"To Play With Fixities and Definites": Byron's Fanciful Real World Games in "Don Juan".

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UMI
"TO PLAY WITH FIXITIES AND DEFINITES"
BYRON'S FANCIFUL REAL WORLD GAMES IN DON JUAN

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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in
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by
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ABSTRACT

In his "epic" retelling of the Don Juan tale, Byron playfully transforms his conventional sources into a poem which explores, among other subjects, Byron's poetics. Of the many love relationships in Don Juan, Juan and Haidée's represents not only ideal love, but also a startlingly Romantic expression of poetic activity. The lovers' transformation of the elements of their heretofore hostile world into a natural playworld is accomplished by a fourth variety of Romantic imagination, a Byronic Fancy which surpasses the mechanical nature of Coleridge's "Fancy." Operating in a manner strikingly similar to Coleridge's "secondary Imagination," Byron's poetic faculty also "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates...to re-create," stopping short, though, of the familiar unifying vision of the Romantics. In the three romantic episodes which serve as foils to the love of Juan and Haidée, the traditions which inform the lovers' concepts of love are disclosed to be only imitations of honest emotion. Julia's idea of romantic love follows the overworked Petrarchan model; Gulbeyaz is trapped in a world where love is just another strategy of control and survival; the English noblewomen have learned from the sentimental literature of their day to value an unauthentic, intellectual "feeling" above all else. In their attempts to find personal value through the love games they devise, Juan's amours cannot get beyond the most basic level of creative play--that of the Coleridgean

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Fancy. They relate mechanically to their surroundings, choosing and manipulating the components of their lives until they gain a sense of power--unlike Juan's expansive, transformative mode of play. For the women who have joined in love games, however flawed, with Juan, interacting with the power of the Byronic Fancy expands their world. The reader of Don Juan--interacting with a playfully shifting text, narrator, and poet--experiences a far greater enrichment.
VEERING WINDS AND SHIFTING SAILS

You are too earnest and eager about a work never intended to be serious;--do you suppose that I could have any intention but to giggle and make giggle?--playful satire with as little poetry as could be helped-- (L&J 6.208)

In Byron's earliest announcement to his friend Tom Moore of the imminent arrival in London of his new poem, a broadly "facetious" "epic" called Don Juan, the author already betrays a slight uneasiness. He casually suggests that it may be "too free for these very modest days" (L&J 6.67). Whatever reaction Byron expected from his reading public, however, he was probably unprepared for the immediate response from his London friends: the poem was unpublishable. Recognizing that the objectionable parts of Don Juan were integral to its humor and poetic value and could not be cut without destroying the poem, John Cam Hobhouse, spokesman for the group, concluded by advising his friend to circulate the poem privately only to those readers who could appreciate its sly wit and sophisticated commentary on British culture and politics.

Byron's pride was understandably hurt, and his first reaction was to acquiesce to his friends' judgment concerning general publication and ask for a mere fifty copies for his personal distribution. Within a month, however, he had regained his resolve and promised his publisher, John Murray, "I will battle my way against them all, like a Porcupine" (L&J 6.105).
For several days preceding the publication of Cantos I and II of *Don Juan*, an enigmatic announcement appeared in the English newspapers: "In a few days-- *Don Juan." When the cantos were published on July 15, 1819, they were accompanied by neither the author's nor the publisher's name. The storm of controversy which Byron's circle had anticipated did not break immediately; the first reviews, while registering some moral protests, were, on the whole, quite complimentary with respect to the poem's artistic value.

It was in August that the critical reception shifted and the most damning reviews began to appear. The most vicious were generally *ad hominem* attacks. While faintly praising the poem's artistic value, journals such as *Blackwood's Magazine* focused brutal criticism on the supposed reflection of Byron's depraved personal life in his tale of the legendary lover, Don Juan. In their enthusiastic condemnation of its author, many reviewers only briefly mentioned the poetry itself.

When the literary figures of the day were not berating Byron for his treatment of Lady Byron for instance, or the dissipation to be found in his Venetian household, they frequently condemned in the strongest terms what indeed seemed a much more profound moral failing: impiety toward God and his universe, but most of all, toward mankind itself. As Keats put it, "This gives me the most horrid idea of human nature . . . and I have no doubt it will
fascenate [sic] thousands into extreem [sic] obduracy of heart" (Rutherford 163).

The anonymous reviewer for Blackwood's also upbraided the self-exiled lord, but in language more severe: "Devoid of religion, this cool, unconcerned fiend . . . [pours] scorn upon every element of good or noble nature in the hearts of his readers." The critic's condemnation reaches an almost cosmic scale as he portrays the debased author of Don Juan laughing "with a detestable glee over the whole of the better and worse of . . . human life . . . , a mere heartless despiser of that frail but noble humanity" (Rutherford 168).

Byron himself claimed that the attack was so "outrageous" and "overdone" that it defeated its author's purpose, and he was right. The question this study seeks to answer is not whether articles like this were fair or even if they were effective, but what was it about Don Juan that elicited such intense disapproval among the literati of Byron's day? As Byron reminded his friends, those who denounced Don Juan from a position of moral superiority showed great indulgence to Fielding, Pope, and Swift, authors whom Byron found equally morally problematic.

Scholars offer interesting explanations for the elevated temperature of the debate over Byron's self-reflexive masterpiece. Hugh J. Luke, Jr., Jerome McGann (Byron's most recent textual editor), and others have detailed the political and social contexts in which Byron's poetry was published and read. The reviews of Don
Juan split, they explain, mainly down Whig-Tory lines. The atmosphere in England in 1819-20 was perhaps the most politically strained of any year in that century; revolution was in the air, and severely repressive legislation was being passed in Parliament. *Don Juan* was pirated almost immediately after its publication to be appropriated by radical elements such as the London Corresponding Society. It was only at this time, notes Luke, that Tory periodicals launched their most vicious attacks. A further consideration closely related to the political issue was that of religious orthodoxy. Victorian morality predated Queen Victoria's reign by many years, and the Evangelicals within and without the Anglican Church, among others, were scandalized by Byron's vision of humankind.

Interesting as they may be, these political and religious factors do not explain why Byron's brooding presence on the literary scene of post-Waterloo Europe posed such a threat to those determined to protect their cultural values while representing, at the same time, a welcome expression for many others of their own searches for meaning. Clearly, Byron shocked and pleased his contemporaries not only by his life and ideas, but also by his very disturbing and stimulating manner of living and thinking. As Donald Reiman explains, "the popularity that he enjoyed as a poet during his lifetime was both unprecedented and rationally inexplicable to his immediate contemporaries and to the Victorians. Only now
... can a true estimate of his achievement begin" (343). From a perspective of almost two centuries, a reader of the postmodern era who seeks to understand that achievement recognizes a playful attitude, a non-serious approach to life through art that has periodically surfaced since classical times and finds our time and culture especially congenial.

I

There are few personalities of any era or nation who have affected their times as profoundly as Lord Byron did his. "European nineteenth-century culture is as unthinkable without Byron as its history would be without Napoleon," Northrop Frye asserts (186), echoing a comparison that Byron often made himself. Lionized by the English upper class for his Oriental tales and brooding Childe Harold persona, he subsequently became their favorite bête noir after his marriage failed, and he was roundly--and hypocritically--condemned on moral grounds. Shaking the English dust from his feet, he permanently departed for the Continent where the indulgence, spontaneity, and exuberance of the Italians captured his heart and his poetic fancy as well. Byron, a staunch defender of Augustan poetics, had expressed skepticism toward the direction taken by the Lake Poets from his youth, and his self-exile from his homeland resulted in a growing concern about the poetical degeneracy he saw there. He already knew what he wanted to say about English Romantic poetry; it was the Italian medley tradition, both
in the original texts and in English imitations, that gave him the voice to say it more memorably than he had ever done before.

Thus, drawing on his natural affinity for a vigorous ludic tradition extending from Ovid to Hudibras, from Ariosto to Monk Lewis's Whistlecraft, Byron deliberately frames his serious commentary in a rhetorical style which mocks, qualifies, and transforms the classical epic and the traditional cautionary tale of Don Juan, the heartless seducer. It is a confrontational move on his part, this choice of the epic, a genre which has inspired mockery as often as veneration, and of Don Juan, a protagonist whose profligate life immediately recalls that of the tantalizingly dissolute author. Of the major poets of his day, perhaps only Byron, who deliberately both charmed and offended his countrymen by his life and his poetry, could entice his readers into an exotic adventure and deftly and humorously resituate their cultural icons on a Greek island, or in a Turkish harem, forcing those readers to re-evaluate each belief and institution on its own merit, removed from any familiar context. Perhaps only Byron, with his ability to command the absolute loyalty of a wide range of friends, to impress serious souls such as the earnest Annabella Milbanke, and to fascinate the scores of less scrupulous women who pursued him, could carry off such a performance.

A reflection of the mobile mind of its creator, one of the qualities most disconcerting for serious critics of Don
Juan has always been the poet's refusal to view the world from a single perspective. The issues he raises--and examines--are provocative, especially those centered about the nature of love and marriage, the certainty and mystery of death, and the value human life may have. Although the narrator in all his incarnations professes his commitment to "Truth" repeatedly and convincingly, he is anything but singleminded in his search. In the Dedication, Byron clearly reveals the approach he will not be taking in Don Juan by expressing his antipathy for the plodding thought and embarrassingly turgid discourse of such public figures as Viscount Castlereagh, a favorite object of his ire. In contrast, the narrator's style, marked by endless curiosity and mental agility, sets the tone for the poem in a later passage as he sometimes flippantly mocks life's profundities and sometimes energetically probes for profound meaning in the commonplace.

Byron turned the most biting of his "simple, savage verse" (L&J 6.68) in Don Juan on the English literary and socio-political degeneracy which he abhorred. In his Dedication, he first attacks the "Lakists" by name for their incestuous poetic narrowness which has resulted in an artistic sterility. Then he turns on the political figure, Castlereagh, and the way his use of language reveals the quality of his mind. He, too, is sterile, an "intellectual eunuch," an attribute which exasperates Byron at a visceral level. One stanza is particularly revealing:

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An orator of such set trash of phrase
Ineffably, legitimately vile,
That even its grossest flatterers dare not praise,
Nor foes--all nations--condescend to smile:
Not even a sprightly blunder's spark can blaze
From that Ixion grindstone's ceaseless toil,
That turns and turns, to give the world a notion
Of endless torments, and perpetual motion. (13)

Byron has condemned Castlereagh as an emasculated,
blood-hungry dabbler in international politics, but he is
no less brutal in his assessment of the Foreign Secretary's
oratory. In the preface to Cantos Six through Eight, Byron
condemns him for his verbal awkwardness and
unintelligibility: "England has been insulted by a
Minister . . . who could not speak English, and the
Parliament [has] permitted itself to be dictated to in the
language of Mrs. Malaprop" (Complete Wks 295). Byron is
offended by Castlereagh's "set trash of phrase" which
echoes down the years in the bureaucratic platitudes common
in the latest official speeches of Great Britain or any
other country. The deadening predictability and blundering
ineptness of the words he speaks evoke in his audience a
corresponding barrenness, an "ineffably" wordless
revulsion. Byron fears that the deadening effect of
Castlereagh's rhetoric is as numbing to the national spirit
as the Lake Poets' is to national art: his anger, then, is
an appeal for an awakening, even a revolution.

Byron intensifies his attack by comparing
Castlereagh's public discourse (and his public service, as
well) to an "Ixion grindstone," an engine of such
incredibly stultifying, repetitive dullness that it cannot
even make a spontaneous mistake. No spark of creativity or imagination will ever be struck from the thoughts of Viscount Castlereagh, whose intellectual activity is represented by the endlessly punishing millstone of Greek myth. Just as the stone slowly revolves around its fixed center, so does Castlereagh's mind set in motion a crushing force which "curb[s]" "states" and "confine[s]" "thoughts" with far-reaching and deadly effects.

This awareness of the consequences for others may well be the real reason that Byron savages Castlereagh as he does. Galled by the reiterative motion of a mind which crushes and grinds, Byron tellingly designates such activity as "toil" and "torment." More important to Byron the satirist, the mind which functions in such a way is not only trapped in a "ceaseless," "endless," and "perpetual" round of unproductive activity, but entraps others as well in the grist mills of mediocrity.

By the end of the tale of Juan's first seduction (by, not of, Julia), the voice of the urbane narrator has become a familiar and comfortable presence in the poem. Byron, from his position as an English lord, has reviled Castlereagh for the consequences to England of the Foreign Minister's public influence; in a parallel passage following Juan's first "scrape" in Seville, the narrator voices a pointedly contrasting philosophy--quintessentially
Continental--of tolerant accommodation and flexibility to life:

Well--well, the world must turn upon its axis,
And all mankind turn with it, heads or tails,
And live and die, make love and pay our taxes,
And as the veering wind shifts, shift our sails;
The king commands us, and the doctor quacks us,
The priest instructs, and so our life exhales,
A little breath, love, wine, ambition, fame,
Fighting, devotion, dust,--perhaps a name. (2.4)

"Well--well," he chuckles, "the world must turn upon its axis." Today's burning gossip, after all, will be tomorrow's old news, having been replaced already by someone else's conquest or dishonor. It's all "quite natural" (2.3.5)--love, struggle, death--and common to mankind, trapped on an endlessly revolving planet. We "live and pay our taxes," the narrator comments, mocking his own clichés, but not exactly with the sigh of resignation one might expect.

For, while the ceaseless rotation of the earth mirrors the "perpetual motion" of Castlereagh's mind, a critical difference exists between the statesman's work and the results of human activity as played out in an individual's life. Captured as men and women are by the gravity of both their planet and their situation, they nevertheless are free to create lives of profound meaning or glittering superficiality by the manner in which they choose to live. The round of years which constitutes a lifetime contains factors common to almost all humans: the demands of king, doctor, and priest. The elements of chance ("heads or tails") and skill ("as the veering wind shifts, shift our
sails") complicate the process with which mankind must struggle to satisfy these demands, to play the game of life in a meaningful way.

In these and many other passages, Byron operates in the context of the basic dichotomy of the serious and the non-serious traditions in Western thought. Work and play, profit and pleasure—philosophers have debated the relative value of these opposing principles since classical Greek times. Although the Byronic narrator refuses to turn his gaze from significant issues when they are dropped into the hopper, he also refuses to grind them interminably into mush around a fixed center. Aware that he must live in the world into which he was born, he insists on playing with the "veering wind" of circumstance, skillfully winning from it every possible advantage on the voyage that is his life.

II

A review of ludic theory in literature reveals a continuing dialogue among philosophers, artists, and most recently, social scientists concerning the roles of these concepts of play and work in our culture. In classical times, play was considered a means to an end, not a worthy activity in itself. Plato himself viewed play as inferior to the goal of the serious, meaningful life, an opportunity to rest so that women and men may labor more productively afterward. Aristotle was even more direct in his Ethics: "Serious things are intrinsically better than funny or amusing things . . . To make a serious business of amusement and spend laborious days upon it is the height of
folly and childishness" (X.6). Thus, at the beginnings of Western culture, the universal instinct of play was set in opposition and subordination to the activity of work with a firmness that resonates in literary theory even today.

However, Plato also (as Ronald Foust notes) found play a metaphor for godlike creativity and striving after truth. "Man is made God's plaything," the critic quotes from Plato's Laws, "and that is the best part of him. Therefore every man and woman should live life accordingly, and play the noblest games." Foust comments, "This intuition [of Plato's] lies at the heart of his development of dialectics, the noblest intellectual game of all, in which chaotic and randomly conflicting impulses are sublimated into a formal system of conceptual exchange, a question and answer interplay of competing ideas the goal of which is increase of reason" (6). Byron adopts this dialectical, dialogical approach to the search for meaning taking place in Don Juan, although the typically Augustan objective, "increase of reason," undergoes a sea change in the hands of the post-Enlightenment nineteenth-century poet.

Though philosophers may sometimes view play as valuable, they still speak from the context of what literary critic and historian Mihai Spariosu terms "the rational mentality" (Dionysius Intro) in which the play impulse is consistently the handmaid of reason and seriousness. This classical philosophy pervades eighteenth-century English literature, providing Byron with a transhistorical paradigm by which to measure his own
exploration of ludic discourse as both a goal (enjoyment) and a means (accomplishment of serious purpose).

The constraints placed on play and pleasure in literary discourse remained in place for centuries in spite of the occasional artistic restlessness of certain authors--very typically Ovid, Chaucer, Rabelais, and Sterne--and certain literary periods, such as the Renaissance. Spariosu dates the modern concepts of play from the late 1700's, which he calls "a period of crisis in Western values." That era, he claims, is one of a number of "times when implicit governing assumptions begin to lose their authority . . . when they are no longer automatically accepted and require (re)definition" (Dionysius 24). In this re-evaluation of the play concept, he and others see a reaction against the rationality of the Enlightenment and a decision made by the pre-Romantic and early Romantic poets and philosophers to elevate aesthetics, with special emphasis on the play-spirit, to a position of primary importance.

Indeed, in the twentieth century, Johan Huizinga, the Dutch historian of culture, established play as the foundation of human culture itself. In his study of medieval history, he was puzzled by the retention of outdated customs relating to heraldry and chivalric behavior--until he recognized in them traces of primitive initiation ceremonies. These ceremonies, he became convinced, evolved from a context of religious play and
continued in a secular arena as the basis of poetry, law, organized religion, art, war, and other activities.

Huizinga titled his 1938 work, *Homo Ludens*--Man the Player--claiming that human society is rooted in play whether individual humans realize it or not.

Resulting from his seminal study of the nature of the ubiquitous play spirit underlying human civilization, Huizinga's comprehensive definition has served as a touchstone for a generation of scholars in various disciplines:

> a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. (13)

Further, he asserts that the richness of the play concept as the subject of intellectual inquiry arises out of its inclusivity and complexity: "[T]he two terms [play and earnest] are not of equal value . . . The significance of 'play' . . . is by no means defined or exhausted by calling it 'not earnest.' For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can . . . include seriousness" (45). The concept that play can actually include seriousness and not vice versa opens up a wide variety of non-serious texts to a richer appreciation by readers of differing perspectives. Without it, *Don Juan* would remain a confusing jumble of styles, tones, and materials set in no particular rhetorical context.
While Huizinga examines the ostensibly serious aspects of society and discovers their ludic source, Roger Callois defines and classifies those games already recognized as such and opens the way to their serious use in specific fields of study, especially literary critical theory. He identifies six characteristics of play, all of which are at least somewhat applicable to playful texts: play is basically free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and make-believe (9-10). He also places games in four categories: agon (competition); alea (chance); mimicry (simulation); and ilinx (vertigo). Agon, alea and mimicry (role-playing of any kind) are easily recognized presences in Don Juan, illuminating the nature of the games of love and literature about which the poem turns.

Coincidental with the twentieth-century burst of interest in play and game theory by cultural historians such as Huizinga and Callois, there occurred similar philosophic activity among psychologists and sociologists. Among them was Gregory Bateson, who participated in a Stanford University project begun in the early fifties which took the first step toward an evaluation not of play, nor of "real life," but the actual analysis of life as a game, especially the game played between a psychotherapist and his or her patient. These individuals send almost imperceptible signals to one another about one another, Bateson and his colleagues believed, which must be understood and acted upon in order for healing and growth to take place in the patient's life. On a visit to the
Fleishhacker Zoo in San Francisco, Bateson observed behavior in animals which paralleled and clarified the human relationships he had been studying:

I saw two young monkeys playing, i.e., engage in an interactive sequence of which the unit . . . signals were similar to but not the same as those of combat. It was evident . . . that the sequence as a whole was not combat, and evident to the human observer that to the participant monkeys this was 'not combat.' Now this phenomenon, play, could only occur if the participant organisms were capable of some degree of meta-communication, i.e., of exchanging signals which would carry the message 'this is play.' (Sutton-Smith 39)

The meta-communication of which Bateson speaks actually constitutes the most abstract level of human verbal communication. At the most basic level, the denotative statement conveys information ("The cat is on the mat"). In the meta-linguistic statement, ("The word 'cat' has no fur and cannot scratch"), the subject being discussed is the language itself. The most abstract level, the meta-communicative, is signaled when the subject of discourse is the relationship between the speakers ("My telling you where to find the cat was friendly"). The purest play takes place at this last level. In fact, if the act which initiates the play relationship is interpreted at another level, the receiver of the statement will take it in an entirely different way.

This application of rules from one mode of exchange to another creates what Bateson likens to Epimenides's paradox. In that ancient conundrum, Epimenides, the Cretan, said, "All Cretans are liars." Obviously, if the statement is true, then it is necessarily false because
Epimenides is a Cretan and lies himself. In much the same way, the statement, "This is play" frames the playful act (whether it is a bite, a verbal insult, or a text—even a self-declared epic) and insures that the act no longer denotes what it would under all other circumstances.

Sociologist Erving Goffman has shifted Bateson's frame concept into more clearly social situations. Within the frame or context of an artistic performance, for example, he posits a self which projects itself and its message from within the restrictions of that specific play world. Goffman's frame theory and Bateson's explanation of meta-communication explain why the same literary text like Don Juan might be perceived as humor or obscenity, clever parody or blasphemy, depending on whether or not it is perceived as being within a ludic frame. Undoubtedly, many of Byron's harshest critics misunderstood him at this metacommunicative level. For example, in anticipation of a chilly critical reception of his racy version of Juan's first love, Byron joked that he had "bribed my grandmother's review— the British" to insure a favorable review of Don Juan:

I sent it in a letter to the editor,  
Who thank'd me duly by return of post—  
I'm for a handsome article his creditor;  
Yet if my gentle Muse he please to roast,  
And break a promise after having made it her,  
Denying the receipt of what it cost,  
And smear his page with gall instead of honey,  
All I can say is— that he had the money. (1.210)

William Roberts, the aforementioned editor, took the jest quite seriously, or feared that others might, and issued a stern denial. It was an unanticipated response, but one
greatly relished by Byron, who had assumed his ludic frame was as evident to Roberts as it was to the jester himself.

The playfulness of an act is not determined solely by cultural context or psycho-social frame, however. Theorists have determined that play is an instinctive "in-between" activity, rooted in the early needs of the infant to establish her self in relation to her surroundings.

D. W. Winnicott, an English pediatrician with a special interest in Freudian psychoanalysis, proposed that the gradually widening space between the infant's "me" and the caregiver's "not me" provides a "play-space" where the infant gradually identifies and adapts to the reality of the world beyond her control. In order to negotiate this disturbing territory, she "plays" with transitional objects and phenomena such as blankets, pacifiers, and soothing repetitive noises which she invests with increased significance as they become part-infant and part-everything-else. The success of this adaptive process depends on a fairly stable and increasingly predictable environment--what Winnicott called "good enough" mothering--where the baby can construct a manageable playworld out of familiar elements. Arguing from his psychoanalytical perspective, Winnicott claims that adults also remain "engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related" (2-3), and that this struggle to relate to objective reality finds
expression in the areas of religious belief, artistic creativity, and other aspects of the culture.

The anthropologist Victor Turner also explores the trans-cultural preoccupation with in-betweenness, which he calls the liminal state. Intrigued by primitive rites of passage, he investigates the significance of this social process designed to relate individuals to their community. The social neophytes, whose temporarily liminal existence he studies, are characterized mainly by what they are not--wise, loquacious, proud, autonomous--and by what they do not have--status, sexual identity, property, kinship rights--a virtual portrait of Juan after the shipwreck in Canto Two. They "must be a tabula rasa, a blank slate," Turner states, "on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group." He continues,

The ordeals and humiliations ... to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of their previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges. (103)

As John Johnson, Juan's comrade on the slave block, comments as they wait for a buyer,

Knowledge, at least, is gain'd; for instance, now
We know what slavery is, and our disasters
May teach us better to behave when masters.

(5.23.6-8)

Juan's and Johnson's trials are part of a ritualized process which separates them from society, confines them in a transitional state, and returns them to the community. Although a firm classification of any system of ritual acts...
as play is problematic, the self-limiting, temporary transitional state necessarily preceding the transformation functions as a ludic "pure space" in Don Juan, and the ambiguous, "is and is not" quality of the initiates themselves strongly suggests further identification with the play concept.

III

But how exactly for the purposes of this study does one define play? We may wish to apply the terse remark made by the U. S. Supreme Court justice concerning obscenity--"I know it when I see it"--and be done with it. Spariosu acknowledges that play seems to be a form of what the German philosophers call "tacit knowledge," relying more on common sense than logic. Indeed, he reports that so many definitions have been offered that many scholars deduce from that fact alone that the nature of play is so paradoxical and broad as to be virtually undefinable (Dionysius 1). Anna Nardo offers another explanation which leads to a more precise definition: "Play is so hard to define precisely because it is itself a defining activity: it communicates the definition of a situation to participants" (10). Whether or not the object of inquiry is a playful one depends on the stance of the players toward the elements of the real world in which they exist.

Each player assumes this ludic stance in a way which uniquely reflects his or her own temperament, but such a lusory attitude always results in some sort of corresponding activity, whether entirely intellectual, or

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interpersonal and physical, as well. Those who engage in play actually create a play-domain out of the real world in which they, as actual selves, exist. They accomplish this by choosing real world objects (or people, activities, or institutions), dislocating them from their serious context, and reframing them in a playful one. Thus, these objects of play, though they resemble their serious counterparts, have actually been transformed into something else altogether--an element of the playful dimension existing somewhere in-between the players and the real world and the fanciful world. Although some, such as the mentally ill, never leave this world of their own making and managing, most players emerge from it wiser, more skilled, more relaxed. The skills learned during play often serve them well in the everyday world: they explore and discover new aspects of themselves by playful mimicry, often continuing to roleplay in the serious world. Not only do they better understand and challenge themselves, but they also cope more skillfully with the realities of their own lives, having spent time in a more manageable, parallel, self-made dimension.

In the play of children, the transformational act at the heart of the play process is unobscured by the complexities of adult life. The simplest objects become objects of play. For example, many patients who have suffered for years from muscle-wasting diseases find it difficult to drink from a cup. They frequently sip through a common soda straw in order to accomplish a serious
purpose: ingesting liquids. Give a healthy child his grandfather's drinking straw, though, and he imaginatively transforms it into an object of pleasure and mischief. It may look like a straw, but to a pre-schooler, it's a bubble-making machine as he plunges it into his milk and enthusiastically begins blowing instead of sucking. To a school-aged child, it is more than merely a way to create fascinating noises and draw an adult's attention; he views it as a weapon in an unending game of one-upmanship with an unfriendly rival. In his hands, it becomes a spitball shooter aimed at the back of the unsuspecting classmate's neck. The possibilities for more complicated play naturally increase at this level for the attacker as he assumes the role of the innocent student lost in thought when his red-faced victim turns to apprehend his tormentor. Thus, for both children, the playful activity in which they indulge has very real and immediate consequences when they introduce it into the real world.

Under favorable circumstances, the same playfulness might escalate until the players structure their own "play-circle," where they play a game which begins and ends according to its own time, takes place in its own space, and follows its own rules. In that case, the offended older student may challenge his opponent to a much more serious contest to be held after school behind the gym in which fists, not drinking straws, are the weapon of choice. What began in the spirit of play may become an event of serious conflict when the contestants voluntarily structure
their activity into a game. Of course, this game may also be interrupted by the intrusion of the real world in the form of a humorless teacher who prematurely ends the contest. She may exaggerate the qualitative difference between the serious and ludic dimensions by taking both boys to that imposing repository of authority, the principal's office, which, as any child knows, is about as far from the pleasure and freedom of the playworld as one can get.

What the children in a scenario like this one do with a common soda straw, Byron does in a much more sophisticated way with the literary and cultural artifacts available to a nineteenth-century English poet with a classical education. He takes familiar, recognizable entities and converts them to facetious likenesses by which he can gain both pleasure and meaning. In order to create the incredibly complex playworld that is Don Juan, Byron plays with two genres: one, the classical epic; the other, the legend of Don Juan Tenorio. He turns almost every important element in these traditions "upside down," in Bakhtin's sense, "decrowning" the venerable conventions which have had a profound influence on literary discourse and popular culture for so long. By so doing, Byron creates a ludic dominion where he has the freedom to re-evaluate and transform the current literary, social, and
political realities of his own day as well as the icons of the past.

Even modern-day critics, however, have struggled to understand what Byron is doing in *Don Juan* when they consider the poem from a serious perspective. They have called the poet everything from a staunch Augustan absolutist who explores a modern moral relativism to an absolute nihilist who merely gives lip service to the moral norms of a prior age. Peter Curran speaks for most contemporary Romantic scholars when he places Byron squarely within the relativist camp:

> To insist that all facts are subjective approximations and that no truth is pure is the truth asserted throughout *Don Juan* . . . . Epic can accommodate such a radical skepticism, but satire cannot. (197)

Perhaps traditional satire cannot, but *Don Juan* is, in its author's words, a "playful satire" (*L&J* 6.208) which acknowledges that "Truth's fountains may be clear--her streams are muddy" (15.88.6). As a satirist, he holds the poetic and socio-political world to account for its degeneracy and apostasy from the ideals of clarity, freedom, and truth. The same poet, however, who maintains his "plain, sworn, downright detestation / Of every despotism in every nation" (9.24.7-8) also admits that "There's no such thing as certainty, that's plain" (9.17.5) a few lines earlier. He is by temperament and choice a man marked by what he calls "mobility," Richard Lanham's "rhetorical man" who, unlike those with a clear sense of a strong central self, darts from one perspective or role to
the next, alternately embracing and mocking the
institutions of his day. This back and forth movement is
decidedly playful, the mark of a poet who chooses to be
both serious and rhetorical at the same time, who
deliberately chooses not to choose but instead to mediate
between levels of reality.

As these conventional genres of epic and the Don Juan
Tenorio tradition use love and the sexual relationship as a
means of commenting on the central values of their culture,
so Byron, in his own way, structures his great poetic
exploration of ideas around the love games into which the
women of Juan's acquaintance draw their young amoroso.
These love games do not, admittedly, inspire ethical praise
on the reader's part. As sympathetic as she may be toward
the frustrated women of Don Juan, she nonetheless recoils
from the calculating machinations of Inez, for instance, or
the arrogant possessiveness of the Sultana. The games of
love which shape the poem demean the players without
exception--both the careful schemers and the less adroit.
Such unnaturally contrived "love" relationships, and the
unsatisfying poetic traditions associated with them, evoke,
incredibly, not revulsion, but fascination and pleasure.
The games which began in the playful spirit of competition
or role play have coalesced into very serious contests for
very high stakes, only to be redeemed again by the play
spirit. The poet, as the transforming consciousness
standing outside of the ludic world he has made, transforms
the mean and self-centered, the dull and boring, into

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poetic artifacts, glittering with witty complexity and genial observation.

While Juan and his lady friends learn about life and themselves through their amorous play, Don Juan's narrator slips an arm around the reader's shoulder and walks with him through the poem. He gestures, now and then, toward the enactment of Juan's tale, and pauses to ponder aloud what it all means. Calling forth shadowy figures from his mind and memory, he praises some for their idealism, but curses many more as living examples of mediocrity, mendacity, and greed.

Most importantly, Byron fashions from Juan's love encounters a grand, co-operative venture of the type that play theorists call a mixed-motive game. While he admits to creating suspense for the reader at certain points, Byron also gifts his narrator-guide with a friendly volubility and a genuine desire to draw the reader into the narrative and cognitive activity of the poem. A skilled ironist, the poet hides his meaning only partially, because the one thing that his increasingly talkative narrator wants is that the reader "get it." He most often co-operates with the player/reader by means of what Walter Ong, based on research by female linguists, calls the feminine use of language (76). In the same way that the actor in a game of charades indirectly and progressively communicates hints to his teammates through mimicry and signal, the narrator alludes to a familiar myth (the Odyssey), defamiliarizes the name of a national war hero,
("Villainton") or even shares an anecdote overheard at last night's converzatione. His audience responds, he adjusts his clues: they make increasingly intelligent guesses. At the end of a long evening--or a long poem--the players have developed a confidence in their ability to both send and decipher signals of meaning within the universe of this particular game.

But just as the leader in charades routinely informs his team as to the category of the next item to be guessed, in the Dedication, Byron boldly reveals in his own voice the targets of his satiric attack. I would argue that first in importance among these, especially in the early cantos, is what Byron considers to be the current state of poetic decadence, represented by Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other lesser names. As a poet himself, he contributes to the reputation of English authors as a group and shares in the ignominy of their decline. Therefore, when his anger rises against the perpetuators of what he claims to be incomprehensible mush, his spirit warms to the task of revealing them for the mediocre "verse-writers--for we shall sink poets" (LB 100) that they are. He also considers certain statesmen and military leaders as grave threats not only to the well-being of the English, but other nations as well, as his ferocious attack on Castlereagh shows. Significantly, though, when he assails one group, he also effectively hits the other: Southey, for instance, the "epic renegade," is both a literary and political opportunist; Castlereagh is berated as much for
his atrociously bumbling use of the language as for his lack of political support for human freedom. Social institutions and the nobility, synecdoches for society itself, become a favorite subject for Byron's satirical wit as the poem continues, especially when liberally illustrated with thinly-veiled allusions to his own remarkable past. Society's sins, once again, resemble those familiar literary shortcomings of the English Romantics: its institutions are narrow and rigid, and its most visible representatives are pretentious, boring, and unintelligible even to themselves.

This preoccupation of Don Juan with the quality of public discourse, and especially with poetry, provides some of the most entertaining and memorable images in the poem. The philosopher/poet Coleridge, "like a hawk encumber'd with his hood," struggles to "[explain] [his] metaphysics to the nation" (Ded 2.6-7); Wordsworth "drivels seas" for his "little boat" in "Peter Bell" (3.98.8,7); but the obscene wordplay directed at Southey in the Dedication shocked even Byron's friends, who convinced the poet to remove the "Bob[s]" which rhyme the couplet. Southey, the new Poet Laureate, is here compared to a "soar[ing]" bird which, having risen too high too fast, undergoes an awkward Ovidian metamorphosis in mid-air and falls onto a ship like a misdirected flying fish,

Gasping on deck, because you soar too high, Bob, And fall, for lack of moisture, quite adry, Bob! (Ded 3.7-8)
"A dry bob," the footnote dutifully reports, is slang for "coitus without emission," placing this particular indignity beyond the pale of good taste. Questions of etiquette aside, however, the randy sexual reference is actually quite germane to Byron's focus on poetical commentary within the context of the traditional Don Juan story.

By casting Southey's poetic sterility in terms of sexual impotence, Byron, from the very earliest stanzas, links the expression of literary creativity with the physical act of love. Frequently, the activity is barren and unproductive. Southey, for instance, is not only impotent, but actually completely, fatally, out of his professional element, a fish out of water. In other words, not only is he unable to produce viable poetic offspring, but his very existence as a poet is compromised and threatened by his elevation to the Poet Laureateship where his incompetence is conspicuous to all. Though Southey has at least limited literary ability, Castlereagh, on the other hand, has no possibility at all of striking a creative "spark." An "intellectual eunuch" (Ded 11.8), he has been gelded, "emasculated to the marrow" (Ded 15.2), an "it" who is denied even the dignity of the masculine pronoun.

In his own case, though, Byron uses the same sexual metaphor in a positive sense to describe his procreative mood during periods of artistic creativity: "I can only write when the estro is upon me," he states (Records 1.33).
Later, in a letter mailed from Italy to his literary agent, Douglas Kinnaird, he defends the artistic value of the erotic passages in Cantos One and Two in terms of a total abandonment to the sexual drive:

[C]onfess--confess--you dog--and be candid--that it is the sublime of that there sort of writing--it may be bawdy--but is it not good English?--it may be profligate--but is it not life, is it not the thing?--Could any man have written it--who has not lived in the world?--and tooled in a post-chaise? in a hackney coach? in a Gondola? against a wall? in a court carriage? in a vis a vis?--on a table?--and under it?

(L&J 6.232)

Byron's explicit identification of "the thing," a ribald term with a strong male sexual connotation then, as now, with his poem Don Juan, further graphically conflates the traditional sexual element of this literary tradition and the activity of the imagination.

I contend, therefore, that the love games in Don Juan that measure Juan's progress through the poem are the means through which Byron explores the complexities of poetic imagination and creativity. Whatever their source, whether stock episodes from the London pantomime or personal memories and anecdotes, Byron transforms these incidents into fascinating ludic phenomena. They portray, in each case, a specific type of love characterized both by recognizably gamelike patterns and the nature or degree of the imaginative activity which that love represents. Julia, Haidée, Gulbeyaz, and the English noblewomen act in very different ways as Muse-mothers to Juan, and the sexual energy they generate in these ludic relationships parallels
the creative process. With Julia, the callow Juan plays the role of the conventional Petrarchan lover while the Moorish fire deep in her spirit flares up to defend what she sees as her one chance at happiness. In the harem with Gulbeyaz, while he quickly learns to play the non-European love game by rules which define love solely in terms of physical desire, her dormant femininity is awakened. Finally, as a "gaté" and "blasé" young foreigner, he is drawn into the superficial, sentimental games of the mind which substitute for a commitment of the heart for the English noblewomen; they, in their turn, begin to understand just how "vacant" those hearts and those games are. In each case, the love encounter expands the mental and emotional horizons of both the woman and the rapidly maturing Juan. Only with Haïdée, who lacks a formal education, does Juan experience a natural love, unobstructed by society, by which the couple creates an evanescent playworld of love for themselves alone. Just so much as the faux love of all the others departs from the standard Haïdée sets, so also do the other incidents of creative activity depart from the natural act of imaginative play which occurs on her island.

As scholar Richard Lanham notes, people play for both pleasure and advantage (Motives 4-5), and these women who draw Juan into their games are no different. They play for the pleasure of love—an emotional commitment that for them is denied, distorted, or dead. But, in doing so, they also play for control in hopes that it, too, can satisfy the
desire for meaning and purpose in their lives. There are three obvious and very different exceptions to this pattern. The first is Catherine the Great, who could not be more direct and less playful, even in her sexual relationships. During her rise to the position of Empress, she played the palace games quite successfully, but as sole ruler of Russia, she no longer has any need to broker for power. The second is Haidée (and, later, Aurora Raby—a spiritualized Haidée), whose love relationship with Juan is the paradigmatic event of the entire poem.

Within the context of play, then, the act of love between Juan and Haidée takes on an enduring significance, not only as an ideal romantic experience, but also as a startlingly Romantic expression of imaginative activity in the poetical realm. A stalwart defender and self-proclaimed disciple of the rich eighteenth-century Augustan literary tradition, Byron so identified himself with his predecessors Pope and Dryden and so distanced himself from his contemporaries, Wordsworth ("Wordy") and Southey ("mouthey"), that his poetry would be the last place most critics would expect to find a prototypically Romantic passage. Nevertheless, based on Haidée's instruction and inspiration, the lovers transform, in ludic fashion, elements of their heretofore hostile world into a playworld where their natural, loving relationship briefly flourishes. I intend to establish in this study that this transformation is accomplished by the activity of a fourth variety of Romantic imagination, a Byronic Fancy which
surpasses the mechanical nature of Coleridge's "Fancy," but which Byron would never have agreed to identify as the older poet's "Imagination." It operates, however, in a manner strikingly similar to Coleridge's "secondary Imagination" which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create" (516).

In their attempts to invest their lives with meaning through the love games they devise and play out, Juan's amours cannot seem to get beyond the most basic level of creative play--that of the Coleridgean Fancy. They relate mechanically to their surroundings and even to themselves: sifting, like Coleridge's Memory, through the components of their lives: choosing and manipulating the fittest--people or things or ideas--until they gain a sense of power over them. Juan's mode of play, while it incorporates the process of assembling, is markedly transformative. Although it is only with Haidée that he achieves the highest expression of his imaginative powers, the gameplay in which he engages at the invitation of others, flawed though it is, nevertheless leaves its unmistakable trace. The women who have joined in love games with Juan--whether in awkward role-play, in contest, or in teasing masquerade--find that they have developed new abilities, new capacities for pleasure and perception. Simply interacting with Juan's power of transformative Fancy--a Byronic Fancy--expands their world, if not to the level of Coleridge's "eternal act of creation" (Portable 516), then
at least far beyond the boundaries of their prior love games.

In spite of his published protestations against the Lakers' solipsistic murkiness, the island idyll demonstrates that Byron is, perhaps, more of a Romantic than either he or generations of readers would have recognized. Rather than taking him at his word, then, the modern reader must take his poetic word and play with it: examining it from every angle, enjoying its protean beauty, taking its very informality--its "rattling on"--and bringing to it his own imaginative powers. Byron counsels the "Gent. Reader" to handle his poem with just that kind of lively irreverence:

This narrative is not meant for narration,
But a mere airy and fantastic basis,
To build up common things with common places.

(14.7.6-8)

Poetry is, he continues, a "straw, borne on by human breath," a "paper kite," and a "shadow"

(14.8.3,5,6)--objects which belong to both the solid world of "common things" and the "airy and fantastic" realm of play. As Bakhtin would recognize over a century later, Don Juan is no monologic, easily categorized text (Dialogic 5-6); it is, instead, a poem composed of familiar but contradictory elements, briefly joined to create an ephemeral object which reflects and in that reflection, transmutes the world around it. Byron described his "playful satire" (L&J 6.208) in just such terms:
And mine's a bubble not blown up for praise,
But just to play with, as an infant plays.
(14.8.7-8)

Although Don Juan received little acclaim from
English literary and social circles when it was published,
its popularity was demonstrated by its prolific sales and
Byron's continued fame after his death. The poem's wide
and lasting enjoyment by its readers was not due solely to
the risqué lovers' tale that it recounted, but to the sheer
pleasure of the varying thoughts and emotions evoked by it.
In contrast to those satisfied readers, Byron described
those who excoriated him for obscenity as having "imputed
such designs as show / Not what they saw, but what they
wish'd to see." Wryly, he comments, "But if it gives them
pleasure, be it so" (4.7.3-5), knowing that he will give
them pleasure either way--by the experience of the poem, or
with an ironic twist, by the smug self-assurance it
provokes in its disparagers. For after all, the goal of
play is pleasure, and Byron is the Magister Ludi, the Game
Master.
CHAPTER TWO

FROM STORY TO GLORY: PLAYING WITH TRADITION

I will answer your friend C.V. [Francis Cohen] who objects to the quick succession of fun and gravity--
... His metaphor is that "we are never scorched and drenched at the same time!"--Blessings on his experience!--Ask him these questions about "scorching and drenching".--Did he never play at Cricket or walk a mile in hot weather?--did he never spill a dish of tea over his testicles in handing the cup to his charmer to the great shame of his nankeen breeches?--did he never swim in the sea at Noonday with the Sun in his eyes and on his head--which all the foam of ocean could not cool? (L&J 6.207)

As Byron's critic, the medievalist Francis Cohen recognized, one of the hallmarks of Don Juan is the jarring juxtaposition of the serious and the playful. For Cohen, it was a stylistic aberration, but many readers, even those who were able to look beyond a plot constructed of a series of illicit love affairs, inferred a moral undercutting of the values of freedom, human dignity, or romantic love which the poet ostensibly espoused. On the contrary, Byron grounds his spirited defense of this inconsistency of tone on the fact that Don Juan actually captures the unpredictable, even oxymoronic nature of life itself. It was not until much later, though, that literary theorists began systematically to explore the complexities of the play stance which has allowed authors from Ovid to James Joyce to assume an equivocal attitude toward both experience and conventional genres.
One of the most influential of these approaches to genre is that of theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, who detects within many historically diverse texts a common root of dialogic discourse which he terms "serio-comical." These serio-comical texts maintain a dubious relationship with the more straightforwardly serious literary traditions which generated them. Their "multi-styled and hetero-voiced" skepticism is the literary expression, Bakhtin believes, of the even older folkloric tradition of carnival, a ritualized transgression of social, religious, and legal convention carefully calendared and restricted to times of holiday and celebration (Problems 108).

For Bakhtin, the spirit of the medieval carnival, though considerably diluted as a social phenomenon over the centuries, keeps rudely breaking through monologic literary discourse, insisting that its ambivalent laughter be heard. The now familiar carnival sense of the world is often recognized in those texts especially marked by indeterminacy and polyphonic discourse. None more vigorously operates within this double world of the carnivalesque than Don Juan.

Although the ludic sense of life pervades most of Don Juan, in some episodes that spirit shapes plot, character, and setting in particularly striking ways that clearly place the poem within the ancient tradition described by Bakhtin. In Cantos Three and Four, the playworld of love and holiday created by Juan and Haidée frames and enriches
Lambro's re-enactment of the Homeric Odysseus's return to Ithaca. Unhindered by traditional epic demands, Byron maneuvers the Spanish seafaring Odysseus, Juan, into the background of his tale where his boyish hero temporarily drops his Odyssean identity. Lambro, in turn, assumes the role of the homecoming mythic hero with catastrophic results for the lovers and himself.

After Juan's scandalous affair with Julia in Canto One and his shipwreck and idyllic love for Haidee on her father's island in Canto Two, the action noticeably slows in Cantos Three and Four as the narrator wanders in the ambages of his own thought, fascinated by the scene before him. Many critics have viewed this section's lessening of intensity as a natural reaction on Byron's part to the furor raised in England over his promiscuous hero. I would argue that despite the narrator's protestation that "[n]othing['s] so difficult as a beginning / In poesy, unless perhaps the end" (4.1.1-2), in this case, it was the middle of Juan and Haidee's story which presented the greatest narrative difficulties for the poet. Every reader realizes that the star-crossed lovers of Canto Two are destined for heartbreak and separation; the question is how fate will disentangle them and propel Juan on his personal odyssey. Even Byron himself released these cantos to his publisher, John Murray, with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm: "very decent--but dull--damned dull," (LJ 6.256) he commented to his friend Douglas Kinnaird concerning the third canto.
Dull? Perhaps, at least for the nineteenth-century British reader seeking a romantic thrill or a suspense-driven plot. But Byron was also correct when he termed "decent" these stanzas which fall between Juan's tryst on a twilight beach and his confinement below the decks of a pirate ship. This episode occupies a unique position in the poem, a quiet pause for breath-taking which captures the very essence of the relationship between the playful and serious worlds which both the reader and the central character explore in Don Juan. It also distills the major sources from which Byron worked, the classical epic and the Don Juan legend, into a scene of almost iconographic quality. The young lovers create from the real world an opulent island of their own, celebrated by an obliging poet/singer, where the rules of everyday life are temporarily suspended until reality intervenes, a parental intervention which sends Don Juan into another amorous situation fraught with genuine risk.

As Lambro returns to his estate, the narrator lingers over every detail of the scene that awaits the long-absent master of the island. His approach and entrance into "the house no more his home" (3.51.1) closely shadows both the tone and details of Odysseus's return to Ithaca and the subsequent slaughter of Penelope's suitors. Both men experience a bittersweet mix of anticipation and foreboding at what awaits them. They encounter dogs, insulting guests, and intended or actual sexual intruders as they pass unrecognized through familiar surroundings now altered
by time and circumstance. The Juan of this episode shares with the original Don Juan the purest narrative strain of the legend: loving a woman and then barely escaping the wrath of her outraged male protector. Shawled and turbanned as a Greek, he sits with Haidée at Lambro's ivory table "in their beauty and their pride" (3.61.4) and later sleeps beside her, "pillowed cheek to cheek" (4.29.1) in Lambro's bed. Little wonder that the sea-hardened pirate seeks no explanations but immediately orders his men to strike down the despoiler of his daughter and dispatch him to an embarking ship.

The usurpers in both of Don Juan's source legends are removed from their illegitimately gained positions and severely punished for their impudence. Because of Juan and Haidée's love-play, though, Lambro's island has undergone a critical if short-lived change. The scene which confronts him as he tops the hill beside his home appears tranquil and familiar: man and nature move as productively and harmoniously, the narrator observes, as the music of the spheres. In a moment, however, the appearance of normalcy is shattered by "an unhallow'd, earthly sound of fiddling" (3.28.4) and "a most unoriental roar of laughter" (3.28.6). Lambro has entered a playworld, a Bakhtinian Twilight Zone operating according to its own time, bounded by its own space, and following its own rules.

This world of its own arrestingly embodies the carnival spirit celebrated in the twentieth century by Bakhtin. As its creator, Byron assumes no single perspective, accepts
no hierarchy unquestioned. According to Bakhtin, this
carnivalesque worldview is best captured in the dualistic
ritual of the mock crowning and decrowning of the ruler of
the celebration, an act which underscores the "jolly
relativity" of all things. In the "inside-out" world which
it creates, the rules of social behavior are set aside, and
all participants experience "free and familiar contact"
(Problems 125), temporarily sanctioning obscenity and
blasphemy as well as creating a new familiarity between
individuals. The carnival worldview unifies the
disconcerting disunities of ordinary existence--foolishness
and wisdom, the sacred and the profane, death and
renewal--by temporarily linking them in a playworld limited
by time and space. The celebrant/reader is reminded that
just as newly crowned authority contains its own end, life
is a discourse of dualities, and in the non-serious text,
the tension between stability and change, seriousness and
play is only relieved by the ritualized laughter of the
carnivalesque.

In one form or another, this profoundly ambivalent
carnival laughter rings through texts in many genres.
Originally sanctioned only within the rigid limits of the
carnival, it is directed at the representatives of
authority. License is extended, under these circumstances,
to engage in activity that would never be permitted in the
serious world. Mock crownings, and later, parodies of
liturgical and literary texts both ridicule and
irreverently call for renewing of institutions of
authority. Bakhtin contends that important literary change occurs at this site of resistance to existing monologic thought.

Perhaps that earliest sound in Lambro's ears, the uncontrolled laughter which at once mocks and celebrates, provides the first real clue to the nature of the non-serious world which he views with increasingly astonished anger. The grounds are alive with "festivity" (3.29.4): singing and dancing, storytelling, and abundant feasting (all, Byron notes, at Lambro's expense). What the old pirate does not understand, and the narrator quickly explains, is that the hosts and their festive guests believe him to be dead, have mourned him quite properly, and have now set aside their personal and social grief at his presumed "decrowning" to celebrate the "crowning" of Haidée and Juan. In this atmosphere of shifting relationships, the celebrants disregard the structured society of years past and its rules of social exchange. No incident better expresses the carnival atmosphere than the response by several guests to Lambro's polite inquiry concerning the occasion of the feast. The first,

    without turning his facetious head,
    Over his shoulder, with a Bacchant air,
    Presented the o'erflowing cup, and said,
    'Talking's dry work, I have no time to spare.'

    A second hiccup'd, 'Our old master's dead,
    You'd better ask our mistress who's his heir.'

    'Our mistress!' quoth a third: 'Our mistress!--pooh!--
    You mean our master--not the old but new.'

(3.43)
The jostling of master and servant in the courtyard; the cheerful, casual disrespect for authority, both former and present; and the abundance of food and especially drink all belong to the festive, "upside down" world which renews and energizes that which has gone before.

As the narrator's eye scans this swirl of activity, he pauses to describe a fascinating scene, a visual image of the underforming ludic attitude which so profoundly affects the poem. A group of children plays gently with a mild-tempered ram, forming a self-contained world of "as if" within the larger carnivalistic spectacle:

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. (3.32)

But nothing is to be taken at face value in this little tableau. The children treat the ram "as if" he were a nursing lamb, but although they disguise his horns with flowers, he never ceases to be a powerful male figure. He, in turn, feigns an aggressive act "as if" he would hurt his playmates, but he actually has no such intent. One is vividly reminded of Bateson's playfully biting monkeys at the Fleishhacker Zoo. Significantly, although the singing, dancing, and storytelling entertain the adults at the party, only the ingenuous children, "blessed by innocence," engage in this play of simulation.
Unaware of any spectator, the children are caught up in the reality of their playworld. As their elders do, they focus intensely on the moment of pleasure, undistracted by their surroundings. Unlike the older festival goers, however, there is no element of performance in their play, no outside intrusions into or excursions from their charmed circle. Restricted in space, they also seem to be transfixed in time, a "classical... picture"(3.33.1,6). Grammatically expressing his desire that these "little Greeks" might never grow old, the narrator speaks of them in a sort of eternal present tense, in contrast to the historical past tense of the rest of Cantos Three and Four.

Lambro, however, with good reason, doesn't seem to share the narrator's enchantment with the scene before him. First of all and naturally enough, he is shocked at the uncontrolled prodigality of his own household. The narrator records with comic exaggeration Lambro's dismay at the inevitable "climax of all human ills, / The inflammation of his weekly bills" (3.35.7-8). Pecuniary interests aside, though, Lambro is obviously temperamentally unsuited for le monde a l'envers he discovers on his island. When confronted with the "siren" Pleasure, "Lambro's reception at his people's banquet / Was such as fire accords to a wet blanket" (3.36.7-8). Richard Lanham, a critic who, like Bakhtin, has surveyed Western literature with an eye for manifestations of the ludic spirit, categorizes such characters as "serious" souls who have a strong sense of "a central self, an irreducible
identity" (Motives 1). Their natural style of communication is transparent and straightforward and set within a context of objective reality. Roleplay and disguise do not come easily to them.

The narrator of Don Juan, on the other hand, a complex rhetorical being, possesses a "social self": he darts from one role to the next, alternately embracing and mocking the serious literary, social, and political conventions of his day. In fact, as the speaker of the text, he completely exemplifies what Lanham calls a "rhetorical man" in a generative relationship with the serious world. Since the centricity of language as language rather than primarily as a conveyor of ideas is foundational to the rhetorical Greek tradition, which Lanham references, this narrator operates linguistically within whatever gamelike universe he finds himself, adopting rapidly shifting orientations in order to gain a persuasive advantage. This preoccupation with the present reality as it is perceived (not as it exists in some ideal realm) encourages Lanham's homo rhetoricus to be an actor in relation to others and an explorer of complementary roles--the devout and the faithless, the romantic and the cynical, the naive and the sophisticated. The challenge in such a constantly fluctuating universe is to land on one's feet with apparently effortless skill (Motives 4).

In Lanham's view, two ends motivate this skillful masquerade. The poet, the narrator, and the reader all play in the world of the text in order to achieve
individual goals: to create meaning, to explore ideas, to gain understanding. But the drive to succeed in the agonistic struggle only partially fuels the rhetorical approach. "We play for advantage," Lanham reminds us, "but we play for pleasure, too . . . Purposeful striving is invigorated by frequent dips back into the pleasurable resources of pure play" (Motives 4-5). Sheer, unadulterated enjoyment of every aspect of the textual performance, even if indulged in for that reason alone, exists in the rhetorical world as a perfectly valid activity. For the serious poet and reader, it is never so, although they may unconsciously engage in what they theoretically deny.

But if the slippery narrator plays for pleasure as well as to accomplish his personal goals, Lambro clearly does not. In fact, he doggedly pursues his profession more like a force of nature than a swashbuckling pirate. At the time of Juan's rescue, Haidée's father is a vague, threatening presence which haunts the couple's growing love until he heads out to sea to make his living. Efficiently merchandising both stolen goods and stolen men, the Greek entrepreneur scatters his prisoners across the Mediterranean, all "save one man / Toss'd overboard unsaleable (being old)" (3.16.3-4). He makes a profit on the goods as well, with once again, a significant exception: "Light classic articles of female want, . . . Robb'd for his daughter by the best of fathers" (3.17.4,8). At once the heartless pirate and the doting father, Lambro
may be morally ambivalent, but his actions are completely true to his serious nature.

Throughout *Don Juan*, the rhetorical narrator is especially marked by a facility in role-playing, an obsession with language and words, and a frank embrace of pleasure for its own sake. Lambro, in contrast, struggles to conceal his anger from the revelers. Disconcerted by their flippant conversation, his "visage f[alls]. . . . but he str[ives] to quell / The expression, and endeavours to resume / His smile" (3.44.2,4-6). Whether such a man hides his thoughts well or not, he never departs very far from their source, the central self. It follows, then, that such a man does not employ his words in the same way as his rhetorical brother who exuberantly celebrates his verbal skill and daring. Lambro, "who seldom used a word / Too much" (3.37.1-2), clearly personifies an almost non-verbal man, an extreme example of the man of terse communication and decisive action. His momentary pause at the threshold evokes a narrator's comment tinged by foreboding:

> Not that he was not sometimes rash or so, But never in his real and serious mood; Then calm, concentrated, and still, and slow, He lay coil'd like the boa in the wood; With him it never was a word and blow, His angry word once o'er, he shed no blood, But in his silence there was much to rue, And his one blow left little work for two. (3.48)

Haidée's father, then, remains a man of purpose, engaged in the soul-callousing profession created for him by economic and political reality. He single-mindedly plies his trade throughout the Mediterranean, taking time
for no real attachments other than to his daughter. Perhaps his mood may change unexpectedly, but his identity is steady and his actions consistent within the narrative matrix of the poem. Far from luxuriating in his life's largess, he is "moderate in all his habits, and content / With temperance in pleasure" (3.53.3-4). Small wonder, then, that a man of such "real and serious mood" would react as he did when faced with a world of play and carnival.

For it is, after all, the collision of the play spirit and the sober, everyday world which energizes not only this canto but the entire poem. The two worlds are cleverly juxtaposed in stanza 38 of the third canto:

He did not know (Alas! how men will lie)  
That a report (especially the Greeks)  
Avouch'd his death (such people never die),  
And put his house in mourning several weeks,  
But now their eyes and also lips were dry;  
The bloom too had return'd to Haidée's cheeks.  
Her tears too being return'd into their fount,  
She now kept house upon her own account.  

(3.38)

The information concerning Lambro--"a report / Avouch'd his death"--is delivered matter-of-factly, situated well within the realm of everyday, transparent speech, much as Haidée and the others must have received it. This fact (which "[Lambro] did not know") has further complicated the situation but is also presented as objective reality.

At the same time, the narrator delivers a delightfully rhetorical message which completely recontextualizes the prior factual information--"Alas! how men will lie ..."
especially the Greeks . . . such people never die." By alternating the serious message with the playful one, he momentarily foregrounds the subtext to what purports to be an epic narrative and sets the reality of the ludic world directly alongside conventional reality. As the reader well knows, reports of Lambro's death have been greatly exaggerated, to paraphrase Mark Twain, thus making the one who "did not know" the only one in possession of the truth. Significantly, the physical fact of his existence is known to him only by experience, not by human discourse, whether serious or playful.

The mocking, alternative voice of the parenthetical commentary reveals this slipperiness of "truth" by reveling in its own self-reflexivity. "Tsk, tsk," the ludic voice teases. "We know men are liars, but those Greeks are the worst!"--a jest made at the expense of the classical philosophers and their search for Ultimate Reality. The resignation which echoes in the narrator's "Alas! how men will lie" suggests that lying is an endemic human trait, leaving the reader facing a variation of the ancient dilemma of Epimenedes: if men are naturally liars, then the narrator is probably also a liar, and his false regret over deceitful humankind is not warranted because they are really not naturally liars. If they are not, the reader can trust the narrator because he is probably truthful. Unfortunately, the narrator explodes this hope when he chuckles about the rumor and says, "such people never die." Well, of course, in a literal world they do, making his
statement a lie. In a figurative sense, however, they may never seem to die, making his statement true after all. The inherent truth or falseness of any of these statements is beside the point, however, because the unspoken premises which frame the utterance also determine its purpose. The narrator does not lie or tell the truth; he plays.

As Lambro joins the narrator as the second unseen watcher at Juan and Haidée's evening meal, the shadows of both the day's end and the dream's end wash the room. If this is a game, then everyone is about to lose. Captured in a moment of suspended time, the lovers are "children still" (4.15.1), aware of nothing but their beloved's tender looks and "sweet playful phrases" (4.14.7). They sit, surrounded by a luxury which contains its own end, foretells its own demise. The Persian proverbs and verses woven into the tapestries on the walls remind the narrator of the ancient king Belshazzar and the ominous warning which appeared on the wall at his feast the night before his death. The words he read "took his kingdom from him" (3.65.6), just as Juan and Haidée will soon lose theirs. Experience will confirm for these young lovers, as it has for so many in the past, the lessons taught by the wise, whether rhetorical or serious, whether "poets, or the moralists their betters" (3.64.8). Even so, the narrator quickly points out that the earnest, direct path to insight isn't the only one: both the act of play and the consequences of play lead to wisdom as well. "You will find," he shrewdly observes, "Though sages may pour out
their wisdom's treasure / There is no sterner moralist than pleasure" (3.65.6-8).

Whatever pleasure's role in this life--either the object of selfish pursuit or a severe teacher or perhaps both--Juan and Haidée lavish upon themselves all the Oriental indulgences Byron encountered on his own trip through the Middle East. Furnishings, jewelry, clothing--all fascinate the narrator, who records the couple's last hours together with loving detail. After dinner, Lambro's retinue of entertainers appears: "Dwarfs, dancing girls, black eunuchs, and a poet" (my emphasis) (3.78.2), as much a part of the pleasure pavilion as the golden filigreed coffee cups and the emerald aigrette in Juan's turban. Probably brought to the island when their own voyages were interrupted by a visit from Lambro's crew, these human trophies briefly appear to amuse their audience and then vanish--all except the poet. No more than a diversion to Juan and Haidée, this intriguing figure allows the narrator (who is very close to Byron himself in this passage) to comment extensively on the literary and political practices of the day, a major focus of his satire in Don Juan. Equally important to this study, Lambro's court poet exemplifies Lanham's rhetorical man's shifting perspective on truth and preoccupation with style over content. He sings, Byron declares, "truth like Southey," the political poet-for-hire, and "verse like Crashaw," known for his stylistic excesses (3.79.8).

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This delightful portrait of a Levantine Robert Southey expands the brief "adry Bob" raillery of the Dedication. Southey was a political "renegade," Byron has asserted in the Dedication, a poetaster who refuted republicanism for financial opportunities provided by the Tory government. The "eastern antijacobin" of Canto Three (3.79.3) has also supplied poetical entertainment for those of all political persuasions, whether royalist English or revolutionary French: "'Twas all the same to him--'God save the king,' / Or 'Ça ira" (3.85.3-4). This course had proved profitable, resulting in "great fame" (3.78.4) and a "laureate pension"(3.80.8), but his venality and lack of commitment to any civic or literary principle incenses Byron, the narrator. The "sad trimmer" (3.82.1) learned by experience that idealism often leads to neglect, if not outright disgrace, and adopted flexibility as the crown of virtues:

He was a man who had seen many changes,  
And always changed as true as any needle;  
His polar star being one which rather ranges,  
And not the fix'd--he knew the way to wheedle:  
So vile, he 'scaped the doom which oft avenges;  
And being fluent (save indeed when fee'd ill)  
He lied with such a fervour of intention--  
There was no doubt he earn'd his laureate pension. (3.80)

A close examination of these stanzas reveals that their sharp criticism is aimed at the court poet's willingness to prostitute himself for personal advancement and applause, not his equivocal, shifting stance. The innate mobility of the rhetorical man carries no stigma in Don Juan. In fact, when the court poet realizes that he is "among friends"
(3.83.4), it is this very adaptability which frees him to perform the "Isles of Greece," a patriotic song which celebrates liberty for Greece, the cause in pursuit of which Byron died.

The song only does so, though, after an intriguing poetic agon between the heroic, martial ethos of Homer and the hedonistic perspective of Anacreon's amatory verse, a tour de force which illustrates the rhetorical mind at play with traditional sources. The tension created between these two genres is, according to Jerome McGann, "crucial for all of Byron's work" (McGann Complete Wks 700n) and indeed, vibrates in the interplay between the epic and Don Juan traditions in Don Juan. The text of the song vacillates between the classical call to arms and the lure of the life of pleasure. "Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!" a voice pleads with increasing urgency as the claims of patriotism intensify. "Leave battles to the Turkish hordes" ("Isles".9.3). But the voices of the dead Greek heroes dominate the struggle, and the singer concludes with a rhetorical flourish: "A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine-- / Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!" ("Isles".16.5-6). As is true in polyphonic passages throughout the text, the chair in which any speaker sits when the music stops matters less than how he played the game to get there. On a different day, with different music, he might easily occupy a different seat, reach a new conclusion. The same narrator, for example, who apparently

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approves paying the bloody price for Greek freedom abhors
the cost in innocent lives at the seige of Ismail.

And so the song ends, the reader assumes, with a call
to return to the ideals of once-proud classical Greece. Or
does it? In his commentary on this passage, Jerome McGann
notes the classical echoes from the Odyssey as well as the
allusions to Greek poets of Byron's day. He further
characterizes the lyric as an act of "poetic ventriloquism"
in which Byron comments on the political state of both
modern Greece and modern England through the voice of the
speaker (McGann Complete Wks 701n). But the ventriloquism
of these stanzas represents more than a misdirection of the
reader's attention from England to Greece or the masking of
the source of a subtext. This section of the canto also
exemplifies in a fresh way the spirit of playful
indeterminacy which marks Don Juan throughout.

The problematic nature of the narrator's comments which
frame "The Isles of Greece" conclusively removes the song
from the realm of straightforward monologic discourse. "In
Greece, he'd sing some sort of hymn like this t'ye,"
(3.86.8) the narrator explains by way of introduction.
Immediately following the stirring final stanza, another
puzzling statement confronts the reader: "Thus sung, or
would, or could, or should have sung / The modern
Greek"(3.87.1) (my emphasis in both lines). Obviously, the
textual record may or may not be an "accurate"
representation of a performance that is, after all,
fictional. As important, then, as we know his views on
British political and literary degeneracy were to Byron, the emphasis in the following stanzas falls not on the ideological content of "The Isles" but on the poetic activity taking place among the author, the narrator, the court poet, and the reader. This activity will receive special attention in my final chapter on the ludic relationship between Byron and his reader. For now, though, an understanding of the process of creative play with history, genre, and "facts" described in this passage is key to a clear sense of Byron's relationship to the epic and Don Juan traditions.

After a vague reference to the lyric which "would, or could, or should have [been] sung," the narrator proceeds, almost defensively, to explain that that's just the way poets are. In effect, they lie. In the world of Don Juan, this is not to be construed as a criticism of Southey or the court poet since a lie is just "the truth in masquerade" (11.37.2), as the narrator explains in a later canto. In fact, he continues there, "Praised be all liars and all lies!" (11.38.1). In this instance, in a stanza which reinforces the existence of objective "facts" with precision of both rhyme and connotation (facts / acts / exacts), he suggests that a mere chronicle of actual events would rarely serve the purposes of a poet, or for that matter, a biographer:

All these are, certes, entertaining facts,
Like Shakespeare's stealing deer, Lord Bacon's bribes;
Like Titus' youth, and Caesar's earliest acts;
Like Burns (whom Doctor Currie well
describes);
  Like Cromwell's pranks;--but although truth
  exacts
  These amiable descriptions from the scribes,
  As most essential to their hero's story,
  They do not much contribute to his glory.

(3.92)

It seems simple enough, then: these dry and boring details
must be transformed by cooperative authors from "story" to
"glory." And of course, even the "facts" are seriously in
question in this constantly modulating text. Dating from
antiquity or attached to someone of almost mythic
reputation, they are more truly legends, similar to the
American tale of George Washington and the cherry tree.

Glory, though, resists definition, refuses
objectification. Rather than an attribute or a goal, it
resembles nothing else so much as a grand rhetorical game:

And glory long has made the sages smile;
'Tis something, nothing, words, illusion,
wind--
Depending more upon the historian's style
Than on the name a person leaves behind:
Troy owes to Homer that whist owes to Hoyle.

(3.90.1-5)

In true rhetorical style, glory gives pleasure even to the
serious by its literary style rather than literal fact. It
also plays at being more than one thing at once: something
/ words; nothing / illusion; and wind, a movement which can
be felt but not seen in the liminal region between
something and nothing.

Perhaps the most telling line of all--"Troy owes to
Homer that whist owes to Hoyle"--compares Edmond Hoyle's
codification of the game of whist to Homer's preservation
of Troy's past in epic poetry. Hoyle did not invent whist;
he studied it in its various forms, standardized and published the rules in 1742, and consequently popularized the card game which eventually became the modern game of bridge. Homer, likewise, did not invent the mythic-historic war between the Greeks and the Trojans. He wove many tales about it into one, creating a text and a fertile tradition which have survived for over two millenia. When the narrator links Hoyle, the accepted authority on popular pastimes, in a Bakhtinian relationship of "jolly relativity" with Homer, the father of the most serious of all genres, he avoids becoming distracted by superficial likenesses because there are none. He takes advantage of the fact that there is only one thing with which Hoyle is instantly associated: the rules of the game. With chiasmic disjunction and balance ("Troy owes to Homer that whist owes to Hoyle"), the narrator deflates the comparison between Hoyle, who teaches his readers to play the game of whist, and Homer, who teaches his readers to play the game of epic. Their parallel texts become the familiar norm, the original from which all variations, whether bridge or mock epic, must depart.

So the process which begins with "facts" and "acts" almost always results in a text markedly and deliberately different in character from the originating experience. For instance, the narrator reports his own version of the court poet's song specifically so that he may take the poem where he wants it to go narratively and digressively. The song itself foregrounds the two major thematic influences,
heroic and amatory verse, on the narrative of Don Juan. It also elicits a long digression, in a voice very close to Byron's own, on both poetic theory in general and British poetry in particular. What the narrator does in a small way with the text of the singer's fictional performance, Byron does on a much larger scale with the esteemed traditions of epic and Don Juan: he takes two of the richest stories of his literary culture and revels in the pleasure of glorifying them as pattern and plaything.

II

In a letter to John Murray sent in April of 1819, Byron reacts testily to his publisher's lukewarm reception of the first canto of Don Juan:

So you . . . want me to undertake what you call a "great work" an Epic poem I suppose or some such pyramid. --I'll try no such thing--...you have so many "divine" poems, is it nothing to have written a Human one? without any of your worn out machinery. (L&J 6.105)

This is a curious comment in one respect because Byron has already so clearly identified his poem with two of the most recognizable legends of his culture. The opening declaration, "I want a hero," with its unmistakable echoes of Virgil, Ariosto, and Milton, quickly finds resolution in the announced choice of "our ancient friend Don Juan" (1.1.6), a familiar sight on the London pantomime stage. The narrator's most explicit generic statement comes at the end of the first canto: "My poem's epic" (1.200.1), he says and promises to proceed "[w]ith strict regard to Aristotle's rules" (1.201.2). So what does Byron mean when he flatly refuses even to attempt a "great work,"

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specifically an epic? What does he mean when he characterizes his most recent work as "human"?

One clue perhaps lies in the throwaway phrase "or some such pyramid" appended to "an Epic poem" with a capital "e." Byron's instinctive association of the epic with an ancient monument to an ancient belief system no longer relevant to the modern world reveals just exactly what he does not want his "Epic Satire" to be. The real key, however, to understanding Byron's commentary on his literary forebears is found in his repeated claims to authenticity rather than relevance. "There's only one slight difference between / Me and my epic brethren gone before . . . this story's actually true" (1.202.1-2,8), he assures the reader for the first of many times. Don Juan, although a generic bouillabaisse, expresses this commitment to the truth of human experience specifically in terms of two honorable and venerable literary traditions: the epic and the legend of Don Juan.

Edgar Allen Poe once facetiously defined the epic as "the art of being dull in verse." Although Byron probably would have agreed to place Southey's annual poetic efforts in that category, he praised the mock epics of Frere, Pope, Dryden, and Butler. Drawn, as always, by the less-reverential genre, Byron also strongly identified with the carnival spirit of the Italian medley poets such as Berni, Pulci, and Ariosto. In order to make an epic claim for his poem, though, Byron depended on the familiarity of his audience with the original classical epics by Homer and
Virgil. When told that a poem was "epic," any educated Western reader would look for high seriousness, grand scale, and an imposing hero. He would also expect the standard conventions: the invocation of the Muse, a non-chronological narrative, epic similes, and lengthy catalogues, speeches, and digressions.

Early in her study of Don Juan as commentary on the Homeric epic, Hermione de Almeida describes the epic in a more expansive way by summarizing the thought of several twentieth-century scholars. Avoiding a rigid academic checklist, she defines the epic as a formal composition which has drawn into itself the poetry of past ages through many levels (mythical, legendary, historical) of cultural experience. It boasts among its characteristics lucidity of language, little subordination of thought, swiftly balanced movement, the music of the hexameter verse, a constant heroic world, and characters who function in epic purity. (39)

This view of epic as a tradition based on "propagated family resemblances," (Wilkie 14) rather than defined rules, reflects the nature of a genre which has flourished by invigorating literary discourse for a very long time. Indeed, the epic's double role of pattern and provocation may be one of the very few qualities shared by those milestone texts over whose classification scholars argue. Brian Wilkie finds the Romantic epic characterized by "epic paradox": each epic, to some extent, rejects its own heritage and this "partial repudiation of earlier epic tradition is itself traditional" (97).
Thus, the epic genre, with its characteristic traits and tradition of creative departure from them, was a natural choice for a work intended to satirize both the socio-political and literary transgressions of the post-Waterloo generation. Rocked by the Industrial and French Revolutions, Byron's world is widely acknowledged to be one of those transitional periods in which the epic thrives. With military involvement abroad, the British faced repression at home which sometimes bordered on political paranoia, as Shelley, Leigh Hunt, and even Byron himself discovered. Most European empires crumbled, but so also did the old order of Enlightenment thought based on faith in Reason and the perfectibility of man and society. Just as poets as widely various as Virgil and Ovid in the first century and Dryden and Pope in the eighteenth reshaped the epic as they knew it, Byron also chooses a genre so familiar that deviations from the expected pattern stand out like a Regency dandy in an Athenian fishmarket.

The narrator's clearest statement of epic intent comes over a thousand lines into Don Juan, after numerous allusions to the genre throughout the account of Juan's affair with Julia. "My poem's epic," he announces,

and is meant to be
Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
New characters; the episodes are three:
A panorama view of hell's in training,
After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
So that my name of Epic's no misnomer. 

(1.200)
The details Byron proposed here will be changed by the time the poem breaks off in the seventeenth canto, but the elements themselves are all present in more or less recognizable form. Present, it's true, but playfully altered.

Byron replaces the epic verities with elements which only superficially resemble their predecessors in form and function. Rather than operating to assure the continuation of the matrix of values of which they are a part, they act as a sort of auto-immune condition, weakening the system with mockery and belittling laughter. Only after the epic finally collapses can its irrelevancies be abandoned and replaced by a higher (or more realistic) code.

So, although Byron operates within the epic tradition, his carnivalesque flouting of the conventions reveals his basically anti-epic and anti-heroic stance. Nowhere is this clearer than in the narrator's relationship with his muse. "Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story," begins the Odyssey. Milton likewise petitions the Holy Spirit: "What in me is dark / Illumin" (PL 1.22-3). But Byron's mythical source of supernatural inspiration is summoned by a brisk "Hail, Muse! et cetera" when the narrator needs help with the story line (3.1.1). Instead of inspiring him though, his Muse seems to accompany the narrator the way Tinkerbell darts around Peter Pan. A "capricious elf" (4.74.6), she seeks (13.38.6), naps (5.159.8), smiles (11.63.6), and is wild (10.51.6) and mild (11.38.2) by turns. "The Muse will take a little touch at
warfare" (6.120.8), the reader learns, as though the horrific blood-letting he will soon view is merely included to fulfill the epic requirement for a battle scene. One has the impression that during the worst of the slaughter our Muse is off somewhere doing her nails.

Most significantly, Byron admits in the Dedication that his "pedestrian" Muse cannot approach the sublimity of the others' "winged steed" (8.1,2). Instead of soaring majestically like Pegasus, his "butterfly" muse can only "[flit] . . . without aim" (13.89.5,6). "March! March . . . . !" he commands. "If you cannot fly, yet flutter" (15.27.1-2). But though she will never attain the esteemed position of a serious muse, this playful spirit will, the narrator hopes, navigate a way for him to a new beginning in an undiscovered world. "We surely shall find something worth research," he reassures the reader, even if his machinery is not as exalted as that of the Greeks. After all,

Columbus found a new world in a cutter,  
Or brigantine, or pink, of no great tonnage,  
While yet America was in her non-age.  
(15.27.6-8)

Inspired by this muse of the commonplace, the narrator unerringly employs other devices as well, such as the epic simile, to undercut the high, dignified tone of the original. Homeric similes develop ornate comparisons between people or natural objects usually involved in dramatic situations. For instance, as Odysseus feasts at the Phaeacian court, he hears a song celebrating the Trojan
war. Overcome with grief and homesickness, he begins to weep unseen. In an achingly beautiful passage, Homer compares the hero's pain to that of a warrior's widow:

At sight of the man panting and dying there, she slips down to enfold him, crying out; then feels the spears, prodding her back and shoulders, and goes bound into slavery and grief.

( *Odyssey* 8.565-8)

Don Juan's narrator also reaches for the right image to capture a character's struggle with powerful emotions barely hidden, and, in Lady Adeline's case, barely recognized. Performing the social role dictated by a marriage of politeness, Adeline Amundeville presents a placid facade which some interpret as indifference. "Not at all," asserts the sophisticated narrator, who, in his attempt to portray the veiled heart of the lady, gives the reader an unobstructed glimpse of the poet at work. In his chatty, familiar way, the poet examines, rejects, and replaces a clichéd simile worn thin with overuse just as he intends to revitalize the entire clichéd epic formula, piece by piece:

But Adeline was not indifferent: for (Now for a common place!) beneath the snow, As a Volcano holds the lava more Within--et cetera. Shall I go on?--No! I hate to hunt down a tired metaphor: So let the often used volcano go. Poor thing! How frequently, by me and others, It hath been stirred up till its smoke quite smothers.

I'll have another figure in a trice:-- What say you to a bottle of champagne?

(13.36.;37.1-2)
There may be humor in Homer, but there is nothing like this.

In keeping with Don Juan's metapoetic, comic mode, Byron continues to mock the majesty of the epic simile, using many of these figures of speech like a squeeze of lemon to cut the cloying sweetness of a romanticized scene such as that in the harem. Lit by the same flickering lamps of many an Oriental romance, the slumbering harem girls remind the narrator of "flowers . . . in some exotic garden" (6.65.2-3). One is particularly exquisite: "marble, statue-like and still" (6.68.1). But no, this comparison does not do her justice, and the narrator now empties upon the page what must be a bucketful of similes, each more superficial than the last. "My similes are gathered in a heap," he playfully declares. "So pick and chuse" (6.68.6-7). The startled reader, still recovering from this latest unexpected rhetorical intrusion into a serious narrative, is learning to remain alert. In this poem, even the figures of speech become literal.

Byron plays, as well, with other traditional conventions. The narrator brutally truncates such epic standbys as the catalogues of men and ships, and the eloquent speeches of the military leaders. After dawdling affectionately over the grounds, the house, and the portrait gallery at Norman Abbey, for example, the narrator compliments the reader on his patience. Verbosity is an occupational hazard for poets, he explains, pausing to remind the reader of Homer and his lengthy "Catalogue of
Ships. But *Don Juan* is no *Iliad*. "[A] mere modern must be moderate," he continues. "I spare you then the furniture and plate" (13.74.7-8). Likewise, although the words of Agamemnon, Anchises, and even Satan are there for all to read in the traditional epics, the Russian generals' "long debate" at the Seige of Ismail is cut short because modern readers simply don't have the patience for such outdated rhetoric: "For if I wrote down every warrior's speech / I doubt few readers e'er would mount the breach" (7.35.7-8).

These modern readers are unlikely to tolerate the eloquent mix of passion and sophistry found in the orations of the great heroes primarily because it seems so out of place in the mouths of contemporary leaders. The transformation of serious epic conventions in *Don Juan* through burlesque, parody, satire, and mock epic always results in a blander, or more corrupt, or, in some cases, ridiculous substitute. Lord Henry, for instance, is handsome, honorable, aristocratic--"the very model of a Chamberlain" (14.70.7). But there is "something wanting" in his character: "That indefinable Je ne sais quoi."

The narrator shrugs:

Which, for what I know, may of yore have led To Homer's Iliad, since it drew to Troy The Greek Eve, Helen, from the Spartan's bed. (14.72.1-5)

Something wanting. Though sexual inadequacy is implied in the reference to Menelaus, Byron's playful defamiliarization of the names of champions and aristocrats

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indicates a far more pervasive social deterioration. Heroes have names like Roguenoff and Chokenoff (7.15.4), and the nobility have names like Sir John Pottledeep (13.84.8), General Fireface (13.88.2), and Miss Bombazeen (13.79.5). Instead of on the battlefield, in a verbal echo of Pope's "Rape of the Lock,"

> [g]reat things were now to be achieved at table,  
> With massy plate for armor, knives and forks  
> For weapons . . . (15.62.1-3.)

The heroic world is gone forever--for better and worse--and the narrator's world is now a tawdry but lively shadow of that glory.

The glory so diligently sought by the ancient Greeks was based on the heroic ideal--the pursuit of honor through military action. But was that glory worth the sacrifices made by the heroes and others on their behalf? Furthermore, did a world ever truly exist in which there was the order and simplicity of belief essential to support such an ethic? Richard Lanham claims that, as early as the first century, the player-poet Ovid, a favorite of Byron's, objected to the very possibility of epic: "He thought the epic genre a fraud, an obvious pretense that the world makes more sense than it does" (Motives 60). Don Juan's narrator would seem to agree. While the armies prepare for the battle at Ismail, he questions the very existence of the fame they seek. "Glory's Glory," he states, "[A]nd if you would find / What that is--ask the pig who sees the wind!" (7.84.7-8). Later, as Juan soberly studies the tombs in Canterbury Cathedral, the narrator whispers,
"There's Glory for you, gentle reader! All / Ends in a rusty casque, and dubious bone" (10.73.5-6). Thus, although "eternal Homer" (7.79.1) looms in the background of Don Juan's "love, tempest, travel, war" (8.138.3), the narrator repeatedly characterizes *this* epic as different in quality, not merely subject; as modern; and above all, as true to life.

So, as de Almeida explains,

if Homer is touchstone he is also punching-bag,  
if he is point of direction he is also point of divergence, if he is authority he is also reason for rebellion . . . . (20)

In the same way that scholars perceive a shift from the largely martial values of the *Iliad* to the more domestic, agrarian virtues of the *Odyssey*, *Don Juan* also reacts, in de Almeida's sense, against remaining within an unexamined or unchanging tradition. Referring to the Florentine author of chivalric romance, the narrator traces more recent chapters in his literary heritage and explains his departure from them:

Pulci was sire of the half-serious rhyme,  
Who sang when chivalry was more Quixotic,  
And revell'd in the fancies of the time,  
True knights, chaste dames, huge giants, kings despotic;  
But all these, save the last, being obsolete,  
I chose a modern subject as more meet.  

(4.6.3-8)

*Don Juan* first revokes, then dismantles the heroic universe. Soldiers aren't motivated by patriotism, it demonstrates, but by the opportunity for plunder (8.103.6). The soldier who receives a medal for hacking his way through the defenders of a city to extend his sovereign's
empire has really received an obsolete honor because, in truth, "[t]he drying up a single tear has more / Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore" (8.3.7-8). An honest epic will always tell the truth about the place of man in his world. Alter as one will the linguistic continuum of style, trope, and convention which distinguishes the epic tradition, the key site where literary change begins will always be the single heroic individual, the epic hero.

"I want a hero," the narrator begins in Canto One, Stanza One, where he announces his choice of the Spanish don, and devotes the next stanzas to an inventory of famous European statesmen and generals who, though brave, were too much like Agamemnon to fit this modern epic. The narrator immediately turns on its head his defiant selection of the libertine Don Juan by (re)naming him "Joo-un" to rhyme with "new one" and "true one." This creative act forever sets him apart from his namesake, actually transforming him into a new and true hero, markedly different from his predecessors. Indeed, even today, the Anglicized pronunciation jars upon the ear and requires explanation, accentuating Juan's (and Byron's) unique position in epic lore.

That highly equivocal position, alternating between tradition and burlesque, may have been what prompted John Cam Hobhouse, Byron's close friend, to refer to Juan as a "half-real hero." Admired by Lord Henry for his "proud humility" (13.22.4), Juan combines nobility and courage with foolhardiness and a sometimes too-obliging nature.

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His oxymoronic character retains both the finest heroic qualities of the past and the unconventional traits of the modern hero.

For instance, Juan shows real courage when faced with physical danger. He defends himself gamely against Alfonso in Julia's bedroom, and later, much less successfully, against the flinty Lambro. "With sense beyond his years" (2.35.2), he maintains the sobriety of the crew during the storm at sea by guarding the liquor supply with a brace of pistols. Later, Gulbayez's brazen proposition rouses Juan to a proud refusal: "Love is for the free!" (5.127.4). Finally, and perhaps most suitable for a traditional hero, Juan distinguishes himself on the battlefield at Ismail when he rallies his retreating company by rushing to the thickest of the fighting. "The thirst of Glory . . . pervaded him" (8.52.5-7), the narrator explains.

Interestingly, although "Glory" receives gibes throughout this section, the typically heroic "determined scorn of life" (8.119.8) shown by the Tartar Khan and his sons in that battle draws the admiration of both the Russian soldiers and the narrator. There is room in the world of Don Juan for more than one (or even two or three) perspectives on such a traditional theme.

An epic hero recognized more often for his non-military characteristics, Odysseus stands as a further obvious heroic pattern for Juan. Like Odysseus, Juan wanders on the outskirts of various societies, adapting to each new circumstance, but never making permanent connections. He
too is a "man of many turns" (Odyssey 1.1) who experiences much, but, unconnected as he is, remains free to make his own observations and draw his own conclusions. Although not as articulate as the cunning-tongued Odysseus, Juan lives by his wits and his instinctively surefooted maneuvers in tough situations. An ambiguous hero, Odysseus is both noble and comic, and de Almeida suggests that instead of a reaction against the traditional concept of the hero, Byron may, in fact, be returning to the spirit of the original when he endows Juan with such complementary, contradictory qualities.

Whatever the relationship between Juan and certain of his heroic forebears may be, though, the "gentle Spaniard" (13.22.1) stands out as a carnivalesque reversal of the active, aggressive protagonist of the traditional epic. Unconventionally, Juan has no destination at the end of his trials and travels. He is not driven by a vision or a quest or even raw curiosity. In fact, he is not driven by anything but circumstance. A Rousseauistic naïf, when he acts—or more often (re)acts—his action is based on passion and impulse. Such Romantic traits cause him to resemble more closely the receptive protagonists of Austen and Scott (Ruddick 128), than Homer's enterprising Odysseus or Ariosto's energetic Orlando.

In his study Fighting for Life, Walter J. Ong notes that the concept of agon is central to classical Greek culture and thought (21). This thematic focus on difficult, personal struggle continues in many forms.
throughout the long history of the epic genre. Determined
to create a new hero for his own age, why did Byron settle
on this critical aspect of the traditional hero as the most
fertile ground for parody? Is Juan a passive figure
because the society of his day does not deserve the great
sacrifice of a Hector? Or is any heroic life or death
merely a waste, a meaningless gesture in a chaotic
universe?

III

This constantly shifting poem will only disappoint any
reader looking for objective answers to these or any other
questions. Although a study of his character may not
provide cosmic answers, Don Juan Tenorio, as he was known
in the original Spanish texts, stands uniquely qualified in
legend and in literature to function in a poem whose stated
purpose is to satirize almost all aspects of life in
Byron's world. Early nineteenth-century Europe was rotting
with hypocrisy, and the manipulative Don Juan mirrored the
general corruption. He was exactly what they deserved. He
was also exactly what they expected from Lord Byron, who
had a reputation as a bit of a rake himself. What they got
was something else entirely.

The Don Juan legend was first given literary form by
Tirso de Molina, a Spanish monk writing in the early
1600's. Working with folk tales of foolhardy young men and
heartless seducers, he created a fable of punishment called
El Burlador de Seville (The Trickster of Seville) designed
to frighten the dissolute young caballeros of the upper
classes into better behavior. The play opens with the
seduction of Isabela by Don Juan Tenorio, who is disguised
as her betrothed. Don Juan flees certain retribution and
is shipwrecked in a remote area where he is rescued by
Tisbea, a fisher-girl whom he also subsequently seduces.
From there he travels to Seville, where, once again in
disguise, he attempts to seduce Dona Ana. She, however,
repulses him and calls her father, Don Gonzalo, to her aid.
Gonzalo is killed in the ensuing fight. Don Juan then
hurries away to the country, where he seduces a peasant
girl, Aminta. When he returns to Seville, he and his
servant pass by the newly-erected statue to the memory of
Don Gonzalo and the young nobleman rashly invites it to
dinner. To his dismay, the statue accepts, appears at the
meal, and issues an invitation of his own to a "banquet of
death" in the chapel. Don Juan, too proud to refuse and
too rebellious to repent, attends the occasion and is
carried away to Hell in a horrifying, Faustian scene
replete with flames and demons.

From Spain, the tale traveled to Italy where it became
stock material in the commedia dell'arte. Here the story
was reduced to its most basic plot, serving as a source for
the improvisation of comic dialogue, puns and double
entendre, and physical humor such as miming, jokes, and
horseplay. This superficial treatment of the legend itself
showed no concern for motivation or complexity of
character. Don Juan was unremittingly evil: a rapist,
atheist, murderer of his own father. Mentioned in the
first stanza of *Don Juan*, the pantomime in the English spectacular theatre grew out of this improvisational tradition. Like its Italian ancestor, the London pantomime also included a mute protagonist on his way to hell, gender reversals, and broad comedy. It was the most familiar form of the legend to the British public during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Graham 25, Smeed 34).

So, when the narrator-poet declares that no conventional hero will suffice for this epic poem and affectionately introduces his "friend" Don Juan, he, in effect, immediately creates an "inside out" carnival world in which the local cut-purse is crowned king. He elevates this thoroughly disreputable character, Don Juan, to the pre-eminent role in his new epic. An even more surprising reversal of expectation occurs, however, when Don Juan, the heartless seducer, turns out to be Don Joo-un, the tender-hearted seduced. It is as though the cut-purse were discovered to be an altar boy.

For though Juan was decidedly not, the narrator assures his readers, "an ancient debauchee, . . . [h]is youth was not [exactly] the chastest that might be" either (10.54.2,6). His moral lapses, if they can be considered such, always occurred as a result of feminine attentions or pursuit. He seems to acquire women without even trying. Even truer, they seem to acquire him.

This ironic reversal of the Tenorio legend informs the gender studies by Susan Wolfson, who notes that Don Juan is
possessed by the women who become his lovers (146).

Gulbayez actually purchases the handsome captive in a slave market. A more subtle form of protection and influence manifests itself in the maternal flavor of the relationships with such older women as Julia, Catherine, Adeline, and even the lovely Haidée as she tenderly cares for Juan in the cave. Juan, unlike his predatory namesake, is one “who upon Woman's breast / Even from a child, felt like a child” (8.53.1-2). In his transformation of the Don Juan figure, Byron has shifted the entire perspective of the legend from what Oscar Mandel calls the male view of conqueror and deceiver (29) to the female view of Don Juan as the irresistible, possessible lover. This will become the prevailing approach in much Don Juan literature to follow.

In order to enhance his irresistibility, Don Juan Tenorio depends on disguise and deception. Don Juan subverts these methods by recontextualizing them. The only willing disguise in Don Juan is that of the Black Friar, who, in yet another gender reversal, turns out to be “her graceless Grace,” the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke. Juan is disguised, it's true, but quite unwillingly, and at the behest of the powerful Sultana. Dressed in chemise and petticoat, Juan grumbles,

I yield thus far; but soon will break the charm
If any take me for that which I seem:
So that I trust for everybody's sake,
That this disguise may lead to no mistake.

(5.82.5-8)
He seems, in fact, to slip from one woman-imposed costume to another: Julia wraps him in her sheets from which he flees naked; Haidée dresses him as a Turk in Lambro’s ill-fitting clothes; finally, befitting Catherine’s court, he is transformed by "Youth, Fame, and an Army tailor" (9.44.2) from himself to Cupid to a Lieutenant of Artillery!

Traditionally, Don Juan Tenorio seduces his victims not only by using physical disguise, but also by his verbal powers of persuasion. The peasant girls, Tisbea and Aminta, are won over by his clever appeal to their sympathies and his even cleverer manipulation of language. In Moliere’s version of the story, Dom Juan, Don Juan outargues his servant as well who speaks for common sense and conventional moral standards. Don Juan’s protagonist, however, is characteristically non-verbal. On the rare occasions when he speaks, he does so without self-consciousness or guile, but rather in ways that either underscore his heroic qualities or completely deflate them. For instance, Juan delivers his first verbal utterance on the deck of the Trinidada as she departs from Seville and his first love. In a delightfully parodic example of the carnival grotesque, his heart-sickness swiftly becomes sea-sickness, and he is unable to continue reading Julia’s letter. Needless to say, a vomiting hero is about as far from the sophisticated, seductive Spanish nobleman as it is possible to get.
The contrast continues, especially in the early cantos. Juan's proud intention to "die like men, not sink below / Like brutes" (2.36.4-5) rings bravely through the panic of the shipwreck, and his suggestion to Johnson that the captives effect their escape by "knock[ing] that old black fellow on the head" (5.43.7) reveals the first glimmerings of a heroic wiliness that suits anyone from Odysseus to the cunning Don Juan Tenorio himself. Amazingly, though, within a few stanzas, the high-spirited Juan wordlessly responds with tears to Gulbayez's "Christian, canst thou love?" (5.116.7). Even she is taken aback. Epic heroes occasionally weep, and Don Juan Tenorio might feign melancholia, but never in response to a frank proposition by a sexually alluring woman.

Except for this episode in the harem and one other minor incident--the pairing of Juan with the beautiful singer aboard Lambro's slaver--Juan responds favorably, if not always enthusiastically, to each romantic situation. True to his namesake, "woman's face was never form'd in vain / For Juan." "Even when he pray'd," the narrator explains, "[He] turn'd from grisly saints, and martyrs hairy / To the sweet portraits of the Virgin Mary" (2.149.5-8). Unlike the legendary seducer, however, Juan never abandons his amours out of heartless indifference or even self-preservation. Far from accumulating a black book full of names, Juan never left them, while they had charms,
Unless compelled by fate, or wave, or wind,
    Or near relations, who are much the same.
(8.53.8; 54.1-2)

Juan's very nature, his strong attraction to the opposite sex, becomes the aspect of his literary persona which both identifies him with Don Juan Tenorio and separates him from the charming libertine.

In his examination of the Don Juan legend's persistence in the theatre for over three and a half centuries, Oscar Mandel credits much of its power to the mythic stature of the leading man. Don Juan's story is a myth, Mandel further explains, but he himself is a symbol of "uncontaminated sensuality, . . . the incarnation of a fundamental human drive" (10,13). The single focus of Don Juan Tenorio's being, his indispensable characteristic in the literature before Byron's *Don Juan*, remains his aggressive search for women to seduce. It is simply his nature, he shrugs, as he justifies his life in play after play across the Continent and into England. He naturally pursues, achieves, and then discards; he can hardly help himself.

There were those, however, who were offended, morally and critically, by this sort of appeal to an irresistible urge. In his *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge notes that while the Spanish version of the Don Juan tale depicts depravity only in order to disgust and warn, some modern French drama actually made vice seem non-threatening and even attractive. Although Byron never said as much, Jerome McGann and others suggest that Coleridge's moral
outrage probably threw the character of Don Juan right in Byron's way, provoking the poet to choose this man of mythic energy and appetite as a model for his own tale of love and death.

It was a fortunate choice. Kirkegaard describes a perfect work of art as one that results when the right artist discovers the subject perfectly right for him (qtd in Weinstein 53). Byron would have been all wrong had he chosen to produce a "great work," a serious satire of European culture. Instead, he makes a game of it by taking a notoriously dishonorable hero and "for the first time... removing from [him] any stigma of wickedness," according to J. W. Smeed in a recent survey of the Don Juan tradition. "Byron's hero," he continues, "is ... more admirable than society at large, which is shown as going against nature and as thoroughly hypocritical, both in sexual matters and in its general moral conduct" (43, my emphasis). In this Bakhtinian world, Juan's ideal love relationship with Haidée, for example, is consistently presented as natural and wholesome in stark contrast to society's norm, a loveless marriage unfulfilling to men and demeaning to women. It is in the discursive space opened between Don Juan Tenorio, swaggering his way through European culture, and the "gentle Juan" of this text that the reader participates in the complex ludic relationship between the traditional and the unexpected.
"Forgive me, Homer's universal shade!" Byron cried in "The Island," written the year before his death. As in Don Juan, he had once again been guilty of commingling time-honored literary traditions—this time classical Greek and Celtic—and resituating them in yet another historical frame. He was not alone in this practice. In his investigation of the role of history and myth in English Romantic literature, Stephen Behrendt discusses the ways in which all the Romantics used myth to comment on the unsettled political and social community in which they lived. They knew, he argues, that "outfitting modern phenomena—whether strictly contemporaneous or not—with the trappings of myth updates that mythological context, lending it increased and particular modern relevance" (20). At the same time that the myth is updated, the contemporary people and events also gain increased significance as they take their place at the end of a trans-historical continuum of ideas. In Don Juan, the classical heroic tradition and the more recent Don Juan legend operate synergistically to create a rich literary dialogue as they enter nineteenth-century England together.

In an extended digression near the end of Don Juan, Byron as narrator reflects on his poetic choices and the events which, in conjunction with his own temperament, prepared him to write this poem. He ponders his past, then turns to the matter at hand:

But 'laissez aller'—knights and dames I sing,
Such as the times may furnish. 'Tis a flight
Which seems at first to need no lofty wing,
   Plumed by Longinus or the Stagyrite:
The difficulty lies in colouring  
(Keeping the due proportions still in sight)
With Nature manners which are artificial,
   And rend'ring general that which is especial.

The difference is, that in the days of old
   Men made the manners; manners now make
   men-- . . .
Now this at all events must render cold
   Your writers, who must either draw again
   Days better drawn before, or else assume
   The present, with their common-place costume. (15.25;26.1-2,5-8)

In a few simple lines, the narrator suggests the history of a genre and the renaming of a cultural artifact. He captures the spirit of chivalric romance in a proud, Virgilian cadence and then proceeds to transpose his hero into a present-day "common-place costume." Just as that earlier rhetorical poet, Rabelais, makes style his subject by battling against genre and the cultural authority it stands for (Lanham, Motives 165), so Byron as narrator also reverses the operation of the heroic impulse in serious literature.

The serious poets from "days of old" shaped a highly structured, artificial discourse, a reflection of the lofty ideals of the culture, not the reality of life for most in that society. Then, "[m]en made the manners," the narrator puts it, but "manners now make men." He laments that in the modern world, men's status is determined by the superficial values of the upper class; they are the weak and sickly descendants of the great heroes of the past. He intends, in contrast to his literary forebears, to "[colour] / With Nature manners which are artificial" (my
emphasis), and, as he repeatedly insists, simply to tell the truth about the real world. By the time Don Juan Tenorio, the man of legendary power and wickedness, is brought one hundred and fifty years into the present and dressed in his "common-place costume," he is a handsome and likable innocent, caught and released by the gravitational pull of one woman after another. "The chivalry of this bright age" (13.44.6) becomes an object of mockery which must be revealed for what it is and destroyed before a truly valuable moral code or literary standard can replace it.

But the question continues to nag at the reader: Why play with tradition? Why not use earnest, reasoned argument to destroy the old ways and the new counterfeits and offer something better in their place? Why "giggle and make giggle"?

The playful undependability of stance so characteristic of Don Juan grows out of a philosophy that challenges the self-sufficiency of monologic discourse. Richard Lanham terms it "rhetorical"; Mikhail Bakhtin speaks of "heteroglossia." Classical scholar W. R. Johnson defends the need for the "oxymoronic art" of what he calls "counter-classical poetry." He asserts that while espousing "[n]either order complete nor complete chaos,"

[counter-classical poetry suggests that we mistrust (as perhaps too easy, too uncritical) the world of affirmation and celebration that classical poetry offers us, and it accomplishes this artistically by altering the traditional forms and themes of classical poetry, whether slightly or radically, whether gently or sardonically. (127)
The playful attitude taken by the narrator toward his story frees him to hold two ideas in the mind at once—maybe three or four—adopting and rejecting each in its turn. Bakhtin described this activity in terms of the jolly relativity of the carnivalesque—not replacing monologic discourse, but examining it, expanding it, finally completing it by supplying alternative voices within the text. Lanham, too, writes of the inadequacy of either serious or rhetorical discourse without the stimulating, whole-making presence of the other.

In a text shot through with antipodal voices and multiple styles, the ever-shifting narrator spends a great deal of his time poised on the cusps of the "melancholy merriment" of our "checquered . . . human lot" (8.89.5,3). Why would he rather play with tradition than simply accommodate himself to it? First of all, for the pure pleasure of being a gadfly. But equally important, because that's just the way life is, a seemingly endless series of "scorching[s] and drenching[s]." "I sketch your world exactly as it goes" (8.89.8), the narrator declares, almost daring the reader to disagree.
A gray wall, a green ruin, rusty pike,
Make my soul pass the equinoctial line
Between the present and past worlds, and
hover
Upon their airy confine, half-seas-over.
(10.61.5-8)

True to his namesake, Juan participates in the games of marriage and adultery with one woman after another as though he were changing partners in a dance. He is caught, held briefly, and then released by beautiful commoners, noblewomen, and queens alike. While Don Juan Tenorio is heartlessly seductive, however, Juan generally responds passively to the lead of his female partner as they perform a set of steps within the larger pattern of the dance--a parabolic dance which, although repetitive, will never actually bring Juan full circle.

The love relationship between Juan and Haidée, however, is the still center in an otherwise constantly mobile poem. All of Juan's other amorous encounters are measured against it--a fact demonstrated by the memory of "Nature's bride" which recurs whenever he becomes involved with another woman. Julia, Gulbeyaz, and Catherine slip quietly from both Juan's mind and the reader's attention when circumstances separate them from their young lover, and the once irresistible women do not return. Haidée, however, a lovely will-o-the-wisp, flits through the poem like the
ghost of the Black Friar haunts the gallery of Norman Abbey.

From her, Juan learns about the nature of ideal love—a defining step which sets him apart from the quintessential libertine of European tradition. From that time on, he carries within himself the memory of Haidée's simple, ingenuous love; it gives substance to the ideal for which, some psychoanalytical critics suggest, Don Juan Tenorio fruitlessly searches. It also prepares Juan for his future in another way: by serving as his teacher and inspiration, Haidée as Muse awakens in Juan the artist's latent potential as an active, creative participant in life. Although he will once again be overwhelmed by forces beyond his control when Lambro returns, Juan gains through Haidée a good sense of his own identity and the confidence to exploit skillfully his innate adaptability wherever he goes.

Juan and Haidée's love is at the center of Juan's story; the transformative, creative energy which it portrays is at the center of Byron's understanding of the poetic process. After reducing Juan to liminal status in the first half of Canto Two by manipulating the elements of the "real" world, Byron constructs, in a very Coleridgean, classically Romantic manner, a parallel playworld out of these same elements, demonstrating a creative faculty similar to that described by the poets of Lyrical Ballads. This dimension, which Huizinga called the "play-circle," emerges from the narrative with a dreamlike, other-worldly
quality and constitutes a typically ludic level of reality, at once both independent of and closely related to the everyday world.

The ephemeral love-world, "in which the mind delights / To lose itself, when the old world grows dull," (4.17.2-3), glistens for a moment and then is extinguished by Lambro's return. But even as their last day together slips away, Juan and Haidée's love continues to "[charm]" the real world objects which make up their play world. The light of the setting sun washes over them, interacts with their memory of the sunset skies of their first evening together, and recreates "[t]he past still welcome as the present thought" (4.20.8). An imaginative reprise of that first encounter, this moment exemplifies Wordsworth's "emotion recollected in tranquility" (460) from the preface to Lyrical Ballads, and the "sudden charm" which Coleridge attributes to "the modifying colors of imagination . . . which moon-light or sun-set [diffuse] over a . . . familiar landscape" (517) from Biographia Literaria--both texts with which Byron was familiar. It is a scene cunningly spun out of remembered and assembled bits of the everyday world by a creative faculty, a Byronic Fancy, which embraces and expands the activity of the Coleridgean Fancy.

Byron's unexpected inclusion of this season of love and artistic creativity in his retelling of the Don Juan story firmly foregrounds the idyll among the other romantic episodes in the poem. Such idealism had no place at all in the tradition of the cruel debauchee so familiar to
Europeans of the day. To heighten its distinctive simplicity and naturalness, Byron brackets it with sexual imbroglios in Spain and Turkey and follows those with compromising relationships in Russia and England—all of which offer a striking contrast to the selfless devotion and unhindered creativity Juan experiences on Haidée's island. This episode is further enriched as it is viewed in the context of the transhistorical archetypes of passage and initiation which resonate with the same transformative energy present in the poetic act. Once again, though, Byron turns on its head the reader's expectation. Rather than conflate Juan's primary rite of passage with his initial sexual experience, Byron playfully delays, placing that contact with the ideal in an unexpected, but more influential position—after he loses his innocence. Seville, the home of superficiality in both sex and poetry, gives way to an ocean and a beach where the profound realities of life can be explored, but only through imaginative play.

I

Although at the age of sixteen Juan undergoes his personal version of the Fall in the Garden, he retains a curious air of naïveté, "puzz[ing]" (2.2.8) in one at the center of a scandalous divorce. In fact, the somewhat premature initiation into adulthood works well as a first chapter in this version of the traditional story for several reasons. First, in a work characterized by surprising reversals of reader expectations, this sort of
precocious sexual encounter is exactly what any reader would expect in the account of the life of the archetypal lover authored by another legendary lover. It both fulfills the initial expectation of the reader for the narrative, and, at the same time, sets the reader up to be surprised when the passive hero, Juan, remains essentially the seduced rather than the seducer for the rest of the poem. Second, the comedic potential in the older woman/younger boy scenario is irresistible to a master at handling outrageous situations with a deft touch, and Byron milks it for all it is worth.

Finally, the abrupt conclusion to Juan's affair with Julia provides the impetus to begin the picaresque wanderings which structure the poem. Specifically, it propels him into the arms of Haidée, where he experiences love, the ostensible subject of the poem, as Byron imagined it should be. This journey of growing up echoes with the peregrinations of the heroes in all the great myths as they set out on quests for knowledge or virtue. The specific parallels to Juan's literary forebears--Odysseus (Nausicaa) and Don Juan Tenorio (Tisbea, the fisher girl)--are obvious but serve primarily as points of departure rather than sources of illumination. While the heroes of classical fables of journey are on a mission, their modern counterparts are more likely just traveling (Slochower 24). Their pilgrimage no longer leads to a particular destination, and whatever wisdom they gain is not so much sought as it is serendipitously discovered.
Cultural theorist Joseph Campbell summarizes the trans-cultural hero's journey as the laying aside of one situation in order to move toward "the source of life" and, consequently, deeper understanding and satisfaction with the journey (124). These archetypal passages through life have traditionally fallen into one of two categories: either "circular," concerned with regeneration and renewal, or "linear," described as "an impulse after knowledge . . . the product of man's desire to make sense out of his world" (Roppen and Sommer 18). Carried along by the unpredictable, linear current of circumstance, Juan finds himself briefly captured in Canto Two by the whirling eddy of cyclical myth. As he links such recurring transhistorical patterns to a "game-play paradigm," Sura Rath observes the ludic transformation of many narratives' protagonists (138-141). Juan's character is similarly, if only temporarily, enlarged in a process which lays the foundation for what will occur in the remainder of the poem. As well as placing the maturing Juan in situations which Byron wishes to analyze and use for his own satiric purposes, Juan's personal circular journey of cleansing and renewal serves to further the progress of the larger, linear journey of Don Juan, its author, and its readers.

No longer the boy who attracted Julia's eye, Juan, though he has lost his virginity, has nevertheless preserved his native sincerity. True to his nature, he follows his instincts rather than conform to artificial standards of conduct. Unfortunately, though, however
"natural" (2.3.5) the emotion and however spontaneous the
affair, the scandal has irrecoverably compromised his
innocence.

If he is ever to re-occupy Paradise, he will

have to endure great suffering first.

Juan's sojourn in

that c o m e r of the fallen world known as Seville has left
him dirtied by his association with and concessions to the
people and codes in i t .

As a natural man who lives in the

world with its conventions and institutions but who is not
of that world, Juan needs desperately to be purified and
endowed with a mature vision.

His first understanding of

love was no more than a confused imitation of conventional
poetic discourse; he has yet to earn or participate
knowledgeably in the Edenic dream of ideal love.
As well as a loss of innocence, critics speak of Juan's
adolescent first love in terms of an awakening to
self-awareness, a separating of the self from the mother,
or a crossing of the border between childhood and manhood.
Jerome McGann, for instance, terms the Julia-experience of
puberty in Don Juan as a "rite of passage"

(Context 144).

While it is true that in Canto One Juan participates for
the first time in what will become the defining activity of
his adult life, I would submit that it is in the second
canto that he actually undergoes an archetypal passage
through adolescence which prepares him for life in the
adult world.
Anthropologist Victor Turner, in The Ritual Process,
maintains that the rituals associated with a change in
status for the individual consistently follow a pattern of
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withdrawal from everyday activity, an acceptance of new
knowledge and responsibility, and a return to the real
world (102). The individual's condition during the primary
and secondary phases, which Turner calls "liminality,"
particularly interests play theorists because of its
similarity to the position of the typical game player with
respect to the non-ludic world. The contestants, for
instance, bring only their skills and their aspirations to
the competition; their standing in the everyday world, like
that of the initiates, is irrelevant to the outcome of the
game. Furthermore, as they begin to play, they fall under
the spell of the game and become disconnected from the
realities and priorities of the serious world. This
participation frees them to see through the ordinariness of
the objects with which they play and grasp either these
objects' potential, or, in a truly Romantic sense, their
essence and the way it reflects the essence of the players
themselves. In his discussion of the European Romantic
movement and its ludic features, Huizinga identified this
characteristic marking off of a locus for thought as a
process distinctively playful in nature.

So integral is the achievement of this liminal state to
the ritual process that in order to reach it, much time is
spent removing all traces of the initiate's status in the
extra-liminal world (Turner 102). Such cleansing makes it
possible for the young person to receive formally the
imprint of his culture's values and traditions. This
transformation of the subject's identity from the

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individual to the generic is frequently accomplished by testing or refining experiences. As Turner explains,

The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges. (103)

Mythical and religious figures such as Odysseus, Aeneas, Jesus, and St. Paul have traditionally passed through a period of deprivation and testing in the underworld, the desert, or even the wilderness of their own souls. The world in which Juan most immediately undergoes his own trials is a realm of myth and paradox: the open sea. There he stays until the sun has scorched and the wind and water have scrubbed away every trace of his prior life just as with Coleridge's Ancient Mariner or Melville's Ishmael.

Oceans, seas, and lakes loom as a powerful presence in Byron's creative imagination. A strong swimmer from his youth, he relates to the sea not only as a watcher beside the sea or a sailor on the sea, but more intimately, as one who plays in the water, testing himself against its power with both casual familiarity and cautious respect. One of many salient references comes at the close of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, published the year before the appearance of Don Juan. There, Byron reveals his complex and constantly shifting stance toward the paradoxical, primeval symbol, Ocean. Though he concedes that it playfully tosses both ships and men to their graves, he nevertheless speaks of the sea with filial affection:
"from a boy / I wanton'd with thy breakers--they to me /
Were a delight." The same friendly waves, he admits,
sometimes became a "terror," but
\[
\text{\'twas a pleasing fear,}
\text{For I was as it were a child of thee,}
\text{And trusted to thy billows far and near,}
\text{And laid my hand upon thy mane.}
\]
(4.184.3-5, 6-9)

The pelagic world which Juan enters when he embarks on the
Trinidad contains no such "pleasing fear," however. It
is, instead, a circle of testing where he is reduced to the
ambiguous margins of personality and identity.

Although it is not, strictly speaking, a "playworld" as
I have used that term heretofore, the ocean functions as a
sort of ante-room to the ludic field of play, much as the
closet through which the children pass becomes the Narnian
forest in C. S. Lewis's children's novels or a locker room
serves as a transitional site for the football players
between the outside world and the stadium. The initiation
rites of other cultures also consistently call for a
separation of the subject from the rest of his community,
whether in separate dwellings or areas marked off by a
special fence or ceremonial markings. In many cultures,
this separation is portrayed as the swallowing or devouring
of the novices by a god-monster who later disgorges them.
After a ritually specified period of time during which the
sequestered initiate is purified and prepared, he is
invested with the wisdom of the tribe. Juan's isolation in
time and space is similarly complete. When his mother
embarks him on a journey "to wean him from the wickedness
of earth" (2.8.7), he finds himself restricted to the area of one small Spanish cargo ship crossing the Mediterranean to an Italian harbor. A gale hits the ship the first night out, almost immediately disabling her. From that point on, until the Trinidadita sinks and Juan's universe collapses even further, the normal dawns and dusks marking the passage of time are obscured by the black, windswept days and rain-soaked, increasingly hopeless nights. After Juan retreats to the tiny lifeboat, overcrowded with other survivors, the sea calms, and the lifeboat lies almost totally still in the water under a burning sun. Circumscribed by an empty horizon, the men sense time easing almost to a halt, its passage marked only by one death after another and the gradual removal of food and clothing until there are no remaining signs of individuality among those who endure, and "a mother had not known her son / Amidst the skeletons of that gaunt crew" (2.102.3-4).

As one might expect, the player who enters a transitional dimension existing in its own time and location must adjust to the very serious conditions there which define and control such a space. In the daily world of Spanish society, for instance, the comparative influence of chance and Juan's own actions on his life is uncertain, but in the parallel world of his "nautical existence" (2.12.8), the rules are, in Callois's words, "precise, arbitrary, and unexceptional" (7). Who can say what prompted Alfonso to pay a midnight visit to his wife's
bedside while Juan was in her bed? Who can say why he overlooked the tell-tale shoe during his initial search of the boudoir only to stumble over it when he returned to apologize? If the world Juan left is one of confusing and complex chains of cause and effect, then the liminal world of wind, water, and sun which he so precipitously enters clearly operates by the implacable physical laws of the material universe. Although the survival of certain of the crew and passengers may seem "providential," to use the narrator's word, it results, in fact, from ascertainable natural laws. For example,

1. Drunkenness and hysteria adversely affect one's judgment in a crisis.

2. A large lifeboat is less likely to sink than a small one in a rough sea.

3. Pets are edible.

4. Cannibalism can cause insanity. The ingestion of salt water and dead turtles causes illness, kidney failure, and death.

To be sure, in addition to predictable verities of life like these, luck also plays a role in Juan's life. What if he had taken another ship out of Cadiz a week later? What if he had chosen to escape in the other lifeboat? The indefinable, unpredictable relationship between agon and alea, between personal responsibility and surrender to forces beyond human control, haunts the poem. As his comrade John Johnson will comment in a later canto, it is useless for the grain to oppose the sickle—an aphorism, of
course, which must be taken in the amplifying context of Johnson's life, a nimble jockeying for opportunity and advantage. In his recent discussion of the rhetoric of play and game in American culture, Michael Oriard describes a similar philosophical position held at the beginning of the twentieth century in this country. The concept of chance as a determiner of human outcomes, he notes, evolved from its prior role in opposition to religion and self-determination to a more positive one: the source of personal freedom in a deterministic world (160). In this more modern view, the action of chance creates a sense of equality based on an opportunity for skilled performance rather than a provision of a level field for all players. 

Don Juan occupied this territory eighty years before Oriard's Americans.

Whatever the involvement of chance in Juan's adventures, he effectively increases the odds of his survival by punctuating his story at crucial moments with willful acts of bravery and intelligence. In spite of all his efforts, though, his ordeals grind away at the paraphernalia carried over from his life in the everyday world until that life fades into an unreality of its own. An anonymous figure in transition, he is by now characterized only by the reductive gauntness he shares with his corpse-like companions. They are all equally without status or possessions--the nobleman and the valet, the surgeon and the captain's mate, the father and the son. Having eaten their clothing or worn it to rags, they huddle
practically naked in the lifeboat, clinging to life as they search the horizon for a welcoming shoreline.

After what seems like countless days battling the elements, Juan's last struggle carries him, naked and truly more dead than alive, onto the beach of Haidée's island. The stanza in which Byron records Juan's first contact with land divides Canto Two neatly into two equal parts: the first deals with his preparatory cleansing at sea, the second with his first encounter with the concept of ideal love. Having endured harrowing experiences on the water, Juan has great need of his beautiful savior, Haidée, whom he encounters almost immediately. Haidée overflows with life and strength, which she uses to call Juan back from the death-like trance into which he sinks while lying at the water's edge. The "lady of the island" feeds, clothes, and finally protects Juan from discovery by her "piratical papa" (3.13.8) by hiding him during his recovery in a cave on an isolated beach. Under Haidée's dedicated nursing, Juan recovers quickly and emerges from the womb-like cave in a state of grace--cleansed and restored. The obvious and inevitable occurs: "Health and idleness," as the narrator remarks, "to passion's flame / . . . are oil and gunpowder" (2.169.5-6). In only a short time, personal beauty, tender care, and gratitude combine to encourage a friendship which quickly matures into passionate love. In the second half of the canto, Byron focuses on the "natural" nature of this idyllic love which will have such dramatic consequences in the young couple's lives.
In his essay on Byron's romantic heroines, Malcolm Kelsall questions the "idealisation" of the Haidée episode. He claims, instead, that Haidée is masculinized—an oppressor, a seducer—and thus subverts the "romantic vision" she is supposed to represent. Bernard Beatty is more generous but no more optimistic. Even if she does create a unique love relationship with Juan, he contends that Love itself (Eros), which admittedly drives the poem, "also builds up such piles of contaminated waste as the integral by-products of its lauded process that [even in this instance] we come to doubt the value of these energies" (*Byron's DJ* 127). I suggest, rather, that Byron's well-known detestation of tyranny and cant finds a strong voice in his portrayal of Haidée and the love she and Juan share. By avoiding the autocratically arranged marriages which her father would likely approve, she has avoided the "one sole bond" which leads only to "treachery" (2.200.2,3). Furthermore, her relationship to Juan actually replaces that "unnatural situation" (2.201.6) with the spiritual bond that only love can forge. Brian Wilkie goes so far as to assert that Byron is deliberately mocking the anti-feminism of the conventional epic heroes by demonstrating with his sensitive protagonist that "love is a higher calling than war" (215). This spontaneous, selfless commitment must not be held accountable for Beatty's "piles of . . . waste" left in the wake of the
collision of ideal love and the sharp realities of the real
world.

Isolated from mankind, Juan and Haidée experience a
wholly natural relationship based on unplanned, unforced,
and uninhibited affections. Byron stresses the unity of
all nature in cooperation with the young couple and the
harmony that they feel with the world around them. He
further emphasizes the purity of their love by contrasting
it explicitly to contemporary marriage customs and
implicitly to Juan's recently terminated situation in
Seville. The relationship with Haidée gives Juan a chance
to express his love in terms which make his affair with
Julia seem only an unfortunate prelude, in many ways, to
his true first love. The horrific days in the lifeboat and
the freshness of "Nature's bride" (2.202.1) have thoroughly
erased Julia's memory from his mind, and, significantly, he
never mentions her name again.

For it is Haidée, after all, who embodies the qualities
of naturalness and transience which characterize the entire
episode. Like Juan, the natural man, the island girl's
character bears the imprint of Rousseau and the
Primitivists. Unlike her resilient lover, though, she does
not adapt easily to any circumstance and is tragically
unable to survive in the unsympathetic world which
eventually separates her from her "ocean-treasure"
(2.173.7): her innocence provides no more protection than
does Juan's experience against Lambro's inevitable return.
Haidée is uneducated and quite provincial; her instincts
are faultless, nevertheless, and her actions sacrificial and selfless in spite of her youth. She occupies a unique and vital position in Juan's tale, and "refuses to be," as Beatty asserts, "simply number two between numbers one and three" (Byron's DJ 126). Juan's attachment to this winsome daughter of a Greek pirate exposes him to an ideal unimaginable in Seville. His parents were never moved to sacrifice or devotion; his carefully structured education was incompatible with such a dream; and unfortunately, his first romantic involvement fell far short of the Eden which he and Haidée create for each other.

No further idyllic interludes await Juan in his travels. He is followed throughout the poem by the spectre of lost love, symbolized, as Jerome McGann notes (Context 125), by the sunflower which seals Julia's letter with the motto "Elle vous suit partout" (1.198.6). As play theorist Eugen Fink writes in "The Oasis of Happiness," "Play is no harmless . . . thing . . .[I]n the power and glory of our magical creativity mortal men are 'at stake' in an inscrutably threatening way." Fink further concludes that in spite of the risk, "man can find his true essence only in relating to that which transcends him" (29-30). The Utopian existence which Juan experiences on Haidée's island gives substance to that human longing for the ideal, and although it is ended for the lovers by the outside world, the transcendent dream has become a part of Juan. He never again involves himself in another relationship of such
II

By the end of Canto Two, then, Juan and Haidee have created "another Eden" (4.10.2) "after nature's fashion" (2.191.2). In the "hallow'd" (2.204.5) solitude of a sacred cave, the boy with the legendary lover's name experiences ideal love with one who has never loved another. In every sense that matters, Juan also comes to this relationship without a past, since he has undergone a cleansing baptism of storm and suffering. It has not only purified him, however, but, like the baptism of myth and religion, has imposed upon his story one of the most ancient of archetypal patterns: death and resurrection. As presented in Canto Two, however, the cycle takes on an additional significance as a mythical representation of the creative process in which Juan's role is a creative one. The power which characterizes the young couple's love enables them to imagine into existence their own lovers' paradise in much the same way that the poet's mind acts upon the real world around him and creates an artistic dimension in which he is free to speak into existence his own poetry.

The rebirth archetype is, according to scholars and anthropologists, the foundational concept of which the journey/initiation motif is a later expression. In his seminal study, The Golden Bough, Sir James Frazer documents the frequent association of a ceremonial mock killing and...
resurrection of the novices with the initiation rites of puberty (692-700). More recently, Joseph Campbell claims that not only do these rites portray the death of the child and emergence of the adult personality, but that "[to] evolve out of . . . psychological immaturity to the courage of self-responsibility and assurance requires a death and a resurrection" (124) [my emphasis]. On the beach, Juan clearly experiences a symbolic death from which he is revived only by the sight of "a lovely female face of seventeen" (2.112.8):

How long in his damp trance young Juan lay
He knew not, for the earth was gone for him,
And Time had nothing more of night nor day
For his congealing blood, and senses dim;
And how this heavy faintness pass'd away
He knew not, till each painful pulse and limb,
And tingling vein, seem'd throbbing back to life,
For Death, though vanquish'd, still retired
with strife. (2.111)

Juan's charming rescuer and her servant, Zoe, are not identified for some stanzas, and when they are, it comes as a self-referential demonstration of this poet's dedication to poetic Truth and clarity as opposed to the lack of that commitment on the part of his allegedly unintelligible contemporaries--Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey:

I'll tell you who they were, this female pair,
Lest they should seem princesses in disguise;
Besides, I hate all mystery, and that air
Of clap-trap, which your recent poets prize.
(2.124.1-4)

Juan's participation in the repetitive cycle of death, rebirth, and illumination in the second canto of Don Juan serves as one method of achieving the clarity of thought Byron so desires, especially as it involves his concept of
the role of the creative imagination. This position may seem to contradict the views of critics such as Jerome McGann who hold that "the subject . . . of Byron's poetry was not the poetic process itself," but the "human world of men and women in their complex relations with themselves, each other, and their environments, both natural and cultural" (160). In fact, though, the rebirth archetype, supported by the patterns of imagery and allusion which are seen throughout the canto, actually allows the statements of Byron concerning poetic creativity to merge with those of Coleridge, whom he so often disparages. Thus, Byron operates more freely within the Romantic tradition than he is usually willing to admit.

The poem's preoccupation with contemporary poetical ineptness and pretension surfaces regularly at odd moments throughout the text—a jab here and there, sometimes sardonic parody—but beneath Byron's insistent denunciations of the Lakers there exists an uneasy sense that he protests just a little too much, possibly out of fear that his raillery may, in fact, be against much of his own work as well.

Byron alone of all the major Romantic poets left no comprehensive, deliberate statement of his poetic theory: his philosophy must be extracted from comments in various letters and poems. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, on the other hand, is generally regarded as the literary theorist and critic whose voluminous body of work best delineates the system of beliefs which forms the basis for the Romantic

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movement in English literature. Moreover, the two men clearly and repeatedly state that they are opposed in principle to the artistic precepts by which the other creates literary works. A close reading of the second canto of Don Juan with an eye to the rebirth archetype which structures it, however, suggests interesting possibilities. Could Byron, in his use of plot and imagery in this canto, be depicting a creative process which is actually closer to Coleridge's position than Byron himself realizes? Furthermore, does the young Juan participate in a process which blends Augustan ideals with the philosophy found in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria?

William Wordsworth, in his "Preface To Lyrical Ballads" (1800), discusses at length the new kind of poetry which he, Coleridge, and others were writing. The Romantic movement emphasized such qualities as naturalness in diction and familiarity of subject matter; the concept of the individual artist, however, in whom the creative process operates to a higher degree and in a different manner than it does in most men, is arguably the most influential contribution that the Romantics have made to our literary heritage. This creative capacity, the imagination, and its workings are briefly described by Wordsworth, but it remained for Coleridge, influenced by the German philosophers of his day, to explore the subject in greater detail in a number of his works. The two most familiar of these passages are found in Chapters 13 and 14 of Biographia Literaria (1817) where human creativity is
specifically couched in the language of play. In the first passage, Coleridge attempts to define two specific aspects of the human creative ability and to discriminate between "Imagination" and what he calls "Fancy," a lesser but vital operation:

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former... It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create... it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially "vital" even as all objects... are essentially fixed and dead. (516)

In contrast, Fancy, Coleridge emphasizes, "has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites" (516). Operating by the "law of association" chiefly as taught by David Hartley, it chooses from image and incident preserved within the memory, presenting these everyday objects to the Imagination to be transformed into art by its "synthetic and magical power" (524). It was the operation of the Fancy, involving both the unconscious retrieval of images of "Nature" and the conscious exertion of the will, which was widely understood by earlier theorists to be the faculty of creativity itself. It remained for the Romantics to recast and expand this ludic activity into the "Imagination."

While acknowledging the essential role of Fancy, however, Coleridge designates the secondary imagination as the synthesizing faculty of man which blends and fuses the images from the real world upon which it acts with each.
other, and in a complex way, with the poet himself. Coleridge's explication of the interplay between universal truth, sense perception, and mental activity did not go unchallenged, even in his own day, though; Byron, who was both more widely known and read during his lifetime than any of the other poets now referred to as "Romantic," was openly critical of the position assumed by the "Lakers." In the fragmentary prose "Preface to Cantos I and II" of Don Juan, Byron laments Wordsworth's use of an able mind to produce "such trash as may support the reveries which he would reduce into a System of prosaic raving that is to supersede all that has hitherto by the best & wisest of our fathers has [sic] been deemed poetry." The "reveries" and "prosaic raving[s]" which constitute Wordsworth's and Coleridge's system probably refer specifically to the poets' explanation of the roles of Fancy and Imagination in the creative process, coming, as this statement does, in the midst of a discussion of "supposing," or the act of creation as shared by the poet and the reader.

The value of this passage to a consideration of Byron's poetics becomes clear as Wordsworth's prefatory request of his reader to "suppose" a few meager facts concerning the narrator of "The Thorn" becomes the object of a witty attack by Byron. Byron finds this request laughable, implying that if Wordsworth were a competent poet, the poem would better provide the artistic context in which the reader's creativity could flourish. He then proceeds, with tongue in cheek, to ask the reader of Don Juan to perform a
similar task of supposing the setting in which his poem is told. In an impressive display of descriptive language, Byron demonstrates what he considers to be his own far more effective imaginative "supposing" in comparison to the powers of the reader's "Imagination" as systematized by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Byron, repelled naturally by "systems" such as Coleridge's and Wordsworth's, adhered closely, in theory at least, to the position of Pope and Dryden, whose work reflected their understanding of a world in which the artist interacted imaginatively with objects endowed with actual meaning and significance of their own. "For Byron," McGann explains, "the person existed in context, and the interaction of the two developed the reality we call the human world" (Context 157). Critic John Cunningham illustrates the difference between the two positions, basically reflecting Enlightenment and Romantic understandings, by explaining the role of the poet in each. The Augustans, he explains, maintained that the colors of meaning "come not so much from within the poet as from the potency of his craft and from his skills and techniques." The Romantics, on the other hand, sought transcendent reality by the exercise of a "poetic sensibility" which originates within the individual and "mold[s], delineate[s], and give[s] color" to its surroundings (15).

Thus, the pre-occupation of the Romantic theorists, especially Coleridge, with the faculty of Imagination struck Byron at times as curious, if not downright silly.
"It is the fashion of the day," he wrote John Murray, "to lay great stress upon what they call 'imagination' and 'invention,' the two commonest of qualities: an Irish peasant, with a little whiskey in his head, will imagine and invent more than would furnish forth a modern poem" (Works 1043). In direct opposition to this "imaginative" poetry which looks inward for its own truth, Byron, in the same letter, gives his highest praise to carefully crafted "ethical poetry . . . the very first order of poetry" (Works 1043). Concerned as he was with "cant" at every level and in every aspect of modern society, it was only natural for Byron to view his work as a corrective step away from the solipsistic "reveries" of "the Naturals." In fact, Byron views his poetic imagination as a tool which portrays objects in a way which invites evaluation of the objects and the contexts in which they exist, an "analytical and critical" faculty rather than a purely creative one (McGann Context 161). In a work such as Don Juan, for instance, Byron's imaginative use of objects and situations in the world of the poem makes the poem a means of examining political, literary, social, and religious values of that era. Thus, while converting the elements of the real world into the means of playful questioning in identifiably Romantic fashion, the author could also respond to the negative criticism leveled at Don Juan by stoutly maintaining it to be "the most moral of poems" (L&J 4.270) because it did, like Pope's poetry, expose to the
scrutiny of the reader a world of selfish indifference and careless incompetence.

In this examination of the tension between the Romantic theory of imagination and fancy as set forth by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* and the principles of art and poetry which Byron advanced in scattered passages of prose and verse, there exists no more appropriate text for study than *Don Juan*. Both in his fragmentary prose preface and the verse dedication, he focuses on the supposed weaknesses of the "Lakers": the theory of the "Imagination" ("supposing" in the "Preface"), general intellectual obscurity, and materialism. Given his eighteenth-century underpinnings, it seems likely to many critics that Byron intended his poem to repudiate Romantic theories by personally demonstrating how poetry ought to be written.

I contend, however, that Byron does not so much repudiate Romantic poetics as he practices them, all the while marking them as his own—creating like Coleridge, but sounding like Byron. This position is supported both by a careful reading of many of his works and by a frank comment in a letter written in Ravenna over a year after the publication of Cantos One and Two of *Don Juan*. In the midst of an attack on those who exhibited a "very natural antipathy to Pope," Byron admits that, though he has "ever loved and honored Pope's poetry with my whole soul," he, too, has "shamefully deviated in practice" (Works 1060). While he is surely remembering here the Oriental tales and brooding Childe Harold, I believe his beloved "Donny
Johnny," so recently published, must also have been in his mind. Although it seems unlikely that the Juan and Haidée episode was written as a deliberate demonstration of poetic creativity in the Romantic mode, perhaps Byron privileges Coleridge's "system" unawares when he transforms in purest Romantic fashion the world of Juan and Haidée in a mythic moment of union and creativity.

Although Byron's readers may cavil at his self-described shame over a falling-away from Pope's high standard of "ethical poetry," many will indeed agree that he has fortuitously done so. I would further submit that the most compelling argument in support of Byron's own admission can be taken from the Juan and Haidée story. The great mythical pattern of the journey from unconsciousness to knowledge structures not only Juan's individual narrative, but the process of artistic play by which that narrative comes into being as well. In his encyclopedic study, The Act of Creation, Arthur Koestler investigates this rebirth archetype as a metaphoric expression of a basic psychological process which results in what he calls the "meeting of the Tragic and Trivial Planes." At certain points in anyone's life, according to Koestler, an individual may gain a sudden awareness of the superficial nature of daily existence. This understanding can result from subtle or dramatic events, but it always "plunge[s] [one] downward and backward to [the Tragic plane]--the sources and tragic undercurrents of existence, . . . the fluid magma, of which the Trivial Plane of everyday life is
merely the thin crust" (358). The fourth stanza of the second canto captures the mundaneness of life on the Trivial plane in monotonous clichés--"heads or tails ... live and die, make love and pay our taxes" (2.4.2-3)--which characterize the principal part of life until man experiences a crisis situation. In Juan's case, it is his voyage that quickly "wean[s]" (2.8.7) him from this routine life and launches him on his "nautical existence" (2.12.8).

Juan's experiences on--and in--the sea echo the archetypal return to the womb of mother ocean, a symbol of the collective unconscious and the source of the creative urge. In psychoanalytical literature, such a return is followed by a voyage toward the east and a rebirth, strongly suggestive of the course followed by the artist in the creative process. The sea is also said to act as a "strong emetic" (2.21.8), effectively cleansing Juan from his former associations and preparing him for contact with the "vast, salt, dread, eternal, deep" (2.103.8). This process of withdrawal to the subconscious, later referred to by Freud and Jung as a natural rhythm of growth, occurs in Canto Two when Juan descends into the lifeboat in the middle of the stormy sea and continues until he is washed ashore on Haidée's island.

Much of Juan's time in the lifeboat is spent in lethargic passivity on the windless sea. This period of quiescence parallels, for the psychoanalytical critic, the stage of incubation or brooding experienced by the artist
prior to a resumption of productive activity. It is often, to use Jung's term, a time of extreme "frustration," and the signs of renewed life, the wind and rain, are gratefully accepted. The wind has long symbolized the breath of rebirth and inspiration, especially when it relieves an extended and stagnant calm. Byron's description of the handful of survivors who "rubb'd their eyes, and saw . . . / Or thought they saw" (2.97.5-6) an indistinct shoreline can serve as a poignant portrayal of the artist struggling to throw off the stupor of his retreat to the subconscious.

Almost immediately after Juan's arrival on dry land, he is discovered by Haidee, who carries him to the cave-womb to complete his rebirth. Corpse-like, Juan lies in the "vault" (2.147.8) overnight in a state of dreamless insensibility. This symbolic death offers a striking contrast to the new life which Haidee ushers into the cool darkness of the cave. She brings energy and vitality and transforms the tomb-like cavern into a place of warmth and nourishment which can then truly function as a womb for the reviving Juan.

Haidee also provides "good-enough mothering," Winnicott-style: a stable environment for a dependent Juan, unable to distinguish the horrors of the past days from his present situation:

His eyes he open'd, shut, again unclosed,
For all was doubt and dizziness; methought
He still was in the boat, and had but dozed,
And felt again with his despair o'erwrought.

(2.112.1-4)
Like Dorothy waking up after the tornado in the surreal land of Oz, sure only that "We're not in Kansas anymore," so Juan regains consciousness in a strange place which seems no more real than the nightmarish lifeboat he just left. He needs the protected place Haidee provides to sort out the images of a malignant sea and sky which make up his inner reality from the sanctuary of the beach where he actually has collapsed. As he plays with the elements of his world, separating and recombining memory and present perception, the sea will become a place for bathing, the beach for long walks with Haidee, and the sun a marker of the days which rebuild body and spirit.

Haidee's maternal ministrations extend beyond furnishing a safe haven for a recovering Juan; she also stands as a Muse-mother figure as she aids Juan in the expression of his creative ability. She repeatedly plays the role of the giver of life and inspiration as she hovers over her unconscious or sleeping guest and bathes his face with her breath. Haidee's sighs are similar in function to the wind which carried the long-becalmed lifeboat to shore. They also play an important role in the night of lovemaking which follows when she and Juan synaesthetically "[drink]" (2.194.5) each other's sighs.

Finally, while Juan lies in the grip of a dreamless, death-like sleep, Haidee's head is full of vivid visions of the day's discovery which cause her to "[toss] and [tumble]" (2.138.1) and wake her before sunrise. As a common symbol of imaginative activity, Haidee's dreams
embody the same kind of creative energy which she soon shares with Juan. After caring for him physically, she begins to instruct him in "good, modern Greek," (2.150.6) as opposed to classical Greek, the Ur-language of the Romantics, which in itself is a birth and a beginning. In this instance, though, Byron once again reduces the epic ideal to fit his contemporary tale. More important is the non-verbal communication taught to Juan by Haidée's look alone. The indispensable Muse has traditionally inspired and equipped human beings who already possess the special qualities of the artist; Haidée supplies Juan with a new means of creative expression which greatly increases his potential for increased sensitivity and understanding.

The final quarter of the canto, encompassing the creative moment shared by Juan and Haidée, begins with a simple stroll: "And thus they walk'd out in the afternoon, / And saw the sun set opposite the moon" (2.176.7-8). In a proleptic allusion to the esemplastic power of the imagination over the natural world, the narrator gestures toward a wave washing gently ashore. Leaving its frothy trace on the sand, it pictures the coming evening's interface between sea and air and land--and reminds the narrator of the bubbling overflow of a glass of champagne. A well-chosen philosophical symbol, liquor has traditionally linked the opposing qualities of creativity and destruction, or activity and passivity, by its effect of those who drink it. "Man, being reasonable, must get drunk," the narrator advises. "The best of life is but
intoxication" (2.179.1-2). Paradoxically, this intoxication had once been a contemptible substitute for courage and fortitude when Juan, during the worst of the storm, had guarded the "spirit room" to prevent the sailors from getting drunk. Writing to a friend, Byron earlier waggishly privileges it as a source of imagination (in a tipsy Irish peasant) equal to that of the Lakers. In a more serious vein, Irving Babbitt, an American critic of Romanticism, attributes to alcohol the ability to release the "subrational self" from the "surveillance of reason" and the "imagination . . . from the limitations of the real" (181): similarly, in Canto Two, it has now become the subject of an urbane little digression on wine and women as its role has shifted from a disabling force to one of active creativity. Juan's exhilaration has the positive result of enabling him to abandon restrictive mental attitudes and participate fully in the creative moment.

The wave—which reminds the narrator of "the cream of your champagne"—indicates the quiet nature of the sea on this particular afternoon. Nature is not usually so amiable here:

It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host,
With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-tost;
And rarely ceased the haughty billow's roar,
Save on the dead long summer days, which make
The outstretch'd ocean glitter like a lake.

(2.177)

Within this stanza, Byron has vividly represented the harshest aspects of Nature as Juan experienced them in the
preceding sections of this canto: the violent force, forbidding mien, and even the deadly calm which denied all hope to the men in the lifeboat. These "fixities and definites" as Coleridge would term them, are for Byron here preserved in Juan's memory, recalled and presented by the faculty which Coleridge called Fancy to be transformed by the imaginative activity taking place between Juan and Haidée. The activity of this Byronic Fancy exceeds that of Coleridge's merely mechanical Fancy, the gatherer of past and present perceptions, when it acts at the will of the poet to convert the real world elements into imaginative, playful transmutations. I believe that Byron, however, would firmly have rejected the further expansion of his creative faculty into the esoteric, metaphysical realm--the "clap-trap"--of the Lake Poets.

Whether by the primary Imagination, "the prime Agent of all human Perception," or the Byronic Fancy, the objects in the natural world must be perceived by the poet before any transformation can occur. As they walk the shores of their Utopian island, Juan and Haidée are surrounded by a friendly Nature. On the now peaceful shore, only the restful sounds of the gulls' cries as they soar overhead, the splash of friendly dolphins frolicking in the warm water, and the soft lapping of the never totally quiescent ocean on the jutting rocks can be heard. These "fixities and definites" require no common language; they are their own vocabulary. The lovers, arm in arm, "[look]," "[gaze]," "[see]," and "[behold]" both their surroundings.
and, most importantly, each other (2.185). As she and Juan retire into a cave, it is clear that Haidée's role has gradually changed from teacher to partner in a process in which Juan is the major figure.

In the first canto, Haidée revitalized Juan: she nurtured him physically, inspired him with her sighs, and taught him new ways to communicate. Juan owes her his life, but he no longer needs her in order to go on living. In the same way, Juan's creative capacity would not exist without the ministrations of Haidée, who functions much as does the artistic Imagination. In the past, she has been the source of poetic inspiration for him, but now that the actual creative moment is at hand, Juan's own renewed vitality is capable of maintaining itself. Though reality may seem harsh in this idyllic setting, it would seem that Haidée has been a "tool" for Juan, an indispensable device, it is true, but only a separate skill to be used by the artist. Her role in this canto—as provider of materials and skill—reflects Byron's professed understanding of the role of imagination in the creative process.

The stanzas in which Byron describes Juan and Haidée's evening on the beach contain patterns of imagery, however, which strongly suggest striking resemblances between the transformative activity taking place between Haidée and Juan and the Romantic concept of the Imagination. The secondary imagination, in Coleridge's terms, performs some fairly specific functions: it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create... it struggles to
idealize and to unify." Both the natural world surrounding the lovers and the lovers themselves clearly participate in the creation of a synaesthetic world; surrounded by the sounds of the sea and sea creatures, Juan and Haidée are at once sexually united and washed by the waves.

A careful reading of the stanzas, for instance, which deal with Juan and Haidée in the twilight reveals the presence of the same physical objects which were called up by the faculty of Fancy as the lovers began their walk. The inhospitable land, the once destructive ocean, even the hot sun reflected on the "glitter[ing]" water--all are again present, but these previously destructive natural forces have been radically changed by the creative inter-activity of the lovers--and the narrator's playful stance. The formerly malevolent elements now comprise the wedding party: Ocean, once Juan's crucible of testing, now beams over the scene as witness to the marriage, and Solitude, the cause of so many sailors' starvation, wears the benign collar of a priest. For the first time in the canto, physical nature, personified by Byron, harmonizes with human aims.

The distinctive borders which separate the elements of the natural world are blurred in the twilight, and all of Nature is unified with itself and the young couple. The rising "broad moon" (2.185.4), the eye-star (2.183.8), the hollow caves (2.184.6), and the "rounded / Red sun" (2.183.1-2) setting behind a dusky hill "circl[e] all nature" (2.183.4), marking off a charmed ludic space like
that which Huizinga would later call the great play-circle, a place of myth and mystery. The sun, mountain, sea, and sky also recall the totality of creation as expressed in the medieval concept of the four basic elements: earth, air, fire, and water. These individual elements merge into the larger pattern of the blending of Nature's various components: day and night; sun and moon; and earth, sky, and water. The lover's entire universe is contained within the boundaries of

the far mountain-crescent half surrounded
  On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill,
Upon the other, and the rosy sky.

(2.183.5-7)

The island's shore is, for an hour, the center of the great circle of existence as the universe is "focused" into the lovers' kiss:

They look'd up to the sky, whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
  Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;
They heard the waves splash, and the wind so low,
  And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other--and, beholding this,
Their lips drew near, and clung into a kiss;

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth, and love,
  And beauty, all concentrating like rays
Into one focus, kindled from above.

(2.185; 186.1-3)

Sheltered in a cave at the water's edge, the lovers experience the unity of the physical world as they view the reflected beauties of the sea and sky. The mirrored images form a great sphere, that, when accompanied by the mingled noises of the wind and waves, further accomplishes the blending of the opposing elements of the universe. Phrases
such as "floating glow," "rosy ocean," and "broad moon rose" reinforce the circular imagery even further by the sounds of the words themselves and the appointive nature of the descriptive adjectives which paradoxically describe without limiting the noun: thus the "floating glow" indicates a watery warm and the "rosy ocean" a warm water.

The commingling of the separate elements of Nature culminates in the kiss, which, as the lovemaking it prefigures, blends Juan and Haidée into a single symbol of the powerful creative act. The lovemaking itself, taking place in yet another womb-like cave, is illuminated by the moonlight, traditionally associated with the subconscious, intuition, and imagination. Juan and Haidée communicate on the same non-verbal, subrational level upon which the artist communicates in his moments of purest expression. Their looks, their kiss, their sighs, and their lovemaking comprise a common language more effective than any human speech.

The most intense, intimate moments in the relationship between Juan and Haidée are portrayed in stanza 194. As Juan embraces her, Haidée "drinks his sighs: and lovingly returns his gaze: "And thus they form a group that's quite antique, / Half naked, loving, natural and Greek." The reference to classical Greek sculpture is deliberate; the "idealiz[ing]" and "unifying" (Coleridge Portable 516) action of the imagination has both blended Juan and Haidée into a single body and transformed them, like the lovers on Keats's urn, into an artifact themselves. In their
resemblance to a work of art lies the truth of their eternalization of an intangible ideal. Another telling detail endows Juan and Haidée's creative moment with the timelessness of art: stanza 194 is placed in an eternal present tense in subtle contrast to all other stanzas relating the Juan and Haidée story.

Coleridge's attempt to capture eternity in a moment is couched, on the other hand, in theological terms: the primary Imagination, he says, "is a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (516). "I AM," of course, is the name God attributed to Himself when he spoke to Moses at the burning bush. It was used again by Jesus in the New Testament to identify Himself with Yahweh, and characterizes, in both instances, the speakers as eternally self-existent. Byron's lovers, then, experience their own transformative power, and, by becoming a timeless work of art, share in Coleridge's concept of the creative process as an eternally existent and constantly recurring one, paralleling the operation of divine creativity.

Perhaps the clearest way to evaluate the relationship between Juan and Haidée as an early nineteenth-century expression of the creative process is to examine the results of their creative act. The most obvious consequence of the couple's creative energy remains the existence of a life where none had existed before. Juan and Haidée's unborn baby represents in a tangible way the vitality of their relationship. In the context of Byron's
traditional poetics, the conception of the baby is credited mainly to Juan, the artist, who, in his creative interaction with Haidée, creates new life. The creation of this life serves Byron's purposes well as it produces a situation where some sort of action must be taken, offering the poet the opportunity to make further ethical comment on the world and its inhabitants and to propel Juan on his way. Interestingly, Byron allows Haidée to interact with Juan as the Imagination functions in the Coleridgean sense as well. So intrinsically a part of the artist that "heart, and soul, and sense, in concert move" (2.185.5), Haidée actively participates in the radical transformation of her entire world: "to their young eyes / Each was an angel, and earth paradise" (2.204.7-8). Thus, the objects of the natural world gain their true meaning only in the context of Haidée's imaginative activity.

If the Juan and Haidée episode, then, is Romantic poetry in its paradigm mode, why was it that Byron could not see or did not choose to acknowledge that fact? Perhaps a comment by critic Frederick Garber suggests an answer. In a passage exploring Paul De Man's theory of disjunction as a definitive modern experience, Garber claims to see a similar rejection of organic wholeness on Byron's part:

In both Byron and De Man the uneasiness with the organic starts from the organic's insistence upon wholeness and closure, a condition organicism needs in order to survive, both as a theory and as a mode of experience. (257)
Of course, I would maintain that the love idyll on Haidée's island clearly demonstrates the Byronic Fancy as one which at once incorporates both the mechanical Fancy and the non-metaphysical creative faculty, which strives to "idealize and unify"—a patently "organic" goal. The poetic expression of the ideal love shared by Juan and Haidée, the Byronic Fancy emerges as the privileged mode of artistic creativity as well, serving as the standard against which other poetic efforts are judged.

Don Juan, however, is a work in which ideas and perspectives are constantly shifting, jostling for position and prominence. In such a poem, it is easy to mistake a willingness to entertain all points of view for an unwillingness to endorse any. Such a poet as Byron, in such a poem as Don Juan can fluidly create like a Romantic and speak like an Augustan at the same time. A few lines from Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey reveal the nature of Byron's remarkable kinship with and disjunction from Romantic poetic theory. "I have felt," the mature Wordsworth tells his sister Dorothy, "... a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused":

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. (95-102)

They are all there—the setting sun, the round ocean, the blue sky—in both Wordsworth's English countryside and Byron's Greek island, alike transformed by the mind of man.
into a moment of wholeness and unity. What Garber has correctly sensed, though, is the glaring disparity between Wordsworth's final lines--his mighty "motion and . . . spirit [rolling] through all things"--and Byron's refusal to settle upon such a unifying vision, his insistence that he be allowed "to play upon the surface of Humanity" (15.60.2).

Byron argues, in a letter to John Murray in defense of Pope and the classics, against expecting the structures of "reasoning" to apply to the "passions." "Poetry is in itself passion," he remonstrates, "and does not systematise" (Works 1051). In his instinctive portrayal of the creative process in Canto Two as a Romantic one, he demonstrates for all who come to the poem his adherence to the truth of that statement.
CHAPTER FOUR

A PARADISE OF PLEASURE AND ENNUI: THE GAMES OF MARRIAGE AND ADULTERY

Their [Italian women's] system has its rules—and its fitnesses—and decorums—so as to be reduced to a kind of discipline—or game at hearts—which admits few deviations unless you wish to lose it... In short they transfer marriage to adultery—and strike the not out of that commandment. (L&J 7.43)

"I cannot easily think of another major theme in European literature that has 'Men only' written above it more conspicuously," concludes J. W. Smeed in his review of the evolution of the Don Juan tradition. The legendary seducer victimizes women, typically the weak and naive, treating each "as an object to be tested against an impossible ideal of perfection and rejected as soon as found wanting" (149). Women in the epic tradition fare only slightly better. The classical hero's wife serves primarily as a civic and familial accessory in his life, while his extra-marital liaisons function as either temporary amusements or dangerous distractions from his primary goal. Although both genres contain memorable female characters, rarely do these women determine the direction of the plot in any significant way.

In Byron's ludic tale of love and adventure, however, it is the women who energize the text. They do not do so in the customary masculine style of the epic hero; instead, they actually assume some of the most characteristic traits of Don Juan Tenorio. They share his wiliness, his
complicated strategies of seduction, even his affinity for the use of disguise and deception. Barred from the overt expression of desire, they exercise their considerable power in other, more subtle ways: they play games (sometimes even with themselves) which profoundly, self-reflectively affect the families and societies in which they live.

The three romantic episodes which serve as foils to the love of Juan and Haidée occur in societies widely separated by distance and culture--Spain, Turkey, and England. Their rich disparities open the text to penetrating metasocial commentary; their underlying likenesses reveal just how pervasive and significant a departure from the standard of ideal love--or genuine poetry--has occurred. The literary traditions which inform the lovers' concepts of love are disclosed to be no more than superficial imitations of honest emotion. Julia's idea of romantic love follows closely the ubiquitous and overworked Petrarchan model, which ceased long before to communicate any real emotion. Gulbeyaz is trapped in a world where love is just another strategy of survival. Like the average performance of the court poet, there is no emotional component. In contrast, the leisured English noblewomen have learned from the sentimental dramas and novels of their day to value feeling above all else. In each case, the genre or tradition which dominates these women's ideas of romantic relationships both affects and reflects their attitudes and beliefs.
Within the late eighteenth-century world of Don Juan, though, these amorous agons accomplish more than an underscoring of Byron's ludic reversals of recognized literary conventions. The underforming game patterns of Juan's romantic episodes provide vital clues to anyone challenged by "this grand poetic riddle" (8.139.3) of a poem. They powerfully suggest both the striking correspondence between games and literary texts and the ways that play strategies can be used to create and communicate meaning within those texts.

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case, the genre or tradition which dominates these women's ideas of romantic relationships both affects and reflects their attitudes and beliefs.

One of the simplest and most common of these rhetorical strategies is the synecdochical game, or a game which is recognizable as such within the text (Foust 7). These ludic phenomena range in Don Juan from undisguised references to backgammon, for instance, or the board game Goose to a narrative section in which the characters proceed in chess-like moves. In Don Juan, games are usually agonistic in structure, although the visible players are sometimes unaware that they are really only pieces themselves in a larger contest. A sub-category of the synecdochical game particularly relevant to this study, the plotting and maneuvering by social competitors underlie the narrative of the European cantos, and, as Ronald Foust explains about such games, frequently serve as "metaphors . . . that 'cue' the reader to the narrative's thematic . . . purpose" (8).

The reader is tipped off as well to thematic purpose by a closely related game pattern which Foust terms "structural." Another expression of the conflict which drives any plot, these games expand the competitive confrontations between individuals to a struggle against the true antagonist, "a monolithic and decadent social order" (9). By recasting the foundations of modern society as games, the text destabilizes the familiar vantage points of the serious worldview and renegotiates traditional
perspectives on society, politics, and literature. Thus, when viewed through the prism of play, even such venerable institutions as marriage (whether monogamous or polygamous) are suddenly open to re-examination and re-evaluation.

His passage through the nineteenth-century realm of the rich and famous gives the narrator the opportunity to comment on the world they have created. Freed as they fortunately are by birth or social position from the struggle to meet basic needs, why then, the narrator seems to ask, do the privileged so often allow their lives to be consumed by the superficial pursuit of advantage and pleasure rather than more significant goals? The reader flinches, for instance, at the doe-eyed Julia's capacity for deceit; at the exotic Gulbeyaz's cool proposition; at the bored duchess's unbecoming coquetry. In spite of the disastrous results of a possible loss, Don Juan suggests that people play for the most selfish, and sometimes trifling of reasons.

If the reader flinches at the duplicitous gamesmanship of Don Juan's heroines, however, the narrator quite clearly does not. Byron, as the ultimate designer off the games which structure the plot and the narrator who enjoys reporting them, transforms his ladies' unfaithfulness into opportunities for exuberant high drama, their superficiality into a chance to show off his own witty wordplay. He has great fun regaling his readers with tales of outrageous disguises, improbable situations, and unexplained escapes. He chuckles at their bold cunning, as
they plot to cuckold their husbands under their own roofs; Byron himself bragged to his friends about leaving Teresa Guiccioli's bedroom door unlocked while her husband was at home.

Instead, then, of condemning these women for their moral slippages, the storyteller conveys a note of sympathetic camaraderie. Sexual contests have become a metaphor for related agons over the economic, political, and social boundaries of their lives. These women's enforced idleness, their relegation to the periphery of the active, masculine culture in which they live, creates tensions which express themselves in a sophisticated sexual game in which the search for power is masked as eroticism.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in his study of the Balinese cockfight, identifies such multi-dimensional games as "deep play." Practically speaking, the stakes in such a game are too high to justify the risks at all unless the activity sharply defines and increases the significance of the players' lives. In a world in which amusements and pastimes take the place of intimate relationships, "the imposition of meaning on life . . . more than compensates for the . . . costs involved" (Geertz 76). The clever heroines from Spain, Turkey, and England contrive the games that structure and enrich their lives because they desire relationships which satisfy rather than circumscribe. They play to experience the freedom and influence denied them in
their privileged surroundings. They play the games of love to know life.

I

The jocular account of the young wife who outwits the husband old enough to be her father has entertained listeners since classical times. A fitting initiation into the world of adult sexuality for Juan, namesake of the famous lover, it was suggested to Byron by an anecdote overheard at a conversazione in Venice. Writing from Italy to his friend Hobhouse in England, Byron puts to rest the rumor circulating at home that Juan's earliest "scrape" (Canto One) was really one of his own. It was "one of an acquaintance of mine," he insists, "which happened some years ago at Bassano with the Prefect's wife when he was a boy--and was the Subject of a long cause ending in a divorce . . ." (L&J 6.96). Unlike many earlier retellings, though, Byron's Julia and Juan version of the story (which follows the "older woman initiates inexperienced boy" formula) avoids a salacious preoccupation with sex itself and sparkles with wit and waggishness.

Inez, Juan's widowed mother, sits omnisciently at the center of the web of allusive stories and relationships in Canto One. She sets up and initiates a "godgame" (Fowles 19) in which she is the only player who really understands the rules. The other players--José and Alfonso, Juan and Julia--perceive only a part of the underforming pattern of the game and therefore are unaware of the real meaning of their actions. None of these characters, in fact, ever
realizes the part he or she plays in accomplishing Inez's goal: gaining status and financial security by becoming Alfonso's wife.

But Inez is hardly the first in the family to play the games of love for high stakes. In the background of the scandalous tale of the young lovers around which Canto One revolves lies another tale of more conventional social arrangements in Julia's family. Julia's great-great-grandmother, though living in a respectable marriage, may have prefigured her descendant's lawless behavior by her own sexual transgressions.

Julia, the narrator explains, is strikingly beautiful, more so than most women of the inbred aristocratic families. This he attributes to her Moorish "grandmamma," who remained in Spain after her countrymen's defeat and married a don willing to overlook her lack of pedigree. A fortuitous match for the Spanish family whose gene pool had begun to resemble the Dead Sea, this infusion of fresh blood resulted in tall, handsome sons and beautiful, dark-eyed daughters. Julia's enterprising ancestress may have infused the passion of her "heathenish" (1.58.1) blood as well as its comeliness into a family "the ugliest in Old Spain" (1.58.3). It is rumored, the narrator confides, that "Donna Julia's grandmamma / Produced her Don more heirs at love than law" (1.58.7-8). Risking her future in a hostile land, she nonetheless played the game skillfully, winning both security and love.
Julia's beauty is at first playfully reported at first in terms of "trite and stupid" eighteenth-century clichés--"as sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean / Her zone to Venus, or his bow to Cupid" (1.55.6-7); the narrator gladly removes Julia from the realm of the banal, though, by presenting the reader with a truly creative description. He concentrates instead on the Moorish inheritance of body and spirit captured in "her oriental eye" (1.56.1), always the focus of his descriptive attention to women. Although he has already declared her to be a stereotypically "chaste" lady (1.59.8), the proleptic stanza which follows makes her future incautious affair and flamboyant theatricality seem almost inevitable:

Her eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)  
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire  
Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise  
Flash'd an expression more of pride than ire,  
And love than either; and there would arise  
A something in them which was not desire,  
But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul  
Which struggled through and chasten'd down the whole. (1.60)

Her soul will not succeed in its chastening role for long, though, as the reader already guesses at this point, and the entrance of fickle Chance into her game produces a vastly different outcome from great-great-grandmamma's.

All must be conjecture concerning the marriage of the Moorish flower and her homely husband so many years before, but in the unfortunate case of Juan's parents, Inez and José, the narrator leaves no doubt about the quality of their union: temperamental opposites, the serious Inez
cannot abide José's rhetorical nature. Indeed, in Canto One, their marriage already exists only in the past tense, as Don José has died well before the reader meets the sixteen-year-old Juan. The narrator, though, an old family friend, zestfully remembers and recounts all the colorful details of their married life. He pronounces Juan's mother, Inez, a marvel, a paragon of eighteenth-century female "accomplishments." Renowned for both her intellect and her virtue:

She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,  
And even the good with inward envy groan,  
Finding themselves so very much exceeded  
In their own way by all the things that she did. (1.10.4-8)

A student of mathematics, drama, and classical and modern languages, she can demonstrate a grasp of the linguistic relationship between Hebrew and English, for example, seemingly unattainable by other scholars. Probably because of her regular attendance at the theater, she knows the Spanish playwrights by heart, and also impresses her friends with her knowledge of Latin ("'the Lord's Prayer'"), Greek ("the alphabet"); and French ("some romances") (1.13.1-3). Her appropriation of virtue is no less impressive than her accumulation of learning. Indeed, her friends say that she has not one "female [error]" (1.16.7), and that her very countenance is a liturgy: "she look'd a lecture, / Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily" (1.15.1-2). "Perfect past all parallel" (1.17.1), Donna Inez not only meets, but compulsively exceeds the aristocratic standards for a gentlewoman of her culture.
Perhaps not quite perfect, though. This equal of any "modern female saint" (1.17.2) lacks the crucial virtue of humility, having, admittedly, "[a] great opinion of her own good qualities" (1.20.2). "Morality's prim personification" (1.16.5) must have been an awkward spouse for the manifestly less-than-perfect Don José, whose own canonization was considerably less likely. For unlike his wife, Don José was "a mortal of the careless kind," unimpressed by "learning, or the learn'd" (1.19.3). A true rhetorical soul, he "chose to go where'er he had a mind" (1.19.2-3), unrestricted by his wife's ethical or intellectual boundaries. Finally, bored by Inez's daunting moral rectitude and unconcerned about the consequences of his actions, "Don José, like a lineal son of Eve, / Went plucking various fruit without her leave" (1.18.7-8).

A less competitive wife would have agreed to the common practice among the married noblemen of her day of keeping a mistress or two conveniently near. Inez, however, quickly realized that in order to maintain the control of her domestic situation that she desired, she must shift the struggle to her own ground. She must depend upon her wits to create a new game rather than allowing her errant husband to play by the time-honored rules of his male-dominated society.

Poor José never really had a chance. Because he understood neither the game nor the determination of his opponent, Inez capably maneuvered him into one "scrape" after another:
This was an easy matter with a man
    Oft in the wrong, and never on his guard;
And even the wisest, do the best they can,
    Have moments, hours, and days, so unprepared,
That you might 'brain them with their lady's fan,'
    And sometimes ladies hit exceeding hard,
And fans turn into falchions in fair hands,
    And why and wherefore no one understands.

Least of all Don José. Drawn into what he thought was a private quarrel, he suddenly found himself the subject of discussion and benevolent interference by a gallery of "several thousand people" (1.23.3), most of whom were rooting for the saintly Inez.

A feigned reconciliation served only as a sort of intermission before Inez delivered the feminine coup de grace. In order to isolate her husband even further from those naturally inclined to take his side, she enlisted the aid of his doctor to act as a sort of umpire and decide whether or not he was actually sane. The outcome mattered little, because whether he was "mad" or only "bad" (1.27.2,4), she now had "all Seville for abettors" (1.28.4). His belongings rifled, his every move recorded, Don José was a beaten man, and he knew it. While his "[meek]" and "magnanimous" wife (1.29.1;30.3) enjoyed the applause of her friends, José, outmanned and outplayed, withdrew from the contest. The timing of his death proved unlucky only for the lawyers, who had planned to take this agon to another level and now felt cheated of their fees.

The obvious stakes over which he and Inez had battled, his
two mistresses, were transferred to the accounts of other players to become a part of someone else's game.

The agon which takes place between Inez and José, however, cannot be totally understood in terms of the winning or losing of mistresses and reputations. Their marital struggle actually reflects a deeper conflict between Juan's parents, a tension between her serious and his playful worldviews. Although both engage in this game of profound consequence, they play in strikingly different modes.

Don José, born into a world of privilege, accepts that fact without a great deal of introspection. He never feels the need to examine his actions in regard to Right and Wrong; he simply directs his course in relation to the people and forces among which it has been his fortune to land. Before his high-stakes confrontation with his wife, if he played at all, it was purely for pleasure. He likely enjoyed Inez until her perfection grew tedious; then he simply turned his path into "this naughty world" (1.18.2) until he found somewhere else he'd rather be. While José is not exactly an innocent, his friend the narrator explains that the wayward husband really "never dream'd his lady was concern'd" (1.19.4). As with all rhetorical beings, he favors style over substance without hypocrisy: playing the role of lover as aptly as that of husband, picking up roses for Inez on the way home from an afternoon with his mistress.
Donna Inez, on the other hand, inhabits a universe of scientific rather than social certainties. Governed by the predictabilities of mathematics and the systemization of science, even her interest in drama—which, in her case involves only the memorization of scripts—springs out of her natural desire to insure absolute correctness. However, lacking an appreciation for the complexity of life, she unknowingly falls short of her own self-image. A consummate role-player himself, the narrator instinctively recognizes her clumsy attempts to play the part of the bluestocking and the inevitable signs of failure in that attempt:

Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic all,  
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity  
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,  
As if she deem'd that mystery would ennoble 'em. (1.12.3-4;13.7-8)

Inez's disappointing performance comes as no surprise to the observant reader: she is not by nature a player of roles of any kind.

Secure in her own identity, Inez is an "all-in-all-sufficient self-director" (1.15.3). She has no need, as a rhetorical character would, to discover facets of her self in the people and occurrences around her because she already knows who she is and what she wishes to accomplish. Instead, she manages and manipulates her world with mathematical precision: she is "a walking calculation" (1.16.1), the narrator observes, the didactic...
personification of her favorite books. She plays a game of her own making, but the workmanlike earnestness and determination with which she plays reveal her as the serious being that she truly is. Although no one could have guessed it at the time, this masterful triumph by a serious wife over her playful husband contains the beginnings of a future contest, one with a strategy even more devious which involves her own son and her young friend, Julia.

That whole adulterous game to come, the first of Juan's varied career, begins innocently enough. The lovely Julia, a special friend of Inez's after her husband's death, visits regularly in the home where Juan, seven years her junior, is growing up. Her husband, Alfonso, is an old friend of Inez's, and Julia somehow inherits the friendship. Significantly, the talkative narrator repeats, with a personal warning about its veracity--"(but, no doubt, they lie)" (1.66.5)--an old rumor concerning the couple's connection. Malicious gossips, he says with a wink, circulate the story "[t]hat Inez had, ere Don Alfonso's marriage, / Forgot with him her very prudent carriage" (1.66.7-8). If true, that rumor may be the key, casually dropped by the narrator, that reveals Juan's mother as the most successful love-game player of all in Don Juan.

Another untold tale, that of Julia's courtship and marriage, lies silently in the background of her now tepid relationship with Alfonso. Since she is lovely and
well-bred, the reader might assume that Alfonso defeated her other suitors in the agon of male courtship. But since she is married to a man of about twice her age, the reader also assumes that Alfonso may have won her hand in a less socially strenuous venue. As happened so often to young women of her social class, her youth was probably bargained away in exchange for a large dowry or a family connection. The only daughter of an only son, her personal fortune made Julia a rich prize indeed.

But though his young bride's desirability may tinge Alfonso's loving looks with jealousy, she certainly feels little attachment to him. In fact, she is either so "indifferent" or so "callous" (1.68.6) about where his affections lie that she doesn't even give that nasty gossip about Inez a thought. Several unsatisfying years pass for Julia; Juan matures into a handsome young man of sixteen; and the unplanned but predictable happens: Juan and Julia fall in love . . . or in lust.

The narrator tells the story of Juan and Julia's romance with humor-filled tenderness, smiling at the embarrassments of first love. Juan, on the awkward cusp between puberty and adulthood, doesn't understand the source of the emotions he experiences. Although she has never experienced the excitement of infatuation with Alfonso, Julia, on the other hand, is old enough to recognize her feelings for what they are and simultaneously enjoys and struggles to control the growing attraction between herself and her young friend. Juan must deal with
the unfamiliar emotional turbulence brought on by his awakening sexuality: his thoughts are lost in a world of his own making. Julia, as a married woman, finds herself in a considerably stickier situation. She must deal not only with her erotic feelings for this boy-man, but also with the conflict they create with her moral duty to her unexciting husband.

Complicating their situation even further is the fact that neither Julia nor Juan comprehend the true nature of this love-experience they are undergoing. Their feelings are "quite natural" (2.3.5), the narrator comments later, a product of puberty on Juan's part and frustrated emotional, and perhaps, physical needs on Julia's, but the lovers are not free to enjoy this normal attraction. They confuse from the first their own sincere emotions with the highly stylized Petrarchan tradition. The predominant influence on love poetry for several hundred years, by the eighteenth century, Petrarch's love sonnets had long ago been reduced to a poetic formula consisting of conventional commonplaces. Both Juan and Julia adopt the stock attitudes and postures of the lovesick devotee and his lady because that tradition is the only way they know to express emotional ardor before or outside of marriage--and emotional ardor, of course, is rarely a part of the arranged marriages with which they are familiar.

Due to Juan's protected youth, Julia has no female rivals whom she must contest for his affections, and the couple's mutual attraction obviates the need for calculated
strategies of flirtation. Instead, the adversative activity present in the early stages of the affair occurs entirely within Julia's mind. While Juan wanders the leafy glades in a Petrarchan mood, Julia carries on an intensely agonistic, and equally Petrarchan conversation between her heart and her conscience. Petrarch's sonnets regularly feature such struggles between passion and honor; however, the love which occasions the debate always remains unrequited and the lovers remain chaste. "My brain is feminine" (1.195.5), she writes later in the poem, and nowhere does the narrator show a shrewder perception of a woman's dilemma than in his recounting of the complicated psychological games she feels obliged by tradition to play with herself.

The exquisite torture—which she enjoys, it seems--of Julia's temporarily unsatisfied desires is captured in one particularly oxymoronic passage. Her "coldness . . . was kind" (1.71.1); her sadness [was] [sweet]" (1.72.2) because

Even innocence itself has many a wile,  
And will not dare to trust itself with truth,  
And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

And in whatever aspect it arrays itself, 'tis still the same hypocrisy;  
Coldness or anger, even disdain or hate,  
Are masks it often wears, and still too late.  
(1.72.6-8; 73.4-8)

Ever the poseur, Julia's adoption of the role of the cool and unresponsive lady to Juan, the callow pursuer, leads her steadily further from the truth: the truth about her attraction to Juan, her ability to control it, and the future that it creates for her.
Unable to deny her emotions, Julia wishes they could be converted, like Petrarch's, to religious or platonic love. In a sparkling demonstration of the dialogic interplay of Julia's will and her desire, the sophisticated narrator records the gradual dissolving of the self-discipline upon which her well-intentioned plans depend. Attempting sincerity, she admits the sinful nature of her feelings and even petitions the Virgin for succor. Her commitment to her decision is unimpressive, however. "She vowed she never would see Juan more," the narrator deadpans, "And next day paid a visit to his mother" (1.76.1-2). Even though Julia watches the door longingly, "by the Virgin's grace" (1.76.4) Juan does not appear. No further prayers were offered.

After all, it is really unnecessary to avoid Juan's company entirely, she rationalizes. Why, it's the duty of a "virtuous woman" to "face and overcome temptation" (1.77.1-2). She'll be stronger for it, she's sure. In an awesome burst of self-deception, Julia even convinces herself that her innocent love has already been transformed from eros to phileo. It is now "love divine / Bright and immaculate, unmix'd and pure . . . ," and, in a final, soaring paroxysm of virtue, "[p]latonic, perfect" (1.79.1,2,5). Her internal agon is over. Of course, she doesn't yet realize it, but the wall of her virtue has already been breached and her moral collapse accomplished. Such unhealthy expectations on Julia's part, the narrator
makes clear, amount to no more than ethical gymnastics: her feigned appeals to the Virgin for moral strength and her insincere commitment to offer only a sisterly attachment to Juan are superficial substitutes for an honest approach to what is, after all, one of the commonest of human conditions.

Although Julia knew from the first that she was losing her heart to one who was barely aware of the love game he played, the contestatory voices of her own genuine feelings and the imposed demands of an overused poetic mode blur her perception of her own emotions. Such confusion of the real and the artificial results in a complicated game of self-seduction which irrevocably taints their love with foolish rationalizations and harmful illusions.

Julia acknowledges her growing love for Juan in the stilted style of the Petrarchan internal debate; Juan, confused and disconcerted by his feelings for his mother's married friend, withdraws from the familiar everyday world of Sevillean society to a separate space, a green playworld, where he abandons himself to the unfamiliar, troubling emotions which possess him. The narrator describes him in terms used by love sonneteers for centuries:

Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow,
His home deserted for the lonely wood,
Tormented with a wound he could not know,
His, like all deep grief, plunged in solitude. (1.87.1-4)

So caught up is he in his enactment of the heartsick lover's role that he does not return to the actual,
empirical world until he can no longer ignore his physical hunger. Like a modern-day man who buys a ticket to an afternoon movie and emerges, hours later, to find that night has fallen, Juan is startled when he crosses the ludic boundary of his fictional world and is confronted by the plain realities of everyday life. Time, his unrecognized opponent, has proceeded at his regular pace, and the oblivious Juan has missed his supper while losing himself in one of the most revered Petrarchan conventions, the use of nature and mythology as a backdrop to love:

He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,  
And heard a voice in all the winds; and then  
He thought of wood nymphs and immortal bowers,  
And how the goddesses came down to men:  
He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,  
and when he look'd upon his watch again,  
He found how much old Time had been a winner--  
He also found that he had lost his dinner.  

(1.94)

The highly stylized Nature to which Juan retreats is as far from the "wild and breaker-beaten coast" of Haïdeé's island as the stilted, outmoded expression of his immature love for Julia is from the young lovers in Canto Two who "[cling]" "like swarming bees . . . / Their hearts the flowers from which the honey sprung" (2.187.7-8).

But, infatuated with his first experience of love, Juan knows only that he must pause often in his adolescent communing with nature to read from the sixteenth-century Spanish poets Boscán and Garcilasso. Their love sonnets are reworkings of the Petrarchan tradition, and, like a child who mimics, without understanding the game, his father's playing at chess or cards, Juan plays at being in
love according to the poets' rules. What he does not realize, of course, is that the role of the love-sick admirer which he has adopted is a literary construct which bears little resemblance to a genuine lover. The part of the tortured lover, nevertheless, transcends the textual boundaries of Juan's book, and acts as a cognitive instrument in Juan's rapidly coalescing sense of self. The fascinating scene where Juan studies and imitates his only model of ideal romantic love suggests this fruitful confluence of a literary text, a discrete and magical ludic world, and the factual, everyday plane where Juan struggles to come to terms with his growing attraction to Julia:

Sometimes he turn'd to gaze upon his book,
Boscan, or Garcilasso;--by the wind
Even as the page is rustled while we look,
So by the poesy of his own mind
Over the mystic leaf his soul was shook,
As if 'twere one whereby magicians bind
Their spells, and give them to the passing gale,
According to some good old woman's tale.  (1.95)

Clearly, Juan does not yet understand that only when his sonnets are read in one context, or frame, do they represent a serious portrayal of the course of romantic love. When parodied in his own naive person, on the other hand, they comprise a reappraisal of the values embodied in the original genre itself and introduce a metapoetic statement on Romanticism as well.

Bateson defines play as just this sort of shifting of particular acts from certain frames or contexts to others on which they take on a distinctly ludic relevance. But
Juan, at once both a reader of poetry and the naive protagonist of Byron's poem, relates to the centuries-old love tradition only at a denotative and meta-linguistic level which, by the theorist's definition, barely qualifies as play at all. Although Julia introduces him to the complex emotions and consequences of adulthood, he remains, for the most part, a child of literal understanding who merely imitates the adult actions about which he reads. Alone in his leafy playworld, Juan falls in love less with Julia than with his heightened emotional state; like most beginners, Juan is actually in love with the playing of the love-game itself.

The reader, however, a more sophisticated player than Juan, engages the text at what Bateson calls the meta-communicative level where the true subject of the discourse is the relationship between the speaker/text and listener/reader. The most polished literary play takes place at this site. In his examination of games and play in modern American literature, Robert Detweiler comments on this kind of playful transgression and even destruction of the defining frames which normally enable the reader to more easily manage the "meaning" of the text:

In all of this fiction as game with the reader, the reader is challenged to dispense with the willing suspension of disbelief in order to play another game... The author says, "I will not allow you to inhabit an integral fictive world while you read my [text]; instead, you must constantly and self-consciously connect the artifice of my narrative with the problematical real world that you live in."... [T]he intention is not to absorb the audience in the illusion but to use the artificiality of the illusion... to
make the respondent (the viewer or reader) aware of the alienating power of art, its ability to employ tradition in order to negate it. (56)

Obviously, instead of contracting with the reader to suspend his disbelief as so many love poets have done, Byron encourages him to "play another game," to get beyond that most elementary level of play by acknowledging the unnaturalness of the fictive world of the narrative. He wants his reader to see that when Juan falls under the spell of the Petrarchan love conventions that it constitutes a naive misappropriation of this stylized emotional expression.

This displacement by Byron of such a familiar tradition of love poetry for the purposes of gentle mockery and re-evaluation is itself a familiar tradition since the Petrarchan mode, in addition to its many imitations, has provoked parody and satire for centuries. It is, in fact, only one of a number of genres and styles which are lifted from their traditional contexts and reframed in this witty bricolage, Don Juan. Not all of Byron's choices, however, receive such an indulgent re-appraisal. Some are wrested from their positions of literary honor and acclaim--"decanonized," as Earl Ingersoll uses the postmodern term (303)--and mercilessly exposed as the fraudulent "clap-trap" Byron believed them to be. The German Romanticist Jurgen Schlaeger makes an arresting comparison between this ludic process in Don Juan and the unprincipled methods of the original Don himself:
In the promiscuity of its meanings and modalities this consciousness presents itself as a kind of Don Juan of the established literary conventions. It seizes and uses them, leaving them violated and desecrated, but all the more available for use by others. (in Fischer 236-7)

So, just as the many inadequate imitations of Petrarchan love poetry speak only superficially of the pain and pleasure of genuine love, Byron uses Juan's moody woodland retreats and Julia's trivialized self-seduction to reflect their immature understandings of what should be an honest, spontaneous expression of their love and to encourage a re-assessment and, perhaps, revitalization of the genre.

It was exactly that kind of honest portrayal of the complexity of love that endeared Petrarch's love poetry to its first readers. Its graceful fidelity to real life was more difficult for lesser poets to imitate, however, than its subject matter or style, and thus the tradition eventually lost its power to express legitimate emotion. Wordsworth and Coleridge, on the other hand, the central figures then in what later came to be called the Romantic movement, produced poetry that, in Byron's view, was inferior from the very beginning. Their work is certainly "[seized and used]" in this manner by Byron to represent a "wrong revolutionary poetical system" (LB 167) which Byron believed valued the poetry of "entusymusy" (Works 1053) over that striving for cogent thought and expression. Such poets, he believed, indulged in the "poetry of innerness," to use modern critic Jean Hall's phrase, "creat[ing] an illusion which they mist[ook] for truth" (149). His rough
treatment of the Lake Poets did not diminish their influence or usefulness in that day or this, however, but may instead have actually stimulated Byron's own "Romantic" poetic tendencies in his telling of the love story of Juan and Haidée.

But for now, Byron puts feet to the assault he began in his dedication on those he considered to be the instigators of the poetical degeneracy of that day by playfully interpolating evidence from the offenders themselves in Don Juan. Byron enthusiastically reaches across borders of text, language, and genre into the cultural reservoir which has defined and inspired his past "scribbling" and which he would now reassess and refashion. In a work marked by such self-conscious intertextuality, Byron explicates or mocks with energy, humor, and zest these literary conventions that make writing fiction possible. In order to enlarge on Juan's wilderness wanderings (1.88.1-4), he quotes Thomas Campbell (author of Gertrude of Wyoming [!]) in this passage with only a mild reproof for semantic vagueness; Southey he quotes later with venom and a fervent disclaimer: "For God's sake, reader! take them [the quoted lines] not for mine" (1.222.8). Wordsworth and Coleridge he mimics instead with tongue in cheek and obvious delight.

Wherever it is found throughout Don Juan and Byron's letters, the criticism of the Lyrical Balladeers, especially Wordsworth, is always uncompromising, often ungentlemanly, and sometimes unfair. In Canto One, however, although the familiar themes of self-indulgent
"self-communion" and obscurity of thought crop up once again, the personal attacks are muted. Byron, having great fun at the poets' expense, playfully mugs his way through a clever parody of Wordsworth's baring his great soul just as if (the characteristically ludic mode) Wordsworth had written it himself. Coleridge, elsewhere named as "the best of the trio [STC, Wordsworth, and Southey]--but bad" (LB 101), rests his dubious claim to poetical greatness on a body of work so undecipherably abstruse in Byron's mind that he qualifies Coleridge as a philosopher rather than a poet. James Chandler, in his discussion of the question of intelligibility in this passage, proffers the line "so that their plan and prosody are eligible" as proof that Byron was capable of the very opacity of which he accuses the Lakers (Levine and Keane 74). I agree, but believe that, in this case, the verbal obscurity is teasingly deliberate. These lines resonate with the spirit of cleverness and fun--Byron's opportunity to strut his stuff:

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
Himself at length within the leafy nooks
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;
There poets find materials for their books,
And every now and then we read them through,
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove
unintelligible.

He, Juan (and not Wordsworth), so pursued
His self-communion with his own high soul,
Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,
Had mitigated part, though not the whole
Of its disease; he . . .
. . . turn'd, without perceiving his condition,
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

(1.90; 1.91.1-5,7-8)
They are none of them poets, he asserts in an earlier, less charitable mood, but a "set of . . . impostors . . . Look at their beastly vulgarity, when they wish to be homely; and their exquisite stuff, when they clap on sail, and aim at fancy" (LB 100-101).

"Yes, look at it," he seems to invite the reader of Don Juan. "Set it next to poetry of honest passion that speaks from life." In a letter to Thomas Moore, he complains, "They know nothing of the world; and what is poetry, but the reflection of the world?" (LB 100). How better to draw attention to what Byron considered to be their dangerous self-absorption than to transpose a facetiously overdone imitation of an intellectually dense style ripe for parody into a work that fairly crackles with life, with humor, with play?

Neither the affectations of the Petrarchists nor the pretensions of the Lakists allow the reader to experience the frank emotions which Byron will portray in the second canto. Even in an arbor washed in summer moonlight, Juan and Julia's love is described in clichés which idealize their relationship. Eros-love is personified in classic Petrarchan style, a participant in a game of high stakes in which he himself becomes both the prize and the referee of the game. He increases the competition by equalizing the competitors; he dangles before them the prize which the self-deluded players think they can win; and, finally, he intensifies the atmosphere of the game by introducing the element of risk:
Oh Love! how perfect is thy mystic art,
    Strengthening the weak, and trampling on the strong,
How self-deceitful is the sagest part
    Of mortals whom thy lure hath led along--
The precipice she stood on was immense,
So was her creed in her own innocence.
(1.106.3-8)

Julia feels no guilt because she, like Juan before her, is as taken with the erotic game as she is with her beloved himself. Having fully entered into this game, she writes her own rules (her "creed") and uses them to maintain her eligibility to play. They are happy together for a few brief months. Unfortunately, none of this will matter when her dreams collide with the real world of Alfonso and his divorce lawyer.

This invasion of Julia's boudoir by her husband and his cohorts occurs months later on a cold, November night. Unlike Lambro, who interrupts Juan and Haidée's sleep with implacable resolve, the suspicious Alfonso makes a ridiculous figure as he appears at her door in a carnivalesque re-enactment of the traditional ritual of discovery. It is a game made up of both carefully prescribed moves on his part and quickly improvised strategies on hers.

It also gives Byron the opportunity to play with the readers' perception of "gentle" Julia--so demure, so determined to be "chaste" when she and Juan first become aware of one another's charms. When last the reader saw her, she was in the moonlit arbor with Juan--already "repent[ing] / And whispering 'I will ne'er consent'"--and
then consenting (1.117.7-8)! Thus, it is something of a surprise to encounter a new Julia--forceful, offended, and highly eloquent--but above all, willing to lie very convincingly. Her affair with Juan has tapped her passionate, "heathenish" nature, and having experienced this life of excitement, she will now defend it with every breath in her body. Of course, she is in a rather compromising situation: Juan is, after all, barely more than a child--even Antonia can't understand Julia's attraction to "that half-girlish face" instead of a "stout cavalier / Of twenty-five or thirty" (1.171.8; 172.1-2). She has also betrayed her husband with this boy-man for months and, while denying the whole deception apparently without a flicker of conscience, she is even able to generate genuine outrage at her husband's (accurate) allegations of infidelity. In spite of all this, Byron's creative imagination succeeds in transforming the whole sordid episode into a delightful, witty exercise in support of an engaging, if amoral, heroine.

Alfonso arrives at midnight, accompanied by a torchlit crowd of men eager to find and make an example of another unfaithful wife. Barely preceded by Julia's maid, Antonia, he bursts in, and, counting on the advantage gained by the element of surprise, ransacks her room in search of a hidden lover. While he and his team of "lackeys" (1.139.7) literalize the carnivalistic concept of upending, his suspicious lawyer stands to the side, closely observing the night's activities. The emotionless embodiment of
authority, he imposes on the scene the real world's strictures against adultery, "a sin, / Forbid by heavenly, fined by human laws" (1.167.2-3). He serves as a sort of referee: at once, the ultimate witness of any infraction and the arbiter of marital disputes. Watching without taking part, he also serves as an almost comic, vulture-like figure, hovering on the fringes of the confrontation and hoping for a "kill" so he can pick the bones.

Julia and her maid scramble to respond to this assault. In the best tradition of mimetic play, they create an appearance of "two poor harmless women" (1.141.2) sleeping together in the absence of the master. Antonia is "an adept" (1.140.4) at this sort of situation, but Julia reveals what can only be called an impressive aptitude for role-playing under pressure. Her impersonation of an innocent wife ranks with the greatest comic moments in English literature and almost carries the day for her. Believing that "the best defense is a good offense," she lambastes her husband with a "thunder-shower" (1.161.8) of disbelief, insults, and humiliating questions. Indeed, the longer she reviles him, the better she gets, and the better she gets, the more she likes it. It is a masterful strategic response in the carnivalistic tradition of "flyting" in which a verbal agon precedes or replaces physical conflict (Ong 108). "Yes, search and search," she taunts him, "insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!" (1.145.2-3), exactly her proposed counter-attack on him:
Is it for this I scarce went anywhere,  
Except to bull-fights, mass, play, rout, and revel?  
Is it for this, whate'er my suitors were,  
I favour'd none--nay, was almost uncivil?  
(1.148.4-8)

Pray have the courtesy to make it known  
Who is the man you search for?  .  .  .  
(1.154.3-4)

'At least, perhaps, he has not sixty years,  
At that age he would be too old for slaughter. (1.155.1-2)

She turns to the lawyer: "There's pen and ink for you, sir,  
when you need-- / Let everything be noted with precision."  
(1.152.4-5). But everyone knows the score: Alfonso--0,  
Julia--1.

The force of Julia's virtuoso performance overturns  
Alfonso's position of male dominance and leaves him  
perplexed and embarrassed. Byron intends to create little  
sympathy in the reader's mind for Alfonso because, although  
he is the wronged husband in this case, he is hardly in a  
position to cast the first stone, having been the "other  
man" himself with Inez. Besides, for all his machismo, he  
proves to be inept in his investigation and is humiliated  
before his friends by his wife's tirade. While he retreats  
to confer with and dismiss his "posse comitatus" (1.164.1),  
Juan slips from the pile of heavy, winter bedclothes,  
believing Julia's performance and creating an explosive  
situation. Weak with relief, Julia caresses her lover,  
leaving the shrewd Antonia--a "counselor" for Julia who  
parallels Alfonso's lawyer--to devise a strategy to "parry  
[Alfonso's] renew'd attack" (1.169.5). Ever the realist,  
Antonia scolds as she hides Juan away in a closet: "You'll
lose your life, and I shall lose my place, / My mistress, all, for that half-girlish face" (1.171.7-8). She's right, of course, although the young lovers are not listening. The stakes are very high for them: though Alfonso's failure would be embarrassing, Juan and Julia have everything to lose.

But at this point, there is every reason for Julia to hope for success. Alfonso returns, and, on the defensive, apologizes, explains, clears his throat repeatedly. Julia, aware of her advantage, silently listens and ponders her strategy to parlay this weakening of her husband's position into a victory for herself. The success of her earlier aggressive tactics tempts her to accuse Alfonso, in his turn, of unfaithfulness with Inez. Injecting her name, however, into the conversation could remind him of Inez's son, who is in the closet, and might be stung, in any case, by such an overheard revelation. So the clever Julia decides instead on a passive response. She reluctantly half-grants the forgiveness her husband seeks, deliberately bringing the verbal agon to an end. She has effected a victory in the face of almost impossible odds--no small feat for a rookie--when chance intervenes with disastrous consequences.

Approaching his wife with the hope of reconciliation, Alfonso kicks aside a shoe, a man's shoe. Julia can now only watch as the skillfully created persona of a woman wronged unravels in her husband's mind. Realizing that the owner of the shoe is still close at hand, the enraged
Alfonso rushes from the room to get his sword. The masquerade is over, and the physical agon between husband and lover is about to begin.

Juan and Alfonso's encounter, brief and bloody, parodies the classic chivalric scene of physical combat to win the lady. Instead of noble warriors in the lists, a sixteen-year-old boy and a fifty-year-old man fight with their fists. In this case, the only blood flows from the nose, and as they wrestle on the floor, "Juan contrive[s] to give an awkward blow" (1.186.5) and slips away, leaving his shirt in Alfonso's hand. He escapes, naked, through the garden and into the dark streets, an especially undignified departure from the arena. With the click of the closing gate, the game ends.

Juan repulses Alfonso's attack, but he cannot claim a victory in this agon. He has lost Julia and is sent into temporary exile for his crime. The one who loses the most in this complicated contest, however, is the "gentle" Julia. Beguiled by her unrealistic dream of love, she has played the game of adultery against all odds of winning. In her last letter to her young lover before she enters a convent, she dispassionately speaks of the cost of losing:

I loved, I love you, for that love have lost State, station, heaven, mankind's, my own esteem, And yet can not regret what it hath cost, So dear is still the memory of that dream. (1.193.1-4)

But what if Julia's dream was not entirely her own? What if, instead of an independent player who risked everything
for love, Julia is actually an impressionable, inexperienced young woman who is being manipulated by a master gamewright? After all, if Julia is the clear loser in this tale, then Donna Inez doubtless finishes as the champion.

The narrator obviously distrusts Inez. He states quite openly that "Alfonso's loves with Inez were well known" (1.176.2), and that she must have "had some other motive . . . for leaving Juan to this new temptation [Julia]" (1.101.3-4). That motive, he suggests, might be "to open Don Alfonso's eyes, / In case he thought his wife too great a prize" (1.101.7-8). If so, it was probably her plotting which provoked Antonia to cry out on that November night, "Who can have put my master in this mood?" (1.171.2).

The narrator, however, well-placed within the tangle of Sevillian society and a bit of an intriguer himself, also recognizes Inez's cunning. It is he, after all, who reports some time later from St. Petersburg that Juan has received a letter from home full of maternal advice and a little news. Juan now has "a little brother / Born in a second wedlock" (10.32.6-7). Inez does not name her new husband, though, a fact unsurprising only if he is Alfonso, the husband cuckolded by Juan himself.

Judging by the outcome, then, of the complicated maze of game-playing in Canto One, Inez must be declared the winner. Her agons with José and Julia amount to zero-sum games: everything they lose, she gains. When she marries
her prize, Alfonso, and provides him an heir, everything he has becomes available to her and their son. The narrator suggests that the Inezes of the extra-textual world, however, may not be winning the ultimate prize. They singlemindedly play for advantage, experiencing little of the joie de vivre known to such as Julia. In the midst of recounting her love story, the tale teller pauses to praise pleasure, the Promethean fire of life. He reminisces about the sweetnesses of life—the moments that live in our memories even when we are forgotten. Oars dripping dark water, the joy of recognition in a loving eye, even an unexpected windfall at a relative's death, all are celebrated for the richness they give to life. The agon brings pleasure, he admits: "'Tis sweet to win . . . one's laurels / By blood or ink . . . " (1.126.1-2),

But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,  
Is first and passionate love—it stands alone,  
Like Adam's recollection of his fall;  
The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd—all's known—  
And life yields nothing further to recall  
Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,  
No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven  
Fire which Prometheus filch'd for us from heaven.  (1.127)

It was Julia, not Inez, who played for pleasure. Even confined within the echoing walls of a nunnery, it is Julia, not Inez, who wins at the game of life.

II

After the scandal caused by Juan and Julia's affair, Inez sends her son on a Mediterranean voyage designed to "wean him from the wickedness of earth / And send him like
a dove of promise forth" (2.8.7-8). It does no such thing, of course, at least not in the way she intended, but what it lacks in moral efficacy it makes up for in narrative purpose. Just like the real Don Juan, Juan is shipwrecked on a Greek island and rescued by the beautiful daughter of a fisherman. Sadly, he is a fisher of men, the narrator points out, a pirate who interrupts the couple's unwedded bliss and shanghais Juan to Constantinople to be sold in the slave market.

Juan's time among the Turks is as crucial to the development of his character as it is to his tale. He catches the eye of the Sultana, who instructs her servant to buy him and transport him to the palace. During his confrontation with Gulbeyaz there, he assumes his most active stance in all the love relationships of Don Juan. Ironically, his strong self-assertion results in a rebuff of her sexual advances unseen in any other episodes. After such an uncompromising rejection, though, he makes a surprising and very rhetorical shift in his attitude toward Gulbeyaz, barely salvaging her queenly ego. This accommodation to the women in his life, with or without emotional attraction, becomes a pattern of behavior for Juan which continues until the poem breaks off in the seventeenth canto. Whereas in his first two romances he was infatuated with his heroines, it is in the Sultana's palace that the young Juan deliberately chooses to use his sexuality as a means of coping and surviving in an unpredictable world.
As a slave for sale to the highest bidder, Juan's first experience in Turkey particularizes for the Western reader the nature of the mid-Eastern culture into which the young hero has been unceremoniously unloaded from Lambro's ship. It is a closed society, epitomized by the institutions of slavery and polygamy, both of which Juan will personally experience during his stay. As a foreigner in a non-Christian, non-European country, Juan introduces a new love game, or perhaps a variation of the same game played by Western rules. His honest reactions to the practices and beliefs of those he encounters offer the reader, with few exceptions, Byron's own assessment of the culture recalled from his visit with Ali Pasha years earlier—a place "[w]here people always did as they were bid, / Or did what they should not with foreign graces" (13.23.3-4). The Sultan's absolute rule extends throughout the culture: even Lambro's court poet, the "eastern anti-jacobin" has sung his best politically reactionary ballads to please "the Sultan and the Pacha" (3.79.3,7). For those "who did what they should not," in whatever realm, control is maintained by a routine use of violence unmatched in any of the other love episodes. Even the queenly Gulbeyaz, the Sultan's favorite wife, plays her love games at great personal risk. A privileged victim of her own society, she plays expertly if mechanically, within the limitations placed upon her. At the end, though, she rejects Juan's transformative influence on her and refuses to transcend her own self-imposed restrictions.
Byron frames Juan's latest predicament almost immediately in terms of a game. The slave market where Juan stands reminds the narrator of the ancient board game which originated in the land of Juan's captivity:

Like a backgammon board the place was dotted
   With whites and blacks, in groups on show for sale,
   Though rather more irregularly spotted:
       Some bought the jet, while others chose the pale.
It chanced amongst the other people lotted,
   A man of thirty, rather stout and hale,
   With resolution in his dark gray eye,
       Next Juan stood, till some might choose to buy. (5.10)

Although it does not impose upon this canto a rigid pattern, the game of backgammon is a useful metaphor. It suggests, first of all, a visual image: the groupings by race of the men and women for sale at the market; but, more importantly, it reminds the reader of a mode of play common to many games--the interaction of agon and alea. Success in backgammon as played in Byron's day depended largely on fortunate rolls of the dice. The element of skill lay in positioning the pieces so that the most advantage could be gained from whatever number was thrown. The adept player, then, increased his odds of winning by remaining alert and prepared to take quick advantage of any stroke of good fortune.

Exactly that style of play in the game of life, it turns out, is espoused by the gentleman standing next to Juan on the block. An English mercenary fighting for the Russian army against the Turks, the generically-named John Johnson has mastered the ability to survive in spite of the

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sometimes perilous fluidity of his situation. Wounded, enslaved, he is nonetheless characterized by a remarkable "sang-froid" (5.11.7)—the typical English "stiff upper lip"—that contrasts with the discouragement and fear of many of those around him. More than that, he actually seems able to find enjoyment even in his own deplorable circumstances by the sharing of a little "blunt compassion" (5.12.5).

Johnson's most important contribution to Juan's growing equanimity, however, is his realistic assessment of their immediate situation and plain-spoken advice about what to expect from life in general. "Fortune has play'd you here a pretty freak," he sympathizes like an older brother/backgammon player,

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But that's her way with all men till they're tried;
But never mind,—she'll turn, perhaps, next week;
She has served me also much the same as you,
Except that I have found it nothing new.
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(5.14.4-8)

Lady Luck, the pretty girl whose fickle toying with men instructs and tests them, represents for Johnson the nature of life as he has known it. Like a snake repeatedly shedding its skin, he confides to Juan, his illusions' brilliant promises fade and are finally stripped away by the real world. Then, new dreams form and are destroyed in their turn. The adaptable Johnson, however, is a born survivor, as is Juan. More experienced but not old enough to be Juan's father, the Englishman models for Juan the paradoxical art of a vigorous fatalism. The ever-varying
circumstances of life demand skillful reconnoitering and readjustment, but in an actual agon with life, he admits, the individual will rarely emerge the victor:

To strive too with our fate were such a strife
As if the corn-sheaf should oppose the sickle:
Men are the sport of circumstances, when
The circumstances seem the sport of men.

(5.17.4-8)

Life is a sport, but he warns Juan never to forget that all is not as it seems. Even as they think they initiate their own moves, create their own reality, men are not the players, but the playthings of the unpredictable forces in their lives.

The youthful Juan dismisses such talk as highly speculative and probably irrelevant. Johnson simply shrugs. In their present inside-out situation, there are lessons to be learned, perspectives to be re-evaluated, whether as players or game pieces. When circumstances shift—and they will--those who are now servants will once again be masters, and they will remember. But for now, neither Juan nor Johnson sees himself as anything but powerless. Exposed to public view in the slave market, they suffer from an exquisite sense of their own vulnerability, and, as Johnson exclaims, "... wish to G-d that somebody would buy us!" (5.24.8). Game pieces moved at the whim of Fancy, almost anything would be better than the inscrutable, labyrinthine future they now face.

Even as Johnson speaks, the Sultana's eunuch, Baba, has commenced the ritualized contest held between buyer and seller which will result in his purchase of the two men.
According to rules agreed upon in a thousand Middle Eastern bazaars, he examines the merchandise—in this case, "a superior yoke of human cattle" (5.28.8)—and makes an offer which he knows will be refused. So begins the "battle" (5.28.7) which quickly rises to the level of verbal combat: "They haggled, wrangled, swore, too--so they did!" (5.28.4). But such ferocity cannot last long. In unspoken agreement, the merchant and the customer gradually lessen the intensity of their confrontation and finally arrive at a truce, a price amenable to both.

Although this study would establish the importance of the adversative activities throughout Don Juan, Baba's agon in the market carries particular significance for Juan's forthcoming encounter with Gulbeyaz. For, while Juan is frequently the prize for which women strive, nowhere else is he diminished to the status of merchandise with a monetary value—a game piece in a commodity game. The narrator emphasizes this reductive treatment by disputing the merchant's conscience and interjecting his own "curious sort of question, / About the right divine how far we should / Sell flesh and blood" (5.30.4-6). As well as dehumanizing Juan, his disempowerment by the Other—a castrated, non-Christian male for a powerful female—signals a carnivalesque scene to follow. For Juan, the role reversal will enable him to compete adequately in a female-dominated game.

Of course, at this point, the two European slaves know only that they have been purchased, and that they are being
conducted deep into Constantinople by an aged servant. Sensing an opportunity for escape, Juan suggests that he and Johnson "knock that old black fellow on the head, / And march away . . ." (5.43.7-8). The savvy Johnson, unwilling to fall like the aforementioned corn sheaf before the sickle (a castration image), discourages Juan from that course of action, recommending instead a more cautious strategy. Unarmed and alone in an unfamiliar city, the odds of their escape are extremely poor, and, opposed to risking all on a weak hand, Johnson, as always, would rather fold for now and bid from strength later. "'Tis therefore better looking before leaping--" (5.45.6), he counsels his headstrong young friend. "Besides," he adds pragmatically, "I'm hungry, and just now would take, / Like Esau, for my birthright a beef-steak" (5.44.7-8). But the Englishman is always careful to provide a "saving clause." Things may be quite different after supper, "[a]nd then I'm with you, if you're for a row" (5.47.6,8), he pledges.

Later, deep within the maze of the palace's wide halls and ornate chambers, Johnson and Juan's aptitude for accommodation is tested in bizarre and unexpected ways. Baba soon presents them with elaborate clothing appropriate for the new roles they were purchased to play. As their guide caparisons Johnson in the dress of a Turkish dandy, though, he offers some startling advice: "'Twould greatly tend to better their condition, / If they would condescend to circumcision" (5.69.7-8).
In the exchange which follows, Johnson once again models for Juan his ability to play skillfully, even from a vulnerable position. Quickly, smoothly, "thanking [Baba] for this excess / Of goodness, in thus leaving them a voice / In such a trifle" (5.70.4-6), Johnson half grants and half withholds his agreement to "so respectable an ancient rite" (5.71.2). Stunned, Juan, still a "hot youth" untutored in rhetorical skills, emphatically protests: "'Strike me dead, / But they as soon shall circumcise my head!'" (5.71.7-8). Johnson, the better gamester, interrupts before Baba can make Juan's metaphoric outburst a literal reality and diplomatically promises their sincerest contemplation of Baba's kind offer.

But poor Juan next faces not a repugnant offer, but an embarrassing and unavoidable command. Brought openly into the Sultan's palace, he must now be smuggled at great risk into its hidden heart, the Sultan's harem. After seeing Juan for himself, Baba has contrived a dangerous game: he will dress Juan as an odalisque and escort "her" boldly into Gulbeyaz's presence. But once again, Juan resists Baba's script--this time to dress in lacy petticoats--and scornfully kicks at the clothing, "not being in a masquerading mood" (5.73.5). The lives of everyone involved--Baba, Juan, and Gulbeyaz--are already in grave jeopardy, however, and the old eunuch, who coaches the real players in this high-stakes game, attempts to secure Juan's co-operation first by reason, and finally by threats. "Incense me," he mutters ominously, "and I call / Those
who will leave you of no sex at all" (5.75.7-8). Juan reluctantly assents.

Baba now transforms Juan by costume and cosmetics into an ingenue malgré lui--a defamiliarized game "counter"--in a narrative twist which recalls the London pantomime theatre. In a straightforward stock episode included for comic effect, Don Juan Tenorio had entered harems in female disguise on stages all across Europe for many years. This complex episode in Juan's life, though, resonates with the interplay of alternative voices. Although the feminized Juan, Juanna, may tease about becoming the Sultan's concubine, he cannot escape the chilling sense that the footsteps behind him may be those of a nameless executioner. Still in his teens, Juan must quickly learn to act the part, to balance precariously between the sensuous pleasures of the "Prophet's paradise" (5.81.8) and a brutal sexual mutilation or sudden, anonymous death. He has been hidden in bed linens by Julia; he has been dressed in unfamiliar clothes by Haidée; now, for the first time, he must willingly and convincingly masquerade as the very being, Woman, who has hitherto exerted such control over his life. Instead of gaining the feminine power he has come to know so well, however, he may now surrender himself into the hands of a woman in an alien, non-European environment. Facing the libidinous Gulbeyaz, Juan has two choices: he may overtly resist absorption by the Other, or he may learn to play the game, cleverly utilizing his very vulnerability to female influence as his method of survival.
in what has lately been an unpredictable and threatening universe. With Johnson as teacher and Baba as guide, Juan learns to act in concert with his own profoundly rhetorical nature for the first time. Just as the women in his life have adopted the methods of their seducers, so Juan eventually learns to play this woman's "game at hearts" for the same stakes and by the same rules.

If Juan were a serious soul, truer to his central self and less able to compromise, his story and his life might well have ended in the waters of the Bosphorus. But he discovers as he plays that masqueing is, in fact, a spontaneous act for him. So despite the fact that he has only two apparent choices concerning Gulbeyaz--to resist or to give in--he is still constitutionally unable to limit himself by committing to one path or the other. Without consciously deciding to do so, he naturally plays with his contradictory options, exploring all possible roles within this game where his luck, the real game master at this point, has landed him. It is no surprise, then, to find embedded in the text foreshadowings of an agon between Juan and Gulbeyaz which will prove to be an unanticipated and perplexing obstacle to her plans.

For example, in the earliest scene of this episode, the narrator describes the commerce of the slave market in terms of backgammon, a game in which the outcome relies largely on luck. The fate of the two European prisoners rests with such things as the tightfistedness of a dealer, the temporary needs of a buyer, or the casual glance of a
veiled lady. Purchased by an unknown bidder, the men are taken away by Baba, and the role of Fortune very gradually diminishes as images of skilled struggle briefly appear and are left behind. The palace where they are taken, for instance, stands as a dominant symbol of intrigue and captivity in the Turkish cantos. Honeycombed with halls and courtyards and private galleries, it seems to swallow up Juan and Johnson as soon as they enter. In fact, the narrator calls it the "labyrinth of love" (6.28.7), especially in reference to the inner apartments of the Sultan's wives and concubines where Juan is taken.

An archetypal image dating from pre-classical times, the labyrinth's power to suggest agonistic trial (Burke 83) and serious gameplay flows from the myth of Theseus and the Cretan minotaur. The real agon, the military struggle between the Greeks and the Cretans, had ended, and the prize—an annual fee of seven youths and seven maidens—had gone to the winners from Crete. The ceremony within the labyrinth, although technically a payment of a loser's penalty, simulates a game, a re-enactment of what has already occurred in the real world. Unfortunately for the victims, this ritualistic pseudo-game is one of terror, confusion, and death because its outcome has been predetermined. The same player, the monstrous Minotaur, wins every time, and not one loser escapes with his or her life. Not one, that is, until Theseus, the hero who sweet
talks a princess and outwits a kingdom to break free of his entrapment.

Similarly, Juan and Johnson's entrapment becomes steadily more apparent as they follow their guide through opulent chambers which seem to extend forever like the reflections in the mirrored walls of a funhouse maze. Hangers-on in every attitude of leisure fill the halls; among these squat players too engrossed in games of chess to look up when the three men pass. Chess, the only other game alluded to by name in the Turkish cantos, is a significantly different pastime from backgammon. The backgammon pieces move primarily at the whim of the dice, but chess is purely a game of intellectual skill based on the agon of battle. Its very mention confirms the growing tendency for Juan to take a more active, Theseus-like stance toward his captors. Perhaps the players in the palace act out in a board game what they dare not in real life, but Juan as a foreign newcomer (and a young one at that) will have to learn the rhetorical skills of negotiating the new rules which he introduces into the harem.

In a further foreshadowing of Juan's confrontation with Gulbeyaz, the narrator admiringly describes the scenes portrayed on the heavy bronze door to the sanctum santorum, the harem itself. He states that it is "carved in curious guise" (5.86.2), perhaps because it opens to the beauties of the seraglio instead of the armory:
Warriors thereon were battling furiously;  
Here stalks the victor, there the vanquished  
lies;  
There captives led in triumph droop the eye.  
(5.86.3-5)

No such "brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting" (9.4.3) 
battles take place within the palace; the antagonists 
employ different weapons, generate different wounds. In 
the unseen power struggles, though, the blood runs just as 
deep. Advisors jockey for position; concubines dream of a 
Sultan's favor; faithless wives and their hapless lovers 
disappear in the night, leaving their places to be filled 
by others.

Juan, however, is not a castrated or executed lover, at 
least not yet. When he follows Baba through the great 
bronze doors, he still does not know why he must "[unsex] 
his dress" (5.75.6) and walk past the guards with a mincing 
step. But he will discover the truth in short order, for 
the woman impatiently waiting for him on the other side of 
the door has no inclination to dawdle. The Sultan's 
beautiful favorite of his four wives and fifteen hundred 
concubines, Gulbeyaz meets Juan in a series of ludic moves 
based on carefully choreographed ceremony, semi-ritualistic 
maneuvers, and, due to Juan's introduction of Western 
"rules," extemporaneous strategies.

Awed by the splendor of his surroundings and confused 
by Eastern custom, Juan kneels and bows his head with Baba 
in the presence of the queenly Gulbeyaz. After a brief 
conference with her eunuch, she dismisses her female 
attendants, clearing the stage for a rendezvous with her
latest, ironically termed, "fancy." Baba alone remains to demonstrate the proper way to approach a sultana. Like Antonia and Zoe, Baba is not a player himself, but is nevertheless indispensable to the game: he serves as the Sultana's pander, as Juan's coach, and at this awkward moment, as a referee-negotiator between two people who are about to become opponents.

For Baba, steeped in the values of a non-European, autocratic culture, the simple gesture of submission—kissing Gulbeyaz's foot—he next requires of Juan acknowledges in routine fashion the hierarchy of power from which none of them can depart intact. Swift and violent acts support this power. The young Spaniard has already been faced with progressively severe threats—loss of foreskin, loss of genitalia, and now loss of life—as his refusal to play according to Turkish rules of etiquette shocks and exasperates his tutor. Baba fiercely chides, then threatens with the garrote, all to no avail. The threat of castration may have gotten Juan into a dress, but better "a thousand swords / A thousand times of him had made an end" (5.104.5-6) than for the young nobleman to compromise his Western concept of honor.

But compromise is the quick-thinking Baba's strong suit, and, as soon as he realizes the strength of Juan's obstinacy, he suggests an alternative to the developing agon: Could Juan kiss Gulbeyaz's hand? A familiar gesture of respect rather than subservience, the substitute move satisfies both the kissed, and especially the kisser:
For through the South, the custom [not the lady] still commands
The gentleman, to kiss the lady’s hands.
(5.105.7-8)

This cross-cultural detente leaves Baba pleased and ready to wish the couple a pleasant evening. "Well-used to the retreating trade" (5.107.3), he departs, exhorting Juan to relax and enjoy himself.

The playful scene which follows is potentially even funnier than Julia’s tirade against Alfonso back in Seville. The reader must never forget that during the entire seduction episode, the object of Gulbeyaz’s affection is to all appearances a lovely maiden. So complete is Juan’s "transformation" (5.80.5) that even the Sultan himself, a man of no small experience with women, later takes him for that which he is not. The Sultan’s mild expression of interest causes much jealousy among the harem girls because he so rarely notices one of them. Juanna must be fair indeed.

In this carnivalesque scenario, if Juan makes a pretty girl, then Gulbeyaz certainly makes a virile ruler. Her classic beauty combines with her haughtiness, giving her an air "[o]f half-voluptuousness and half command" (5.108.8) such as Juan has not yet encountered, but anticipating that of Catherine in Russia. The narrator damns with faint praise the physical perfection that has guaranteed her the position of preference she enjoys because

somehow, there was something somewhere wanting,
As if she rather order’d than was granting.
Something imperial, or imperious, threw

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A chain o'er all she did; that is, a chain
Was thrown as 'twere about the neck of you.--
(5.109.7-8; 110.1-3)

Just as Castlereagh, in the introduction, chains
countries, so Gulbeyaz attempts to bind those humans under
her control. She does not acknowledge, or perhaps she does
not know, that "our souls at least are free" (5.110.6).
Juan is now her "property" (5.116.4), and she invites him
to be her lover with all the finesse of the Sultan's
liveryman stabling his newest stallion. One of the least
engaging, in some ways, of Juan's amours, the Sultana
nevertheless garners the reader's sympathy. On one hand,
she acts just as the Sultan acts: she sees what she
wants--a handsome slave--and buys him. But her situation
differs profoundly from her husband's. By seeking sexual
variety as he does, she stakes everything she has,
everything she is, on her skill at the game of adultery.
Imprisoned in a palace, she is still imprisoned, and she
subconsciously compensates for that unperceived inequity by
upending the male-female relationship of her culture
whenever she can.

Skilled as she is, though, the Sultana's love play
still falls short of the ideal love Juan experiences with
Haidée. In the mode of Coleridge's Fancy, Gulbeyaz gathers
those "fixities and definites" which, like a spoiled child,
she desires or even ["supposes"] she desires:

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.

Juan, the latest of her whims had caught
Her eye in passing on his way to sale;
She order'd him directly to be bought.

(5.113.1-6; 5.114.1-3)

Juan, the latest object which the Sultana would transform into her plaything, is, in fact remade into Juanna by Baba, but only superficially, and only temporarily.

So it is that the Sultana turns to Juan, "[h]im whom she meant to tutor in love's ways" (5.122.5), and coolly asks the Turkish equivalent of the question phrased in a thousand ways: "Christian, canst thou love?" (5.116.7). Unheroically, but quite consistent with his appearance, Juan remembers Haidée and bursts into tears. This is the high point of the carnivalesque reversal of gender roles in the Turkish cantos. The defamiliarization of Juan, the male lover, has at once both made him more feminine and emphasized his underlying masculinity. It also further focuses the reader's attention on the roles of the players rather than the players themselves. By playing the part of the aggressive, unemotional male to Juan's passive, tearful female, Gulbeyaz has placed herself in a position superior to the man. Just as she has been made the sexual property of her husband, she now expects to possess Juan in the same way.

Gulbeyaz is temporarily vexed by Juan's response. Nothing like this, quite probably, has ever happened before during one of her liaisons. Her social position and her physical beauty should have secured a warmer reply from this "debtor" (5.124.5) who owes her so much. Besides, the
narrator pauses to point out, Juan simply does not observe the rules of the game of adultery as played in Constantinople. He plays his own new game as though he is unaware of the element of urgency in an affair conducted under the very nose of the Sultan. No clock ticking away the minutes of a sporting event ever had a more powerful sense of inevitability than the time passing in Gulbeyaz's chamber. After all, opposing teams are customarily guaranteed a certain amount of time in which to play; Gulbeyaz's game may come to a precipitous and unannounced end at any moment. But Juan, unconcerned about Gulbeyaz's time-governed game of infidelity, clings loyally instead to the memory of the loving and creative moments on the beach with Haidée when, together, they remade the world into a nurturing place.

Gulbeyaz is not to be so easily denied, however. She swiftly recalculates her strategy, abandons her natural haughtiness, and takes on an ultra-feminine role. She gives Juan a long, sultry look; he is unmoved. Frustrated and embarrassed, the Sultana makes her final desperate move: burying her face in his chest, she wraps him in a lustful embrace, "and there she grew" (5.125.8). What she grew, or how she grew, the reader must imagine for herself, but the clear implication is that the attachment was forceful and highly lascivious.

The wickedly playful spirit of Don Juan is nowhere more evident to the Western reader than in the construction of this scene. When different cultures play similar games,
the roleplay sometimes gets confusing. What if a suspicious Sultan had returned unannounced, as Alfonso did, to visit his bride? What if he had found her in the arms of a lovely new servant girl? This, of course, is the country that gave its name to the Turkish bath, and Byron himself, writing to his mother of his visit to the Pasha, made oblique reference to an undercurrent of same-sex relationships among the men (L&J 1.250-1). So not only does this sexual imbroglio draw humor from the image of the playboy of the western world in drag, but the visual image created by this attempted seduction implies a further upending of the hetero/homosexual sub-culture in the Mid East.

There will be no successful seduction this evening, however. Juan, "steel'd by sorrow, wrath, and pride" (5.126.2), extricates himself from Gulbeyaz's embrace and passionately defends, not love, but his freedom to love as he chooses. Obviously, his choice is not here, at least not yet. In this initially adamant refusal to play Gulbeyaz's game at all, Juan has in effect, stymied her last, best move toward a win. Eric Berne, in his best-seller, Games People Play, calls it the "Potiphar's wife maneuver" (126). Don Juan's narrator, in describing the Sultana's resulting tempestuous rage, uses chess terminology:

For ne'er till now she knew a check'd desire:
Even ye who know what a check'd woman is
(Enough, God knows!) would much fall short of
this. (5.134.6-8)
Interestingly, in a chess game, only the king can be checked, or put in grave danger of defeat if not made safe in the next move. If a pawn penetrates to the edge of the board on his opponent's side, he receives the power of another piece, usually a queen. Deep within her opponent's territory, the new queen, as the most powerful and most easily moved piece, poses a significant threat to the opposing king and often succeeds in checking him there. In a notably similar fashion, Juan is taken to the innermost heart of the palace, where he is "transformed" into a woman and succeeds in "checking" the kingly Gulbeyaz.

The game is not quite over yet, though. Humiliated, Gulbeyaz reviews her options for what she intends to be her final move in this contest:

Her first thought was to cut off Juan's head;
Her second, to cut only his--acquaintance;
Her third, to ask him where he had been bred;
Her fourth, to rally him into repentance;
Her fifth, to call her maids and go to bed;
Her sixth, to stab herself; her seventh, to sentence
The lash to Baba;--but her grand resource
Was to sit down again, and cry of course. (5.139)

By reverting instinctively to that most feminine of strategies, crying, Gulbeyaz almost snatches victory from certain defeat. Her tears flow from genuine frustration, and she wins by becoming weak what she could never gain in her pride and her power. Juan's heroic intent "dissolve[s] like snow before a woman crying" (5.141.8), and before he knows it, the two sides seem ready for an armistice.

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Juan begs her pardon with stumbling excuses, and Gulbeyaz begins to wonder if she might not grant it when the game is interrupted by Baba. The tyrannical forces in the real world which will always prevent her from participating in a satisfying, transformative love relationship have returned, and all her skillful maneuvering cannot defeat them. Baba informs them that gametime has indeed expired and that an intermission must be taken because "[t]he Sun himself has sent me like a ray / To hint that he is coming up this way" (5.144.7-8). Startled and dismayed, the Sun's bride cries out, "Is it . . . as you say? / I wish to heaven he would not shine till morning!" (5.145.1-2). But the wishes of the playworld have no force against the unstoppable intrusion by the real world in the person of the Sultan himself. The playspace in which Juan and Gulbeyaz have been sparring dissolves into the air, and the excitement of the coming rapprochement into her keen disappointment.

It is important to remember that the Sultan's unexpected appearance is no mere inconvenience for Gulbeyaz. The practice in the polygamous Moslem countries of the merchandising and subjugation of women through marriage and various forms of concubinage had taken on an exotic (and erotic) fascination for Western readers of travel books and oriental romances. Byron had played to this audience in his own romances and appears to be doing so again in the voyeuristic sleeping harem scene in the sixth canto. But as the reader has already learned, almost
nothing in *Don Juan* is to be taken at face value. Byron, with his usual empathy for women and their plight, portrays these Eastern, game-playing women as trapped within the same social and political boundaries as their European sisters. Their sexual bondage symbolizes their bondage—which is severe—within society as a whole.

The attitudes which prevent a natural, healthy expression of love and sexuality in this alien culture, however, are much more rigorous than those in Europe. Thus, when the narrator points out that "in the East they are extremely strict, / And Wedlock and a Padlock mean the same" (5.158.1-2), Byron literalizes the wordplay when the guards and the great brass doors shut off the harem from the rest of the world. The Sultana's boudoir is the only one Juan enters which is locked from the outside. There, though the women, even the sultanas, suffer from emotional "inanition" (6.9.5), it hardly matters, since they exist only to provide comfort and pleasure "as one may like to have a fan" (6.91.4).

Retribution for transgressions of the Turkish sexual code is immediate and ruthless. Women who wander outside their boundaries (or who bring others in) find themselves and their lovers bound, placed in bags, and dropped into the Bosphorus to feed the fishes. The sexual element is central even to the punishment meted out to men for other infractions: for instance, Baba threatens Juan with castration when he resists putting on a dress, and the Sultana considers it when he refuses her advances! Baba's
very existence as a eunuch testifies to the barbarity of a
culture willing to sexually mutilate its servants in order
to make possible the sexual confinement of its women.

So, as Juan disappears into the "labyrinth of love"
with fifteen hundred other concubines, Gulbeyaz remains
with the Sultan to play her most challenging--and
crucial--role, that of an adoring wife. Although her plans
for love-making with her latest game token were
interrupted, the Sultan himself expects "the welcome of a
lover" (6.13.7), and, as always, she meets his demands.
Gulbeyaz, in fact, may have "over[done] her part" (6.19.1),
but she is in no danger, for he is too vain to detect any
false note in her performance. Her evening with him,
though, contrasts strikingly with Haidée and Juan's.
Afterwards, Gulbeyaz lies awake beneath her window,
watching the night sky just as Haidée had done on the
beach. For Haidée, though, the diffusing, unifying power
of the Byronic Fancy causes "Love's, and Night's and
Ocean's solitude, / [to] [o'erflow] her soul with their
united power" (2.198.2-3); Gulbeyaz, in contrast, waits "in
dudgeon to sigh for the light / Of the grey morning"
(6.24.4-5). Haidée feels "rapture" (2.196.7) as she
"pillow[s] on her o'erflowing heart" (2.195.7) Juan's head
as he sleeps. Not so Gulbeyaz--she "toss[es]" and
"tumble[s]," afraid that her "too lawful bed-fellow should
wake" (6.24.7-8). Haidée and Juan's love acts upon their
world and themselves to "idealize and to unify"; the sexual
activity occurring between the royal couple isolates and
estranges.

If Gulbeyaz, then, is prevented by her circumstances
from engaging in the kind of creative activity which I
ascribe to the Byronic Fancy, what is the nature of her
play? Her assumption of one role after another--the cool
seductress, the passionate seductress, the affectionate
wife--raises an interesting question: Is the agile
Gulbeyaz a rhetorical or a serious player? Not the skilled
intriguer that Inez turns out to be (Baba must contrive
much of her strategy for her), the Sultana does not share
Julia's gift for drama, either. None of her devices prove
effective with Juan; only when her strategies are blocked
again and again by Juan's idealism does she break down into
the sincere tears that soften his resolve. A determined
role player, Gulbeyaz is competent enough to achieve her
latest fancy or avoid an unpleasant situation, but she does
not play her part with the gusto of the free-spirited
Julia, for example. Julia mimics the wronged wife so well
that Alfonso, lacking any solid evidence of either her
infidelity or her faithfulness, believes her in spite of
his better judgment. More significant, though, as
evidenced by the creativity and exuberance her tirade
against her husband shows, she relishes the act itself of
mimicry, not merely the prize gained by a winning
performance. Caught up in her own posing, she almost
convinces herself that she is innocent. Gulbeyaz plays, as
Julia does, for advantage and for the prize of pleasure,
but she is never carried away by the sheer enjoyment of the play itself. She remains true to her central self instead of becoming the character she portrays. Calculating and tenacious, she plays the game of adultery as a means to a serious end.

Juan, on the other hand, gradually recognizes and surrenders to his own rhetorical nature. Glimpses of his natural tendency to take pleasure in roleplay appear throughout the evening. As he and Johnson are about to part, for example, Johnson cannot help but smile at the vision in pink lace which stands before him. Juan, who had resisted this disguise almost to the death, is now caught up in the spirit of play. "Keep your good name," the older man teases, "though Eve herself once fell." "Nay," retorts Juanna with a wink and a curtsy, "the Sultan's self shan't carry me, / Unless his highness promises to marry me" (5.84.6-8). When his Highness actually does take notice of the pretty "new-bought virgin," Juanna finds herself the center of attention and accordingly begins to "blush and shake" convincingly (5.156.2), entirely appropriate behavior for a shy maid under such conditions. In these and later situations, because Juan lacks a serious, central self, he finds great satisfaction in taking on the challenge of a new role to play, a new personality to express. By thus identifying so closely with his part, he
also instinctively represents himself with ingenuousness and authenticity.

For Juan, then, roleplaying has no hint of hypocrisy about it; he is truest to his own nature when he transgresses the boundaries of nationality, privilege, or gender. In Don Juan and Regency England, Peter Graham examines the contest between Juan and Gulbeyaz with an eye to the ways that the "is-and-is-not" of masquerade both reveals and informs their poetic identities. Juan's essence is his mobility, he points out: "Between the poem's first and last moments, we find Juan always being himself by always acting the part that falls to him, always staying true to himself by keeping faith with the changing demands of time, place, company, and circumstance" (81). Juan has possessed a rhetorical nature from birth, as many critics note, but not until his time spent under Johnson's tutelage and his "psychosexual pas de deux" (81) with Gulbeyaz does he consciously adopt a ludic stance in his affairs of the heart.

The softening of his opposition to Gulbeyaz's advances results more from his native gallantry than any willingness to accommodate himself to fluid circumstances. Juan's encounter with Dudu, however, signifies an important shift in his attitude toward women of beauty or power. For the first time, he clearly chooses a sexual relationship based purely on physical attraction. In this case, the object of his attraction is the "sleepy Venus" (6.42.1), Dudu, to
whose bed he is assigned until a place can be prepared for him within the harem.

Juan's interlude with Dudu, a warm and affectionate Rubenesque beauty, serves as an enforced intermission in the game of seduction he plays with Gulbeyaz. The Sultana has introduced him to the world of sex for fun, uncomplicated by the emotional involvement love requires. In fact, love would subvert such an amusement because of its earnestness and idealism. A liaison with Dudu requires no more of an emotional commitment than does one with Gulbeyaz, but for entirely different reasons. Whereas Gulbeyaz plays hard for personal gain instead of love, Dudu can hardly be said to play at all until she discovers Juanna's secret in the most extraordinarily unexpected way. It is only after she cries out in the middle of the night, awakening the entire harem, that she must play the part of the nightmare-bedeviled girl, at once terrified and embarrassed by her dream. Having already gained, through an incredible stroke of luck, the "[thing]" or two "all . . . ladies want" 6.51.7) (especially those in a seraglio), she has had no time to consider or expect any sort of emotional bond at all. Her tongue-tied performance succeeds because she has always belonged to the "silent class" (6.49.8) of non-players, and her present behavior, therefore, excites no suspicion among the odalisques or their overseer, the "Mother of the Maids" (6.30.8).

The frustrated Sultana, a bit testy after a sleepless night, is not so trusting, however. When Baba reports that
Juan has spent the night with one of her husband's concubines, Gulbeyaz flies into a rage. She knows that Juan's budding response to her advances the evening before was born of lust rather than love, and even he, the naive and idealistic semi-novice, must know it too. Gulbeyaz, cooler and more experienced than he, plays the game of adultery with an understanding of her opponent's weaknesses and capabilities. The Sultana feels certain, now that Juan has agreed to enjoy the pleasures of an uncomplicated sensual relationship with her, he is capable of doing so with any other attractive female. Though she cannot yet know it for sure, her intuition tells her that Juan has already taken advantage of an autumn night in a bed warmed by the "large and languishing and lazy" (6.41.7) Dudu. Baba also suspects as much, and he intercedes, once again, to remind his mistress of the stakes she stands to lose if she plays recklessly. As Gulbeyaz petulantly reminds him, Baba stands outside of the games of passion in another way, too. He is a eunuch, and thus particularly able to advise her dispassionately concerning the "rules" of love and lust which govern her game. Destroying the one she desires out of anger and spite, he warns her, will only insure that everyone loses.

The proud Sultana, though, refuses to listen. In her mind, she has been bested by a rank beginner, and she intends to even the score permanently. There will be no rematch, no awkward reminder of her humiliation. Hardened by the inflexibility of her own circumstances, she orders
Baba to exact the ultimate penalty from the one who did to her what she intended to do to the Sultan. From the beginning, Gulbeyaz's game has only two possible outcomes: she wins (a successful seduction) or he loses (no seduction, his execution). Mercifully for Juan and Dudu, the narrator steps in, and in a maneuver in the best of the _deus ex machina_ tradition, ends the game by removing Juan from the board entirely and placing him in the middle of the Russo-Turkish war.

Does this abrupt removal of the young man who is both Gulbeyaz's opponent and her prize constitute a defeat for her? Even at the worst, probably not. Gulbeyaz's plans are blocked, certainly; she fails to consummate either her affair or her revenge. But the brazen Sultana also escapes certain discovery by avoiding an agon with the Sultan (who has already remarked on Juanna's beauty) over Juan which she ultimately cannot win. There are other positive outcomes as well for the strong-willed Gulbeyaz. In the first place, her interaction with Juan in the carnivalesque seduction scene puts her in touch with the undeveloped feminine side of her personality. She has for so long played for control according to the masculine rules of her society that she has almost lost the traditionally feminine ability to empathize. When Juan weeps at the memory of Haidée's love,

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    she would have consoled, but knew not how;
    Having no equals. . . .

    But nature teaches more than power can spoil,
    And, when a strong although a strange
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sensation,
Moves--female hearts are such a genial soil
For kinder feelings, whatso'er their nation,
They naturally pour the 'wine and oil,'
Samaritans in every situation;
And thus Gulbeyaz, though she knew not why,
Felt an odd glistening moisture in her eye.

Coleridgean Fancy, "a mode of Memory" (516), easily recalls
that night of love, but only the Byronic Fancy can use
Juan's recollection as a powerful agent of change in a
haughty queen. In the Bakhtinian sense, female superiority
in Gulbeyaz's already upended world has been overset again:
the powerless male briefly controls the situation,
ironically by an ostensibly feminine tactic, and even
instructs Gulbeyaz by causing her to re-examine the Middle
Eastern canons of social contact. Her temporary relaxation
of those conventions allows her to view her world and the
people in it unconditionally and as a whole because she
herself has, however briefly, experienced emotional
wholeness.

The contemplation of a parallel universe where
nineteenth-century Turkish social standards are overturned
initiates a intense agon within Gulbeyaz's mind. When Juan
first refuses to demur to the privilege granted the Sultana
by birth and marriage, she vacillates between sending him
to the block and just sending him away so she can go to bed
and cry. Later, when Baba reveals that the "Mother of the
Maids" put Juan into Dudu's care, Gulbeyaz "proved in that
brief agony / What she could ne'er express" (6.106.7-8):
she blushes; she blanches; she collapses; she rises to pace
the room. Her pride of place finally takes precedence over

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her newly-awakened human kindness, though, and she summarily sends Baba off on his ominous errand of punishment.

If Gulbeyaz can take rightful pride in anything other than her social position, it must be in the skillful play which gives her tightly circumscribed life richness and meaning. Even though endowed with hereditary and conjugal advantage, she remains unsatisfied and toys with the boundaries imposed upon her. The narrator remarks with feigned piety that Gulbeyaz's infidelity is immoral and her judgment faulty, but, he admits, she was brought to this place by emotional "inanition":

For were the Sultan just to all his dears,
She could but claim the fifteenth hundred part
Of what should be monopoly--the heart. (6.9.6-8)

Many of the fifteen hundred harem girls, however, whose bosoms are "beating for love as the caged birds for air" (6.26.8), choose instead to surrender to the hothouse atmosphere of the oda and languish unresisting in its suffocating closeness. Precious few are the Dudus who are awakened in the night, incredulous, to a chance for pleasure and a second chance at life. Unlike Dudu, Gulbeyaz must struggle mightily and risk much to create such a liberating opportunity. The narrator acknowledges her self-centered scheming, but, in the midst of her story, in the midst of a ribald digression on the affairs of men and women, he pauses to admire the spirit of such a woman:

a headlong, headstrong, downright she,
Young, beautiful, and daring--who would risk
A throne, the world, the universe, to be

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Beloved in her own way, and rather whisk
The stars from out the sky, than not be free.

(6.3.1-5)

She will need every bit of her courage and determination,
too, for her most steadfast opponent is not Juan, or even
the Sultan, but the social and legal institutions of the
Moslem world represented metonymically for her by the
tradition of polygamy. Lusting for pleasure and power, her
personal struggle against the boundaries plays out simply,
uncomplicated by an emotional tangle of love, duty, and
disguised motives. She has already cozened her jailers
once when she and Baba smuggled Juan into her boudoir.
Only an unforeseeable bit of bad luck—-an impromptu visit
from His Highness—-cheats the Sultana, in her turn, of her
prize. As it did Julia, who was undone by a shoe, chance
denies Gulbeyaz the same trophy, Juan, which she nearly
wins by her skill and daring.

During his day and night in Constantinople, an
observant Juan, who is by turns plaything, player, and
prize, develops his own strategy for dealing with the
relationship between chance and merit in the world.
Brought into port against his will on a Greek slaver, he
faces an uncertain future in an unfamiliar land. From a
position of powerlessness within a random universe, Juan
evaluates his opportunities for engagement with the forces
acting on him. Some opportunities he rejects; others he
instinctively accepts, all the while negotiating his own
stance in relation to the other players. Roger Callois
describes games which combine the elements of agon and alea

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as the "very image of life" (75) because they require the player to play skillfully the hand that chance has dealt him. He further classifies agonistic and mimetic play as "active and creative" because the player's success depends upon both his will and his wit (76-7). Wounded and heartbroken, Juan on the slave block offers no resistance to the power of the cosmic dice, but, guided by Johnson and Baba, he learns when to oppose obstacles and when to adapt to them instead. The two principles of play which require intelligent persistence, agon and mimicry, are foregrounded throughout the episode as Juan grows cannier and more adept in their practice. By the time he is spirited out of the palace, he is a skilled gamesman. Violent encounters lie in his future which demonstrate the steadfastness of his courage and idealism, but in the games of the heart, he has learned that accommodation rather than confrontation is a surer path to pleasure and, sometimes, to survival.

III

Juan escapes from the dangerous intrigues of the Prophet's paradise only to become a mercenary soldier fighting in hand to hand combat for the Russians at the siege of Ismail. After the Russian victory over the Turks, he is decorated for his valor and chosen to carry the news of the battle to Catherine the Great herself. When Juan arrives at court, "Her Majesty looked down, the Youth looked up-- / And so they fell in love" (9.67.1-2)--or lust, in her case, and "self-love" (9.68.3) in his. In an episode perhaps most remarkable for its lack of gameplay,
Juan becomes the "man-mistress" (Medwin 164-5) of the Russian ruler until he grows ill from an excess of love-play and is sent on a diplomatic mission to England for a change of climate.

There Juan encounters for the first time after leaving home a society where the women's games of love are played in the Western mode. Unlike Haïdée and Gulbeyaz, the ladies of England and Spain are educated in the popular love literature of Western Europe. For Julia, it is "Petrarch's self . . . the Platonic pimp of all posterity" (5.1.7-8) and his imitators who shape her concept of love. The English ladies are caught up, instead, in the popular groundswell of sentimentalism, especially the heroes and heroines of the sentimental novel and drama. Both genres exemplify a literary standard of love, not usually a human one. Their appeal to honest emotion and ideals has lessened as their portrayal of authentic relationships has become clichéd and commonplace. Instead of reflecting life, the "woes of sentiment" become life for the idle rich, robbing it of its normal intensity and value. Literary "Romances," become a template for life, and, the narrator sighs, are "reduced to practice and perform'd like dances" (14.79.7-8).

As commonplace as sentimental literature may have become, its appeal to the ladies of the upper classes--both the jaded and the not-yet-jaded--is consistent with what Byron perceived to be their "awkward" situation (14.73.1). The love which the female readers sought in their own lives

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was often portrayed in their favorite novels as an all-consuming passion interweaving the heart, mind, and body in an intense experience (McGann Brain 32); it was expressed most conventionally in emotional terms, though, emotions often indulged in for their own sake in an attempt to escape the boredom of life in the "Great World." Byron refers to the sentimental in this sense and claims that neither the superficially physical nor the overheated emotional "love" will satisfy a woman's need for a deeply committed relationship:

The sensual for a short time but connects us--
The sentimental boasts to be unmoved. . . .

A something all-sufficient for the heart
Is that for which the Sex are always seeking.
(14.73.5-6; 74.1-2)

With that heart-need unmet, though, the ladies settle instead for a sort of quasi-intellectual substitute, an emotion manufactured in the mind.

These love games, contrived "in the head . . . as if they acted with the heart" (11.34.2,4), result from a fanciful, "rov[ing]," "excursive" mental activity "which serves our thinking people for a passion" (11.33.4-5,8): the Romantic Fancy. "Romantic heads are pretty painters" (11.33.3), Byron explains, but such activity cannot effect a transmutation of kind; it merely creates a desired appearance by its grouping and application of particular qualities. The ideal love of Juan and Haidee, in contrast, flows from natural feelings and needs no "ladies' lucubrations" (11.34.6):
This is in others a factitious state,
    An opium dream of too much youth and reading,
But was in [Juan and Haidée] their nature or
    their fate:
    No novels e'er had set their young hearts
    bleeding, . . .
So that there was no reason for their loves
More than for those of nightingales or doves.

(4.19.1-4; 7-8)

So completely a part of the natural world and each other
that there is no need for "reason" in their love, Juan and
Haidée represent the dream that the "vacant"-hearted
(14.74.3) ladies of England reach for in the only way they
know--the love game.

When Juan, the fascinating foreigner, appears in
British high society, fresh from war and love in Russia and
the East, he carries with him an aura of primitive energy
and sexuality that is belied (the ladies hope) by his
sophisticated diplomatic exterior. A wanderer, a darkly
handsome and reserved alien in their midst, he "com[es]
young from lands and scenes romantic, / Where lives not
law-suits must be risked for Passion" (12.68.1-2). His
feminine admirers can easily imagine him to be a mysterious
hero from a Gothic novel come to life--non-menacing, but
with just enough of a "past" to tantalize. They know that
he comes from worlds which they imagine to be extravagant
expansions of their own circumscribed lives, and
instinctively, they seek him out in hopes that he can bring
excitement and passion into their boring existence.

Juan's introduction to the ladies of England--a return
to the more familiar Western love game--constitutes a
return for Byron as well. He has been gone from England,
Byron notes nostalgically, for seven years, years of great social, economic, and political change. For practically the first time in the poem, there is almost no pretense that the narrator of the British cantos is anyone but Byron himself. (Thus, Don Juan becomes for many of Byron's contemporaries, a roman à clef, where, as in Gulliver's Travels, the reader is challenged to join the game of identifying the "real" people behind the fictional characters.) A self-exiled Englishman, the poet's reminiscences are tinged with the ache of homesickness, as much for a time as for a place, as much for the young man he was as for the people he knew when he was young. "Where is the world of eight years past?" he exclaims,

'Twas there--
I look for it--'tis gone, a Globe of Glass!
Cracked, shivered, vanished, scarcely gazed on,
ere
A silent change dissolves the glittering mass.
Statesmen, chiefs, orators, queens, patriots,
kings,
And dandies, all are gone on the wind's wings . . .

Talk not of seventy years as age! in seven
I have seen more changes, down from monarchs to
The humblest individual under heaven,
Than might suffice a moderate century through.
I knew that nought was lasting, but now even Change grows too changeable, without being new.

(11.76.3-8;82.1-6)

Too much change, too fast, but all, Byron muses, without really "being new." He holds in his mind at once both a very modern astonishment at the speed of change and a calm recognition that this latest variation is really another interval in an ancient cycle of human competition and
accomplishment: "To-morrow sees another race as gay / And transient, and devoured by the same harpy" (11.86.2-3). A backward look at yesterday's heat, then, might make tomorrow's race easier to run.

Within that context of historical patterning, his perception of this world as a place of transition and instability results in the narrator's urgent instruction to Juan to "Carpe diem, . . . carpe, carpe!" (11.86.1). Living expertly and fully (some would say rhetorically) in the present does not preclude thoughtful and creative revisiting of one's personal and national history as Childe Harold does in the graveyards and battlefields of his pilgrimage. The value of such reflection on a particular locale in the context of a specific time suggests Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope (Graham 163) as analyzed in his remarks on the power of the setting in Goethe's work. Commenting on the German author's Annals, Bakhtin notes his remarkable sensitivity to the interpenetration of space by the historical past. In certain regions of Western Europe which are permeated by the culture of the ancient Roman Empire, for instance, Goethe writes that he felt "enclosed in a magic circle." According to Bakhtin, the works inspired by these visits demonstrated an "inseparable unity" of time and space in which

a definite and absolutely concrete locality serves as the starting point for the creative imagination. But this is not an abstract landscape, imbued with the mood of the contemplator--no, this is a piece of human history, historical time condensed in space. Therefore, the plot . . . and the characters do not enter it from outside . . . ,
but are unfolded in it as though they were present from the very beginning. 
(Bakhtin Speech Genres 49)

This creation of a parallel world in which spatial and temporal realities are merged, suspended, and profoundly altered mirrors the activity of the Romantic imagination. It disperses the elements of the real world--time, human beings, physical location--and acts upon them, creating a seamless poetical garment. Byron created such a wholeness in Canto Two with the lovers; the sand, water, and sky; and the eternal present tense. In the English cantos, he does it again, its effectiveness heightened by his intimate knowledge of England, its upper classes, and the Regency years. Bakhtin, and Byron before him, understood the power that this locus of time and space gives a text. As Bakhtin explains, the chronotopic world "is a germinative seed, utterly real, visibly available, and at the same time filled with an equally real future that is growing out of it" (Speech Genres 50). By chronotopically recreating the social games of Regency England which he observed and played during his "years of fame" from 1811-1816, Byron can comment as well on the implications of such play in both the fictional realm of his narrative (1792) and the real world of Don Juan's composition (1822-23).

Having established his position regarding the Romantics in the early cantos, Byron has less to say on subjects poetical in the later ones, assuming a polemical tone concerning the politics and society of Western Europe. Although he has altered his technique, he continues to
demonstrate his own poetic theories in the episodes of flirtation and self-deception which complement the earlier literary/sexual encounters. He adroitly weaves the literary motif of the love game together with the tactics of play associated with such popular board games of the day as chess and Goose, linking them in a metaphoric relationship. Juan's amorous experiences with Julia and Gulbeyaz were also characterized by gamelike adversative and mimetic activities integral to the plot and the relationships between the lovers and other players, but no narrative discussion of the social foundations of such ludic structures occurs in the earlier cantos. Although similar social games were also implied in the Spanish and Turkish sections, Byron as narrator spends considerable time describing life in the English "Great World" in terms of a complicated competition for social position and political power. "Placemen" plot together in the glow of London's gas lamps, matchmakers scheme at masquerades and balls, and the handsome Spaniard "steer[s] with care through all that glittering sea / Of gems and plumes, and pearls and silks" (11.70.3-4) well before he meets the three ladies whose love game he will join at Norman Abbey.

Whatever economic and political power they may lack, the female aristocracy shares little of its domination of the social world of Regency England with husbands, brothers, or lovers. Byron had willingly subjected himself to the rule of the "Gynocracy" (12.66.4), both at home and as a cavalier servente in Italy, and he portrayed himself
somewhat disingenuously to his friends as a victim of that feminine autocracy:

I should like to know who has been carried off--except poor dear me--I have been more ravished myself than anybody since the Trojan war . . . I have been their martyr.--My whole life has been sacrificed to them & by them.

(L&J 6.237,257)

Byron's versified memoirs in the final section of Don Juan deal with this paradox of women who are restricted by law but empowered by their gender-based social role. In spite of his reputation as a wicked seducer, he actually feels a lifelong sympathy for a woman's situation even when he is confronted, in literature or in life, by the most manipulative or brazen behavior, as in the case of Julia or Gulbeyaz. He balances criticism and glorification of women by simultaneously satirizing their conduct and preserving the ideal of feminine beauty and character which they represent. The pettiness and selfishness which characterize so many noblewomen's lives, he would claim, result from their "unnatural situation" (2.201.6). Finding herself in the predicament made familiar by Jane Austen's heroines, a young woman of that day is unable to directly inherit even her own father's estate. She seeks security in a "good" marriage, usually achieved by the plotting of the Machiavellis of her social circle--her female relatives and friends--"(Who, by the by, when clever, are more handy / At making matches, where 'tis gold that glisters,' / Than their he relatives)" (12.32.4-6). Once she has won her prize, however, she finds that, all too often, even the most well-meaning husband has "something wanting"
(14.71.1), and that there are many who are far less desirable than that. Faced with nothing but "mockeries of the past" (2.199.5), her "bursting [heart] despond[s]," (2.200.4), and she plays at adultery, hypochondria, or religion to bring excitement or acquiescence to her life.

When portraying the games of love played by nineteenth-century English noblewomen, however, the narrator does not directly address the economic realities of their situation. Instead, he suggests that it is, ironically, a certain subconscious sense of insignificance pervading the lives of both sexes of the privileged class that fuels their search for stimulation and fulfillment. The "twice two thousand" souls who make up the Great World of business, afternoon carriage rides, and extravagant balls are, in their own eyes, those "for whom the earth was made" (13.49.2). In the memory of the poet first lionized, then cut by them, however, they are born

By no means to be very wise or witty
But to sit up while others lie in bed,
And look down on the universe with pity.

(11.45.4-6)

Rather than redeeming their mundane surroundings with their own creativity, they accumulate more and more insignificant tokens of their personal significance. Without a new mode of play, their predictable round of ludic activities will only temporarily satisfy their hunger for meaning.

Juan's aristocratic birth and inborn adaptability enable him to step easily into this realm of wealth and power. His diplomatic mission quickly fades in importance.

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as he becomes a friend to the young men of influence and the darling of the ladies. Anxious to gain an advantage of their own by their alliance with the handsome foreigner, his new friends introduce Juan, a skilled and eligible player, into the world of social events designed as arenas in which the contestants risk fortunes and reputations for the prizes they seek. Juan has already played this game in Catherine's court, an environment considered primitive by the English. It will be played in the future in other non-European settings by other English gentlemen—an interesting projection of the British experience in India and China.

The experienced man-about-town, Byron coaches the novice, like Juan, who "takes an active share" of this heady life (11.70.2), in the artful play of the young aristocrat. Juan's encounter with Gulbeyaz, for instance, conducted according to Turkish rules of seduction which allow "just two minutes for your declaration" (5.123.7), has left him ill-prepared for the more relaxed pursuit of English beauties. The ambitious male guest at an exclusive soiree receives advice to choose a subtle strategy in the agon with other suitors over the object of his desire:

Let him take care that that which he pursues
Is not at once too palpably descried.
Full many an eager gentleman oft rues
His haste: impatience is a blundering guide
Amongst a people famous for reflection,
Who like to play the fool with circumspection.

But, if you can contrive, get next at supper;
Or, if forestalled, get opposite and ogle.
(11.71.3-8,72.1-2)
In other words, in an inversion of the Julia experience, the young man is counseled to act interested but not obsessed: He must sit close, or if that's not possible, at least catch the eye of the young lady. This practical instruction from the nineteenth century participates in a genre of love literature including works as timeless as Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* as well as today's latest best-seller which outlines "the rules" of sexual pursuit in the 1990's.

Such guidance is seldom followed, though, by anything more profound. After all, once the goal of a profitable marriage or exciting liaison is reached, the game is over. Discussions of the emptiness of shallow relationships in some sort of eternal context rarely occur. But for Byron, who now playfully "hover[s]" at that "barbarous . . . middle age" of thirty-five, "the illusion's o'er." "Too old . . . [and] too young . . . / To herd with boys, or hoard with good threescore" (12.1-2), he alternates flippant suggestions on lovemaking with somber reflections on the brevity and triviality of the aristocratic life. "I wish they knew the life of a young noble," he says of those who envy the leisured existence of the upper classes:

They are young, but know not youth--it is anticipated;  
Handsome but wasted, rich without a sou;  
Their vigour in a thousand arms is dissipated;  
Their cash comes from, their wealth goes to a Jew;  
Both senates see their nightly votes participated  
Between the tyrant's and the tribunes' crew;  
And having voted, dined, drank, gamed, and whored,  
The family vault receives another lord. (11.75)
They play their parts according to the script; they play the game according to the rules; they just die anyway, having spent their time on earth as "slaves" who "toil" mechanically (11.74.3,7) to meet a set of hereditary requirements rather than players engaged in an imaginative cosmic game which invests their routine activities with meaning.

After a further canto spent in the presence of "Lord This . . . [a]nd . . . my Lady That" (11.79.1), the poet's raillery takes on a Swiftean edge when he reduces and removes from the rest of the culture any legitimate influence by this obsolete social institution:

Don Juan saw that microcosm on stilts
Yclept the Great World . . .

Thus the low world, north, south, or west, or east,
Must still obey the high--which is their handle,
Their moon, their sun, their gas, their farthing candle. (12.56.1-2,6-8)

The longer he reflects upon this Beau Monde (14.20.2), the farther away and dimmer and smaller that world becomes until it shrinks to the dimensions of a mere parlor game and becomes a mechanical world.

Other than a parlor game, the poet might have chosen any of a number of relatively uncomplicated amusements to capture the essence of upper class English social life. The correspondence between the social track along which the nobility progresses and the route taken by the players of one particularly popular board game, though, is unusually congruous.
A young unmarried man, with a good name
   And fortune, has an awkward part to play;
For good society is but a game,
   'The royal game of Goose,' as I may say,
Where every body has some separate aim,
   An end to answer, or a plan to lay--
The single ladies wishing to be double,
The married ones to save the virgins trouble.

(12.58)

The "royal game of Goose" originally came to England from France, sharing its Continental sophistication with all other things French, including fashion and language. Like all things French, it, too, underwent certain changes after the events of 1789, and was unsurprisingly renamed "the game of the French Revolution," reflecting the liminal state of the nobility of other societies, including the English, where the game was played following the Revolution and Napoleon's fall. Despite its minor modifications, Goose remains, in Regency England, a game in which the roll of the dice moves the players along a predetermined course. It is chance which guides the winner through the penalty and bonus spaces to the sixty-third square, marked by a goose. Gambling, sometimes for high stakes, increases the thrill of the play and the reward of a victory.

Similarly, the English aristocracy advances along a life-route set by heredity and tradition. Often chance provides the primary impetus for the journey--a precipitous marriage to a suitor of uncertain character or means, for example, or an embarrassing affair with an unexpectedly indiscreet lover. The mad rush to make the "single ladies . . . double" amounts to little more than a gamble for happiness or security, Byron maintains. He knows whereof
he speaks, since in the case of his own hapless marriage, he admits that "the young lady made a monstrous choice" (12.38.8). Other well-to-do young men lose "time, and hearts, and bets / Upon the sweepstakes for substantial wives" (12.36.3-4) before bad luck awards their darlings to a more persistent beau, or even, ironically, "[t]o the lot of him who scarce pursued at all" (12.37.4). This lottery of hearts and hands takes on a harder, more commercial edge with the practice by clothiers of extravagantly outfitting eligible young women, or "'drapery Misses,'" to improve the odds of their finding a husband. It is the shopkeepers who assume the risk associated with the marriage game this time by staking expensive ball gowns on the "speculation" that the new husbands attracted thereby will foot the bill for the means of their own enticement (much as Baba provided Juan's feminine disguise to ensure his favor with Gurbeyaz) (11.49.2). This rather bizarre method of financing deception, enabling the lady to masquerade as a wealthier woman than she actually is, increases the element of risk for the male in the courtship ritual and underscores Byron's comparison of that wager to the gambling taking place in "St. James's 'Hells'" (11.29.8): "I / See nought more strange in this than t'other lottery" (12.37.7-8).

The gambles lovers take with one another continue after the days of wooing and marriage, however. Instead of the anticipated fortunes and desired marital affections risked by a man, the wife with a wandering eye stands to lose that most ephemeral of all stakes: her reputation. (This is
not a severe consequence: in Spain, she stakes her freedom; in Turkey, she stakes her life.) But here, also, chance intervenes. Among the "Brahmins" "of highest caste" staying at Norman Abbey are those who can attest to the irony of the narrator's claim that "good society / Is no less famed for tolerance than piety" (13.80.7-8). Certainly, the society represented at the Amundeville's estate is neither pious nor, surprisingly, very tolerant either. While indiscretion rather than iniquity generally sentences an errant lady to social ostracism, sometimes the rules by which good society lives are difficult to decipher, puzzling even the cosmopolitan Byron:

I can't exactly trace their rule of right,
Which hath a little leaning to a lottery.
I've seen a virtuous woman put down quite
By the mere combination of a Coterie.
(13.82.1-4)

But not all players submit to the random whims of their peers. Some, on the other hand, who deserve to be exiled from the Great World, manage to avoid that contingency through their own savviness and persistence. A "So-So Matron," for instance, will occasionally "boldly fight / Her way back to the world by dint of plottery" (13.82.5-6), playing a game based on something other than the passive involvement with chance on which Goose depends.

A determined effort to attain or maintain social position can indeed complement or negate the role of chance, as many members of the aristocracy know very well. In fact, the other game in terms of which the Great World is described, chess, is one of pure strategy. In the
English cantos, the poet first mentions chess during Juan's introduction to high society when frank English manners are contrasted to those of France, "where, like a chessman, /
There is a move set down for joy or sorrow" (11.42.3-4). Although the reference here emphasizes the highly structured nature of French life (which expresses even the very deepest emotion as artificial moves in a game), the social communication of the supposedly "downright and thorough" islanders (11.42.6) differs, it turns out, very little from their neighbors on the Continent.

As he does throughout the poem, the narrator sets side by side his seemingly serious discourse (this time on the state of social etiquette in France and England) and the playful parenthetical commentary which undercuts that message:

For downright rudeness, ye may stay at home;
For true or false politeness (and scarce that Now) you may cross the blue deep and white foam--
The first the emblem (rarely though) of what You leave behind--the next of much you come To meet. (11.44.1-6)

The alternative voice in the background ironizes the authoritative message that France, not England, is the home of roleplay and tactical social maneuvering. This undependability of the narrator's stance calls into question the insular viewpoint that the cultural superiority of English forthrightness extends to its crudest dialects ("Billingsgate") (11.42.8) and even its commonest oaths ("Damme") (11.43.7). Such a carnivalesque reversal of common wisdom does not so much elevate the
French attitude as it devalues the English prejudice: in truth, social players across Europe, as Julia has also shown, share common rules and goals. They plot and maneuver equally to gain advantage in their struggle for love, influence, and wealth.

During the brief English summer, groups of such players withdraw from London to the countryside where, while the pace of everyday life slackens, the chess-like games of love continue unabated. In the midst of a roguish catalog of the "Brahmins," (13.83.4)--including Sir John Pottledeep, the drinker (13.84.8); Sir Henry Silvercup, the horse-racer (13.87.4); and the "waggish Welch Judge, Jefferies Hardsman" (13.88.5), who jokes with the convicts before he administers harsh justice--Byron pauses to consider the motley crew he has assembled:

Good company's a chess-board--there are kings, Queens, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns; the world's a game;
Save that the puppets pull at their own strings;
Methinks gay Punch hath something of the same.

(13.89.1-4)

The Amundevilles' houseguests comprise a microcosm of a microcosm. Just as they do in the "Great World" of four thousand people (13.49.2), the human game pieces, now reduced in number to a "world" of thirty-three, move themselves in pre-ordained agonistic patterns. They may seem to control their actions, or "pull at their own strings," but they allow their cultural inheritance to shape their behavior almost in spite of themselves.

The reference to the Punch and Judy show, like the game of chess, suggests another adversarial paradigm in
which the puppet/players adopt a highly stylized identity—the sort of literary game of strategy which Philip Lewis describes in his analysis of French epigrammist La Rochefoucauld:

Unlike games of skill [agon] or games of pure chance, games of strategy [agon/mimicry] require the player to assume a role which he conceives and acts out with regard to other players, who are likewise rational actors playing their roles. (138)

The elite may not choose the circumstances of the competition they enter, but once they assume a role, their style of play and their choice of strategies inevitably fall into the predictable, familiar, sub-playful routine established by their social class.

The love games which comprise the chief part of many lives are generally women's games, however, at every level of society, as Byron the narrator makes clear when he catalogues the amatory hazards facing an attractive bachelor like Juan. A wise young man will distinguish between genuine attraction on the part of a young woman and feigned emotion designed only to engage his interest. Her "[k]isses, sweet words, and embraces . . . [m]ay look like what is--," (my emphasis), but, in fact, "[t]hey are put on as easily as a hat" (6.14.2-4), playful external facsimiles of love. The is-and-is-not of the masquerade of love laces together Juan's various adventures, and the witty digression that interrupts Juan's entrance into English society in Canto Twelve warns of the games that the ladies concoct and conduct at the expense of their incautious
admirers. The potential for personal disaster is great under those conditions whether the female's goal is marriage, a flirtatious thrill, or an adulterous affair.

The first of these little impostures, the marriage game, is the *raison d'être* for much of the aristocracy's social life. Hammurabi's Code was more flexible than the rules which evolved from this upper class pastime, and, as Jane Austen makes clear in *Persuasion*, woe unto the inexperienced youth who is ignorant of them:

> For talk six times with the same single lady,  
> And you may get the wedding dresses ready.  
> (12.59.7-8)

If he delays his offer of marriage, or worse still, naively continues his single state, oblivious to the assumptions of his lady friend, a flurry of moves and counter-moves begins which are intended to intimidate a rookie into yielding:

> Perhaps you'll have a letter from the mother,  
> To say her daughter's feelings are trepanned;  
> Perhaps you'll have a visit from the brother,  
> All strut and stays and whiskers, to demand  
> What 'your intentions are?' (12.60.1-5)

The traditional male agon against other males for the female prize has undergone an unsubtle transformation here into a contest, sometimes very thinly disguised, between females for a desirable male. The lady's strategy, often executed by her relatives, draws on her superior knowledge of unwritten rules and contracts. Again, as Austen illustrates in *Sense and Sensibility*, the object of that lady's attention, she and her family hope, can be bluffed into believing that he has really made a commitment, even if unwittingly, which he must now honor. This belief can
be encouraged by an ancient but useful diversion: a misdirected accusal that the young man has tricked the girl when, in fact, it is she who is pressuring him into her matrimonial scenario.

An oxymoronic puzzle, the "cold coquette" (12.63.1) represents the second "peril" for the eligible young man--the flirtatious married woman. Cast in liminal terms, she's "neither white nor scarlet" (12.62.8) and occupies the unsteady ground between love and marriage, "not quite adultery, but adulteration" (12.63.8). Of the three feminine types who present a danger to the unwary, the coquettish wife is condemned in the harshest terms. Although she never consummates a sexual relationship, for instance, she is the only woman specifically called a prostitute. The biting disapproval of her hypocrisy is not disguised by the speaker's feigned compliment:

I meant and mean not to disparage The show of virtue even in the vitiated-- It adds an outward grace unto their carriage. (12.62.4-6)

That the grace is outward only soon becomes apparent. Siren-like, the lady entices her admirer and then treats him with indulgent contempt, "keep[ing him] on and off-ing, / On a lee shore, till it begins to blow" (12.63.2-3).

Unprotected by safe harbor, the inevitable shipwreck of the heart occurs, and the lady of outward grace is revealed as "La Belle Dame sans Merci," the lady of "inward scoffing" (12.63.4), the demon lover of Romantic nightmare fiction. Instead of sending the message, "This is play," by placing a serious act in a ludic frame, she communicates her
To her admirer, but, deliberately or not, neglects to contextualize it as the non-serious offer that her flirting actually represents.

Although uncompromising in his censure of the "amphibious . . . harlot" (12.62.7), Byron also betrays his very real sympathy for her and his uncanny understanding of the psychological needs which drive the coquette's actions. After all, she may have coolly watched the male voyager's wreck, but, as Byron comments in a later canto, women are also "[f]rail mariners afloat without a chart" (14.74.5), who, after navigating through rough seas as best they can, often founder on the rocks instead of making safe harbor.

Just as the baby of Freud's acquaintance attempts to cope with the deeper issue of his unwelcome separations from his mother by throwing his toys away and bringing them back (14-17), the frustrated society wife also deals with her emotional separation by manipulating and controlling the men in her life. Furthermore, initially unsatisfied in her marriage, the flirtatious wife can't decide whether to be truly good or truly bad in order to experience what she instinctively knows she is missing. Instead, like Winnicott's infant exploring a "play-space," she plays with the familiar components of her world, married men and unmarried men, trying to find out who she is and what she wants. The girl "who can't say 'No' / And won't say 'Yes'" (12.63.1-2) ends up hurting others because she is uncertain and afraid--uncertain that she will ever find, in or out of marriage, the emotional security she longs for and afraid
to risk what security she has in order to seek it elsewhere.

Yet, oddly enough, the narrator's discussion of the game of adulterous love itself, the natural climax of these stanzas which digress from marriage to flirtation to adultery, entirely ignores the pleasure and excitement associated by many of Byron's readers with such illicit, romantic relationships. Humor is almost as rare. The only facetious moment occurs when the unfaithful wife is declared, with heavy double entendre, to "[make] or [take] love in upright earnest" (12.64.4). Though her earnestness would seem to preclude a playful spirit, the sexual pun on the modifying adjective belies any such singleness of tone in Byron's ever-shifting voice. The remainder of the passage, though, motivated by Byron's own battles in court, chiefly concerns itself with the legal agon which follows a tactless affair. The seasoned veterans of the sport of adultery, however, avoid this fate. Unlike the "blunder[ing] . . . raw beginners" (12.66.1), they maintain their position among the elite at the most exclusive events, making up in discretion what they lack in virtue.

The leisure class's obsession with adroitly playing the games of love does not arise, Byron would argue, solely out of unmet emotional needs, however. Often, an excessive absorption in the personal affairs of friends and fellow contestants serves only to fill the emptiness of pointless lives. Drawn into the single-minded pursuit of social advantage, the players of each type begin to resemble one
another so closely that Byron draws their generic portraits with ease: the "six Miss Rawbolds" (13.85.6), "the Honorable Mrs. Sleep" (13.79.7), and so on, concluding with the inclusive "Countesses of Blank" (13.80.1). The real people behind these caricatures live lives of little purpose, and the trivial games on which they spend their days grow less and less fascinating as time goes by.

Uninteresting and uninterested,

Society is now one polish'd horde,
Form'd of two mighty tribes, the Bores and Bored. (13.95.7-8)

With Ovidian keenness, Byron captures the essence of the nobility's diversions by deftly metamorphosing the Bores and their games into the "boars," who are "game" (13.78.7-8). On Lord Henry and Lady Adeline's "tame / Preserve of Bores" (13.78.7-8), Norman Abbey, the guests fill their days with a variety of pursuits. Among them is hunting, the game that boys continue to play even after they grow up; only now, they play to counteract the enervating ennui that characterizes their days:

The gentlemen got up betimes to shoot,
Or hunt; the young, because they liked the sport--
The first thing boys like, after play and fruit:
The middle-aged, to make the day more short;
For ennui is a growth of English root,
Though nameless in our language: 
That awful yawn which sleep can not abate. (13.101.1-6,8)

Hunting, whether for an heiress (12.34.4), a husband (11.89.2), or even "nutbrown Partridges . . . [and] brilliant Pheasants" (13.75.7), temporarily rouses the
lethargic aristocrat and breaks the tedium of his or her long days.

Penalties exist, however, for those unlicensed hunters (of whatever quarry) unlucky enough to get caught. A scene from the Amundeville's "public day" clarifies in plain language the sexual innuendo of other hunting passages. A young woman--pregnant and unmarried--is brought to Norman Abbey during the festivities to appear before Lord Henry, the Justice of the Peace, to discover the name of her baby's father:

The constable, beneath a warrant's banner,  
Had bagged this poacher upon Nature's manor.

Now Justices of Peace must judge all pieces  
Of mischief of all kinds, and keep the game  
And morals of the country from caprices  
Of those who have not a licence for the same;  
And of all things, excepting tithes and leases,  
Perhaps these are most difficult to tame:  
Preserving partridges and pretty wenches  
Are puzzles to the most precautious benches.  
(16.62.7-8;63)

The parallels between this tearful country girl waiting in the hall and the vivacious gentlewomen at the hunter's feast inside are clear: both have broken laws and both may eventually stand before a judge for their "poaching." The Englishwomen are more fortunate than their non-European sisters, however; the proscription against infidelity is the same "beneath the Eastern star" (12.69.4), but the penalties are much more severe.

Even Juan is not free from this premonitory shadow. In a passage redolent with double entendre and sexual code words, Juan participates in the quintessential amusement of
the English upper class: the foxhunt. The young Spaniard performs well, having ridden from an early age, albeit "[h]e broke, 'tis true, some statutes of the laws / Of hunting--for the sagest youth is frail" (14.33.5-6). Acclaimed by "[s]ires," the experienced hunters of "the sporting generation" who "[s]wore praises, [and] recall'd their former fires" (14.34.4-6), Juan is granted an apprentice's rank in the local group. Skilled rider though he is, he is baffled by the appeal of the English form of the sport and privately wonders "If men ever hunted twice?" (14.35.8).

If Juan finds hunting according to English rules a trifle off-putting, much of the English aristocracy also finds it too regimented and gladly "break[s] . . . ranks" (14.17.2) from time to time. Their freedom to express themselves creatively as unique individuals—to transform themselves from "my Lord This and my Lady That" to Lord Henry and Lady Adeline, for instance—doesn't last long, though. Too insecure to be different, most must define themselves in terms of their social class, and, when the "roll-call draws them back afraid, / . . . they must be or seem [it hardly matters] what they were . . . ." (14.17.3-4). 

"[I]t is a brilliant masquerade" (14.17.5), Byron admits, but one in which everyone wears the same mask because everyone plays at the same non-creative level. The "dull and family likeness" (14.15.7), the "smooth monotony / Of character" (14.16.7-8), even the "common-place . . . crimes" (14.16.4) grow tedious and uninspiring to the
poet/observer. His scrutiny of the aristocracy penetrates the "gems and ermine" (14.15.6) and finds no more than the stuff of other chroniclers of the Beau Monde, who have become the celebrity press of the nineteenth century, collecting only gossip and small talk from the servants. Eager to record the lifestyles of the rich and famous, they discover, instead, "the real portrait of the highest tribe[:] / 'Tis that, in fact, there's little to describe" (14.20.7-8).

"Why then publish?" (14.11.1) Byron asks in another context. The sentimental Romanticism of Juan's woodland wanderings, Haidée's Eden, the Prophet's Paradise in Constantinople, even Catherine's court--all offer rich narrative possibilities for passion and suspense. The lengthy English cantos which stretch between Tom the footpad's death and Juan's ghostly encounter are singularly unexciting, however. Portray this "Paradise of Pleasure and Ennui" (14.17.8)?--why would anyone bother? Perhaps because these boring social amusements--metaphorically represented as Goose, chess, and hunting--are not so insignificant at all. They are "paradigmatic events," in Geertz's terms (28), much more than games, and they make a significant statement about the nature of the culture. But even more important from the perspective of play theorists, the creative act of writing itself parallels the activity of Freud's baby at play who deals with unpleasant situations by re-enacting them in a ludic setting. By creating circumstances which can be placed under his
control, the player converts his role from observer/receiver to that of the initiator of strategy and action. The repetition and reframing of a frightening or embarrassing experience thus transforms it into a source of excitement and pleasure through mastery. From Alfonso's embarrassing discovery of his wife's histrionic talents to the silent spectre that haunts the Gothic gallery, Byron's Fancy seizes the moments that most would try to forget, strips them of their associated dread, and, by mastering them, makes of them sparkling objets d'art. *Don Juan* is full of clear autobiographical allusions, and Byron also repeatedly takes certain unpleasant incidents from his own life (such as his failed marriage) and likewise transforms them into occasions for wit and humor. He revels, though, in his greatest challenge: to choose from the myriads of separate redundancies that make up the lives of his fellow "Lord This[es] and my Lady That[s]" and create from them a poem that immortalizes their boring mortality.

In the midst of a portrait of the Amundevilles--that most culturally representative of couples--Byron veers with Shandean aplomb to "Shakespeare's ever-blooming garden" (14.75.2). "There is a flower called 'Love in Idleness,'" he announces, and proceeds to explore the relationship between the abstract concepts linked in this common name of the wild pansy, for it is nothing about the flower but the name itself which catches the poet's attention. "Eureka!" (14.76.1) and "voilà...!" (14.75.8), he cries with delight at his discovery of the ideal expression of upper-class
English dalliance. The very idleness which identifies "the idle rich" promotes their preoccupation with love and marriage, he asserts. Their lack of focus, of productive employment, leaves a vacuum which they seek to fill with adversative and mimetic activities of another sort--the games of love. Ironically, though, these games become a labor themselves: the leisure class toils at creating sensation, a sense of being truly alive, by assiduously seeking out objects or activities which excite them. But their collection of stimuli fails to quicken them, and they have no imaginative power to re-animate these elements that they hoped would revive them. They rarely succeed:

And hence high life is oft a dreary void,
A rack of pleasures, where we must invent
A something wherewithal to be annoy'd.
(14.79.1-3)

Their "dreary void" provides the background to a staged performance--one of love-making, gambling, primping, and posturing--in which the self-centered actors think they are "inventing" when they identify a new irritation to break the tedium of their existence. Furthermore, excepting their unexpected tragedies, the nobility lead lives of such monotonous privilege and pleasure that their happiness is rather flat and their pain shrugged off as mere annoyance or disappointment. Without true suffering, they cannot experience true joy.

This theme of the quest for experience surfaces much earlier in a letter from Byron to Annabella Milbanke, written before their engagement. There, he comments wryly on some members of "that society" to which they both
belong: "After all bad as it is it has it's agreemens.---"

Perhaps to the twenty-five-year-old Byron, one such agreeable quality might have been the thrill-seeking engaged in by his peers, for in a Don Juanesque shift, he turns to amplify that thought:

--The great object of life is Sensation--to feel that we exist--even though in pain--it is this "craving void" which drives us to Gaming--to Battle--to Travel--to intemperate but keenly felt pursuits of every description whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment. (L&J 3.109)

Years later, however, as an outcast from that social world, the language from that early letter undergoes a subtle darkening in Don Juan. For, although gaming, battle, travel--and certainly love--provide the players in Don Juan, as they did the English players of Byron's youth, with the sensation they crave, it is ultimately unsatisfying and creates problems far worse than boredom.

This is especially true, as has been noted before, for the women of Byron's and Juan's acquaintance. They are caught in a social state, as Byron notes in his Italian journal of 1821, that amounts to little more than "a remnant of the barbarism of the chivalry [sic] and feudal ages--artificial and unnatural." According to current practice,

[t]hey ought to mind home--and be well fed and clothed--but not mixed in [male] society. Well educated, too, in religion--but to read neither poetry nor politics--nothing but books of piety and cookery. Music--drawing--dancing--also a little gardening. (L&J 8.15)
Frequently uninvolved in the daily care of their children and relegated to the periphery of economic and political power, they turn their considerable energy and intelligence to attaining a modest level of education and to maintaining tight control over the one realm granted them without reserve: the social games of the "Great World." Rather than settling for the mere shuffling of titles, fortunes, husbands, and wives from one aristocrat to the next, they should, Byron argues, engage in an "occupation" both creative and satisfying, one which deals with men and women as whole human beings who are not the sum of their possessions and inherited social standing:

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.  
(14.78.6-8; my emphasis)

If women were granted by men a meaningful arena in which to spend those hours, the Gynocracy might well discard its earnest games, since, as Byron writes Annabella, "they [women] are all better than us--& their faults such as they are must originate with ourselves" (L&J 8.109). It was a generous admission, even for Byron, who although a man of his times in many ways, repeatedly reveals a modern empathy for "the Sex" unusual for a nineteenth-century milord.

Nowhere is this admiring fascination with women more obvious than at Norman Abbey, where Byron places three of his most engaging female characters: the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke, Lady Adeline Amundeville, and Aurora Raby. Although only Aurora does not play the games of marriage
and adultery which go on in this island of the grand Monde, all are caught up in the ludic ambience centering around Juan, their captivating foreign guest who has (but they cannot know it yet) already created with Haidée on a starry spring night a love-island of his own.

Appearing only in brief glimpses, the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke makes, nonetheless, a strong impression. Impetuous, beautiful, and unabashedly self-centered, after three years of the "high life" she has made "mischief" with more men than the narrator cares to mention. Her name itself, pronounced "Fook" (like "look") in Britain, emphasizes her sensual nature by an obscene sexual pun of the type which Kenneth Burke calls "ablaut," or wordplay which links two words with identical consonant sounds but critically different vowels (44). A "full-grown" (16.49.2), "full-blown blonde" (14.42.1) with "laughing blue eyes" (16.100.4) and an indifferent husband, she disregards the gossips who would impose their rules upon her and plays freely according to her whim. Her contemporaries are hardly moral traditionalists, however; when she turns her sights on Juan, they disapprove her unfaithfulness to her latest lover, Lord Augustus Fitz-Plantagenet, not her husband. A lusty, amoral, "gracious, graceful, graceless Grace" (16.49.1), she plays for the short term with no holds barred, like her more regal counterparts, Gurbeyaz and Catherine.

As a purely rhetorical soul, mischievous impersonation is her Grace's strategy of choice in the love wars.
Mimicry comes naturally to one who has no central self at all and is obsessed only with the satisfaction of her most immediate desire. She plays whatever part she must with ease, if not finesse, because she lacks any strong personal identity which must be overcome in order to create a believable persona. The narrator remarks, not unkindly, that her "mind / If she had any, was upon her face, / And that was of a fascinating kind" (16.49.2). When the awkward country gentry come to visit on "public day"—that very British version of Bakhtin's "free and familiar [social] contact"—for instance, she mentally records the best examples of their rustic inelegance to imitate before the others after the guests have gone. Her best-known performance to readers of Don Juan, of course, is her appearance to Juan in the darkened portrait gallery. Her impersonation of the Black Friar, though rather amateurish, upends the natural order completely by crossing the boundaries both of gender and of life itself, easily the most dramatic and least demanding performance in the poem.

Her midnight encounter with Juan unsettles her confident, flirtatious demeanor, however. Whether shaken by Juan's rebuff of her attempt at seduction or by a night spent with him, she has at breakfast "a sort of air rebuked"—an implication of having been exposed to a higher standard of some sort. Juan's presence makes the familiar triviality of a life spent in social game play rather than personal creative play suddenly seem the unsatisfying substitute that it is.
Lady Adeline Amundeville, like the Duchess, has spent the last three years in a social whirl, but with markedly different results. "Admired, adored; but also so correct" (14.56.2), she, in contrast, offers no opportunity for gossip about her conduct. So secure is she in her own virtue, that she "knew or thought [she] knew no guile" (14.65.2) and determines to save Juan from the insatiable Duchess. Like her Spanish double, Julia, "[s]he knew not her own heart" (14.91.1), though, and plays an elaborate mental game to convince herself that her interest in Juan is based on friendship alone, obviously, judging from its repeated occurrence in Don Juan, a common self-delusion among women of Byron's acquaintance. Unlike Julia and Juan's story, however, the result of Adeline's ludic maneuvering is never known to the reader, as the tale breaks off in the midst of Juan's ghostly adventures with her Grace. In spite of the speculative conclusion to the tale, the suggestions are strong and frequent that an outcome identical to Juan's in Seville awaits the couple when "Destiny and Passion spread the net . . . / And [catch] them" (13.12.5-7).

But long before that day, Adeline, "not . . . then in love with Juan" (14.91.2), devises a plan. Her first strategy requires her husband to offer Juan wise counsel concerning this dangerous woman, Fitz-Fulke. The proud, reserved Lord Henry declines, of course, and his wife quickly invents a second scheme. If she cannot have him warned away from impending danger, she will marry Juan off,
although why she thinks that would divert her Grace's attentions is anyone's guess. And so it goes, from one canto to the next, from one maneuver to the next: Adeline never quite understands the cause of her "intense intentions" (14.88.4), although it is perfectly clear to the reader that she is "saving" Juan from the aggressive duchess because, at some unacknowledged level, she wants him for herself.

It is probably at that same unconscious level that Adeline is separating emotionally from Lord Henry, the "cold, good, honorable man" (14.70.1) so temperamentally unlike her. Endowed with an exceptionally strong sense of self, he approaches the unfamiliar with confidence "[a]nd loves or hates, disdaining to be guided, / Because [his] own good pleasure hath decided" (13.16.7-8). In addition to the non-rhetorical orientation of his personality, Lord Henry is an unemotional man who kisses his pretty wife like "an aged sister" (14.69.8). Facing such uncreative stolidness, no matter how decent, and in the company of her innately mobile foreign houseguest, Adeline's pleasure in her love for her husband gradually becomes an "effort," a "toil," even the "stone of Sysiphus" (14.86.2-3)! Their contrasting natures are particularly evident in the final scene of the poem when they campaign for Lord Henry's re-election by entertaining the neighbors at Norman Abbey. Henry plays the political game earnestly, methodically becoming "all things to all men" by distributing freely whatever his constituents think they need--whether respect,
bounteous meals, or "promises" (16.71.2-3). He supports his transparently pragmatic attempt to play the part of the inoffensive political moderate with plodding, generic political rhetoric (of which Byron provides a liberal sample). Adeline, on the other hand, entrances her guests with her "airs and graces" (16.100.1), assuming the supporting role of "[co-]electioneerer" (16.70.1) with the all the deftness that only the innately mobile possess.

In fact, in this passage, Adeline becomes the lovely personification of mobility and Byron's favorite expression of the feminine rhetorical temperament. She identifies so completely with "her grand role" of charming aristocratic hostess that she and her chosen persona merge into a seamless, Yeatsian performance "[w]hich she went through as though it were a dance" (16.96.3-4). Juan, a casual observer, finds himself wondering "how much of Adeline was real" (16.96.8);

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,
A thing of temperament and not of art,
Though seeming so, from its supposed facility;
And false--though true; for surely they're sincerest
Who are strongly acted on by what is nearest.

This makes your actors, artists, and romancers,
Heroes sometimes, though seldom--sages never;
But speakers, bards, diplomats, and dancers,
Little that's great, but much of what is clever,
Most orators, but very few financiers.

(16.97-98.1-8,1-5)

Here, close to the abruptly fragmented end of the poem, lies the key to some of its most fascinating characters.

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While they may be deceptive and shrewd players at games of their own devising, serious figures like Inez or Gulbeyaz are understandable and even predictable once the reader figures out what they really are. Others present a different challenge.

While all those through whose hands Juan passes are teachers, models, or overseers in one sense or another, some are characterized by a particularly perplexing opacity of character. Unrestricted by a single viewpoint or set of values, individuals such as Julia, Johnson, and Adeline are free to play boldly and creatively, adapting to shifting circumstances by adopting various styles. This undependability of stance frustrates the reader's attempt to see through the roles to a stable central identity. Misperceived in literature and in life as a weakness of character or "want of heart," the mobile personality is given, Byron would argue, not chosen. Rather than dissemblers, who mask their identities in order to deceive, those with "vivacious versatility" are drawn to people and ideas around them in an osmotic transfer of essence. By losing themselves in an idea or role, the "actors, ... romancers, ... bards, ... and dancers" (the Byron/Juan persona) of this world experience it and choose to deal with it in a way inaccessible to the "sages" and "heroes."

Even the dancers, however, so elegant and animated, often become trapped in the patterns of their lives. A social activity that blends cultural convention and personal expression, dance in Don Juan is synecdochal for
the world of the English aristocracy. Linked to the textually embedded games of romance and intrigue, the artificial relationships formed during a waltz or quadrille, for instance, represent both rigid social roles and the opportunity to escape them through a sprezzatura performance. The ladies of the Great World, "cloyed" (14.79.5) by life's daily pleasures and bored by its lack of meaning, sometimes unconsciously seek significance in superficial intellectual and amatory pursuits similar to those in which they consciously engage purely for amusement:

And hence arise the woes of sentiment,
Blue devils, and Blue-stockings, and Romances
Reduced to practice and perform'd like dances.
(14.79.6-8)

These new projects become, in their turn, as routine as the old ones. Even love, the transcendent human experience, also becomes nothing more than another predictable set of steps and gestures.

Although moving to the same music as his English partners, Juan's rhetorical performance differs from theirs in crucial ways. Instead of struggling against the banality of his surroundings by trying to control them, in another evidence of the work of the Byronic Fancy, he redeems them with his own transforming elegance and skill:

And then he danced;--all foreigners excel
The serious Angles in the eloquence
Of pantomime;--he danced, I say, right well,
With emphasis, and also with good sense--
A thing in footing indispensable:
He danced without theatrical pretense,
Not like a ballet-master in the van
Of his drill'd nymphs, but like a gentleman.
Chaste were his steps, each kept within due bound,
    And elegance was sprinkled o'er his figure;
Like swift Camilla, he scarce skimm'd the ground,
    And rather held in than put forth his vigour.

Juan, ever silent, mimes a role with the easy naturalness of one who is not really playing a part at all. His classical economy of movement creates the impression of effortlessness as though he, like Virgil's Camilla, "scarce skim[s] the ground." Such fluid, seemingly spontaneous motion physically parallels the evasive social maneuvering of his first weeks among the English. At that time, Juan, "undecided" and getting his bearings in an unfamiliar culture, "play[s]" for awhile and "[a]bove the ice . . . like a skaiter glide[s]" (12.25.2-5) among the dangers of impolitic friendships and careless liaisons.

As adroitly as he may dance his way through the common pitfalls of English society, though, Juan's rhetorical nature reveals itself most specifically in his relationships with women. Destined by his literary inheritance to be a legendary lover, this untraditional Don Juan has also been schooled by circumstance in the expression of his mobile personality. He is a "bachelor," (the narrator seems determined to state the obvious) but not only in the primary sense:

    But Juan was a bachelor--of arts,
    And parts, and hearts: he danced and sung . . .
    and could be sad
Or cheerful, without any 'flaws or starts,'
    Just at the proper time.

(11.47.1-2;4-6)
Juan is ever able to alternate his play of the role of the melancholy or gay lover with credibility and perfect timing.

This remarkable ability of Juan's to adapt himself—to re-invent himself—to his constantly changing circumstances has provoked readers' comments almost since the poem's publication. In a recent article, Nancy Benson views Juan and his relationship to the narrator in the context of the theory of psychologist Jean Piaget. Juan, she argues, embodies Piaget's concept of accommodation when he goes out into the world and adapts to what he finds there, primarily by imitation. In contrast, the narrator practices assimilation when he takes in certain aspects of an unfamiliar circumstance and playfully transforms them to make them a part of himself. Together, she concludes, hero and narrator "present essential halves of an ontological whole" (48). Rather than Benson's bifurcation of the complex identity and function of Byron-narrator/Juan-hero, the advice from the narrator to Juan actually suggests a protagonist who participates in both Piagetian processes:

But 'Carpe diem,' Juan, 'Carpe, carpe!'... '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.
(11.86.1,4-8)

Byron as narrator advises Juan in effect to "Play as I do," staying constantly in motion somewhere between the objective reality of an action and the subjective reality
of its verbal expression. He further concentrates his wisdom in the four pithy lines which end in the Rhetorical Golden Rule: "Be not what you seem, but always what you see." In order to live a rich rhetorical life, not only must Juan adjust to the elements of the exterior world, but he must also synthesize them within himself and play them out in his own life, which is just what the operation of Byron's expanded Fancy allows him to do. While the mechanical Fancy of the Romantics "play[s]" with, as Coleridge expresses it, the things Juan sees, it takes the power of the Byronic Fancy to unify the perceiver and the object--to "be [my emphasis] . . . what you see."

Because Juan, like the Duchess and Lady Adeline, lacks a strong personal identity, the narrator does not counsel him to forget who he really is and act like someone else. "Be not what you seem," he directs instead, as though seeming to be someone is as close to a unified personality as Juan can get. Rather than being an illusion, then, Juan is advised, in a rhetorical sense, to become a reflection of objective reality. He has an innate ability to be "all things unto people of all sorts," and especially "most things to all women" (14.31.2,7). "Grave or gay," as the occasion demands, Juan mirrors the mood, the opinion, even the personality of his present female companion. A "cunning rogue" (14.37.6), he establishes a classically playful relationship "[b]y humouring always what they might assert" (14.37.3) and acting "as if each charming word were a decree" (15.82.4) [my emphasis]. In order to allow these
women to believe that they are in control of the attachment, he becomes whatever they want or need—a confidant, an admirer, a protégé: "with women he was what / They pleased to make or take him for" (15.16.1-2). There is one exception, however, to this relational pattern: the other-worldly Aurora Raby.

Aurora, the wealthy, orphaned beauty distanced from her peers by both her Catholic religion and her reserved demeanor, is the quintessential non-player in this most ludic of societies. A member of Adeline's house party, she is nonetheless instinctively excluded by her hostess from the list of eligible matches for Juan. In spite of this, the young girl fascinates Juan, probably because of her polite indifference to the fashionable English playworld and her resemblance to his lost Haidée:

She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew
As seeking not to know it; silent, lone . . .
Her spirit seem'd as seated on a throne
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong
In its own strength. (15.47.1-2,6-8)

In striking contrast to Juan and the other rhetorical game-players in the final cantos, Aurora's "self-possession" is so complete that the rumor and intrigue of the Great World "upon her wax made no impression" (15.57.8,7). Indeed, Adeline's dazzling performance, which so delights the rest of her guests, strikes Aurora as inconsequential and trivial, much as the flickering light of the "glowworm" looks when compared to the eternal radiance of the stars (15.56.3-4). Unsurprisingly, "Juan was something she could not divine"
(15.56.5), and her indifference warms to interest only when his perfect social balance is upset by the ghostly Friar's appearance.

Juan's subsequent distraction and discomposure at the breakfast table on the morning following his first encounter with the ghost draws a musing smile to Aurora's lips. Her smile, however, contains none of the "wiles / Which some pretend to trace in ladies' smiles" (16.92.7-8) because Aurora never plays games at all. Some time earlier, at Juan's entry into English high society, he was struck by the obvious difference between the value of love in England, where it is "half a fashion": "half commercial, half pedantic" (12.68.4-5), and the worth of "good love" (12.67.4) marked by "Passion" (12.68.2) for which he had risked his life in other lands. Aurora's quiet smile recalls for the slightly "gate and blasé" (L&J 8.78) Juan that forgotten idealism:

The love of higher things and better days;
The unbounded hope, and heavenly ignorance
Of what is called the world, and the world's ways.

(16.108.1-3)

This playworld, set apart from the Great World, reminiscent of Haidée's Greek Eden and the Arab orphan Leila's trusting face, has served in the past and promises to be again in the future a touchstone for Juan--a reminder that love surpasses superficial social games, that, like the Byronic Fancy, it can be "ideal," and "so divine" that it becomes "real" (16.107.7-8).
"Periodizing ought to be resisted"; so warns Richard Lanham in the conclusion to his study of literary rhetoric in the Renaissance (Motives 219). As tempting as it may be for play theorists to characterize literary periods based on their general adherence to playful or purposive standards, he notes that each era is replete with exceptions to the dominant orientation. It is difficult to ignore the fact, however, that after Byron left England, the reading public reacted against the profligacy of the Regency court and upper classes and became less tolerant of literature considered risqué or suggestive. Many of the English literary critics reflected this new sense of propriety and, misunderstanding its ludic orientation, seemed determined to measure (and condemn) Don Juan by serious coordinates. There were a few exceptions: the anonymous author, "John Bull," for instance, broke ranks and applauded Byron's departure from the grave and moody heroes of his earlier poetry: "Stick to Don Juan: it is the only sincere thing you have ever written; and it will live many years after all your humbug Harolds have ceased to be" (Rutherford Heritage 183).

Such acceptance of the poem on its own terms was rare, though, and Byron continued to feel the sting of what he considered unfair criticism for the rest of his life.
Because he has abandoned the meditative majesty of his Spenserian-stanzaed *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* for the lively and irreverent Italian ottava rima tradition, "[s]ome have accused me of a strange design, / Against the creed and morals of the land," he complains in Canto Four.

But the fact is that I have nothing plann'd,
Unless it were to be a moment merry,
A novel word in my vocabulary. (4.5.1-2,6-8)

Astonished but not intimidated, in the seventh canto Byron again faces his critics unblinkingly. The tone of his protest concerning the continued attacks reveals both the severity and the nature of the antagonistic reviews:

> They accuse me—Me—the present writer of
> The present poem—of—I know not what,—
> A tendency to under-rate and scoff
> At human power and virtue, and all that;
> And this they say in language rather rough.
> Good God! I wonder what they would be at! (7.3.1-6)

The dismissive "and all that" and final dramatic outburst (which is itself "rather rough") are intended to convey the confusion of an innocent man. They actually suggest something else.

At least some of Byron's detractors, it seems, did not condemn its "excesses" because they didn't understand the stance of the narrator, but because they did. Speaking from a thoroughly traditional perspective, they disapproved of the burlesque treatment of the mighty epic and especially of the heroic values it professes. Lillian Furst, in her article "Reading 'Nasty' Great Books," contends that readers' rejection of a "classic" work can sometimes be traced to distrust of the narrator's role.
They may admire the artistic excellence of the text but feel a profound uneasiness about the ethical distance between themselves and the narrator or the author. W. R. Johnson reaches a similar conclusion concerning "counter-classical" works by Ovid and others. Even modern day critics, he cautiously proposes, sometimes allow their aesthetic judgment to be colored by their basic dislike of the author's philosophical perspective (149-150). One might ask whether, based on this premise, a reader who is put off by Ovid's eroticism, for instance, could ever really appreciate his brilliance as an author.

Perhaps he could, but in Byron's case, political, literary, and philosophical prejudices do seem to dominate much of the critical reception of Don Juan. The charge of obscenity often grew out of, quite naturally, the rather casual attitude toward marriage exhibited by young Juan. A more profound concern is Byron's admitted willingness to "laugh at all things" because "What after all, are all things--but a Show?" (7.2.7-8). This ambivalent, carnivalesque laughter, indulged in by Byron as a healthy means of satiric re-evaluation and renewal of a deteriorating culture appears, to those of a different mind, to be "a tendency to under-rate and scoff" at those essential values--"human power and virtue"--which undergird the society they are trying to preserve and even improve. Erving Goffman makes a strong connection between what society considers sexually indecent and the devaluation of human dignity and worth--exactly the charge made against

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Byron by his critics. By making sexual depictions and references public when they should remain private, purveyors of obscenity may be considered by some to degrade the human beings involved in intimate behavior, Goffman claims, because they remove these portrayals from the private frame which society deems most appropriate (55-56). By extension of his theory, the depiction of cannibalism and other aberrant behaviors unsettled many of Byron's contemporaries because such a portrayal also demeans human dignity when indiscriminately foregrounded beside honorable acts or treated with humor or disregard.

Fearing from the first that Don Juan would draw just this sort of critical condemnation, Byron, I would argue, courted his readers' approval by involving them in the activity of his Byronic Fancy to an extent unparalleled among his contemporaries. Ever since the publication of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, when he "awoke and found [himself] famous," Byron became unusually aware of the large audience for his poetry energized by the cult of personality growing up in response to his cultivation of a dark, brooding public persona. He knew that not all public figures were so fortunate. In a letter to Thomas More written during his Years of Fame in London, Byron describes a play he had attended in which one of the characters, securely bound in leg irons, is driven to distraction by the lengthy oration of a second character. A truly captive audience, the frenzied prisoner responds, Byron maintains, just "as Castlereagh's would, if his audience was chained
by the leg" (L&J 4.323). Three years later, self-exiled from English society to Italy and less confident of his public, Byron would endeavor to establish a relationship with each reader that obviates the need for a chain.

The more typical Romantic relationship between the poet and the reader exists within a tradition of rhetorical displacement—a solipsistic conversation which is overheard by a second individual (McGann Towards 42). Byron, with a studied casualness, artfully seduces his reader into the world of the poem. Many narrators offer friendship in exchange for trust, but the narrator of Don Juan engages the reader in an intimate game of playful "supposing" that actually creates the poem as they proceed. "I rattle on exactly as I'd talk," he explains, "With anybody in a ride or walk" (15.19.7-8). Promising no "servility" on either side of this "[conversation]" (15.20.5,3), the narrator establishes a respectful, friendly distance highly conducive to the co-operative play this game requires.

As the narrator's fancy gathers "fixities and definites" to serve as "counters" in this poetic game, its activity stands between and reflects on both Byron's as poet in creating the entire poem (including the narrator himself); and the incidents of artistic creativity within the plot of the poem, such as Juan and Haidée's creation of Paradise. The foregrounding of the interplay between narrator and reader, then, elucidates the same ludic process taking place at the extra-textual and intra-textual levels. Amazingly, if all goes well between him and his
reader, Byron skillfully creates the perception that the reader is actually participating in all this creative furor, a co-player rather than a mere observer. In a literal sense, by serious standards, of course, she cannot be a co-player unless she is present at the time of composition; but in the ludic world which Byron has created, she and thousands of others are imagined into an existence where they interact with the poet at his moments of highest creativity.

Byron achieves this illusion with the deft interpolation of hints, clues, and subtle suggestions that imply that this playworld of the poem is just as "real" as the extra-textual world or even that, for the moment, as Earl Ingersoll maintains, "there may be no 'reality' outside the textual at all" (307). As he discusses adulterous spouses, for instances, his memory briefly fails him, and he pauses, wondering aloud, "Which commandment is't they break?" (1.98.4). Only the most literal of readers doesn't find herself reviewing the Decalogue for the answer. Or again, deep within the Sultan's palace, Juan must wait with the odalisques while the narrator imagines giant women in mythically distant lands whose entire bodies are "[i]n such proportion!". It's obviously hard for him to release that salacious image, but with a will, the narrator briskly turns to his companion and proposes a return to what, in comparison, seems like the real world: "So let us back to Lilliput, and guide / Our hero through the labyrinth of love" (6.28.3,6-7). The
labyrinthine palace, however, is located within a poetic text which exists within the further allusive context of a respectable eighteenth-century work. Perhaps, Byron cleverly implies, this Lilliput--through which the reader is even now guiding Juan--is more authentically real than the famous country of Swift's classic.

But Byron's narrator (or, increasingly, Byron as narrator or Byron and the narrator) will not be satisfied with the reader's responses alone: he expressly solicits her participation in the very act of imaginative creation. Instead of fully describing Gulbeyaz's exotic boudoir, for example, his fancy will choose the raw materials from life; "[a] lively reader's fancy does the rest [my emphasis]" (6.98.8). The "rest," clearly, is the transforming activity which Coleridge describes as that of the secondary imagination--a virtually divine creative act. Later, when Juan arrives in Russia, the reader is called on to "suppose" into existence the young hero, his destination, and everything he needs to make a good impression on the Czarina. In the prose Preface to Cantos Three and Four, "supposing" is the term first mocked by Byron as the mode of Wordsworth's imagination and then expanded by his fancy into a productive activity for the reader. Once again, Byron (clearly Byron, in the preface) supplies the richly detailed "counters" of the Spanish gentleman's situation and the reader plays with them, transforming them into a playworld so "realistic" that she can, if she wishes, practically step into the poem herself and enter the game
played by the characters at that final level. In fact, Byron literalizes this kind of dramatic entry into the game which the reader has helped to create when the narrator politely invites the reader to join Juan in Catherine's coach:

reader, we request
You'll mount with our young hero the conveyance
Which wafted him from Petersburgh: the best Barouche. (10.49.2-5)

Few authors of any era make such an undisguised play for their audience's total investment in the world of the text.

The intimacy generated by this co-operative artistic play with the genial, witty narrator predisposes the reader to give a fair hearing to Byron's satiric review of post-Waterloo European culture. Nevertheless, Byron's audience must always examine the narrator's statements, even toy with them, in the rhetorical context of the author's acts. For example, as this study has shown, after ridiculing Wordsworth and Coleridge for their poetic "system" for years, Byron then exemplifies, in Don Juan, an "Imaginative" process similar in operation to that which the older poets have made a standard of High Romanticism until the present day. Nor are expressions of personal sentiment always reliable. "I write the world, nor care if the world read," he asserts (15.60.3), a mantra he repeats throughout the poem. But, of course, he does care very much, as his actions show when he faces down all sorts of opposition from friends, publishers, and critics to insure that the world at least be given the opportunity to read Don Juan.

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But when Byron lambastes the Romantics for their incomprehensibility, he means it, and offers as an alternative witty, cogent verse which makes nineteenth-century forays into the "metaphysical" realm accessible and enjoyable. Furthermore, when he says they should "change [their] lakes for ocean" (Ded.5.8), he shows them just what he means by offering a work that encompasses many ways of loving, creating, and thinking. For Byron the eighteenth-century satirist, the values of human freedom and poetical integrity are non-negotiable. Byron the Romantic poet, however, celebrates the human mind and spirit and explores the ways that the interplay of men and women with each other and with their world invests their lives with meaning. That meaning, for all of Byron's passion, is not an absolute one. His ocean is wide enough to accommodate many sea-wanderers, many truths, many "shifting sails."

In fact, when experienced as a whole, Don Juan has more to say to the twentieth-century reader about the way individuals live their lives than it does about the conclusions at which they arrive. Knowledge in Don Juan, McGann reminds us, is consistently portrayed as an activity, not a set of facts or beliefs (Towards 63). In Byron's words, the pleasure lies, not in the place one sets out for, but, ironically, "[a]t the great end of travel--which is driving" (10.72.8).

Finally, in the midst of Byron's depiction of the bored and idle rich at Norman Abbey, he pauses to reflect
on the one thing in his life which, as Robert Gleckner notes, has come to provide the sensation and pleasure that he craves, regardless of the outcome (9). Love affairs thrilled for a time and then cooled; his family life ended in an abrupt marital separation which dragged on for eight bitter years; and the disunified Italians and undisciplined Greeks frustrated his attempts to aid them. But poetry offers the poet and the reader "satiety / Both in performance and in preparation" (14.14.5-6)—the contentment of introspection and the satisfaction of public recognition. "It occupies me, " Byron muses, "to turn back regards / On what I've seen or ponder'd, sad or cheery," whether or not "the world grows weary" (14.11.5-6,2).

Poetry is a gamble, after all: after his "Muse . . . gathers a repertory of facts" (14.13.1-2), and his fancy transforms them into literary artifacts of play and pleasure, there is no guarantee of success with these readers whom Byron has so assiduously cultivated. But it is not of the greatest consequence to the poet, because his reward lies in the act of creative play itself:

In play, there are two pleasures for your choosing—
The one is winning, and the other losing. (14.12.7-8)

The reputation of Byron's Don Juan has risen and fallen with changing poetic fashion several times since those words were written. It will never lose its appeal, though, for those rhetorical souls who play the game of life, not
for any serious prize, but just for the sheer pleasure of the game itself.
REFERENCES


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