauseous, because it
threatens to undo the achievements of repression and
sublimation, threatens to return the subject to the powerlessness,
intensity and anxiety of an immediate, unmediated connection
with the body of the mother.69

The odor of women, which the Oda door, though massive, is unable to
contain, threatens men by coming too close. It threatens to draw men
back to the womb, to an unmediated connection which would undermine
the distinction between masculine and feminine. In “The Blues,” Sir
Richard becomes concerned when he cannot tell himself from his wife, and
the narrator of Don Juan shares his concern. For as much as Byron
playfully blurs gender distinctions in his satirical critique of Regency
England’s moral strictures, his narrator is repulsed by the feminine’s

potential ability to subsume masculine identity in the “unmediated connection” of the womb.

Conclusion

The women whom Juan encounters in the course of his sexual episodes leave him sick or exhausted, drained of his masculine energy. Their language lures with its promise of maternal communion or a lulling feminine and womb-like silence but can turn in a canto into cutting wit or calculated lies. Their bodies are both mild landscapes of soft earth and turbulent, drowning seas. Their wombs give life and threaten to destroy it: “From thee we come, to thee we go” (IX. 56). Levi-Strauss sees a correspondence between images of the vagina dentata and eastern philosophy which claims that “for a man the art of love-making consists essentially in avoiding having his vital force absorbed by the women and in turning this risk to his advantage.” This seems to be the game that Juan and his narrator play throughout the course of Juan’s sexual exploits. While Juan is attracted to the mothering of Haidee, the fame of Catherine the Great, or Fitz-Fulke’s voluptuous and available beauty, and while the narrator is attracted to philosophy masquerading as a fair Venetian (II.

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What serves as the women's attraction could, if like the odor di femina it comes too close, end in Juan's destruction, so Juan never stays with one woman for long.

For both Lacan and Freud, the son’s entrance into sexuality and civilization simultaneously forces him into the same conundrum, the same circle, and their theoretical depictions of the myth of oedipus are fraught with impossibly simultaneous desires and events. The son both desires his mother and is repulsed by her primal “lack.” By virtue of the son's fear of castration, he gives up the desired use of the penis, reunion with the body of the mother, in exchange for entrance into the symbolic realm where “[b]oth phallus and mother are lacking.”71 Similarly, “desire comes about through separation, while separation comes about only through the punitive consequences of desire.”72 As Homans notes, these simultaneous occurrences could only transpire in mythic times.73 The realm into which the son is initiated by choosing the father and relinquishing/rejecting the

71Homans 8.

72Homans 7.

73Ibid.
mother is a complicated house of cards where the referent is always displaced. Although it is “thanks to the Name-of-the-Father” that the mother becomes the lost object, as Homans notes, “The loss of the mother through the prohibition of incest and the desire, law, and language it makes possible are construed here in a wholly positive way.” It is “thanks to” the law of the father that the son is propelled into an impossible quest to replace his mother, the lost object, with both a string of signifying words and a string of substitute objects of desire.

By using the story of Don Juan, Byron has chosen a mythic structure that revolves around the sequential nature of a man’s sexual life, a structure that reflects Lacan’s myth of the son’s quest within language to replace the lost mother with a string of signification and within his sexual life to replace the mother with a string of substitute women. With each sexual encounter, Juan must negotiate both the attraction and threat of his sexual partners, in an attempt, to borrow from Levi-Strauss, to turn the risk to his advantage, to achieve sexual satisfaction. The serial nature of the son’s sexual life, with the struggle to redirect desire for the lost mother, as formulated by Lacan and lived by Juan and all the other Don Juans, resists

74Homans 8.
summation, and the son must continue to seek for the next signifier in the chain of signification. In Byron's *Don Juan*, the ambivalent nature of the son's quest is clear.

The son's progression along the signifying chain is both propelled by the threat of castration and dependent on his initial and permanent act of relinquishing the phallus. Symbolically, at least, it is the body of the feminine, the maternal womb, though eternally displaced, castrated and castrating, which lies both at the beginning and at the end of the signifying chain. As the son moves toward it, he simultaneously would flee from it, and it is this unresolvable ambivalence, this flight toward and simultaneous flight from, which forms the essential character of Byron's depiction of femininity in *Don Juan*.

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In *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*, Shoshana Felman proposes that a serial approach to arithmetic, one that never allows for summation, is one of the central characteristic of the mythic figure Don Juan. Although Felman works with Moliere's version of the myth, it is equally applicable to Byron's *Don Juan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1983) 37.
Works Cited


Vita

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