

Gender, Nation and Embodiment in Byron's Poetry

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>SIGNED DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER I: “MY LITTLE FABRIC OF FAME”: BYRON, WOMEN AND THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Byron and the female reader .....	26
Byron and the female author.....	41
Byron’s aligning of the body politic with the female body: influences and examples .....	58
<b>CHAPTER II: “I AM NOT WHAT I SEEM”: BYRON’S RELUCTANT NATIONALISM</b> .....	<b>67</b>
Cosmopolitanism and patriotism.....	71
“The world is all before me and I leave England without regret”: Childe Harold on the spot.....	76
Unruly bodies: Byron’s fears of miscegenation in <u>The Waltz</u> .....	110
Caged birds and haram queens: contestations of space and discourse in the Turkish Tales .....	122
<b>CHAPTER III: “LIKE DISTANCE IN A LANDSCAPE”: BYRON’S WAYS OF SEEING</b> .....	<b>135</b>
“A Sand-Jar of Atoms”: Byron’s disintegrating sense of self .....	137
The “dangerous goddess”: Byron’s material temptation.....	157
“England! With all thy faults I love thee still”: Byron’s allegorical representations in <u>Don Juan</u> .....	171
<b>CHAPTER IV: “TO WRITE SO AS TO BRING HOME THE HEART”: BYRON AND THE FIGURE OF HOME</b> .....	<b>199</b>
Domesticity begins at home: the Separation Controversy and the aftermath .....	205
Outside looking in: male subjectivity and domesticity in <u>Don Juan</u> .....	211
“The infant of an infant World”: Byron’s quest for paradise in <u>The Island</u> .....	237
“Greek love” and Byron’s fatal love for Greece .....	245
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>251</b>
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	<b>257</b>
<b>APPENDICES: PUBLISHED ARTICLES</b> .....	<b>bound in following the thesis</b>

## ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine how the concepts of gender and nation were inextricably linked for Byron, and how this is demonstrated in his poetry through strategies of gendered embodiment. Byron's complex relationship with and attitudes towards women displays an ambivalence that characterises his representations of England, due to his perception of the British body politic as a "gynocracy." This ambivalence was further exacerbated by Byron's conception of his own masculinity as one in flux. His literary professionalisation and his status as an outmoded aristocrat contributed to these anxieties regarding his masculine subjectivity.

Byron's poetic fame was particularly influenced by the growing importance of women as readers, writers and arbiters of literary taste in early nineteenth century England. The first chapter will explore Byron's anxiety about this increased influence of women as competitors and consumers in the literary marketplace, and how this threat manifests in his monstrous configurations of the female body and the body politic in his poetry. Chapter 2 investigates the tensions between Byron's cosmopolitanism and patriotism in the context of his masculine subjectivity and demonstrates how these tensions shaped Byron's first commercially successful work Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. This chapter also examines how Byron uses this masculine subjectivity in his Turkish Tales in order to assert the authority of his opinions on female sexuality and freedom over those expressed in female-authored works with similarly "exotic" themes. Chapter 3 addresses the post-exilic Byron and how his estrangement from England destabilises his conceptions of subjectivity and influences the poetics of the third canto of CHP. This chapter then goes on to track Byron's recovery from this disintegration and traces how Byron's poetic voice takes a new direction in his depictions of gender and nation. He begins to depend more heavily on allegory as a strategy of displacement for his feelings of nostalgia and homesickness and in order to place himself in a national literary tradition, as illustrated in his treatments of women and nation in Don Juan. The fourth and final chapter explores Byron's feelings towards the domestic and commercial worlds both of which he held as bastions of female authority. Byron examines the ramifications of female influence through the heroines who use sexuality as an assertion of this power against a hapless Juan. This chapter will examine his poem The Island and the poems written just before his death in Greece to demonstrate conclusively how Byron's struggles to recover his masculine subjectivity are persistently staged as contestations of space.

## SIGNED DECLARATION

This thesis has been entirely written by myself, and is my own. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

The publication of my article 'Britannia: The Other Woman in Byron's Life' (Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies, 2006) was approved by my supervisor, Bill Bell. As required by university regulations (3.9.11 in the Postgraduate Studies Programme), a copy of the article is bound into this thesis.

Permission has been obtained from the publishers.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Primary sources:

Byron's Letters and Journals	<u>BLI</u>
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage	<u>CHP</u>
The Complete Miscellaneous Prose	<u>CMP</u>
The Complete Poetical Works	<u>CPW</u>
The Curse of Minerva	<u>CM</u>
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers	<u>EBSR</u>
The Faerie Queene	<u>FQ</u>
Fugitive Pieces	<u>FP</u>
Hours of Idleness	<u>HI</u>
Poems on Various Occasions	<u>POVO</u>
The Prophecy of Dante	<u>PD</u>

### Secondary sources:

Byron and Romanticism	<u>BR</u>
Fiery Dust	<u>FD</u>
The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations	<u>ODQ</u>
The Poetics of Sensibility	<u>PS</u>
Romantics Reviewed	<u>RR</u>
Quarterly Review	<u>QR</u>

All other citations within the thesis are made in MLA style. All references without a specified page number are online sources.

## Introduction

This dissertation will demonstrate how Byron's attitudes towards women influenced his relationship with the British nation and how this is exemplified in his poetry. His attitudes were coloured both by his personal experiences of women as well as by their increasing importance as readers, writers and arbiters of taste in early nineteenth century England. Throughout his life, Byron was anxious to be perceived as indifferent to two forces: his reception by his female audience and his feelings of attachment towards England. This influenced his posthumous reputation, contributing greatly to the pervasive mythicisation of Byron which still endures. However, he wrote in 1820 that his "indifference was a kind of Passion" (CMP 110). This dissertation will argue that for Byron, the ideas of woman and nation were inextricable, and this strongly influenced both his poetry and his actions, showing how his indifference was a performative act that masked his passion for the feminized nation, Britannia.

In order to negotiate these connections fruitfully, I will explore how Byron's experiences of both literal spaces, such as that of the nation, and figurative spaces, such as that of the literary marketplace, shape the gendered, embodied self that he depicts in his poetry, and how that in turn inflects his representations of women and nation. Byron wrote in a letter to John Murray that he had lived in "three or four" (BLJ 10:69) different worlds

and, indeed, he traversed the spheres of the poet and politician, the aristocrat and the underworld, the homosexual and the heterosexual, the cosmopolitan and the nationalist, the oppressed and the liberator. In a departure from a conception of romantic subjectivity as transcendental, the foundations of the argument of this thesis are based on the premise that Byron's selfhood--and consequently his poetry--was shaped by his interactions and experiences, in other words, his embodiment, in these worlds.

### Mapping a history of the body

Theoretical considerations of the body have been transformed by the idea of embodiment--from that of a "fixed, material entity subject to the empirical rules of biological science" to that of a body no longer considered a "bounded entity" (Csordas 1-2). This idea of embodiment asserts the inseparability of perception of the world from the locatedness of the body in that world, in other words, the relationship between body and space.<sup>1</sup>

Byron was invested in the idea of the body more than any of the other Romantics, obsessed with his appearance, weight, and representation in portraits. His relationship with his own body was decidedly complex: he constantly battled with his weight and was born with a club foot. Byron's was one of the first "modern" bodies, that is, a body subjected to

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<sup>1</sup> This way of thinking about embodiment derives from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings in his seminal work, Phenomenology of Perception (1962). On the relationship between place and subjectivity see Jeff Malpas (1999), Edward Casey (1993, 1997). On romantic subjectivity and a sense of place see Jonathan Bate (2000) and Kate Rigby (2004).



commodification, its celebrity appeal lying in its accessible inaccessibility-- portraits of Byron were “engraved and painted and sold in every town throughout the kingdom” (MacCarthy 352), attempts to capture what, according to witnesses such as Scott and Coleridge, was an “otherworldly” appearance (Clubbe 34).

It is unsurprising, then, that Byron’s perceptions of the world were primarily somatic, acutely aware of the experiences of his physical body (and those of others) in space. The body/self can be regarded as a “performing self of appearance, display and impression management” (Csordas 2). Indeed, the way we think about bodies today is greatly influenced by the representation of Byron as celebrity.<sup>2</sup> Byron also “biologizes the process of literary production, making the writing body and the gendered politics of its individuation particularly palpable in the romance of authorship” (Hofkosh 36).

John O’Neill observes that “human beings think nature and society with their bodies” (10). That is, we have a need to anthropomorphise in order to categorise and thus understand the world. He differentiates the conception of the body into five aspects: the world’s body is the tendency to anthropomorphise, the social body is the comparison of the social

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<sup>2</sup> See Tom Mole’s article “‘Nourished by that Abstinence’: Consumption and Control in The Corsair” for a detailed account of Byron’s dieting; see John Clubbe (2005) for Byron’s controlling of his own image.

institutions to bodily organs, the body politic represents models of city or country as the body writ large, the consumer body encompasses the creation and commercialization of bodily needs as well as the marketable self, and the medical body refers to the processes of biotechnology and medicalization (xi).<sup>3</sup> My discussions of Byron's embodiment in different worlds will draw upon all of these aspects to various degrees and track the relationships between them.

For a nineteenth century aristocrat like Byron, his identity was bound up with the possession of landed property which contributed to his sense of self. As Stephen Cheeke has persuasively demonstrated in his book Byron and Place (2002) which he calls a "topo-biographical study" (13), Byron's lordship and his ownership of Newstead Abbey helped him to "[fashion] the self through the meaning of place, answering the needs of identity through physical situation and material historical memory" (17). However, it is significant that Byron's aristocratic status was due to the biological fact of his being a male heir and Byron's "strength" as Jerome Christensen designates it in his book Lord Byron's Strength (1993), was increasingly coming under

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock formulated three approaches to understanding the body: that of the individual body, "understood in the phenomenological sense of the lived experience of the body-self"; the social body "referring to the representational uses of the body as a natural symbol with which to think about nature, society, and culture" (7); and the body politic, "referring to the regulation, surveillance, and control of bodies (individual and collective) in reproduction and sexuality, in work and in leisure, in sickness and other forms of deviance and human difference" (8).

threat from a “commercial culture conceived increasingly in feminine terms” (Hofkosh 38). The ownership of property, as Malcolm Kelsall points out, inspired in Byron an “educated commitment to the state which distinguished the patriot” (Politics 8), a loyalty that existed in tension with his disillusionment with the current state of affairs in a feminized England. Consequently, Byron’s anxieties regarding this threat to his masculine subjectivity emerge as a significant theme in his poetry, inextricable from his treatments of women and nation.

Cheeke’s approach has been partly inspired by Diego Saglia whose work on the poetics of place effectively and elegantly addresses the “dominant ideologies of the emergence and dominance of modern Europe: gendered subjectivity, domestication, and professionalization, imperialism, capitalism” (Favret and Watson 8). Saglia writes that, for Wordsworth and Byron, “the representation of place is both the recreation of a ‘real’ place and that of an imagined locale where the poetic “I” perceives the stratifications of human history” (13). This dissertation begins from the premise that the poetic “I” is also an embodied eye whose subjectivity is inseparable from its gender.

Byron’s conflation of woman and nation finds resonances in the historic idea of the gendered body used to fashion and conceive of the body

politic.<sup>4</sup> O'Neill's formulation of the "world's body" is the impulse that gives rise to origin myths, such as in the example of the Dogon, an African people who perceive the world as a great gendered body (11). The representations that emerge out of such anthropomorphisations can be referred to as a form of mapping. According to Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein

Mapping describes a particular cognitive mode of gaining control over the world, of synthesising cultural and geographical information, and of successfully navigating both physical and mental space. (3)

The ways that the body politic is "mapped" become crucial in the context of nation-states in the early modern period, with the growth of trade and exploration as well as an emergent sense of nationhood.<sup>5</sup> In England, as Joanne Woolway has shown in her work on Spenser and place, both geographers and poets worked "explicitly to project a sense of pride in the nation" (par. 4). As Woolway goes on to demonstrate, rich parallels are to be found between representations of writing and mapmaking in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the use of these representations in imperial

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<sup>4</sup> Recorded history of the use of such analogies to describe the state itself and the relationship of the citizen to the state, can be found in Plato's Republic and in the works of Roman writers Seneca and Cicero and in the works of other ancient Greek writers (Hale 68-70). Hobbes' influential formulation of the body politic in Leviathan and the origin myth of Athens will be discussed in detail in Chapter I.

<sup>5</sup> Denis Cosgrove has demonstrated how mapping becomes particularly significant for sixteenth century Venice as a flourishing commercial centre that depended for its economic life on maritime trade (67), and for the purposes of defence, as a consequence of territorial expansion. Representations of Venice before 1500 in spite of being empirically accurate, would tend to portray the commonwealth of Venice rather than the physical city--"Her physical features are exhibited as the material manifestation of this state, just as the figures of Mercury and Neptune are incarnations of its numen" (Schulz qtd. in Cosgrove 68).

projects illustrates how the fields of literature, geography and politics can intersect. These imbrications are particularly significant for both the subject and the time period that this dissertation will concentrate on as the nineteenth century witnessed an “overdetermined interest in place” due to advances in geographical knowledge and shifts in the geopolitical configuration of the globe (Michie and Thomas 2).

The mapping of the body politic resulted in allegorising the “abstract civic virtues” of the nation “in images of stereotypical female figures” (Cusack 1). Marina Warner in her seminal work on female allegory suggests that the use of allegory functions as an “expression of desiderata and virtues” (xix). This seems particularly relevant with regards to Byron’s relationship with England/“Britannia” which was characterised by nostalgia. Malcolm Kelsall, Jane Stabler and Stephen Cheeke have all discussed the influence this relationship had on his poetry--as Stabler puts it, his “discontinuously continuous relationship with England colours Byron’s life history and also his poetics” (Poetics 1). However, “nation and gender must be seen as mutually implicated, not only because gender differentiation takes place in national contexts, but because gender is a crucial organising principle for the patriarchal nation” (Cusack 4) and it is the important ramifications of this mutuality that I shall be addressing in this thesis.

The gendered body in the long eighteenth century was understood in

terms of a Cartesian mind/body split, that attributed rationality, science and enlightened thought to the masculine mind, and the animalistic and sensual to the female body. However, the privileging of mind over body became more complex with the emergence of the cult of sensibility and sentiment, where sensibility challenged and destabilised this relationship. With the increase in women's writing in the nineteenth century that engaged with the quotidian and the corporeal, the experience of the lived body was no longer relegated to the margins. Anne Mellor's formulations of two kinds of Romanticism made in her influential work Romanticism and Gender ushered in the recovery and assimilation of female writers into Romantic studies.<sup>6</sup>

This recovery brought in its wake Jerome McGann's revisionary revisiting of his earlier work The Romantic Ideology, The Poetics of Sensibility, demonstrating how this increased visibility of women poets allowed readers of Romanticism to witness the "stakes involved in overturning the traditional understandings of mind and body" (18). As Alan Richardson has pointed out perceptions of Romanticism was charged by critics of the early twentieth century with being "irrational, emotive, overly concerned with the body, the senses, and with bodily desires, and (if anything) effeminate rather than 'masculine'" ("Body" 2). This association seems only natural for, as Paul

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Romantic Woman Writers: Voices and Countervoices (1995) and Romanticism and Women Poets: Opening the Doors of Reception (1999) for critical and historical assessments of women's writing in this era.

Youngquist has demonstrated,

the period of cultural history that corresponds with Romanticism in England saw the installation of a norm of embodiment [ . . . ] [which] coincides with the cultural consolidation of a proper body [ . . . ] So the proper body, and the cultural logic of embodiment more generally, arises as a performative effect of a multiplicity of discourses and practises that make such a norm possible without determining it absolutely. (xiv-xv)

Foucault's genealogical method (172) which examines the nexus of power and knowledge as embedded in the material body does not gender the body explicitly. Following Foucault's investigations that take "a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects" and discard the transcendental subject, enables me to illustrate how Byron, in spite of inhabiting a traditionally conceived position of power (aristocratic, white, male) may have perceived himself as lacking in agency and authority. As Foucault illustrates, power is not an essential property but a "strategy" whose effects of domination are attributed not only to "appropriation but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings" (174). Consequently, Foucault goes on to say "that one should decipher [in power] a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess; that one should take as its model a perpetual battle, rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory" (174).

Byron, I will argue, was constantly aware of and responded to the

contingent and relational nature of power both in his poetry and his life.

Caroline Franklin, in her important work Byron's Heroines (1992), examined what was, till then, surprisingly a relatively untouched area in Byron criticism: Byron's myriad representations of women, that ranged from "the eroticized passive victim of patriarchal force to the masculinized woman-warrior, from the romantic heroine of sentiment to the sexually voracious virago or the chaste republican matron" (1). My intention in this dissertation is to show how these representations mesh with Byron's own experiences and perceptions of powerlessness in a gynocratic England, where his "political career . . . is a record of failure ending in inarticulateness" (Kelsall, "Politics" 50).

### Plan of the thesis

The first chapter is an examination of Byron's relationships with women in their various configurations--as consumers, readers and arbiters of his poetry--as well as with his female competitors in the literary marketplace, using examples from his juvenilia and English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. I will demonstrate the threat he felt from women in the metaphorical space of the literary marketplace and the physical space of the Bluestocking salon and the first chapter will end with a discussion of Byron's notorious misogyny. I will argue that, instead of being a straightforward case of hating women, Byron is writing in a tradition of satire that views the female body politic as



the ultimate embodiment of the monstrous body. The gynocracy that Byron famously denigrated in DJ is symbolically represented as Britannia, and it is the confluence of all these factors that inflects Byron's embattled feelings of attachment to the British nation.

The second chapter will open with a discussion of the first two cantos of CHP in the context of Byron's cosmopolitanism that has often been placed in opposition to patriotism, and challenge Caroline Franklin's portrayal of Byron as "the male aristocratic liberal and libertarian poet who frequently offers the Utopian vision of the primacy of romantic love and liberated female sexuality" (2) by showing how his attitude towards the role of women in the political nation is one of Burkean conservatism, and how the security of the nation is threatened by female somatic agency, as demonstrated in his satire, The Waltz.

Chapter III will explore the influence of place on Byron's subjectivity. His self-exile from England and feelings of alienation, in conjunction with his travels through Switzerland and Italy lead to a sense of fragmented self, that, as I will demonstrate, exemplifies Anne Mellor's formulation of "feminine romanticism" as an outcome of his feminizing of space, a theme that runs through most of the poems written in this period, and in Canto III of CHP. I then go on to illustrate how Byron continually tries to represent the feminization of space through allegorical figures such as Venus de Medici,

the sea goddess Cybele in canto IV of CHP and eventually in Juan's manifold love interests in DJ. I observe that most of these figures are conveyed as queenly in some way, recalling Spenser's The Faerie Queene, and represent different configurations and aspects of Byron's relationship with Britain. His uses of universal figura, such as allegory and personification, are gestures towards a desire for human community, and my discussion of these lays the groundwork for the next chapter.

The theme of the last chapter is that of domesticity and the different connotations of home, and I highlight Byron's preoccupation with paternity and transmission, that can arguably considered as an appropriation of the "ethic of care" (Mellor 68) that characterises feminine romanticism. However, this is complicated by Byron's rejection of women as proper agents in the domestic sphere, due to their tendencies towards conspicuous consumption. I argue that Byron's attitudes towards women are reified by his constant reliance on "common things" in DJ. I conclude by chronicling Byron's experiences in Greece, where the process of conflating his place-attachment with the loved one is set into motion, but undone by Byron's eventual realization that his quest for home would always be doomed to failure.

This thesis thus aims to demonstrate, that due to the increasing feminization of British culture, and the impact and influence of women both on Byron's personal and professional life, Byron envisioned the British body

politic as feminine. His various representations of women as mothers, sisters and lovers all shaped his relationship with his “native land”, the nation allegorized as Britannia.

## Chapter I: “My Little Fabric of Fame”: Byron, women, and the literary marketplace

### Introduction

Byron’s representations of women throughout his poetic corpus are never uncomplicated--they are often idealised figures whose ideality is undercut by betrayal or monstrosity that he continually designates as characteristics inherent to womanhood. As this chapter will demonstrate, this ambiguity also surfaces in his allusions to the British nation, as a consequence of his perception of the body politic as feminized. Though this idea is part of a poetic tradition that Byron is heir to and recognises, the ambiguity of these representations is precipitated by his anxiety attendant to his perception of himself being “edged out”<sup>1</sup> of spaces, both metaphorical and literal, that were increasingly coming under what he was later to call “[p]etticoat influence” (D] XIV.26.201). From the metaphorical space of the literary marketplace to the physical space of the Bluestocking salon, Byron felt under threat from the dictates of female readers as well as his female competitors and this influenced his poetics in manifold ways. By way of an

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow the sense of Gaye Tuchman’s (1989) term, though for a different context. Byron’s statement: “no one should be a rhymers who could be anything better. And this is what annoys one, to see Scott and Moore, and Campbell and Rogers, who might have all been agents and leaders, now mere spectators” (BLJ 3:217) seemingly contradicts itself, for the contemporaries he names are all “rhymers”--however, behind the derogatory term “rhymers” lies the spectre of literary professionalization, at which women were becoming particularly adept, and according to Byron threatened to relegate and reduce these masculine figures by their mere presence in the literary marketplace.

analysis of the early nineteenth century literary marketplace, focussing on women as producers and then consumers of literary culture, this chapter will demonstrate how these contexts influenced Byron's relationship with both his audience and with the British nation. This will be followed by an analysis of Byron's conception of the body politic as feminized, that is problematised by the simultaneous abhorrence and attachment felt towards the maternal body, in order to demonstrate the inextricability of Byron's representations of women from that of the nation.

Like most young men's first ventures into writing verse, Byron's "first dash into poetry" ("Detached Thoughts" BLJ 9:40) was prompted by infatuation.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, a large proportion of the poetry written during Byron's adolescence consists of poems addressed to women, as testaments to their "celestialities" (Medwin 73) or his views on the relationship between the sexes, which could be either idealised or cynical.<sup>3</sup> His attitude towards the opposite sex throughout his life grew to be bound up with feelings of hostility, suspicion, betrayal and being threatened though it was tempered on occasion, by genuine feelings of affection that he felt for individual women, such as Teresa Guiccioli or his half-sister Augusta Leigh, but rarely

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<sup>2</sup> This was inspired by his violent passion for his first cousin Margaret Parker (Marchand, Portrait 21).

<sup>3</sup> "Like Napoleon, I have always had a great contempt for women; and formed this opinion of them not hastily, but from my own fatal experience. My writings, indeed, tend to exalt the sex; and my imagination has always delighted in giving them a beau idéal likeness, but I only drew them as a painter of statuary would do, --as they should be." (Medwin 73)

towards the sex in general.<sup>4</sup> His relationship with his widowed mother was tempestuous but affectionate;<sup>5</sup> he wrote her long detailed letters during his travels abroad, and was devastated by her death in 1811.

As a peer who came into his inheritance early in life, Byron was made aware of his potential for a “superior destiny” (Marchand, Portrait 15) at a young age.<sup>6</sup> This awareness was heightened by his attending Harrow, where his talents at oratory convinced him of his potential as a politician, though he envisioned writing poetry as an extension of those talents.<sup>7</sup> Attending one of

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<sup>4</sup> He claimed in later life to have been abused by his nurse May Gray, but the seeds for his early distrust of women may have been sown by his perceived betrayal by his childhood object of infatuation, Mary Chaworth: “She was the beau idéal of all that my youthful fancy could paint of beautiful; and I have taken all my fables about the celestial nature of women from the perfection my imagination created in her--I say created, for I found her, like the rest of the sex, any thing but angelic” (Medwin 61).

<sup>5</sup> In a letter to Augusta he complained bitterly: “She flies into a fit of phrenzy, upbraids me as if I was the most undutiful wretch in existence, rakes up the ashes of my father, abuses him, says I shall be a true Byrrone, which is the worst epithet she can invent. Am I to call this woman mother?” (BLJ 1:56).

<sup>6</sup> “When a visitor flatteringly said that she hoped some day to read his speeches in the House of Commons, the boy replied proudly: ‘I hope not; if you read any speeches of mine, it will be in the House of Lords’.” (Marchand, Portrait 15).

<sup>7</sup> Paul Elledge in his study of Byron’s time at Harrow pays close attention to how his reading and performing of classical texts contributed to his self fashioning, a precocious tendency already evident in the young lord. He argues that Byron’s choices and performances of dramatic pieces rehearse: “the psychobiographical tensions that Byron’s poems will later enact: the ritualized partings and extravagant farewells; the rhythms of approach and withdrawal, advance and retreat; the exploitation of inexhaustible resources for self-dramatization in chronically, compulsively repeated situations; the restless longings for partnership, completion, home” (2). In “Childish Recollections” (CPW I:157), Byron alludes to his friendly rivalry with “Cleon” at public speaking, and how his schooling encouraged him to explore his potential:

Yet, with the retrospection loves to dwell  
As infant laurels round my head were twin’d:  
When Probus’ praise repaid my lyric song,  
Or plac’d me higher in the studious throng;  
Or, when my first harangue receiv’d applause,  
His sage instruction to the primaeval cause,

the most prominent educational institutions of his time, Byron naturally interiorised the rhetoric of masculine virtue and homosociability that these institutions believed was their responsibility to impart.<sup>8</sup> Much of his early poetry was dedicated to celebrating the friendships he had forged at Harrow. These poems often dwelt upon the potential for future glory Byron felt both he and his contemporaries possessed. “Childish Recollections” (CPW I:157), Byron’s paean to Harrow published in Hours of Idleness, often refers to his schoolmates in terms of a fraternity: “All, all, that brothers should be, but the name” (line 264). Byron no doubt envisioned both himself and his peers as future leaders of the nation, conceiving of it, as Benedict Anderson has observed as “a deep horizontal comradeship” (16).

Byron opined that oratory and poetry “are so nearly similar, as to require in a great measure the same Talents, & he who excels in the one would on application succeed in the other” (BLJ 1:113). He was aware, however, that while oratory belonged to the masculine world of politics, poetry was considered to be directed at a female audience, a dichotomy that he initially resolved quite resolutely in the favour of the latter. On reading

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What gratitude, to him, my soul possest,  
While hope of dawning honours fill’d my breast. (345-354)

<sup>8</sup> As John Chandos puts it in his study of boys’ public schools in the 1800s: “What a classical education was designed to do was to forge a bond of shared thought, sensibility and manners between gentlemen of all ranks, uniting in one caste--the caste of a gentleman--nobility, gentry, and their kin, the professional classes, requisite to the ordering of society” (33).

Byron's early work Fugitive Pieces, his friend Reverend Becher castigated him in verse for "Deigning to varnish scenes, that shun the day, / With guilty lustre and with amorous lay" for fear it may "taint the Virgin's spotless mind" and instead encouraged him to "Enhance thy native worth, and proudly twine / With Britain's Honors, those that are divine" (W. Pratt 38).

As James Soderholm has shown, the young Byron persisted in writing erotic verse, though circumventing Becher's concerns by translating the verse of Anacreon whose work signals "a shift from a Homeric muse, who celebrates battles, to a post-Homeric muse, who celebrates marriages of the gods" (29). His translation of Anacreon's Ode 1 (CPW I:73) is a poetic rendering of his [lyre's] choosing "love, love alone" (line 25) over "martial strains" (7).

The tension between what Byron called "amorous writing" (DI V.2.9) and writing to prove what Becher called his "native worth" would, however, become increasingly problematic for Byron as his poetic career progressed. Byron was heir to a national poetic tradition which glorified the British nation that in the eighteenth century was accelerated by Britain constantly being at war as well as by domestic factors such as the 1707 Union of the Parliaments of England and Scotland.<sup>9</sup> Patriotism was, however, as Dustin Griffin has noted

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<sup>9</sup> Griffin cites Pope, Cowper, Thomson, Akenside, Young, Churchill, Dyer and Goldsmith as "many of the poets whom we regard as major figures [in the eighteenth century] quite explicitly put themselves forward in their poems as patriots" (8-9).



not simply a celebrative mode. It often involved anxiety and ambivalence about the state of the nation and its prospects. One loved one's country and feared for it, or one loved the country as it once was and had perhaps ceased to be. (12)

While in the eighteenth century the factors considered detrimental to Britain's culture and identity were the corrupting influence of the French, or the evils of overreaching imperialism, Byron attributed much of its deterioration to the increasing feminization of British culture, a phenomenon by which he felt he was particularly affected. Consequently, he began to conceive of the British nation as a feminine entity, and the "ambivalence" that Griffin designates as an attribute of patriotism, was exacerbated by his complex relationship with women as consumers, arbiters and competitors in the literary marketplace.<sup>10</sup> As this chapter will demonstrate, Byron's discomfiture with this feminization continually manifests itself in corporeal terms, both in terms of his own body and in his depictions of the female body, be it as metaphor for the body politic or those of his fellow

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<sup>10</sup> Increases in women's literacy and opportunities for education meant that there was a significant rise in the consumption and production of literature by women by the early nineteenth century. Lucy Newlyn observes: "Female novelists were successfully establishing their own readership in a competitive literary market, while female readers were gaining access, through circulating-libraries, to this now fashionable (though still expensive) commodity" (7). There were around 1,000 circulating libraries in England by 1801 which were considered feminine spaces, serving as "daytime lounges where ladies could see others and be seen" (Erickson 129). Anne Mellor states that "since reading (especially novels) was thought to be a particularly genteel occupation for [middle-class] women, the majority of the reading public, for all genres, was female" (7). However, Jacqueline Pearson has demonstrated that while reading was considered almost "a metaphor for domesticity" (2), women were encouraged to read only certain kind of books. Books which taught women "only to feel" were considered dangerously corrupting (such as French and German novels) (Pearson 3).

authoresses.

### I.i. Byron and the female reader

Anxiety regarding the growing influence of the female reader became palpable in the eighteenth century and is exemplified in Christopher Anstey's poem "The Author's Conversation with his Bookseller" (1808) that was included as an appendix to The New Bath Guide (1766). Anstey's epistolary work, a gently humorous account of fashionable Bath life, was very possibly an inspiration for Byron's later poem The Blues (written 1821). The New Bath Guide dedicated several episodes to satirical portrayals of female readers and tastes. Byron also borrowed the name "Inkel" from Anstey's An Election Ball, in Poetical Letters (1776). Byron was an admirer of Anstey's work, and he defended him assiduously from Campbell's (of Specimens of British Poets fame) charge that Anstey was guilty of plagiarising Smollett, and claimed that it must have been the other way around, due to the chronology of events (BLJ 7:101).<sup>11</sup> Anstey's account of "The Author's Conversation with his Bookseller" shows how female taste and purchasing habits had an impact on the culture of reading and literary production. Set in Slider the bookseller's shop, an author comes in to discuss the progress of the sales of his latest work, and overhears Slider's important

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<sup>11</sup> Byron also defended DI from charges of obscenity by citing Anstey's Bath Guide, amongst others (BLJ 6:253) and used an excerpt from it as the epigraph to 'Answer to Some Elegant Verses' (CPW I:179).

customers Lady Bonton, Miss Bab and Mr Tightboot discuss his book in disparaging terms. Lady Bonton is critical of Slider's selection of poetry on offer as she wants a poem that is both "manly and spirited, nervous and strong; / Yet tender and delicate joys can impart" (28-29) and will touch her heart with its "sweet sensibility" (line 30).

She and her friends find the secluded author's work tedious, for his work lacks a moral and utilises classical allusions--but does not, unlike most writing of the day, use them to libellous purpose:

MISS BAB.

The subject's as good as the verse, Sir, I think:  
Besides, he don't give us the least intimations,  
What he means by his impudent insinuations.

LADY BONTON.

No--I wish that I knew who the person implied is,  
In a certain account that he gives of Alcides:  
I've try'd--but I can't make the least application  
To any one man that I know in the nation.

MISS BAB.

Ma'am, the thing of all others he gives me the spleen in,  
Is, the bringing in Pollux,--without any meaning.

(46-54)

The Author, wounded by this dismissal, remarks, *sotto voce*, "Racks! tortures! damnation! death! hell! and confusion! / They have no kind of taste for a classic allusion!" (55). After the exit of Slider's clientele, the Author confronts him as to why he didn't promote his work with more vigour, and the bookseller is forced to come clean:

SLIDER.

Why, then, to be plain, if you must know the reason,

You've writ neither blasphemy, bawdy, nor treason:  
 We hop'd you had something that's vendible for us,  
 But we find it is nothing but Pindar and Horace!  
 A mere compilation!---

...

Go boldly to work, and with freedom assail,  
 Not give us a wild allegorical tale,  
 For which by both parties you stand reprehended,  
 For political meanings to neither intended:  
 The ladies, you see, very justly remark,  
 That a reader should never be left in the dark;  
 And for that very reason some critics have said,  
 "You must be forgotten as soon as you're read."  
 (138-142; 160-167)

Anstey's Author responds:

Mr. Slider, I'm under a thorough conviction,  
 Most authors fulfil that unhappy prediction;  
 And am glad the republic of letters think fit  
 To choose such respectable judges of wit,  
 (168-171 )

Anstey's satire is heartfelt; like many of his contemporaries he felt a deep resentment at the significant role female consumers played in shaping the tastes of the nation. The verisimilitude of this state of affairs portrayed in the poem is represented by the figure of the Author, who is Anstey himself, a fact made obvious by the reference to The Patriot, a work that Anstey wrote in 1767. Byron's The Blues: A Literary Eclogue resonates with similar anxieties--though written in 1821, the world it conjures up is that of Regency London, when the Bluestockings held sway.

The anxiety provoked by intellectual women, both readers and writers, was embodied in the figure of the Bluestocking, who exercised her

power as literary arbiter in the physical space of the salon.<sup>12</sup> The overlap of the salon with the domestic space of the home defies “a strict mapping of the public/private distinction onto the exterior and interior, respectively, of domestic spaces . . . as organizers of the English literary salon, they could be said to be co-architects of the public sphere” (Heller 60). As Sarah Richardson observes, this overlap of physical space defined the manner in which middle-class women began to interpret their public and political identities. Some radicals and early feminists embraced the idea of the home as an enabling site for specifically female political agency (175), appropriating the marker that defined the mutable boundaries of the ideological constructs of the public and private. The authority that women exercised in such salons was manifested in its spatial arrangements:

Bluestocking salons were carefully yet casually engineered so that participants gathered in elect groups within small rooms and areas within the hostess’s house, all of these conversational spaces leading effortlessly toward the central space where the hostess reclined with a few select companions. Eventually everyone had to pass through her room. Salon structure, then, orchestrates conversational interaction, directing its flow back to the centering space. (Fay)

Consequently, Byron’s first attempts at publishing his poetry were accompanied by fears of feminine reception. Although he declared melodramatically to his friend and amanuensis Elizabeth Pigot regarding

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<sup>12</sup> Saglia points out how the physical space of the salon is internalized in Romantic conversation poems of the period, this textualised place serving as both background as well as an assumption of the conversational mode into poetical practice, which directs the text’s subject-matter on one side, and its relation to the readers, on the other (Byron and Spain 24).

Southwell (the place of publication of HI),

your cursed, detestable & abhorred abode of Scandal,  
antiquated virginity, & universal Infamy . . . I care not if the  
 whole Race were consigned to the Pit of Acheron, which I  
 would visit in person, rather than contaminate my sandals with  
 the polluted Dust of Southwell. (BLJ 1:123)

he made repeated inquiries after the fate of his first major publication, HI:

“Write soon, has Ridge sold well? or do the Ancients demur? what Ladies

have bought?” (BLJ 1:125) and “Are they [his verses] liked or not in

Southwell?” (BLJ 1:126) demonstrating that ambivalence he felt towards the

marketplace and women as the arbiters of literary taste and consumption.

Sonia Hofkosh has observed that for the writer in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “the self becomes the author when the work that is his own belongs to others, when it is published, sold and bought, read, and reviewed” (39). She describes the relationship of Byron’s female audience with him as one of “ravishment” (37)--the ambiguity of the verb demonstrating how fluid the power play can be between authors and their readers.<sup>13</sup> The conflation of the physical and the writerly body that led Byron to express the poetic impulse in physical terms, as a “bodily function” of “biological necessity” (Hofkosh 36), meant that he keenly felt the

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<sup>13</sup> Ghislaine McDayter has made a similar argument regarding Byron's female readers and fans “who the poet came increasingly to regard as insatiable beings who fed upon his literary corpus to satisfy their taste for the Byronic” (43). McDayter uses the Marxist metaphor of vampiric, “parasitic consumption to describe [the Romantic poets’] perceived loss of cultural and interpretive authority” and illustrates how “the gothic language of monstrosity and consumption” comes to permeate later intellectual and political discourse in the nineteenth century (44).

metaphorical dismemberment that his texts underwent in the literary marketplace. Byron was to persistently describe himself as a victim of female consumption, both physical and textual--as he wrote in a letter to John Murray in 1819: "Your Blackwood accuses me of treating women harshly--it may be so--but I have been their martyr. My whole life has been sacrificed to them and by them" (BLJ 6:257). As Frances Wilson notes,

Byron now belonged to his readers, as if by being read the writer was literally purchased. The "Byronic" became public property and Byron found that his identity was no longer synonymous with his image, that there was a severance between the self he experienced himself as being and the self returned to him in the eyes of his audience. (8)

An early poem, "Soliloquy of a Bard in the Country, in an Imitation of Littleton's Soliloquy of a Beauty" (CPW I:25) that appeared in the expurgated version of FP entitled Poems on Various Occasions, showcases the worries that were to dog Byron for the rest of his life as poet: the tension between being a professional poet, rather than a dilettantish aristocrat, and the influence of female taste on his poetry. Littleton's poem is written in a light hearted vein, the complaint of a beautiful and vain young woman who feels her beauty goes unappreciated in her provincial surroundings. The parallel that Byron is drawing is obvious, showing a thirst for the fame that he tasted with the publication of EBSR (CPW I:227), that was to later reach its zenith with the publication of CHP. Though the poem is written quite early in Byron's career he already characterises himself as a "Rhymer" (line 2) as well

as the eponymous “Bard”. He ruefully attributes the censure of his work to his not being a professional: “When Peers are Poets, Squires may well be Wits” (16). The poem addresses the need for professional disciplines to be circumscribed by certain roles, in this relatively new world where the “discipline that took writing as its professional work” (Siskin, Work 2) was literature and the anxiety felt by Byron at the “ambiguous status of professionalism” (Siskin, Work 5) at this time. The “Soliloquy” protests against the encroachment of other professionals on the discipline of literature by their acting as “Critics” (line 14) on moral grounds, rather than on the grounds of literary merit as the boundaries of professional demarcation demand.

However, he acknowledges the threat that he fears will endanger his poetic career in “To a Knot of Ungenerous Critics” (CPW I:19), a poem in a very similar strain to the “Soliloquy”. It is this insecurity that will lead him to alter his poetic idiom from the sentimental to the satirical by the time he comes to writing EBSR, a move that he is already contemplating: “She need not fear the amorous rhyme, / Love will not tempt her future time” (lines 59-60) where “amorous” writing functions as a signifier of sentimental feminized writing. Indeed, the dangers often imputed to the novel could very well be applied to Byron’s early poetry as well, distorting impressionable female readers’ notions of romantic love and courtship of.



Pearson's account of Samuel Richardson consulting with female correspondents and their role in helping to make his protagonist (26), resonates subtly with Byron's crafting of his poetic self in FP, which was aided by his Southwell muses.

In "Egotism" (CPW I:201), a poem revealingly subtitled "Byron sings himself", Byron seems to distance himself from his participation in the professional world:

That is to say, with some exception,  
                     For though I will not make confession,  
 I've seen too much of man's deception  
                     Ever again to trust profession.  
 (lines 9-12)

The poem, a narrative of "B[ Byron]'s friendships and amours at Harrow, Cambridge and Southwell, with asides on the bad reception in Southwell of FP" (CPW I:388) is representative of Byron's corpus of work up until that time--the major recurring themes being that of love and/or women, and the consequences of both; and his male friendships, especially those forged at Harrow and at Cambridge, and the censure that he experiences as a consequence of his chosen, albeit what he envisions as temporary, profession.

That the anxiety regarding the influence of the female reader dogged Byron throughout his life is evident from his much later satire The Blues. Intended as a gentle satire on not only the Bluestockings but also on the

culture of lecturing<sup>14</sup> Byron did not consider The Blues worthy of publication, unless anonymously and in a miscellany or periodical. Byron's desire for anonymity arose from a desire not to incur the wrath of "all the old women in London" (BLJ 8:172), a ferocious breed whose femininity was considered inversely proportionate to their intellectual pursuits, as John Wilson complained in the Chaldee Manuscript:

Every female leg was azure--absolutely painted blue like a post. A slight beard was becoming visible even on young women still marriageable--a certain consequence of incipient literary habits; so you may imagine the upper lip of well informed women of forty. (qtd. in Rendall 355)

The subtitle, a "literary eclogue" suggests a disjunction between the adjective and its subject, the "literary" as a signifier for the urban, commercial world that literature now inhabited, juxtaposed with the pastoral world that Byron's contemporaries so often located their poetry in, as well being suggestive of an insular, incestuous world characteristic of a rural village, such as Byron's former home Southwell. Byron's choice of the epithet "eclogue" was no doubt not only a conscious echo of the Virgilian classical

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<sup>14</sup> Women were venturing outside the home in search of knowledge and culture, and one such opportunity afforded to them was that of the public lecture. Attending and giving lectures on science and the arts were all the rage in Regency London. Not only was it an occasion for enlightenment, but also had the added advantage of being socially fashionable event. Gillian Russell indicates that lecturing was "one of the crucial sites of the Enlightenment public sphere in a Habermasian sense" and helped in "cementing the cultural authority of 'imaginative' writing" (Russell 123) much in the way it helped to make visible the importance and relevance of science to a wider public. Though Byron did not remain in England long enough to exploit the potential of this medium, (if he would have chosen to at all is but idle speculation), he definitely was aware of the impact of the phenomenon, and alludes to plans to see Coleridge lecture on the "new Art of Poetry" (BLJ 11:179) in 1811 as well as referring to the lecture in The Blues.

genre, but also intended as an emulation of the mode favoured by such quintessentially English writers as Spenser and Sidney, allowing the satire to be read as “mere buffoonery” rather than scathing satire.

The theatrical piece opens, predictably enough, given its title, with a good-natured jab at the increasing feminization of literary culture: “So, instead of ‘beaux arts,’ we may say ‘la belle passion’” (I.4). The palpable influence of women on literary taste triggered an anxiety for the male poet to “do his best to gain the suffrages of the ladies, who, in every country, and particularly in England, [were], after all, the supreme arbiters of the destiny and reputation of new poetry” (qtd. in Stabler, *Poetics* 3).<sup>15</sup> The Bluestocking salons were

taste making tribunals that aimed actively to shape the literary canon of the day marking a shift of power, however slight, to woman’s traditional sphere, the social-domestic, as a source of public taste--at the same time a nascent mass audience and increasingly autonomous profession of letters were developing as part of the new literary marketplace. (S. Jones 139)

Inkel refers to “learning, which lately has taken the lead in / The world, and set all the fine gentlemen reading” (I.6-7). Byron’s absence from the stage in England that now held the lecturer, orator and politician required him to contribute to this world of “learning” in some fashion--and

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<sup>15</sup> This anxiety was further exacerbated by the fact that there was “no consistency in the critical press during the entire period, except perhaps that its wonderful exuberance masks the extent to which it is conditioned by an absence of absolute standards and increasingly pressured by the growing popularity of a literature that casts in doubt the reliability of normative judgment” (Curran 27).

the printed word was the only recourse left to him. Tracy's account of the literary marketplace depicts a disillusionment with literary taste, corrupted not only by the intrusion of the domesticised, feminized opinion but also the attempt on the part of booksellers and publishers to cater to this market:

I am just piping hot from a publisher's shop,  
 (Next door to the pastry-cook's; so that when I  
 Cannot find the new volume I wanted to buy  
 On the bibliopole's shelves, it is only two paces,  
 As one finds every author in one of those places:)  
 Where I just had been skimming a charming critique,  
 So studded with wit, and so sprinkled with Greek!  
 (I.17-23)

Miss Lilac, "a poet, a chymist, a mathematician" (I.66), is an alias for Annabella Milbanke and personifies not only the threat posed by the Bluestockings but also the increasing specialization and professionalisation that was an outcome of the competition between the disciplines to get a foothold in the political economy: "Humph! I can't say I know any happy alliance / Which has lately sprung up from a wedlock with science" (I.71).

The poem explores the commodification of what cannot, ostensibly, be quantified: literary merit, a woman's worth, sexuality and knowledge and the nature of their circulation in the economy. In a strange reversal that premonishes Byron's depiction of Don Juan as sexually passive, the male literateurs (such as Scamp) are portrayed as victims of the attention bestowed on them by learned women; whose own value in turn is based on qualities--other than their knowledge, which is considered more as a flaw



Was there ever a man who was married so sorry?  
 Like a fool, I must needs do the thing in a hurry.  
 (II.1-2)

The twelve, do I say?--of the whole twenty-four,  
 Is there one which I dare call my own any more?  
 What with driving and visiting, dancing and dining,  
 What with learning, and teaching, and scribbling, and shining  
 In science and art, I'll be cursed if I know  
 Myself from my wife; for although we are two,  
 Yet she somehow contrives that all things shall be done  
 In a style which proclaims us eternally one.  
 (II.6-13)

The thrust of Bluebottle's complaint lies mainly in his fear of assimilation and subsumption in this new female cultural climate, similar to Byron's fear regarding the literary marketplace, as I will discuss in the next section.

Byron's feelings of insecurity regarding the reception of his work was due to the uninsitutionalised nature of the profession of letters at this time-- as Curran describes the status of literature at the time: "It was a vital national tradition without codified rules" (22). Institutionalisation was a natural consequence of the emergence of professionalisation, and the Enlightenment had ushered in a plethora of learned societies. This phenomenon was often an indicator of the economic well-being of European urban centres, and London boasted the Royal Society of London (1662), the Royal Society of Antiquaries (1751), the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (1754), and the Royal Academy of Arts (1768) by the end of the eighteenth century. Ink alludes to the element of

competition that had crept up between these bodies, maybe with a note of bitterness, for literature was notably still uninstitutionalised, and would continue to be until it was recognised as part of university and school curricula from the mid nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Byron refers to contemporary debates about literary merit and canonisation to demonstrate the anxiety felt by the lack of regulated professionalisation of the literary sphere in The Blues. “Scamp”, whose character is based on a combination of Coleridge and Hazlitt,<sup>17</sup> is questioned regarding the merit of his fellow poets such as “Wordswords” (Wordsworth) and “Mouthey” (Southey). His response is obviously Byron’s own opinion on the Lake poets: “Scamp. They have merit, I own; / Though their system’s absurdity keeps it unknown” (II.109-110), as is evident from Byron’s letter to John Murray in 1817:

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<sup>16</sup> The anxiety regarding the status of the poet in society, particularly compared to that of the scientist is evident from this passage from Wordsworth’s assertion of the superiority of the poet in the 1802 Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion [ . . . ] In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. . . Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge--it is as immortal as the heart of man (606).

<sup>17</sup> Steven Jones has suggested that Scamp may also be based on Thomas Campbell due to Byron’s reference to Campbell’s success on the lecture circuit (140).

With regard to poetry in general I am convinced the more I think of it--that he and all of us--Scott--Southey--Wordsworth--Moore--Campbell--I--are all in the wrong--one as much as another--that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system--or systems--not worth a damn in itself--& from which none but Rogers and Crabbe are free--and that the present & next generations will finally be of this opinion. (BLJ 5:265)

Byron's own frustration regarding the shift in critical opinion towards his work, that had deteriorated after his departure from England, can be felt in Scamp's diplomatic response (as well as Ink's impatience with his reticence):

Ink. Then why not unearth it in one of your lectures?  
 Scamp. It is only time past which comes under my strictures  
 (II.111-112)

Scamp. I needs must confess I'm embarrassed.  
 Ink. Don't call upon Scamp, who's already so harassed  
 With old schools, and new schools, and no schools, and all  
schools.  
 (II.121-124)

As James Chandler has observed, Byron by writing and publishing poetry consciously implicated himself in this sphere he professes to abhor, but by doing so he would "be inscribing himself into the representation of an epoch in which, much as he might wish to lampoon his fellow representative men, we make out a dim recognition that he is of their number." (379)

The blame for this new unwelcoming literary landscape, Byron seems to imply, lies with the intellectual woman, of whom Annabella Milbanke was an obvious example. Byron's attitude, however, is not only a manifestation of misogyny, but also of an aversion to the values that would come to characterise Victorian Britain, emerging phoenix-like out of the ashes of the



Napoleonic wars--characteristics that Annabella shared: namely, moralistic, evangelistic and scientific.

### I.ii. Byron and the female author

Byron was well aware, as he wrote in the preface to his first publication HI, that he was writing in an “age . . . fertile in rhyme” (CPW I:33). But unlike his predecessors Pope and Johnson, both of whom felt overwhelmed by the explosion of print<sup>18</sup> (Siskin, Work 3), Byron and his contemporaries also had to contend with the growing ubiquity of the female author. Catherine Gallagher has noted that “the appearance of what was called ‘female authorship’ in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries coincided with the emergence of a literary marketplace (xiii). As she has demonstrated, authors of both sexes “called attention to their existence in and through their commodification and their inseparability from it” but where female authors “embraced and feminized” remunerative authorship (xxi, xiii), for male authors the profession of the author was beginning to be accompanied by a sense of emasculation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The shift from manuscript to print resulted in an explosion in the volume of writing produced in the eighteenth century. Erickson illustrates this rise by presenting the following figures: 1,800 books on all subjects in were published in 1740, to 3,000 books on all subjects in 1780, to 6,000 in 1792 (7).

<sup>19</sup> Paula Feldman’s examination of women poets in the romantic era confirms Gallagher’s assertion, illustrating how, rather than being self-effacing or coy about their poetic prowess, many women poets in the era 1770-1835 “proudly placed their real names on the title page from the very outset of their careers” (“Anonymity” 270), and when anonymity was practiced it “was often either a temporary state or a transparent pose” (“Anonymity” 281). This confidence displayed by women, especially when it came to poetry, demonstrates the

Byron was both a precocious reader and writer, and drew up a reading list in 1807 listing seventeen male poets that he admired, as well as those male poets who were “sometimes spoken of, rarely read, and never with advantage”, naming Chaucer as one such example (CMP 3). His list of novelists included Fielding, Smollett, Richardson and Sterne, whose works formed a small proportion of the four thousand novels Byron claimed to have read--to his “regret” he was anxious to add<sup>20</sup>--but does not mention any female writers by name (CMP 6). Even allowing for the fact that Byron read novels from other parts of the world (he lists Cervantes, Rabelais, and Rousseau, for example) statistically, given the volume of female literary production at the time,<sup>21</sup> some of these novels must have been written by

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increasing feminization of the literary marketplace. Anne Mellor disputes arguments put forward by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979), Margaret Homans (1980) and Mary Poovey (1984), all of whom have attributed to women writers of the time a “debilitating ‘anxiety of authorship’” by pointing out that the “rapidly growing number of salons and associations for women writers, critics and readers attests to their increased literary self-confidence, presence, and power” (8). Judith Pascoe shows how Nancy Armstrong’s (1987) observation that female subjectivity in the nineteenth century was shaped by the criticism of the public display associated with aristocratic women such as Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire, breaks down when transferred to discussions about women’s poetry, who were fascinated by Marie Antoinette, and published their work in daily newspapers (4). Phyllis Ann Thompson’s doctoral research illustrates how women’s poetry was used as a site of resistance and subversion, using embodiment as a discursive strategy--she demonstrates how bodies in women’s popular poetry “challenge the bodily constructions and associated gender meanings that the disciplines of medical science and law have traditionally reinforced” (vi).

<sup>20</sup> The novel, by virtue of its gendered and generic associations was considered inferior to poetry: “The specific conjunction of ideas--woman, novel, and reader, or the ‘woman novel reader’--was, for Romantic writers, an organizing figure for the threat posed by modernity to the authority of the writing-subject gendered by tradition as poetic and male” (Newlyn 322).

<sup>21</sup> Of the 2,272 works collected in the British Fiction 1800-1829 database, 92% were available to members of contemporary libraries. 360 of the titles available to these readers between 1800 and 1809 (the year of Byron’s first major publication, EBSR) were written by women, as

women, a fact that Byron does not acknowledge.

Given the volume of women's writing proliferating at this time, Byron, despite wishing to appear otherwise, must have read the works of quite a few female authors, and this influence is detectable in his early poetry. Paul Douglass notes Byron's highly ambivalent attitude towards female authorship (1) that consisted of simultaneous denigration and emulation, remarking on Byron's "taste for Gothic drama and sentimental poetry and fiction, genres identified with women writers like Harriet Lee, Elizabeth Inchbald, Charlotte Dacre, and Maria Edgeworth" (2). As Pascoe has pointed out, the most fruitful period to investigate the relationship between men and women's poetry in the romantic period, was before the entrenchment of romanticism itself (5), and Byron was influenced greatly by the female writers of this era. Both Peter Cochran and Jerome McGann (BR 54) have found significant echoes of Charlotte Dacre's work in Byron's. Cochran suggests that the influence of Charlotte Dacre's novel Zofloya can be found in the fifth Canto of DJ<sup>22</sup> (4), while McGann points out that Dacre's influence on Byron is immediately evident from the title of her work, Hours of Solitude, whose "verbal echo", HL, was "in fact only one part of the massive act of allusion to Dacre" (BR 54). This "literary liaison" (BR 56) soon

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opposed to 293 by men. Even though some of these novels were anonymous, they would often identify themselves as being written "by a lady".

<sup>22</sup> Byron also acknowledged reading Dacre's "sundry novels" in a note to EBSR (Cochran 3).

outlived its usefulness for Byron who was soon to mock the poetic conventions and stylings of the sentimental school in EBSR.<sup>23</sup> The fact that he ridiculed Dacre in EBSR, “The lovely ROSA’s prose in masquerade, / Whose strains, the faithful echoes of her mind, / Leave wondering comprehension far behind” (lines 756-758) meant that he at least considered her worthy of ridiculing and including in a roll call of contemporary mostly male writers. Byron, nonetheless, never seemed to experience the retrospective regret for Dacre that he had felt at his disdain for his contemporary male writers, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge.<sup>24</sup>

McGann characterises Byron’s turn from sentimental poetry to satire, travelogue and heroic poetry as from “‘feminine’ to ‘masculine’ modes, a turn from Anacreon to Horace and Homer” (BR 56). Modelled on Pope’s Dunciad, a catalogue of disdain for fellow poets, politicians and writers, EBSR addresses his anxieties regarding the rise of professionalism less explicitly, and deals more specifically with specialisation and disciplinarity,

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<sup>23</sup> Cochran also demonstrates how the work of Felicia Hemans had a less explicit, yet important impact on Byron’s work. Though Byron outgrew Dacre early on his career, Cochran shows how he was even more reluctant to acknowledge his debt to Hemans “about . . . whom he wrote very little . . . the less he wrote, the greater his creative debt seems to have been” (1). I will explore Hemans’ influence on Byron in the context of writing about home and domesticity in Chapter IV.

<sup>24</sup> In a copy of EBSR that was owned by John Murray, Byron wrote such comments in the margins and on the title page as: “The binding of this volume is considerably too valuable for the contents. B.” and “Nothing but the consideration of its being the property of another prevents me from consigning this miserable record of misplaced anger and indiscriminate acrimony to the flames” as well as scribbling “Unjust” next to his harsh criticisms of Wordsworth and Coleridge. (CPW I:399).

as well as a predominantly female culture of reading and writing. Byron's EBSR declares itself as a satire at the very outset (line 6) and this, along with the epigraphs from Juvenal and Pope, aligns the poem with what Steven Jones has called a "traditionally masculine" (146) literary tradition. I will suggest, however, that Byron's satiric practice borrows from female satirists considerably, though not quite so overtly, in order to reach the widest audience possible.

In his letters, Byron would continually portray female authors as "an unsexed or hermaphrodite figure whose monstrous body figures literary transgressiveness [ . . . ] (t)he literary woman is a monster, since she pushes herself into a public marketplace when her proper milieu is the private sphere" (Pearson 40). Caroline Lamb was a "[S]uch a monster as that has no sex" (BLJ 5:93), Felicia Hemans was variously referred to as a "feminine He-Man" (BLJ 7:183), "Mrs. Hewoman" (BLJ 7:158), "Mrs. Shemans" (D'Israeli qtd. in Wolfson "Hemans"), and De Stael whose work he admired, as "the Epicene" (BLJ 3:66), a phrase that was originally used to describe her in a poem published in the Anti-Jacobin. His allusion to "That mighty instrument of little men!" (EBSR 10) finds prurient echoes in his description of Maria Edgeworth as "a pleasant reserved old woman--with a pencil under her petticoat--however--undisturbed in it's [sic] operation by the vicinity of that anatomical part of female humanity" (BLJ 7:217) and refers to female writers

in general as “spayed bitches” (BLJ 7:218).<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, Byron ridicules male literary rivals in a similar fashion though he reverses his tactics:

he feminizes men[...]in denying them the literary power he claims as his own through manly satire, he strives to stabilize his own poetic identity as masculine and self-determined in a vocation he worried was effeminate when held beside the masculine “talents of action--of war--or the Senate--or even of Science”. (Guiliano 785)

In EBSR, rather than aligning himself with “masculine preoccupations with heredity, succession and selection” (Newlyn 44) (though his reference to the “parent bird” is possibly a nod to the male literary tradition) Byron concentrates on the reproductive imperative of the act of writing instead. He makes this explicit by his comparison of poetical production to the act of childbirth: “Of brains that labour, big with verse or prose” (line 12). The reproductive metaphor will recur time and again in Byron’s poetry in different formulations, demonstrating Byron’s inability to separate the act of poetic creation from that of procreation. The use of “labour” here also is significant--divorcing the act of writing from that of a vocation and instead marrying it to “specialised labour” (Siskin, Work 113), professionalising the act of intellectual work: “Slaves of my thoughts” (8).

I would argue that Byron’s “gender-based hostility” (Guiliano 786) is taken a step further in EBSR by his envisioning of female writers as his main

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<sup>25</sup> He was to similarly write to Hobhouse: “Of all Bitches dead of alive a scribbling woman is the most canine” (BLJ 2:132).

rivals in the literary marketplace. Guiliano observes, “[I]n accordance to [Alexander Pope’s] description of the ideal woman as a ‘softer man’ (in ‘Epistle to a Lady’)” (787), Byron feminizes male poets in order to denigrate them, thus perceiving female authors or “little men” as his true competition in the literary marketplace.<sup>26</sup>

Where Walter Scott “characteristically imagined the competition of the contemporary marketplace as an idealized combat between heroic and courtly men” (L. Wilson 151) Byron sets up his victims in EBSR as straw men, a catalogue of Pope’s “shameless Bards” and “abandon’d Critics” (EBSR epigraph, CPW I:227), that he is using merely for the amusement of his audience. Byron, though anxious to portray himself as writing in a male tradition of wit (as signposted by the epigraphs by Shakespeare and Pope), undermines his own claims to satire:

Such is the force of Wit! but not belong  
To me the arrows of satiric song;  
The royal vices of our age demand  
A keener weapon, and a mightier hand.  
(37-41)

Though the masculine heritage of satire is more or less a critical commonplace, women writers such as Aphra Behn, Delariviere Manley and

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<sup>26</sup> Guiliano identifies the perpetuation of this belief particularly in the Augustan period, women were frequently referred to as parodies of men--women “are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle, and sometimes wit; but for solid reasoning, or good sense, I never knew in my life that had it” (Richardson qtd. in Guiliano 788). This parodic representation finds its counterpart in what Thomas Laqueur has influentially called the ‘one-sex’ model where contemporary anatomical representations considered the female body as an inferior, anomalous and derivative version of the male body (Sex 19).

Eliza Haywood helped create an alternative model for female satire, claiming “satiric authority through the figure of the prostitute” (Gadeken 541). Byron was to utilise the trope of the prostituted muse often--in the Preface to the EBSR he refers to the “mental prostitution” of his fellow writers and their “perverted powers” that “demand the most decided reprehension”, and more directly alludes to the “prostituted muse” (182) and “prostituted reams” (404). In Hints from Horace (CPW I:288), Byron’s adaptation from Horace’s Ars Poetica, he tellingly digresses from the original in his description of feminine nature of inspiration:<sup>27</sup>

The Muse, like mortal females, may be woo’d,  
 In turns she’ll seem a Paphian, or a prude;  
 Fierce as a bride, when first she feels--affright!  
 Mild as the same, upon the second night!  
 Her eyes beseem, her heart belies, her zone;  
 Ice in a crowd, and lava when alone:  
 Wild as the wife of alderman of peer,  
 Now for his Grace, and now a grenadier!  
 (649-654)

Charles Donelan demonstrates that for Byron “poetic language itself becomes identified with illicit desire” (3), as encapsulated by the phrase “marketable vice” (DJ I.64.512), where sexuality becomes a token of transaction and is made illicit by its very marketability and availability for consumption. Stabler has highlighted how the “image of the prostituted muse combined allegations of Byron’s perversion or degradation of his

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<sup>27</sup> In a letter to Hobhouse he writes: “I deviate and adapt from the original” (BLJ 2:45).



genius [ . . . ] Reviewers had hinted before at a female prolixity in Byron's style [ . . . ] A feminine mutability had been detected in his digressive characteristics" that in DJ "extended fickle caprice into harlotry and the concept of the prostituted muse led to the criticism of the increasing 'infection' of the poem" (Poetics 36-37).

Mary Clearman refers to Claude Fuess' suggestion that William Gifford's influence on Byron is evident from the fact that both poets' "sketches are precise and specific, fascinating but with little sense of thematic unity" (87). However, this terse poetic style was also possessed by Lady Anne Hamilton, whose satire The Epics of the Ton (1807) also arguably influenced Byron's poetic style. Stephen Behrendt uses the following passage to illustrate how her work clearly has resonances in EBSR:

Should'st thou, my lay, shine splendid as thy theme,  
Like rushlights to thy sun, all bards should seem:  
Then still might Southey sing his crazy Joan,  
Or feign a Welshman o'er th'Atlantic flown,  
Or tell of Thalaba the wondrous matter,  
Or with clown Wordsworth chatter, chatter, chatter;  
Still Rogers bland his imitations twine,  
And strain his Memory for another line;  
Good-natured Scott rehearse in well-paid Lays  
The marv'lous chiefs and elves of other days;  
Or lazy Campbell spin his golden strains,  
And have the Hope he nurtures for his pains--  
("The Female Book" 29-40)

Clearman's assessment of Byron's satiric *début* as Juvenalian was deemed significant enough for McGann to include in his editorial

commentary to EBSR in the definitive edition of Byron's collected works. She posits Byron's choice of poetical model as "logical", for he, like Juvenal in the first satire, is "contemplating a career as a satirist" (89). This statement seems problematic for two reasons: firstly, it is arguable that Byron was indeed imagining himself principally as a satirist for the rest of his poetic career, and secondly, in spite of his imitation of the first two lines of Juvenal's well known first satire ("It is hard not to write satire at this time"), the poem soon takes on a rather different trajectory, with Juvenalian elements resurfacing intermittently. Consequently, I am more inclined to agree with Gary Dyer's evaluation of EBSR as "neo-Juvenalian" on the grounds that, "although it castigates authors, [it] declines explicitly to take up themes that demand Juvenalian methods" (45). Though Byron "lauds the ability of satire to keep wicked men in check" his "primary subject is the literary 'host of idiots that infest [Albion's] age'" (Dyer 45-46) choosing to remain in the realm of "themes less lofty" (EBSR 1009). The characterisation of the Juvenalian as a masculine mode is, according to Gilbert Highet, due to the fact that women's "kind hearts" have restricted them from writing or even enjoying satire (235). More recent scholarship on women writing satire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has helped dispelled this myth but has not necessarily evaluated what influence women writing satire at this time had on Byron and what implications it held for his satirical *début*. One chief reason that

satire struggled to maintain its masculine identity is, as Dyer has observed, that then it could be used to “attack the infiltration of women into literary culture” opposed as it was, by its very nature, to that designated province of female writing, sensibility (53).

Gadeken in her analysis of Sarah Fielding’s novel The Adventures of David Simple shows how Fielding “opens a new and uneasy space” by using “certain strains within an overwhelmingly satirical tradition to intersect with a newly sentimental discourse that is more amenable to women” (542).<sup>28</sup>

Byron was also very possibly influenced by the gloriously tongue-in-cheek satire, The Art of Tormenting that was written by Henry and Sarah Fieldings’ close friend, Jane Collier, and may very well have mimicked its epigraph “Domestica Facta” in DJ, for both works mock educational and homemaking tracts in their parodic instructions on how to keep domestic peace. Satire and sentimentality, though strange bedfellows, do share in common the insistence “on the moral natures of their respective vigor” (Gadeken 544). For satire to be attractive to the majority of the (female and middle-class) reading public, therefore, it had to be tempered with sensibility and sentimentality. Byron explores the sentimental in his earlier works; but EBSR marks his first foray into the satire tempered with sensibility, in a bid to capture the

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<sup>28</sup> Byron definitely possessed a copy (CMP 232) though he does not mention the book or its author in any of his correspondence.

imagination of his public who were already primed by their experience of mostly female writers in that genre. Satire was “mired in conventions that rapidly became irrelevant to new social dynamics” and “bourgeois even-handedness was transforming it into comic verse” (Dyer 66).

Byron thus declares the aim of his poem is to amuse his audience, “Still there are follies, e’en for me to chase, / And yield at least amusement in the race: / Laugh when I laugh, I seek no other fame” (41-43) rather than to castigate harshly in the Juvenalian mode. The instability that Byron feels is both due to his foray into this more feminized mode of satire that was not entirely appropriate to his class and learning, and to the threat that the lack of specialisation and correct division of labour posed is evident from these uncertain lines:

While such are Critics, why should I forbear?  
But yet, so near all modern worthies run,  
'Tis doubtful whom to seek, or whom to shun;  
Nor know we when to spare, or where to strike,  
Our Bards and Censors are so much alike.  
(87-91)

Siskin characterises this era as one that saw “the simultaneous advent of modern disciplinarity and modern professionalism” and uses the word “engendering” as shorthand for both “the historicity of Literature as a newly restricted arena for the work of writing” as well as “the ways those restrictions followed and produced faultlines of gender” (Work 2). The surge in print that Siskin points out as the cause of this phenomenon is bemoaned

by Byron: "No dearth of Bards can be complained of now: / The loaded Press  
beneath her labour groans, / And Printers' devils shake their weary bones"  
(124-126).

Significantly, Byron genders the printing press as feminine, feminising  
the entire process of publication--from the originating Muse to the audience.

Byron examines each genre of poetry and the appeal it held for women  
readers e.g. the Gothic:

Whether on ancient tombs thou tak'st they stand,  
By gibb'ring spectres hailed, thy kindred band;  
Or tracest chaste descriptions on thy page,  
To please the females of our modest age,  
(269-272)

love poetry:

Who in soft guise, surrounded by a choir  
Of virgins melting, not to Vesta's fire,  
With sparkling eyes, and cheek by passion flush'd,  
Strikes his wild Lyre whilst listening dames are hush'd?  
(283-286)

and translations: "Mend, STRANGFORD! Mend thy morals and thy taste; / Be  
warm, but pure, be amorous, but chaste" (305-306). Byron's perception of the  
significance of this female audience is evident from his allusions to "the  
amorous throng" (344), "our nursery damsels" (345) and his appeal to his  
imagined (implied) reader "attend, each Beauteous miss!" (359).

Even the centrepiece of the poem, a two hundred line mock epic  
account of Francis Jeffrey and Thomas Moore's purported duelling, and  
consequently an excuse for Byron to take potshots at the Edinburgh Review

and its associates, features the woman reader in role of ultimate critic.

Alluding to Lady Holland, whom Byron “suspected of having displayed her matchless wit in the Edinburgh Review” (note to EBSR, CPW I:410), he

wrote:

And lest, when heated with the unusual grape,  
Some glowing thoughts should to the press escape,  
And tinge with red the female reader’s cheek,  
My lady skims the cream of each critique;  
Breathes o’er the page her purity of soul,  
Reforms each error, and refines the whole.  
(554-559)

Byron’s shift of scene from the “field of Mars” (463) to Holland House

depicts how closely entwined the world of commerce and criticism is with the domestic, further reiterated here: “Long, long beneath that hospitable roof, / Shall Grub-street dine” (546-47).

Byron’s diatribe on drama momentarily encounters a convenient amnesia regarding the poem’s original divisive thrust; it is the “British” critic rather than the English or the Scottish who has to endure the “degradation of [our] vaunted stage” (575) after the golden age of Restoration theatre. Byron continues in this nationalist vein, portraying John Bull as the hapless audience assaulted by foreign influence such as “the mummery of German schools” (582), and castigating “Degenerate Britons” (610) for patronising Italian drama. These lines usher in the only genuinely Juvenalian passage of

the poem, a brief tirade on how Italy (personified as an exotic temptress)<sup>29</sup> has undermined British morality and decorum. Byron's paternalistic nationalism in this passage has implications for his future depictions of Britain as feminized and weakened; seemingly (at least or so he insinuates here) transformed, much in the manner of Virginia Woolf's Orlando, from male to female by consorting with a seductress. What follows is a curiously moral treatment of vice, particularly of the nouveau riche and their lax sexual mores, embodied by debauchery as well as gambling. Conspicuous consumption is yet another wanton woman who "spreads wide her portals" (641), and invites saturnalian excess.

Byron's high-handed treatment of the Argyle Rooms and its decadent goings-on could be motivated by two impulses. Firstly, an aristocratic envy at the permissiveness that mere money could purchase in the new political economy; as Peter Graham states in his account of the Regency,

the Regency was a time of great change [ . . . ] The Napoleonic Wars had thinned the ranks of the nobility; the Industrial Revolution had begun to create a new aristocracy of wealth, eager and able to fill the vacant places. Society, growing more fluid, also became more vulgar. (255)

Secondly, it acted as a more subtle readerly distraction, by putting on the mask of middle-class morality to ensure the approval of his readers.

However, Byron is then quick to divest himself of the role of social

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<sup>29</sup> See Chapter III for a more detailed account of the personification of Italy as feminized.

commentator; he feels the need to “rouse some genuine Bard, and guide his hand / To drive this pestilence from out the land” (687-88) and reiterates his lack of moral authority by constantly resorting to an adverb of concession: “Even I--least thinking of a thoughtless throng” (689) “E’en I must raise my voice, e’en I must feel” (695) in a rhetoric of self-deprecation that echoes his reluctance to undertake satire in line 41. He raises the questionability of his suitability in opposition to a satirist like William Gifford, again reiterating the argument he had presented in the Preface:

No one can wish more than the author that some known and able writer had undertaken their exposure; but Mr Gifford has devoted himself to Massinger, and in the absence of the regular physician, a country practitioner may, in cases of absolute necessity, be allowed to prescribe his nostrum to prevent the extension of so deplorable an epidemic provided there be no quackery in his treatment of the malady. (CPW I:228)

By designating Gifford as the “regular physician” and himself as merely the “country practitioner”,<sup>30</sup> Byron seems to be distancing himself from the professional world that he gestures towards earlier in the Preface: “An Author’s works are public property, he who purchases may judge” (CPW I:228).

He returns to a more Horatian mode in which he implicates himself as one of those “men of fashion” who “dare / To scrawl” (711-12) and peers

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<sup>30</sup> Youngquist points out how medicine was becoming increasingly professionalised in the late eighteenth century, an “increasingly coherent medical profession [that was] divided hierarchically into three groups (physicians, surgeons, apothecaries), and regulated directly by three corresponding corporate bodies (the College of Physicians, the Corporation of Surgeons, and the Society of Apothecaries)” (xxiii).



who “too are Bards” (719). Byron revisits this ironic device several times in the course of the poem, using self-parody to demonstrate how, despite appearances to the contrary, he envisioned himself as a member of the very company he was lampooning. When he embarks on his “satiric song” he spurs his “Pegasus” to action much in the manner of “the scribbling crew, / For notice eager, pass in long review: / Each spurs his jaded Pegasus apace” (143-145) as well as those “sable sons” (961) of *Granta*, of whose number Byron was one. More explicitly, he proclaims “I, too, can scrawl, and once upon a time / I poured along the town a flood of rhyme, / A school-boy freak, unworthy praise or blame” (48-50) and reappears as that “puny Schoolboy and his early lay / Men pardon, if his follies pass away” (727-28).

His aristocratic disdain of the cobbler who “[e]mploys a pen less pointed than his awl” (766) and the “happy sons of needless trade” (775) shows his anxiety regarding the blurring of the lines of professional specialisation, as well as the threat of literacy that would ensure that “no Boor can seek his last abode, / No common be enclosed without an ode” (785-86). His sardonic reference to this “increased refinement” that will cause “Poesy” to “pervade the whole, / Alike the rustic, and mechanic soul” (789-90) depicts a marketplace drenched in poetic excess where the very basis of the political economy would be undermined by the lack of a stable measure of value, as in The Blues: “While punctual beaux reward their grateful notes,

/ And pay for poems--when they pay for coats" (797-8).

The struggle for perpetual copyright and thus a recognition of the status of genius as a commodity (Newlyn 271) can be detected in the margins of this meditation on the writing process:

There be, who say in these enlightened days  
That splendid lies are all the poet's praise;  
That strained Invention, ever on the wing,  
Alone impels the modern Bard to sing:  
(849-852)

Byron, however, details how he intends to circumvent this price placed on "Invention" (851) which he equates with "Genius" (854)--by using "Truth" and its "noblest fires" (855)--as he was to write to John Murray in April 1817: "pure invention is but the talent of a liar" (BLJ 5:203). This was soon to become a Byronic hallmark as well as a useful weapon in his arsenal of irony. This ironic force, however, was fuelled by the literary self-consciousness that Byron had made sure to learn from those female authors who had triumphed in the marketplace, for as McGann puts it: "to be sentimental is already to have deployed a form of 'romantic irony'" (BR 101).

### I.iii. Byron's aligning of the body politic with the female body: influences and examples

Many of the female-centric poems of Byron's juvenilia<sup>31</sup> are deprecating of the sex, ridiculing women for being susceptible to infatuation,

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<sup>31</sup> I am using this term to refer to his poetry written between the ages of 10 and 19 when HL his first volume of poetry to be made available to the wider public, was printed.

premonishing his antipathy to being pursued during his years of fame,<sup>32</sup> that he later presented in the figure of the sexually passive Don Juan. But this misogyny was not only prompted by Byron's own experiences but also by the representations of women that were ubiquitous in the kind of poetry the young Byron would be exposed to--from the poetry of Juvenal and Horace to their latter day emulators such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, all of whose work Byron admired.<sup>33</sup>

An example of such learnt misogyny can be found in the poem "A Portrait" (CPW I:30), unpublished during Byron's lifetime, and whose date of composition is uncertain:

Doats yet the hag that from her form so vile  
A race shall quicken to enrich our isle,  
Her poisonous blood thro' other channels roll

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<sup>32</sup> As he wrote in a letter to Richard Hoppner in 1819: "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" (BLJ 6:237).

<sup>33</sup> Felicity Nussbaum lists "Hesiod, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, as well as the more modern French tradition of La Bruyere, La Rochefoucauld, and Boileau" as writing in the "antifeminist satiric tradition" (3) besides Butler, Rochester, Dryden, Swift and Pope, who are the subjects of her work. The "most compelling of the myths" to be satirised are those of the "permissive female or whore, the powerful Amazon, the learned lady, the ideal woman, the angel" (4), all of whom feature as satiric targets for Byron. She writes "most major satirists [in the neoclassical tradition] address specific poems to women as a sex . . . as women deserve to be rebuked for those characteristics of their sex that make them inferior to men" (1). Byron's poem 'To Woman' in HI is written in this spirit, marking the sex's inconstancy as its defining characteristic: "Woman, thy vows are traced in sand" (line 22). See also Katherine Rogers' The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (1966) Laura Mandell's Misogynous Economies: The Business of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Britain (1999) for further discussions of misogyny in literature. S. H. Clark's Sordid Images: The Poetry of Masculine Desire (1994) discusses both the reception and writing of misogyny by male authors from Shakespeare to Larkin. See Ellen Pollak's The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope (1985) for an exploration of the two poets' conceptualization of women in detail.

And spread pollution in each new born soul?  
 Forbid it Heaven--but yet a thought more wild  
 Ne'er fixed the fancy of the veriest child.  
 What bloodless spectres on what wizard dame  
 Ere shared the blessings of a holy flame?  
 Sooner, dire prodigy, will marble glow  
 Or flaming ashes melt in winter snow.  
 Big with like [thought] she roams from place to place,  
 See her each old one fold in close embrace,  
 And flattering hopes from drivelling tales inhale,  
 Tales that Dependents barter by wholesale;  
 Each herb, each philtre idling art employ  
 How to produce a much longed lovely boy.  
 Her phantom form now doubly rendered spare  
 With drugs on drugs--she almost lives on air.  
 Now costly viands, cordials lend their aid,  
 Now Matron throes weigh down the teeming maid,  
 Now sickenings, languors, faintings, longings press  
 But still instead of quickening she grows less.  
 Baffled at length, by Nature fairly spurned,  
 Her last fond hopes so basely overturned,  
 Boiling with ire which never tongue could tell,  
 Husband and earth and all she sends to Hell.  
 (lines 1-27)

McGann's editorial commentary on this poem mentions a draft of the poem that refers to Lucina, the Roman goddess of childbirth (CPW I:360), who the "hag" of the poem invokes in order to aid her quest for "a much longed lovely boy" (16). McGann's assumption that Byron is imitating Pope's account of Belinda at her toilet in The Rape of the Lock seems tenuous, given the vehemence of the invective. Given the poem's much darker, almost Gothic overtones, and the mention of Lucina, Byron was very possibly inspired by Horace's fifth epode since he was already an avid reader of the

ancient poet, and admired him greatly.<sup>34</sup> Though the date of the composition of the poem is uncertain (McGann places it either in 1806 or 1807), Byron was certainly engaged in translating Latin poets regularly at this time; he had made several translations of Anacreon and Catullus, and his first translation of Horace was composed (CPW I:155) in late 1806 and appeared in POVO in 1807.

Horace's epode (as well as Byron's) can be read as an indictment of the female sex and the significance of this misogyny in the context of Horace's epodes in general further explicates the scope of Horace's influence on the young Byron. The epodes, which can be read as a series of metaphorical commentaries on "the symbiosis between individual and state" is largely characterised by misogyny, a variation on a tradition of "blame poetry" or invective that casts women as the antagonist of the individual, who often articulates the thoughts of the poet (Thom 39). Thom characterises Canidia, the "matron" of the fifth epode, as a figure embodying the Roman state. This conflation of the body politic and the maternal body and the anxiety it accrued in a patriarchal state can be recognised in the legend of the origin of Athens, one of the first examples of the city-state in the ancient

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<sup>34</sup> Byron includes Horace in a list of "poets . . . who have distinguished their respective languages by their productions" in his reading list of 1807 (CMP 1) and named him as one of the "great poets of Antiquity" in Some Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (CMP 108) in 1821. Byron's epigraph to HI was taken from Horace.

world.<sup>35</sup>

Egil Kraggerud describes the action of Horace's fifth epode thus:

The Fifth Epode is one of the most appalling texts in Latin literature. It takes us right into a repulsive scene where a young boy is being tortured to death by sorceresses so that his liver can be used for a magical brew. The epode falls into clear units whereby the spoken parts are prominent. It starts off with the abducted boy's horror at the sinister dealings of the witches. Pleading for pity he appeals to the maternal feelings of their leader, Canidia, but in vain. Relentlessly, the preparations take their course in accordance with the book. A speech by Canidia (49-82) reveals some information about the background for the magical proceedings. At last the boy is heard anew bitterly cursing Canidia and her company and threatening them with certain revenge after his death (87-102). (81)

Byron's poem, though not an imitation of Horace's epode, similarly draws together the strands of the unnatural and the mysteries of the origin of life, and asserts their uniqueness to the female sex as connoted by his use of "hag" (1). The monstrosity of the maternal body is, both in Horace and Byron's ode, represented as "both sacred and soiled, holy and hellish . . . it is attractive and repulsive, all-powerful" (Braidotti 65). In Horace's epode the protests of the boy represent rationality and divinely sanctioned morality, as opposed to Canidia's hubristic claims as to the effectiveness of her magical drugs (Kraggerud 85). Byron's "Forbid it Heaven" (5) echoes this appeal to

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<sup>35</sup> Pallas Athene, the patron of Athens, won a contest in which she was pitted against Poseidon, by offering the citizens of Athens the olive tree, which was deemed more useful than the sea-god's gift of salt water. Her victory was decided by a vote that was divided along gender lines which incurred the wrath of Poseidon. He flooded the city and would only withdraw his curse if women were made exempt from civic life, thus giving rise to the Athenian patriarchal polity (Loraux 25-26).

the divine against supernatural (and unnatural) female power, and the final conclusion of both Horace's epode and Byron's poem shows how overreaching magic of the "hag" is destined to be "by Nature fairly spurned" (24).

The embodiment of the state as a feminized entity, as in the case of Horace's epode, demonstrates the gendered duality of the nascent state, signified by the patriarchal state governed from the metro-polis ("mother-city"). The historic denial of this binary relationship takes root in the best known version of the legend of the birth of Athena springing fully formed from the forehead of Zeus. As Moira Gatens points out in *Imaginary Bodies*, the myth that Zeus swallowed his pregnant wife Metis whole, for fear that she may give birth to children more powerful than himself has often been neglected, giving the lie that Athena is "the product of man's reason" (22). Indeed, the concept of autochthony, the belief that the Athenians sprung from the earth without female agency, echoes this lack, embodying the wish of "artificial man, the body politic"<sup>36</sup> mirroring the psychoanalytically

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Hobbes coined the classic and enduring corporeal metaphor for the body politic in his *Leviathan* (1651):

Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man. For by art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State (in Latin, Civitas), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution, artificial joints; reward and punishment (by which fastened to the seat of the sovereignty, every joint and member is

postulated “infantile wish for independence from the maternal body” (Gatens 22).

Melanie Klein’s psychoanalytical model of this fraught relationship suggests that the maternal body is simultaneously the provider and guarantee of all things positive for the infant, but also the potential source of all frustration as the body is the goal of the infant’s first attempts at exerting power, and the stumbling block that makes the child realise it is far from omnipotent (Cambridge 182-183). Julie Kipp in her work on romanticism, maternity and the body politic discusses Rousseau’s “disdain, suspicion and horror of the maternal body” (21) which contained within it “the paradoxical idealization and suspicion of female nature” (22). For Rousseau “motherhood was decidedly duplicitous . . . at once a manifestation of universal and localized drives, a locus of (to use Julia Kristeva’s distinction) powers of love and powers of horror” (Kipp 22). These “powers of horror” emerge in Byron’s demonising of the female body. Braidotti traces the origins of the “horror of the female body” to the “topos of woman as a sign of abnormality and therefore of difference as a mark of inferiority . . . a constant in Western

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moved to perform his duty) are the nerves, that do the same in the body natural; the wealth and riches of all the particular members are the strength; *salus populi* (the people's safety) its business; counsellors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory; equity and laws, an artificial reason and will; concord, health; sedition, sickness; and civil war, death. Lastly, the pacts and covenants, by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that *fiat*, or the let us make man, pronounced by God in the Creation. (81-82)



scientific discourse" (63). Byron's description of his mother's corpse encapsulates the "horror" that Braidotti discusses:

There is to me something so incomprehensible in death, that I can neither speak or think on the subject.--Indeed when I looked on the Mass of Corruption, which was the being from whence I sprang, I doubted within myself whether I was, or She was not. (BLJ 2:69)

She attributes the preoccupation of satire with misogyny to their shared anomalous natures: "the satirical text is implicitly monstrous, it is a deviant, an aberration in itself. Eminently transgressive, it can afford to express a degree of misogyny that might shock in other literary genres" (63).

Nussbaum argues "that the satirist is not always fully in control of his persona, or may not . . . understand or even wish to explore the complexities of his relation to the tradition, the conventions, and the myth" (4) and indeed, this could very well be the case for Byron in "A Portrait". However, his reading and writing of misogynist satire would help internalise the genre's inherent assumption that "the entire female sex comes to embody all that is offensive to the larger society--most frequently as a threat to the patriarchal order" (Nussbaum 4) and most of Byron's later satires would reflect this. As Mandell has pointed out:

misogyny in representations is not about women, but rather about society: representations that inspire passionate hatred of women and disgust with the female body provide a place for people to work out passionate feelings about changes in economic and social structure. (1)

The increasing feminization of British culture as well as the ubiquity of

allegorical representations of Britannia<sup>37</sup> caused Byron to regard the British body politic as a feminine entity and inflected the manner in which he addressed both the British nation and women in his poetry. This chapter has illustrated how the growing significance of women as readers, writers, and participants in the public sphere affected Byron's career at its outset. The resonance of these influences can be felt throughout Byron's poetic corpus, and shape Byron's formative opinions about the English nation.

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<sup>37</sup> The significance of this feminization has been described by S. Richardson: "The female body was a long-established symbol used in political prints, pamphlets, paintings, cartoons, ballads, newspapers, poetry and literature and physically on the streets, in political meetings and a campaigning strategy. Representations were frequently positive. For example, the nation was habitually characterized as female, in the figure of Britannia [ . . . ] There was a tacit acknowledgement of female political power within the home, community and in the realm and these images demonstrate how much characterizations could be read and interpreted in multiple ways." (177-78)

## Chapter II: “I am not what I seem”: Byron’s reluctant nationalism

### Introduction

Byron achieved instant commercial success with the first two cantos of CHP, published in 1812. This chapter will explore how this arguably autobiographical work demonstrates Byron’s feelings of embattled nationalism--for the poet whose ambition was to be a politician,<sup>1</sup> this long poem displays some of Byron’s deeply held political convictions and beliefs. Nostalgia and betrayal characterise Byron’s relationship with both the nation and women, and what complicates this relationship is his disappointment with the feminized Britannia--an “apostate Britain” as Malcolm Kelsall refers to it (Cambridge Companion 53)--and a longing for the idealised ancient state of Albion. This complexity is exacerbated by his reluctance to “[commit] himself to party politics, for like many of his class he prided himself on his independence, but he would never abandon his principles” (Kelsall, Politics 4) a position that can be understood as cosmopolitan--a stance that often

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Kelsall documents Byron’s serious intentions to become a politician:

In 1809, before embarking on the Grand Tour, he had attended the Lords seven times in March, April and May. The list of essential reading he drew up included the parliamentary debates from the Whig revolution of 1688 to 1742. On his return to Britain, and to sudden fame as a poet, he attended the Lords twenty-four times between January and July 1812, including all major debates, and also the minor work of committees. He was present at Early Fitzwilliam’s motion concerning Ireland, at the debate on the Orders of Council, at Lord Boringdon’s motion for an efficient administration, at Wellington’s motion on Roman Catholic claims, even at a debate on the leather tax. He was still a regular attender in the spring and summer of 1813, and was present at Wellesley’s motion on the Peninsula Wars, at debates upon the naval administration, the war with America and the treaty with Sweden. (4)

exists in opposition to patriotism.

Byron's epigraph<sup>2</sup> (CPW II:3) to what was to be the first edition of CHP,<sup>3</sup> taken from Fougeret Monbron's work Le Cosmopolite, sets out a paradoxical definition of love for one's nation. Monbron says on one hand "I hated my nation", as if his nation itself has no innate qualities to recommend it, but on the other hand has been "reconciled to her" as his travels abroad have revealed the inferiority of other nations, imbuing him with a love of his own nation. Byron may have used the excerpt to draw attention to the parallels between Harold and the protagonist of Monbron's book, both of whom were misanthropic and dissolute, or maybe even used it mischievously as a sly nod to the fact that one of the countries whose people Monbron's protagonist had found "offensive" was England.

Critical attention to the epigraph, however, has largely regarded it as a declaration of Byron's own cosmopolitanism, though how this

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<sup>2</sup> "The universe is a kind of book, wherein he who has only seen his own country knows but the opening page. I had leafed through quite a large number, which I had found equally bad. This inspection has not been fruitless for me. I hated my country. All the offensiveness of the different peoples amongst whom I have dwelt, have reconciled me to her. If that were the only benefit which I had gathered from my travels, I should regret neither joys nor the fatigues." (tran. Cochran). This 1751 work by the self-identified misanthrope Monbron was characterised by "a sharp, bitter egotism which assumes rejection of others and society" (Pizzorusso 143).

<sup>3</sup> Byron added the epigraph to the preface of CHP in September 1811 and wrote to his agent Dallas, that it was from a "great favourite" and that he didn't "think it [was] well known in England" (BLJ 2:100).

cosmopolitanism<sup>4</sup> might be construed varies. Jeffrey Cox and Jillian Heydt-Stevenson write that

Byron invokes cosmopolitanism in his preface to Childe Harold less to find a place in the world than to separate himself from Britain, as he quotes Le Cosmopolite to express his hatred for his country: “Je haïssais ma patrie.” (131)

Byron’s rather unconcerned attitude towards the Napoleonic wars<sup>5</sup>

before he left on his eastern travels may go some way to demonstrating why

Byron’s cosmopolitanism has been understood to be exclusive of patriotic

sentiment instead of allowing for the possibility that it could never be a

“pure position” (Cox and Heydt-Stevenson 132). Jonathan Gross views

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<sup>4</sup> Sophia Rosenfeld demonstrates how cosmopolitanism had the reputation of being seen as “a cover for disengagement, a way of private individuals to avoid experiencing local attachments, commitments, and loyalties necessary for the development of real political sentiments”, defined in the Dictionnaire de l’Academie francaise as “someone who adopts no country . . . and is not a good citizen” (25). She goes on to describe how cosmopolitan commentators were “individual subjects [who] transformed themselves into political spokesmen by de-situating themselves rhetorically” choosing “to write literally from no place, with no name, and no specific allegiances to any specific or particularist body” (27). Silvia Bordoni’s recent essay (2007) shows how Byron’s cosmopolitanism consisted of “attempts at literary hybridisation” and contributed to an idea of a pan-European Romanticism. Though I do not believe, as Bordoni does, that Cantos I and II of CHP exemplify a clear and unproblematic cosmopolitanism (as I have argued above), I do agree that Byron’s “translation and appropriation” of Italian literature and language in Canto IV of CHP and particularly in Beppo offered Byron an “international and inter-political space” (144) that allowed him to fulfil Rosenfeld’s conditions for being a cosmopolitan commentator. As Byron’s narrator describes himself in Beppo: “a nameless sort of person / A broken Dandy lately on my travels” (lines 409-410, emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> The much vaunted heroic death of Nelson goes unremarked in Byron’s correspondence of the time though he does allude to the war of 1805 in his letter to his solicitor’s son, Hargreaves Hanson:

I shall expect (when you next write) an Account of your military preparations to repel the Invader of our Isle, whenever he [Napoleon] makes the Attempt. You will doubtless acquire great Glory on the Occasion and In Expectation of hearing of your Warlike Exploits, I remain, yours very truly, Byron. (BLI 1:77)

Byron's cosmopolitanism as a progression from libertinism that entailed "an emancipation from nationalism" (4).

However, Byron wrote to his mother while abroad that the virtue of travel was that

without losing sight of my own, I can judge of the countries and manners of others.--Where I see the superiority of England (which by the bye we are a good deal mistaken about in many things) I am pleased, and where I find her inferior I am at least enlightened.--Now I might have staid [sic] smoked in your towns or fogged in your country a century without being sure of this, and without acquiring more useful or amusing at home. (BLJ 2:35)<sup>6</sup>

He also suggests that "there should be a law to set our young men abroad for a term among the few allies our wars have left us" as it would give them the advantage of "looking at mankind instead of reading about them" (BLJ 2:34).

Peter Graham points out that, for Byron, "cosmopolitan breadth might actually strengthen patriotic attachment" (3).

This tension between patriotism and cosmopolitanism anticipates much of the paradox and irony that is present in Cantos I and II of CHP, but it is not merely performative--it is an outcome, as I will demonstrate in this

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<sup>6</sup> Byron echoes Richard Steele's writing in the Spectator almost a hundred years earlier, showing how this was a commonly accepted reason for undertaking foreign travel:

Certainly the true End of visiting Foreign Parts, is to look into their Customs and Policies, and observe in what Particulars they excel or come short of your own; to unlearn some of the Peculiarities in our Manners, and wear off such awkward Stiffnesses and Affectations in our Behaviour, as may possibly have been contracted from constantly associating with one Nation of Men, by a more free, general, and mixed Conversation. (qtd. in Cohen, "Language" 130).

chapter, of Byron's perception of his own precarious political and social status in a country whose perception of itself was rapidly changing due to the constant threat of war.

### II.i Cosmopolitanism and patriotism

David Simpson demonstrates how the commonly accepted model of cosmopolitanism which is "contrasted with localism . . . a patriotic attachment to place" can be reductive by "focussing attention on the 'other' [which] should begin within the elements of the internally diversified nation-state itself" (141). These internal differences in Britain figured most prominently along the fault-lines of class and gender in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Linda Colley pleads the case for patriotism as

much more than visceral chauvinism, or simple-minded deference or blinkered conservatism. For all classes and for both sexes, patriotism was more often than not a highly rational response and a creative response as well. Patriotism in the sense of identification with Britain served [ . . . ] as a bandwagon on which different groups and interests leaped so as to steer it in a direction that would benefit them. Being a patriot was a way of claiming the right to participate in British political life, and ultimately a means of demanding a much broader access to citizenship. (4-5)

Patriotic activity soon came to be dominated by the nouveau riche and bourgeois elements in Georgian Britain, to whom "patriotic activism also felt like an opportunity to assert their parity with, and in some cases their superiority to, the landed classes" (Colley 110). Byron's use of the phrase "bravo's trade" (CHP II.360) is telling--his disdain, it seems, does not stem

from a distaste for national glory achieved through military means,<sup>7</sup> but rather from the class-based associations fighting for one's country had acquired. The "remote inglorious star" (CHP II.357) that Harold was born under was that of the aristocrat, and war had become "the business of the people" (Clausewitz qtd. in Colley 298). Byron's impressions of the soldier's trade as a "mercenary . . . Slave of Blood" (BLJ 1:118) merely echoed those perceptions of the soldiery held by the aristocratic classes--as demonstrated by the Duke of Wellington's famously supercilious utterance regarding his troops: "I don't know what effect these men will have on the enemy, but by God, they terrify me" and calling them the "scum of the earth" (ODQ 568). Byron was to echo that phrase in a letter to Long, "You must write previous to your Embarkation, & I hope you will return safe, from 'cutting foreign throats' in company with the Scum of the Earth" (BLJ 1:119). However, Britain's increasing dependence on mass military endeavour meant, that, as Colley points out, "some effort had to be made to re-imagine plebeian

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<sup>7</sup> He was to write to his friend Edward Noel Long regarding his own role in military action:

I am no coward, nor would I shrink from Danger on a proper occasion, indeed Life has too little valuable for me, to make Death horrible; I am not insensible to Glory, & even hope before I am at Rest, to see some service in a military Capacity, yet I cannot conquer my repugnance to a Life absolutely & exclusively devoted to Carnage, or bestow any appellation in my Idea applicable to a mercenary Soldier, but the Slave of Blood.--You will excuse the freedom of my Remarks, I smile again at Sentiments to which you are no Stranger [ . . . ] you have entered into a profession with all the ardour hope &c &c of 19 [ . . . ] When you return from the Field bring me the Scalp of Massena, or the chin of Bonaparte. . . . (BLJ 1:118)



soldiers as potential heroes and as patriots" (298). The constant military conflict with France meant that the government needed to recruit larger numbers of men, and thus encouraged "gentlemen" to create their own private volunteer corps whose officers were often landowners and substantial manufacturers with farmers, professionals, shopkeepers and men with established trades to their name serving as their rank and file (Colley 303).

Resentment of the plutocracy caused impoverished aristocrats (like Byron) to dissociate themselves from the patriotic project, for fear of being identified with the new professional class who made up the numbers of these voluntary corps. As the Song of the St Pancras Volunteer Infantry put it: "We're bankers, lawyers, doctors, grocers, shoemakers and bakers, sir / We're tailors, hosiers, painters, smiths and undertakers, sir" (qtd. in Colley 114). Simpson's "internally diversified nation-state" is one "where the division of labour had so occluded the perspectives of its members that none of them, or almost none, could grasp the 'idea' of the public" (Barrell, "Painting" 2).

This dilution of the idea of the "public" was exacerbated by the growing participation of women in patriotic endeavour, not merely as "anonymous props in civic processions, such as Liberty or . . . as Britannia" (Colley 252) but as participants. This participation, along with late eighteenth

century agitations for universal male suffrage, posed a threat to “upwardly mobile and politically ambitious British men” who wished to “legitimise their claims to active citizenship, without taking the women along with them” (Colley 254).

Harriet Guest, in her examination of a 1791 aquatint entitled Politics (2-7), touches briefly on how the growing participation of women in the public sphere in the eighteenth century may have affected someone in Byron’s position, that of the outmoded aristocrat. The aquatint depicts a cluster of middle aged, portly men, presumably engaged in a debate about politics and excluding from their conversation, both by their body language and positioning, a group of rather bored looking women, as well as a “younger fashionably dressed man, who seems to be listening but not participating in the conversation” (Guest 3). As Guest points out, while the image may depict the increasing permeability between the “masculine world of politics and the feminine world of domestic responsibilities and gossip [ . . . ] the feminized young man . . . seems to belong to neither or both of the gendered groups” (4).

This condition of belonging yet not belonging seems to characterise Byron’s position of what Jerome Christensen has termed a “marginal aristocrat” (Strength 21). His reasons for travel, though ostensibly motivated by a wish to be a “citizen of the world” (BLJ 2:41) in actuality seem to be

attempts to escape his straitened financial<sup>8</sup> and social circumstance. Byron's putative lack of patriotism was more a discomfiture with the changing ramifications of the patriotic project, an outcome of his own position as an English male aristocrat, a privilege that he felt could consequently come under threat, precipitating a crisis that "confounds the personal with the epochal" (Christensen, "Speculative" 60) rather than an actual lack of patriotic feeling. In a letter to his mother in 1811 Byron remarks that his wish to live away from England as a "citizen of the world" was contingent on "a delicious climate, luxury at a less expense than a common college life in England", adding that this would be the life he would choose if he sold Newstead Abbey (BLJ 2:41). Byron's desire for the good life was a consequence of the sense of entitlement he felt as an aristocrat, the only other marker of which was Newstead. Christensen states that

[I]t may have been economically true that no aristocracy could survive the loss of its land, but it remains culturally and even politically true that no aristocracy could exist without subscribing to an ethos that countenanced the genuine risk of that land--a truth exemplified . . . by the accounts of those aristocrats who hazarded their patrimonies on the battlefield or at the gaming tables. ("Lordship" 480)

This precarious position exacerbated Byron's status anxiety, and one solution he (and his mother) envisioned was for him to marry into wealth, a

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<sup>8</sup> A spate of reckless womanising and socialising in early 1808 had plunged Byron into debt: "I am cursedly dipped; my debts, every thing inclusive, will be nine or ten thousand before I am twenty-one." (BLJ 1:163). See Doris Langley Moore's Lord Byron - Accounts Rendered for a detailed analysis of Byron's fluctuating finances throughout his life.

“Golden Dolly” as he put it (BLJ 1:181), an option that he did not relish.<sup>9</sup> His other option was to enter the world of politics, for which he believed his travels would prove educational. As Christensen has suggested, it was one way to rescue himself from his marginalised position:

The aristocrat distinguishes himself in his deed, by his deed, as his deed [ . . . ] aristocratic merit is confirmed before the eyes of one’s peers, whether at the threshold of the House of Lords, or outside the city walls in a duel. (“Lordship” 481)

Byron’s much vaunted cosmopolitanism, at least in this early stage in his career, is less an ideological position and more a tool for survival in the new political economy.

## II.ii. “The world is all before me and I leave England without regret”: Childe Harold on the spot

Byron’s first venture into politics, however, was rather less auspicious than he hoped. His guardian, the Earl of Carlisle, whom Byron hoped would give him a personal introduction to the House, merely wrote to Byron informing him of the necessary procedure, but did not accompany him (Marchand, Portrait 56). The mortification he felt found relief in EBSR (lines 726-740)<sup>10</sup> but Byron left England disappointed by his lack of political

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<sup>9</sup> He wrote to Hobhouse that the alternative was blowing his brains out for “it does not matter which, the remedies are nearly alike” (BLJ 1:181). His mother wrote to their solicitor Hanson: “I wish to God he would exert himself and retrieve his affairs. He must marry a Woman of fortune this spring; love matches is all nonsense. Let him make use of the Talents God has given him. He is an English Peer, and has all the privileges of that situation.” (n.BLJ 1:181).

<sup>10</sup> Byron gleefully wrote to his mother regarding Carlisle: “I have lashed him in my rhymes and perhaps his Lordship will regret not being more conciliatory” (BLJ 1:196).

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The historical circumstances of the Romantic period caused political power to become metonymic and abstract, where “[M]en rule by proxy and by mental musculature rather than by their physical presence and the allegiance owed to that presence” (Ross, “Quest” 31). Byron, after his initial humiliation at the House of Lords in early 1809, no longer felt the satirical mode he used for EBSR was a mode appropriate for propagating political power. Instead he chose the Spenserian stanza, as a suitable vehicle for those ideas that will “help prepare England for its imperial destiny” (Ross, “Quest” 31).

Byron’s preoccupation with a national epic first surfaces in EBSR in the form of a sustained diatribe aimed at Southey (lines 202-234). His epithet of choice for Southey was “Ballad-monger” (202) where the ballad was clearly a degraded form for its associations with the labouring classes, and threatens to colonise the “high-status cultural territory” (L. Pratt par.7) occupied by the epic. Byron describes the efficacy of the epic in propagating national pride and commemorating the deeds of national heroes, writing that

Empires have mouldered from the face of earth  
Tongues have expired with those who gave them birth,  
Without the glory such a strain can give,  
As even in ruin bids the language live.  
(EBSR 195-198)

His use of the word “ruin” points to the monumental nature of

language and finds an echo in the following lines in CHP: “When granite moulders, and when records fail . . . Can Volume, Pillar, Pile preserve thee great?” (I.398, 402.) The material manifestations of Southey’s prolificacy made him an easy target for Byron’s insinuations of professionalism; his “annual strains” (EBSR 204) at odds with the received Miltonic idea of the epic, the “one great work” which required “a life of labour spent” (EBSR 200), an accusation Coleridge had also levelled at his brother in law as he himself could not “think of devoting less than 20 years to an Epic Poem” (Letters 1:320).

Byron himself had earlier contemplated writing a national epic on the battle of Bosworth Field, envisioning it extending to eight or ten books that would “be a work of 3 or four years” (BLI 1:132). Though he never completed it, his Whiggish view of history demanded a fit narrator for the epic, one who was trained in the classics and was unconcerned by the demands of the marketplace<sup>11</sup>, to avoid the telescoping of the “hero’s amplest fate” (CHP I.397) into the “peasant’s plaint” (CHP I.399).

By citing Spenser and James Thomson as prominent influences on the work in the Preface to CHP Byron was placing the poem in a context of national epic poetry such as The Faerie Queene (1596) and Liberty (1736),

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<sup>11</sup> Byron’s major grievance against the brothers Joseph and Amos Cottle, apart from their lack of poetic talent was their venturing into the field of poetry despite their “other” profession--that of being booksellers, which already marked them with the taint of commerce, in his eyes (EBSR 385-410).

that celebrated, albeit not entirely unambiguously, the glories of an imperial Britain. Byron further justified his use of Spenserian stanza as well as the poem's archaic subtitle, "A Romaunt"<sup>12</sup> by quoting James Beattie:

Not long ago I began a poem in the style and stanza of Spenser, in which I propose to give full scope to my inclination, and be either droll or pathetic, descriptive or sentimental, tender or satirical, as the humour strikes me; for, if I mistake not, the measure which I have adopted admits equally of all these kinds of composition. ("Preface" CHP 34-39)

Sam Smiles demonstrates that there was an interest in the ancient Anglo-Saxon image of Britain during the romantic era, serving to fuel a nationalist discourse with images of a "manly" ancestry (16) that inspired Byron to adopt the Spenserian stanza. Byron's reading of Spenser is, as Greg Kucich has put it, an attempt "to shape the indeterminate vision of his epic by dramatizing the collapse of antiquated systems of truth into the fractured shards of modern experience" and he aimed to accomplish this by "juxtaposing Spenser's chivalric universe with the modern world" (117). The temporal distance between the two worlds is made explicit by Byron's valorising the older model of the nation (Albion) as opposed to that of Britannia, who represents "the visual 'embodiment' of the new order, which

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<sup>12</sup> Though Byron's choice of the chivalric romance was considered surprising, especially given that his last work was a satire, it was considered as well suited to the varied nature of the poem: "The principal poem is styled 'A Romaunt;' an appellation, perhaps, rather too quaint, but which, inasmuch as it has been always used with a considerable latitude of meaning, it may be considered as applicable to all the anomalous and non-descript classes of poetical composition, is not less suited to any other titles to designate the metrical itinerary which we are about to examine." (QR 7:13 180)

no longer had only the figure of the father as a single centre" (Went 70). The ancient model of Britain makes its entry very early on in the poem:

"Whilome in Albion's isle there dwelt a youth" (CHP I.10), establishing the context for the tension between the contemporary and the ancient national bodies that pervades the first two cantos of CHP.

The tension that Byron felt existed between the ancient model (Albion) and the "new order" is acted out palimpsestically in stanza 13 of CHP II and its variant lines:

What! shall it e'er be said by British tongue,  
 Albion was happy in Athena's tears?  
 Though in thy name the slaves her bosom wrung,  
 Tell not the deed to blushing Europe's ears;  
Albion! I would not see thee thus adorned  
 The ocean queen, the free Britannia bears  
With gains thy generous spirit should have scorned,  
 The last poor plunder from a bleeding land:  
From Man distinguished by some monstrous sign,  
 Yes, she, whose gen'rous aid her name endears,  
Like Attila the Hun was surely horned  
 Tore down those remnants with a Harpy's hand.  
Who worked this ravage among works divine  
 Which envious Eld forbore, with tyrants left to stand.  
Oh that Minerva's voice lent its keen aid to mine.  
 (109-117; variant lines underlined)

Byron uses "Britannia" to denote a feminized nation defined by its plunder and greed, as opposed to Albion, an ancient nation defined by chivalry and freedom.

The Grand Tour, and foreign travel generally, was, as Michèle Cohen has demonstrated, ridden with anxieties about masculinity that were



inseparable from ideas of nationalism. Travel to France (which was the major destination of choice before the Napoleonic wars) was especially seen as problematic: France and the French were seen as “irresistibly seductive [ . . . ] but in the eighteenth century this seductiveness was the source of many dangers, in particular to English masculinity” (Cohen, “Tour” 129). The Tour was initially considered to enhance masculinity, endowing young aristocratic men with “manliness and a becoming Confidence” (Locke qtd. in Cohen, “Tour” 130). One necessary way of constructing masculinity was by removing boys from the overwhelmingly female environment found at home. Richard Lassels, the first person to coin the term the “Grand Tour” in his Voyage of Italy (1670) wrote that

[T]raveling preserves my yong nobleman from surfeiting of his parents, and weanes him from the dangerous fondness of his mother. It teacheth him wholesome hardship [ . . . ] And what generous mother will not say to her son with that ancient? Mao tibi male esse, quam molliter: I had rather thou shouldst be sick, then soft. (qtd. in Chard 36)

By choosing the medium of the chivalrous romance and a knightly protagonist, Byron sought to assert the masculine nature of both the poem and poet.

The expectations set up by Byron’s choice of genre were thwarted by the poem itself. The Eclectic Review informed its readers,

[T]hose who may have been induced to anticipate [ . . . ] a tale of tournaments, and castles, and princesses, it may be useful to

know that fancy could hardly form a being more unlike their old acquaintance (631) and Byron was charged by several critics that Childe Harold, contrary to expectations set up both by the title of the poem and that of its principal character, was “unknightly” (CPW II:5). Though Byron responds to such accusations by cheerily responding in his “Addition to the Preface” that “the good old times . . . were most profligate of all possible centuries [ . . . ] The vows of chivalry were no better kept than any other vows whatsoever” (CPW II:5) by the very act of writing the poem on his travels Byron bestowed “upon himself the mantle of medieval romance quester . . . (taking on) the virile role of chivalric savior” (Ross, “Quest” 32) of the nation. Byron’s gesture of subverting the romance of chivalry while persisting in his formal imitation can be attributed in some part to the ambiguous status of chivalry and its complex relationship to masculinity in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Simon Bainbridge discusses the crucial role that poetry played “in the mediation of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars to the British public” (vii) and that Byron in particular “presents firsthand experience of the battlefield as the only way in which war can be conceived” (177), where the experience of the physical site itself surpasses actual engagement in military action. The significance of his “being there on the spot” in Cheeke’s words (7) attributed his accounts with a credibility that other poets lacked. Cheeke

demonstrates how Byron's responses to places of historical significance, as captured in his poetry were commodified by John Murray's travel guides that tapped into "a middle class market for travel" (7) in the latter half of the century. I depart from Cheeke's reading here, which goes onto discuss the recovery of the past through being present "on the spot" by putting forward the argument that, although analyses of Byron's travels from 1809-1811 often refer to his being on the Grand Tour, these first-person accounts were invested with a desire to be seen more as explorer or adventurer, rather than an aristocratic tourist. Unlike the Grand Tour, Byron's (and Harold's) travels are not marked by a final destination. Instead, Byron was keen to assert his parity with established geographers such as Gell and Leake: "Albania indeed I have seen more than any Englishman (but a Mr. Leake)" (BLJ 1:237) and his note to CHP II reads

Of Albania Gibbon remarks, that a country "within sight of Italy is less known than the interior of America." Circumstances, of little consequence to mention, led Mr. Hobhouse and myself into that country before we visited any other part of the Ottoman dominions; and with the exception of Major Leake, then officially resident at Joanina, no other Englishmen have ever advanced beyond the capital into the interior, as that gentleman very lately assured me. (CPW II:192)

He wrote to the famous traveller and mineralogist, Edward Daniel

Clarke saying "I am sure that I am anxious to have an observer's--

particularly a famous observer's--particularly a famous observer's testimony

on ye fidelity of my manners & dresses" (BLJ 3:199).

Spain and Portugal were common themes in contemporary literature for the market was being flooded with ephemeral verse compositions as well as more ambitious works such as Walter Scott's The Vision of Don Roderick (1811), John Wilson Coker's The Battles of Talavera (1809) and Lord Grenville's Portugal (Saglia "Nation" 69) but Byron was more concerned to prove himself as an adventurer or a geopolitical commentator rather than pit himself against his literary counterparts. My focus here is more on Byron's anxiety regarding the profession of authorship, and his choice to eschew the world of the literary marketplace altogether by positioning himself as a geopolitical commentator, in competition with soldier-geographers and travellers, seeking to undermine their accounts by charging them with parochialism or lack of knowledge or expertise.

Byron did, however, explicitly critique female authors who had chosen to cover similar ground, emphasising his embodied presence at the sites of his subject matter as opposed to authors such as Sydney Owenson whose knowledge of such places was not informed by travel.<sup>13</sup> Byron was working to create a more masculinized self who was doubly fit to offer authoritative commentary on what he saw: his being on the spot, as well as being endowed with a correctness and gentility of vision due to his

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<sup>13</sup> I explore the ramifications of these critiques, as well as Byron's relationship with female authors who had the advantage of travel in more detail later in this chapter.

aristocratic position.<sup>14</sup> This authority is inseparable from the seeing body, as

Jacqueline Labbe writes:

Visuality--the way one looks--is a power ineluctably linked both to the physical body whose eyes broadly survey, or minutely detail, the surrounding prospect, and to the social body, and the representations thereof, that provide the individual gendered body with its distinctions and privileges.  
(xxi)

Labbe's hypothesis of the prospect view as distinctly gendered holds interesting implications for Byron's use of landscape and topography in his poetry. Labbe uses the example of Addison to demonstrate how masculine imagination could only flourish in wide open spaces, which were "pleasing to the fancy" as opposed to "Confinement" which Addison equated with "when the Sight is pent up in a narrow Compass, and shortened on every side by the Neighborhood of Walls or Mountains"(ix). Masculine imagination thus defined itself by opposition to the lack of scope available in the feminine domestic sphere, circumscribed by the walls of manmade

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<sup>14</sup> John Barrell discusses how "a correct taste . . . especially for landscape and landscape art, was used in this period as a means of legitimating political authority" ("Prospect" 19). This emphasis on the visual or how one saw became increasingly important as Emily Bernhard Jackson has observed: "In an era which invested increasingly in the ideas of taste and discernment, the ability to see 'correctly,' to demonstrate gentility by means of an appropriate response to the visual, became ever more important. Arbiters of taste were clear about the vital role that genteel vision played in validating one as a person of both good sense and refinement" (pars.12-13). Women, according to the terms of the discourse of civic humanism, were unable to possess such taste (and thus legitimacy) for they were considered unable to produce abstract ideas from the raw data of experience, due to their lack of education (Barrell, "Prospect" 19). For the important role visuality played in the long eighteenth century, see William Galperin, The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism (1993) and Gillen D'Arcy Wood, The Shock Of The Real : Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760-1860 (2001); with regards to Byron, see Mark Storey, Byron and the Eye of Appetite (1986).

structures. Labbe critiques John Barrell's description of the poet as "seer or observer placed high on an eminence to whom the landscape is a prospect to be surveyed", remarking that this construct is invested with "an ideal and a privilege, necessary to prove one's right to govern and an indication that one is able to govern" (x). Much of Byron's early poetry, which alludes to his aristocratic lineage, demonstrates Byron's assumption of entitlement to this privilege. The action of his poems often takes place in landscapes which in some way are nominally his domain--such as the "steep summit" (2) in "Song" (CPW I:47) that he scaled as "a young Highlander" (1) in order

To gaze on the torrent, that thunder'd beneath,  
Or the mist of the tempest that gather'd below;  
Untutor'd by science, a stranger to fear,  
And rude as the rocks, where my infancy grew,  
(lines 3-7)

or in his commemoration of the "steep, frowning glories of dark Loch na Garr" (CPW I:103, "Lachin Y Gair" line 40).

Byron expresses his presence by infusing Cantos I and II of CHP with an overwhelmingly strong sense of the visual. As Bernhard Jackson has persuasively argued, the poem demonstrates its epistemological instability by constantly questioning the reliability of "the link between seeing and knowing" and "posits a version of knowledge itself as fluid, unstable, and undetermined" (par. 1). Byron seeks to use his visual first-hand accounts of foreign landscapes and peoples as a guarantee of ideological positioning, for

by his use of the epigraph he sets up a causal link between foreign travel and cosmopolitanism but constantly undermines his own position by his commentary that can be read as nationalist rhetoric. As the following section will illustrate, the dissonance between seeing and knowing in Cantos I and II of CHP, becomes most apparent in Byron's discussions of women and landscape, bringing his conflict between cosmopolitanism and patriotism into sharp relief. That commentary, because of Byron's aristocratic position, would be perceived by readers as a source of indisputable knowledge. Byron was anxious to have a "correctness" of vision associated with his poetic voice, which he cultivated by placing emphasis on both his status as masculine explorer/adventurer, who had been "on the spot", and his aristocratic heritage. He hoped that this authoritative voice would set him apart from his competitors in the literary marketplace, and divest his participation in this space of its effeminate connotations.

Harold's "fulness of satiety" (CHP I.34) is described both in terms of dissatisfaction with his "native land" (I.35) and disillusionment in romantic love, thus drawing a parallel between the nation and woman. Harold's "native" circumstance informs the action of the first canto in terms of his relationship with the nation (or rather Albion, as is explicitly mentioned) as well as of his nativity i.e. his status of being born as an aristocrat. The dynamics of Harold's relationship with Albion are thus posited in female

terms--as a maternal figure responsible for Harold's nativity as well as a figure who inspires (romantic) longing. Leaving "[H]is house, his home, his heritage, his lands" (I.91) also means leaving those "laughing dames in whom he did delight" (I.92). In the original version, however, he referred to those "laughing dames" as "[h]is Dalilahs", (CPW II:12), defining women principally by their capacity to betray, a trope that recurs throughout the poem. The spur, that secret "disappointed passion" (I.67) that causes him to leave, seems to be his failure to have negotiated a social or professionally productive role within that land.

In Byron's eyes, to profess to patriotic yearning is to emasculate oneself, as is evident from Harold's suppression of his emotions:

And then, it may be, of his wish to roam  
Repented he, but in his bosom slept  
The silent thought, nor from his lips did come  
One word of wail, whilst other sate and wept,  
And to the reckless gales unmanly moaning kept.  
(I.104-108, emphasis added)

Harold likens his departure to the condition of being orphaned "And I shall hail the main and skies, / But not my mother Earth" (I.128-9) and alludes to his home as a scene of domestic abandonment, whose "hearth is desolate" (I.131), with a possible play on the word's near homonymous relationship to "heart". Harold's sentimental address to his "little page" (I.134), in the song fragment "Good Night", elicits a response that refers to Harold in paternalistic terms: "Sir Childe", (I.144) "no friend . . . / But thee--



and one above" (I.148-9) as well as the more explicit "Master" as a form of address, which Byron had written in the original. He addresses his "yeoman" (I.158) who, like the boy, succumbs to the "softness of domesticity" and attempts to "internalize the feminine" (Ross, "Quest" 37) in order to carry on. Yearning for the ties of domesticity is marked out as a weakness inherent to class, and its particularity belies patriotic feeling. Harold retains his Stoic attitude, but only just--"If I thy guileless bosom had / Mine own [eye] would not be dry" (I.156-7)--as a way to preserve those outdated bounds of class structure. But Harold's attitude towards domestic ties is ambivalent (as is Byron's, which I shall analyse in more detail in Chapter IV) and Byron's allusion to Vathek (in an expunged stanza) is held up as an example of how such a life is destined to end in discontent and loneliness: "thy sad day must close / To scorn, and Solitude unsought--the worst of woes" (CPW II:18) and "Where wanton Wealth her mightiest deed hath done, / Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun" (I.277-8). This omitted verse, again reiterates Harold's sense of abandonment by the source of his nativity,

My mother is a high born dame  
 And much misliketh me  
 She saith my riot bringeth shame  
 On all my ancestry  
 (CPW II:14)

Harold stops from betraying himself by an unmanly show of emotions by

shifting the burden of that betrayal on to ties that bind, "For who would trust the seeming sighs / Of wife or paramour?" (I.174-5). This aids the transition from Stoicism to a version of cosmopolitanism as is evident from the last verse of the song:

With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go  
 Athwart the foaming brine;  
 Nor care what land thou bears't me to,  
 So not again to mine.  
 (I.190-193)

Byron's celebratory description of Portugal refers to its "goodly prospects" (I.210), recalling Harold's gesture of despoiling his paramour's "goodly lands to gild his waste" (I.44) much in the manner of "Gaul's locust host" (I.215), Napoleon. The indirect comparison between Harold and Britain's most loathed enemy sets the narrative tone, which is further refined by the narrative's championing of "calm domestic peace" (I.45). Byron's description of Portugal as "A nation swoln with ignorance and pride, / Who lick yet loath the hand that waves the sword" (I.222-3) is a statement born from the wounding of patriotic pride caused by Portugal's earlier refusal of Britain's assistance after Napoleon's initial attacks.

Britain's intervention, as described by Byron as almost divine or at least having celestial support, was founded in the Protestant belief that Britain was in "God's special care" (Colley 30). Colley describes how British nationalist rhetoric would be couched in terms of the Israelites against

Satan's accomplices (32). Byron, in his comparison between Portugal and Egypt, internalises this nationalist rhetoric, attributing to Portugal the same pride that brought the plague of locusts upon Egypt (I.207-242) and depicting the British as her saviours, endeavouring to recreate a Jerusalem in Europe. Byron's description of Portugal and its inhabitants paints a picture of a barbarous people:

These are memorials frail of murderous wrath:  
 For wheresoe'er the shrieking victim hath  
 Pour'd forth his blood beneath the assassin's knife  
 Some hand erects a cross of mouldering lath;  
 And grove and glen with thousand such are rife  
 Throughout this purple land, where law secures not life.  
 (I.264-269)

Byron evokes the bloody nature of the Portuguese by his epithet "this purple land" (269). He utilises this characteristic to further exaggerate the "otherness" of the Portuguese people in his note, writing that

[I]t is a well known fact, that in the year 1809 the assassinations in the streets of Lisbon and its vicinity were not confined by the Portugese to their countrymen; but that Englishmen were daily butchered: and so far from redress being obtained, we were requested not to interfere if we perceived any compatriot defending himself against his allies. (CPW II:187)

Byron's use of the word "allies" here is damning.

Harold addresses the provinces of Portugal and Spain as the "Babylonian whore" (I.338) and refers to them under their ancient name of Lusitania, conceived as an oriental other due to its Islamic heritage. Byron's tendency to conflate the feminine with the landscape is perceptible in I.603-

611, where he equates the land and its specific clime with a “haram” that yields such “Beauties that ev’n a cynic must avow” (I.606). The ecstasy that accompanies this anticipation--“Match me, ye climes! which poets love to laud; / Match me, ye harams of the land!” and “Match me those Houries, whom ye scarce allow / To taste the gale lest Love should ride the wind” (I.603-4, 606-7)--is echoed in an apostrophic stanza that he segues into on first beholding Mount Parnassus. He likens his digressive hymn of praise to Parnassus to a “song of love” (I.653) inspired by Andalusia’s maids, and though he lauds Parnassus in a mode in keeping with his literary forbears, he is careful to characterise the uniqueness of his experience of “being there” (Cheeke 6). As he boasted to his friend Henry Drury with reference to his friend Francis Hodgson:

what would he give? to have seen like me the real Parnassus, where I robbed the Bishop of Chrisso of a book of Geography, but this I only call plagiarism, as it was done within an hour’s ride of Delphi. (BLJ 2:59)

Intrinsic to this unique position of being there, then, is a sense of acquisition as embodied by his gaze, both with regards to the landscape and its female inhabitants, a sense of entitlement that is discernible in his stealing a copy of a 1728 edition of Meletius’ Ancient and Modern Geography. The power of Parnassus lies in what is made of it by the poet and not the other way round so, though Byron concedes that “Some gentle Spirit still pervades the spot” (I.636), he divests it of its symbolic consequence--“Though from thy

heights no more one Muse will wave her wing" (I. 620) and "Though here no more Apollo haunts his grot, / And thou, the Muses' seat, art now their grave, (I.634-5)--and invests it with the "proof of authenticity" (Cheeke 52).

Byron's defence that his theft is merely "plagiarism" is a deliberate confounding of materiality of text with place and a virtual act of the imperialism that Cheeke remarks was contained within the idea of

Philhellenism:

The Greek nationalism of non-Greeks was therefore a powerful nationalism, but a nationalism by proxy, entwined around the classical fantasies of home and a sense of British patriotism, and therefore in an oblique relation to British imperialism. (52)

The civilising influence of Christianity is depicted by the pastor whose "arms his lambs defend" (I.357), and whose victory is depicted in the account of the battle between the "Moor and knight" (I.383), the Reconquista, and by extension, the civilising influence of Britain. In a footnote, most of which was deleted before publication, Byron describes the "late exploits of Wellington" that had "changed the character of a people, reconciled rival superstitions, and baffled an enemy which though often beaten (in our Gazettes) never retreated before his predecessors" (CPW II:188). Byron's additional commentary on the role of the army continues the footnote's conservative tone:

With regard to my observations on armies, however unpopular, I have religion on my side against armies in particular--they are alike incompatible with our independence

and our population. If ever we are enslaved it will not be by a foreign invader, but a domestic army, and should our navy fall I see little reason to augur more favourably of a Land Contest. (CPW II:278)

This remark seems to have its roots in the anxiety felt by the British government during the early years of the Napoleonic Wars that the British people may turn against them, given that the armies were populated largely by members of the labouring classes (Colley 304). Though this anxiety was proven to be unfounded, as evident from this remark by William Pitt the Younger (who, in hope of quenching revolutionary activity in 1794, had suspended habeas corpus): “There was a time . . . when it would have been dangerous to entrust arms with a great portion of the people of this country [ . . . ] But that time is now past” (qtd. in Colley 328).

Diego Saglia<sup>15</sup> has drawn attention to Regency Britain’s preoccupation with Spanish affairs and the impact this interest had in triggering a “remarkable output of novels, poems and travel narratives evoking the Spanish landscape, people, culture and history for an eager reading public” (“Nation” 363). Though it could be perceived as an exotic “other” like India or Egypt, this “otherness” was countered by its alliance with Britain against Napoleon, and literature of the time exploited this sense of fellow feeling using it to offer up the theme of nationalism, an ideal in which both Britain

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<sup>15</sup> See in particular Saglia’s Byron and Spain: Itinerary in the Writing of Place (1996) and Poetic Castles in Spain: British Romanticism and Figurations of Iberia (2000).

and Spain were invested (Saglia, "Nation" 363). A review of Theodosius de Zulvin, The Monk of Madrid reads "We shall only add that the scene lies in Spain, though the manners represented are those of England" (Monthly Review 441), demonstrating how easily that imaginative leap could be made by its readers and reviewers, so strong were the contemporary perceptions of the two nations' parallel natures.<sup>16</sup> A review of another contemporary novel, Santos de Montenos, or Annals of a Patriot Family by William Ticken, portrays Spain as "the prey of successive invaders; yet, notwithstanding, its wealth and beauty have continually tempted the cupidity of the aggressor", the seductive nature of its subject matter further reiterated by the critic's opinion that in spite of the novel's many faults "it is difficult to resist the fascination of a Spanish tale" (Critical Review 642). Such comments demonstrate how the Iberian nation was perceived in gendered terms, frequently as a feminized, prostrate nation for whom the Duke of Wellington was a "champion" for his defeat of France, by whose intervention "Britain hath wiped Iberia's tears" (Rev. John Keble qtd. by Saglia "Nation" 365). The critic draws a causal link between both authentic and imagined events in Spain's history and its suitability as a "chosen region of romance and

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<sup>16</sup> Saglia writes how contemporary novels set in Spain and Iberia testify "to how this ideology of the hearth both excluded the family and women from social agency while co-opting them increasing importance of the domestic affections in the writing after 1800 that accompanied the strengthening of the connection between middle class, professional culture and Romantic literature [ . . . ] it also offers a practical example of as the human foundations of the community, state, nation and empire. ("Nation" 367)

chivalry" (Critical Review 644). Byron portrays Harold as similarly waylaid by the charms of Mafra--"Onward he flies . . . Yet Mafra shall one moment claim delay" (I.328, 333)-- with the seductive feminized nature of the Mediterranean embodied by the figure of "Lusian's luckless queen" (I.334).

Byron seeks to capitalise on this trend of feminizing the Iberian nation, as is evident from the verse that initiates the treatment of Spain that will continue till the end of the Canto:

Oh, lovely Spain! renown'd, romantic land!  
Where is that standard which Pelagio bore,  
When Cava's traitor-sire first call'd the band  
That dy'd thy mountain streams with Gothic gore?  
(I.387-390)

"Cava" (I.389) was the daughter of Count Julian, Florinda, who was "seduced or ravished" (Gibbon) depending on which version of the legend one believed, by King Roderick. This instigated Julian's betrayal of the Christian kingdom to the Moors, which was the subject matter of Southey's verse tale Roderick, The Last of the Goths (1814). Her Spanish nickname "la Cava Rumia" meant "the Christian whore" recalling the "Babylonian whore" of line 338. Byron's note to the verse refers to her as "the Helen of Spain", an echo of Cervantes' mention of her in Don Quixote<sup>17</sup> which uses the same comparison. In spite of the poem's Christian sympathies, Byron's preferred

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<sup>17</sup> "Dulcinea is well born, of quality, and of the genteel families of Toboso, which are many, ancient, and very good: and no doubt the peerless Dulcinea has a large share in them, for whom her town will be famous and renowned in the ages to come, as Troy was of Helen, and Spain has been for [La] Cava, though upon better grounds and a juster title" (Don Quixote 682).



depiction of Florinda reaffirms and develops the trope of the betraying woman that he is aiming to perpetuate.

Byron's account of Harold's arrival in Seville is set before its fall to the French in 1810 and describes a city untouched by war, where "young-eyed Lewdness walks her midnight rounds" (I.492). The song of the "lusty muleteer" (I.504) alludes to Queen Maria Louisa whose "adulterate joy" with the man she made Prime Minister, Manuel de Godoy was an act of "gore-fac'd Treason" (I.512), as the Spanish believed he was responsible for the downfall of Spain at the hands of the French. Byron attempts to assemble this gallery of female betrayal to universalise the idea of woman by attributing this common attribute across races and nations. Byron casts Venus as a mythological representative of the betraying woman who "constant to her native sea" was "To nought else constant" (I.669-70). Once this has been accomplished, he turns to the figure of the warrior woman in his description of the Maid of Saragoza:

Is it for this the Spanish maid, arous'd,  
Hangs on the willow her unstrung guitar,  
And all unsex'd, the Anlace hath espous'd,  
Sung the loud song, and dar'd the deed of war?  
And she, whom once the semblance of the scar  
Appall'd, an owlet's larum chill'd with dread,  
Now views the column-scattering bay'net jar,  
The falchion flash, and o'er the yet warm dead  
Stalks with Minerva's step where Mars might quake to dread.  
(I.558-566)

The legend of the Maid of Saragoza was already familiar to English

audiences due to Charles Richard Vaughan's account, Narrative of the Siege of Zaragoza (1809) whose depiction elevated her to "an Amazon-like figure embodying war and patriotic resistance", who crucially became "personification of both abstract patriotism and of a specific place, her name being transformed sometimes into that of the country (Agustina de Aragon) and sometimes into that of the town (Agustina Zaragoza)" (Saglia, "Nation" 377-78). However, the unprecedented commercial success of the first two cantos of CHP meant that the legend of the Maid of Saragoza would now find its largest audience. Saglia finds Byron's use of the Spanish heroine is situated "both as a figure invading the masculine enclave of military heroism and as an embodiment of stereotypical Spanish femininity [combining] sensuality and violence, patriotism and self-denial" ("Nation" 378).

Saglia's assertion that Byron's representation of the stereotype is "complex and not easily codifiable" ("Nation" 378) rings true, though his argument does not seem to address the reasons behind Byron's intentions in creating this ambiguity, or indeed the centrality of the figure to the ideological advocacy of the poem. Guiliano uses the figure of the Maid of Saragoza as an early emblem for Byron's later "female phallic figures" (798) such as Gulnare in The Corsair, a parallel also drawn by Caroline Franklin (Heroines 214). Guiliano argues that Byron's portrayal of the Maid "reveals progressive admiration tempered by conservative sexual politics" (799).

Though the Maid, due to several contemporary accounts, had become the stuff of legend in England and her heroism deemed universally praiseworthy, Byron's account of her is not unreservedly positive. Byron's use of "unsex'd" in line 560 does, as Guiliano points out, immediately recall Lady Macbeth (799). The passage also recalls--through its use of "tower" (I.573), "owlet" (I.563), "deed" (I.561) and "falchion" (I.565) (a near homographic match with falcon)--the following lines from Macbeth:

'Tis unnatural,  
 Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,  
 A falcon, towering in her pride of place,  
 Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.  
Macbeth II.iv.10-13

Byron is careful to qualify the Maid's "unsex'd" moment by alluding to her natural feminine tendencies (I.558-9) that were perceptible in "her softer hour" (I.568): "her light, lively tones", "her long locks", and "her fairy form with more than female grace" (I.570-572). The syntactical ambiguity of the lines "Scarce would you deem that Saragoza's tower / Beheld her smile in Danger's Gorgon face" (573-4) where "smile" can function both as a noun or a verb, allows the latter usage to signify the power of her deed to turn her into something unnatural and monstrous. Both the last line of this stanza-- "Stalks with Minerva's step where Mars might quake to tread" (I.566)--and the earlier condemnation of the avarice of women--"And Mammon wins his way where Seraphs might despair" (I.81)--echo the structure of Pope's

famous words from "An Essay on Criticism"--"For fools rush in where angels fear to tread" (line 625)--and are offered as ironic statements on the folly of women. In his original note to this account he wrote: "Such were the exploits of the Maid of Saragoza who by her valour elevated herself to the highest rank of heroines" (CPW II:189). Revised and later versions omitted the complimentary clause and referred to her as a "new Joan of Arc" (CPW II:189). Though during Byron's visit to Seville "she walked daily in the Prado" (CPW II:190), his acquaintance with her went no deeper, unlike Sir John Carr the travel writer, who had visited her. But Byron's intimate description--"Oh! had you known her in her softer hour, / Mark'd her black eye that mocks her coal-black veil, / Heard her light, lively tone in Lady's bower" (I.568-570)--belies his lack of personal familiarity and seems an extension of Byron's writerly desire to perform "the recovery of lived experience" (Cheeke 13).

Byron therefore, in his accounts of other cultures, repeatedly describes them in terms of their women, DJ being the most obvious example with its "gallery of female characters, in a variety of nations" (Franklin, Heroines 101). His scopophilic gaze on "Spain's maids [ . . . ] form'd for all the witching arts of love" (I.585) goes hand in hand with the pleasure one takes in that difference quested for in travel; he remarks on the beauty of their chins, their lips, their complexions. The appeal to Byron, of their sometimes

martial motivations, lies in their aiming to preserve the sanctity of domesticity and of marital life, as Byron's use of that trope of happy domesticity the "tender . . . dove" (I.589) demonstrates, rather than prove themselves more than men like those "Remoter females, fam'd for sickening prate" (I.592). Here he is referring to the Bluestockings whose unfeminine nature Richard Polwhele expounded upon in his misogynist poem "The Unsex'd Females" (1798), "A female band despising NATURE's law, / As "proud defiance" flashes from their arms, / And vengeance smothers all their softer charms" (lines 17-19) and refers to as the "Amazonian band" in his note to these lines. Byron's statement "Yet are Spain's maids no race of Amazons" (I.585) praises the Spanish maiden's innate softness, that serves to uphold the traditional roles of men and women--where man's gallantry is rewarded by imprint of those lips "whose kisses pout to leave their nest" (I.596)--and prevents them from encroaching on the traditional male territory of the intellect. He castigates, by contrast, the intellectual pretensions of "paler dames" (I.601) of the North with their "languid, wan, and weak" (I.602) appearances, distancing them from an idealised femininity, as represented by the Spanish maid, defined in terms of domestic pliancy and sexual attractiveness. The song "The Girl of Cadiz" that Byron wrote on his journey from Gibraltar to Sardinia in mid-1809, which was replaced by the interlude "To Inez" in 1810, probably formed the original material for the

comparison between the English and Spanish woman found in these stanzas.

In a surprising shift from his effusive praise of the Spanish woman's docility, however, Byron's descriptions of Spanish women at the bull-fight sets up a discourse of otherness based on their almost masculine enjoyment of the bloodthirsty nature of the sport: "Yells the mad crowd o'er entrails freshly torn, / Nor shrinks the female eye, nor ev'n affects to mourn" (I.691-692). Byron's sudden digression in the following two stanzas that places the action on a typical Sunday in London and then jolts the reader back to the "thronged Arena" (I.690) of the bullfight, serves two complementary purposes: by contrasting the carnivalesque jollity of the mock oath and its associated revels with the violent Sunday entertainment of the Spanish, Byron puts into place a comparison whose purpose is mostly pejorative. Secondly, the unsettling effect of the digression itself,<sup>18</sup> coupled with the highly visceral narrative of the fight, renders this comparison even more effective and heightens the readers' intolerance for the female audience's reaction to the fight. Byron sets the stage by subverting his earlier accounts of the positive attributes of the Spanish woman by replacing them with their opposite; the pliant maid whose sphere is that of hearth and home becomes "Skill'd in the ogle of a roguish eye" (I.725) and the enthusiastic spectator of "the ungentle sport" (I.792).

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<sup>18</sup> See Stabler (2002) for Byron's use of digressions.

Byron couches the horrors of war as those circumstances which necessitate men to “guard the sister and the wife” (I.897) against those whose hands were “with female slaughter red” (I.902), using those discourses of masculinity which

like femininity, must be produced and secured as ‘the other side’ of the modern two-sex model--both in relation to, and in opposition to, its counterpart, the feminine [and] is measured by its ability to defend the feminine, which can also mean the nation. (Went 68-9)

Byron’s description of the plundering of the Parthenon by Elgin is an explicit rendering of this device: “Her sons too weak the sacred shrine to guard, / Yet felt some portion of their mother’s pains” (II.105-6). He uses similar maternal terms to describe the body politic in his description of the historical and political situation in Spain: “the sons of Spain” (I.882), “the parent clime” (I.917) and “a land which gave them nought but life” (I.887). This is echoed in his note to the final stanzas of the canto where he mourns the passing of his mother: “I have lost her who gave me being” (CPW II:189). The figure of mother then, as Went has described it, appears to illustrate the beginnings of “political love” or amor patriae thus reducing the figure of mother to a sign (64).

Harold’s encounter with “Sweet Florence” (II.266) elicits a meditation on love against which Harold has hardened his heart and thus is able to “Withstand, unmov’d, the lustre of her gaze” (II.282). But much in the

manner he “left without a sigh the land of wars and crimes” (II.144) this marks the next step in Harold’s detachment from Britain and its contemporary patriotic culture.<sup>19</sup> His comparison of Florence to “A mortal sovereign [who] holds her dangerous throne” (II.264), whose rule causes youth to be “wasted, minds degraded, honour lost” (II.311), recalls Britannia the “Ocean queen” as well as those “Imperial Anarchs, doubling human woes!” (II.404) The “Passion” (II.306, 312) that recurs twice within the space of seven lines is captured by the sense of the “Delirium” that is man’s “best deceiver” (4) in “The Spell is Broke, the Charm is Flown!” and is that “patriotic Zeal” (I.555) that deludes and sends men to their deaths. Thus Harold finds that though he once may have loved Albion, his “love is at an end” (II.200) and he goes in search of “new Utopias” (II.322).

Byron’s own anxiety wrought by his attachment to Britain, a nation whom he loves yet whose actions he cannot condone, is betrayed occasionally in these first two cantos. His description of the British navy in CHP II.154-171 expresses an admiration for the trappings and activity of the naval life, which is made somewhat poignant by his sense of exemption from “the little warlike world within” (II.154). Once Harold disappears from the narrative after hearing the Suliote’s song, Byron’s commentary on the state of

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<sup>19</sup> “Florence” was an alias for Mrs Spencer Smith, with whom Byron was briefly infatuated in Malta and for whom he wrote “To Florence” (September 1809), “Stanzas Composed During a Thunderstorm” (October 1809), “Stanzas Written in passing the Ambracian Gulf” (October 1809) and “Written at Athens” (January 1810).



Greece, a “[s]ad relic of departed worth” (II.693), is of a nation betrayed by her sons who have lost their “gallant spirit” (II.700) and instead feign their revels in wilful ignorance of that “secret pain” (II.775). His allusion to the “true-born son” and patriot of Greece (783-4) recalls his description of himself in The Curse of Minerva as a “true-born Briton” (line 126) defending Britain’s actions against an enraged Athena.

Byron’s perceived lack of political efficacy in England leads him to entertain fantasies of liberating Greece as demonstrated in this account:

In it Byron asks a series of rhetorical questions about a liberator of Greece. Five times he asks a variant of the question of “who” will finally set Greece free, and five times the answer to that question--not publicly recorded--is dashed across the page in his bold script: “Byron.” The scrap of MS is a graphic reminder not only of Byron’s heroic pretensions, but of his tendency to refuse the distinction between his life in history and his life in art. (McGann FD 28)

But these following lines which allude to the motto from Le Cosmopolite again reiterate those ties that bind:

The parted bosom clings to wonted home,  
If aught that’s kindred cheer the welcome hearth;  
He that is lonely hither let him roam,  
And gaze complacent on congenial earth.  
(CHP II.864-868)

Byron’s ambivalence wears two masks in these first two cantos of CHP: that of the narrator who loves his nation but cannot reconcile himself to its actions, and that of the detached disillusioned cynic, Harold himself. As McGann points out, these cantos are a chronicle of “a threatening duality that

is the image of his own mind" (FD 77), and "[w]ar, martial glory, Spain, France, and England all weigh equally (or nearly so) in the balance of his equivocal mind" (FD 53). Harold's scepticism is a reaction to the patriotic "prate of war" (II.785), "prate" (and its close relative "prattle") being as abhorrent to Byron as cant, used especially by him with regards to women.<sup>20</sup> Byron undergoes a belated disillusionment, which is evident from his later additions to both cantos: stanza 25 which speaks of a "nation's shallow joy" (I.300) in conquest, and stanzas 93-8 which were added after his return to England. It is worth remembering, however, that behind the "ill-dissembled sneer" (II.917) of these cantos lies a "kind of honesty" (FD 77) that is more convincing for its paradoxical nature.

Another poem of the period that embodied this ambivalence was The Curse of Minerva (CPW I:320). Only eight copies of CM were ever printed. Written as a castigation of Lord Elgin's removal of the marble sculptures housed at the Parthenon, in Greece, Byron had intended it to be published along with Hints from Horace and EBSR in December 1811. His growing political ambition, however, deterred him from wishing to antagonise such personages as Lord Holland, whom he satirised in EBSR, and he decided not to go through with its publication. In spite of this, the satire appeared in

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<sup>20</sup> He wrote to his mother in 1810: "I suppose you have your house full of silly women, prating scandalous things" (BLJ 2:4).

pirated extracts as “The Malediction of Minerva; or, The Athenian Marble Merchant” in the New Monthly Magazine in 1815 (CPW I:446), and the privately printed copies enjoyed a wide circulation among London’s elite and intelligentsia.

CM explicitly addresses the personification of the body politic-- Minerva appears as Pallas Athene to the narrator of the poem who is bemoaning the plunder of the sculptures of the Parthenon “Sacred to Gods, but not secure from Man” (line 60). She is represented divested of all her awesome glory:

Gone were the terrors of her awful brow,  
Her idle Aegis wore no Gorgon now;  
Her helm was dented, and the broken lance  
Seem’d weak and shaftless e’en to mortal glance;  
The olive branch, which she still deign’d to clasp,  
Shrunk from her touch and withered in her grasp;  
(79-84)

Byron’s description of Athene shows her as the embodiment of both masculine, martial qualities, that have undergone emasculation “the broken lance/ Seemed weak and shaftless” (81-2) as well as the feminine quality of fertility which has turned barren. Byron responds to Pallas Athene’s tirade against Britain “once a noble name” (90):

‘Daughter of Jove! in Britain’s injured name,  
A true-born Briton may the deed disclaim.  
Frown not on England, England owns him not:  
Athena, no; thy plunderer was a Scot.  
(125-128)

Byron conflates England with Britain, referring to “Caledonia” (130) as a

separate national entity. He returns to the vituperative rhetoric he employed in EBSR to criticise the land of his childhood. In doing so, he aligns himself with those English writers who chose to envision Britannia as personifying only England, reiterating this usage by using England interchangeably with Albion in much of his poetry. Interestingly, though the narrator tries to defend England against Athene's wrath, she seemingly ignores the distinction he makes between Scotland and England, and targets his "native shore" (158)--an epithet that Byron used repeatedly in CHP--rather than Scotland. Byron then uses Athene as a mouthpiece to criticise English foreign policy:

Though not for him alone revenge shall wait,  
 But fits thy country for the coming fate:  
 Hers were the deeds that taught her lawless son  
 To do what oft Britannia's self had done.  
 Look to the Baltic--blazing from afar,  
 Your old ally yet mourns perfidious war  
 Not to such deeds did Pallas lend her aid,  
 Or break the compact which she herself had made;  
 Far from such councils from the faithless field  
 She fled--but left behind her Gorgon shield:  
 A fatal gift that turn'd your friends to stone,  
 And left lost Albion hated and alone.  
 (209-220)

Byron thus uses Elgin and his plunder of the marbles as a convenient scapegoat for articulating his displeasure at England's desecration of those democratic ideals that marked the birth of the nation: "So may ye perish! Pallas, when she gave / Your free-born rights, forbade you to enslave" (228-

229). The actual purpose behind Byron's poem is to set out the wrongs of the British government, and to position himself as a fit commentator on these events; Athene's rhetorical "who shall dare to sing?" (245) is implicitly answered "Byron" through his chronicles and critiques of England's policy both at home and abroad.

Even before his political début, Byron was apprehensive about politics as this excerpt from a letter to John Hanson illustrates:

I have not yet chosen my side in politics, nor shall I hastily commit myself with professions, or pledge my support to any men or measures, but though I shall not run headlong into opposition, I will studiously avoid a connection with ministry.-  
-I cannot say that my opinion is strongly in favour of either party [. . .] I shall stand aloof, speak what I think, but not often, nor too soon. I will preserve my independence, if possible, but if involved with a party, I will take care not to be the last or least in the Ranks. (BLJ 1:186-7)

His wish to preserve his independence was a consequence of his lack of faith in the effectuality of the two party system that composed the British government for he wished to be "the man whose counsels may have weight" (CM 274),<sup>21</sup> a position that he felt might be undermined by pledging allegiance to either party, neither of whom he found particularly impressive.

CM does not only refer to Athene's curse directed towards Britain as a consequence of Elgin's act of plunder, but also to England as Britannia/Minerva's current political situation, which Byron views as futile

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<sup>21</sup> See Chapter III for further analysis of the role of "counsellor" in the body politic.

and in a state of deterioration. However, the “curse” also contains within it the paradox of the glories of imperialism--Athens at the height of its power being as aggressively imperialist as England was in Byron’s time but, as a consequence, possessing the most enduring historical impact. CM effectively encapsulates the ambivalence that Byron feels towards England. His antipathy towards the new incarnation of England--“Britannia”--was founded on what he envisioned as an increasing feminization of culture and politics that he targetted in his satire The Waltz.

### II.iii. Unruly bodies: Byron’s fears of miscegenation in The Waltz

The triumph of Byron’s return to England is often celebrated by that much chronicled moment when Byron awoke to find himself famous in March 1812 and tends to overshadow his earlier, less successful bids for fame that year. It is worth bearing in mind that those earlier bids were for political rather than poetical fame. Nicholas Mason, in his examination of the marketing of CHP, persuasively argues that: “it would have been virtually impossible for Childe Harold I and II to sell out in three days solely because of its merits, since content based sales are usually built by word of mouth, which travels relatively slowly” (425). Mason’s investigations demonstrate that John Murray, Byron’s publisher spent considerably less on the advertising of CHP than most books of the time, recognising that “publicity is much more effective than direct advertising” (427). The relevance of

Mason's conclusions to my argument is to furnish some idea of the measure of Byron's fame before the publication of CHP. In particular, I am interested in providing a context for his anonymous publications that appeared in the Morning Chronicle shortly after his maiden speech in the House of Lords on February 27th 1812 opposing the Tory bill making frame-breaking a capital offence. These anonymous publications exist in tension with The Waltz which was published the following year, due to their very different treatments of the somatic aspects of the female body, which Byron uses in both cases to embody the body politic.

The reception of Byron's speech was lukewarm due to its rather flamboyant delivery as well as its lack of timeliness, given that the bill was all but passed and debates on the matter were considered over (Mason 428). Lord Holland and other members of the House privately considered Byron's "fancy, wit, and invective" (Holland qtd. in BLJ 2:167) as inappropriate and born of inexperience but it was probably these qualities that made him a favourite topic of discussion both in London drawing rooms and the press (Mason 429).

Byron sent his "An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill" to the editor of the Morning Chronicle and it was published on the 2nd of March, 1812. It was much more vituperative than the speech itself, and it is likely that the daily Chronicle's readership (which was considerable and had a strong Whig

bias) would have made the connection between the young lord whose “talents have been already established by his literary productions” (Morning Chronicle qtd. in Mason 432) and the political orator. Close on the heels of this, Byron chose to publish two more poems in quick succession that week: “Impromptu on a Recent Incident” and “Sympathetic Address to a Young Lady” published on the 6th and 7th of March respectively. As Jeffery Vail points out, London’s chattering classes suspected Byron’s involvement in the Whig “squib-warfare” as this letter from Mary Berry to the Countess of Hardwick on the 16th of March shows:

You must see likewise a certain vision, said to be by Lord Byron, as well as some lines on the Princess Charlotte’s tears at the far-famed dinner, and the triumph of the whale in the “Examiner” of last Sunday. The prose squibs and abuse are endless. People begin to look grave at the vision taken. (qtd. in Vail 30)

These “Lines to a Lady Weeping” (CPW III:10) themselves seem to align themselves with the feminized model of patriotism that Byron was usually eager to distance himself from:

Weep, daughter of a royal line,  
                   A Sire’s disgrace, a realm’s decay;  
 Ah, happy! if each tear of thine  
                   Could wash a father’s fault away!

Weep--for thy tears are Virtue’s tears--  
                   Auspicious to these suffering isles;  
 And be each drop in future years  
                   Repaid thee by thy people’s smiles!

(1-8)

Princess Charlotte was a “focus for sentimental attachment”,



especially for women, till her death in childbirth in 1817 (Colley 283) and in writing these lines Byron was exercising a “politics of feeling that emphasised passion rather than parliamentary procedure” (Gross 21). It was also one of the few occasions on which Byron makes an explicitly positive connection between female virtue and the British nation, and it was very possibly an exercise to ingratiate himself to Lord Holland and the Whigs. He had already been making frantic amends to Lord Holland for his treatment of him in EBSR, by sending him obsequious letters as well as a copy of CHP before it was available for sale. The anonymous verse could have been an extension of this undertaking--though it was soon to outlive its necessity due to the popularity of CHP and its interference with Byron’s political ambition.

The Waltz on the other hand, was to set the precedent for Byron’s targeting of women as the threat to the integrity of the British body politic. In a letter to Lady Melbourne at the beginning of his acquaintance with Annabella Milbanke, Byron enquired anxiously of her: “Does Annabella waltz?--it is an odd question--but a very essential point with me” (BLJ 2:218). Caroline Lamb, with whom Byron was now involved, enjoyed waltzing and had been praised in the Morning Post as a “correct and animated waltzer” (BLJ 3:65). This was a point of contention in their relationship as Lamb recounts:

The scene at Lady Heathcote's is nearly true--he had made me swear I was never to Waltz. Lady Heathcote said, Come, Lady Caroline, you must begin, and I bitterly answered--oh yes! I am in a merry humour. I did so--but whispered to Lord Byron 'I conclude I may waltz now' and he answered sarcastically, 'with every body in turn--you always did it better than any one. I shall have a pleasure in seeing you.'--I did so you may judge with what feelings. (Prothero II.458)

Byron's perception of the waltz as an adulterous act was due to its perceived permissiveness, being the first dance that allowed a couple to dance in close embrace and face to face for the duration of the dance, rather than dancing side by side and changing partners as in the minuet (Katz 372). Moralists complained about the whirling motion of the couple, which caused dizziness in the young women who "allowed themselves to be grasped anywhere by their partners and lusted to be thrown into the air" along with the "ecstatic gliding motion" of the feet (Katz 370).

Though Byron had always intended the satirical Waltz to be published anonymously, he had initially expected that it would be attributed to him in any case, and was writing the Waltz as an antidote to "glutting ye. public" (BLJ 2:234). However, after its publication he was anxious not to be identified as its author, asking Murray to deny any such speculation (BLJ 3:41) possibly because of the rather personal attacks it made on personages of the bon ton with whom he was well acquainted due to his current celebrity status, and for fear of the libel laws that had put the Hunt brothers in jail (Childers 94).

The poetry that Byron produced at this time avowed his political

commitment in print, if not in action, and the intensity of this political conviction lasted only as long as he was in the arena of action, on the spot, as it were, and was later diluted both by distance and disillusionment.

However, the significance of Byron's inheritance of the patrician Whig tradition cannot be underestimated in an analysis of Byron's politics at this time, and as Kelsall points out, he never made the break completely for the Whigs gave him a "temporary home" during his years in London, and "until his death, he maintained his loyalty to its traditions" (Politics 7).

This inheritance owed a great deal to Edmund Burke, a man whose oratorical abilities and politics Byron largely admired. Kelsall notes a number of instances where Byron borrows from or is influenced by Burke in his poetic career, and I will demonstrate that The Waltz: An Apostrophic Hymn was one such instance. The poem, though ostensibly a satire on the evils of waltzing, addresses the anxieties of cultural adulteration of the British polity by Germany and France, embodied by the kings (and their wives) of German descent who had been ruling for a century (Childers 87). This adulteration is postulated as a consequence of adultery, a betrayal which can only come to fruition by the physical transgression of the female body. Mary Jean Corbett demonstrates that Burke, in his Reflections on the Revolution in France, similarly represents "women as always potentially adulterous and thus subversive of the foundations of political and imperial order" (878). Burke's

model of the nation is dependent on “the idiom of landed estate and patrilineal succession” (Corbett 878) that he describes as an “entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers” (428). Burke defines this “idea of inheritance” as “the happy effect of following nature” and that it is a “sure principle of conservation and . . . transmission” (428). This political system, according to Burke, is akin to “a sort of a family settlement”, the body politic analogous to the family, bound by “dearest domestic ties” (428-429). As Corbett observes, women, though crucial to the “metaphorical and literal reproduction of the family [are] largely written out of Burke’s account of transmission and inheritance” (880). This emphasis on inheritance, however, is problematised because of “the uncertainties of determining paternity” and is contingent on female fidelity within the bounds of marriage, making women the unacknowledged agents of “familial, economic and political legitimacy” (Corbett 880).

Byron’s personifies the Waltz as female, a German ingénue who comes to England and seduces and consequently corrupts the nation. The muse Terpsichore is portrayed as wanton, the “least . . . vestal of the virgin Nine” (line 6). Although Byron describes her in motion, “Thy legs must move to conquer as they fly” (9) she was almost never depicted as dancing, but rather as seated with a lyre, much like the other Muses. But it is the subversive potential of her physical agency that Byron is condemning, and

attributes to women throughout the poem. The consequences of her physical agency coupled with her apparent wanton nature results in her conceiving the “not too lawfully begotten ‘Waltz’” (14). His reference to her “breast--if bare enough--requires no shield” (11) though possibly recalling depictions of Terpsichore with her breast exposed,<sup>22</sup> could also be taken to be an allusion to Britannia/Minerva who was also depicted similarly, her lack of a shield hinting at her willingness to be invaded by other cultures, making her “impregnable to most assaults” (13). The anxiety underpinning Burke’s robust defence of Britain’s constitutional virtues is echoed in Byron’s accusation of Britain’s vulnerability. “Dance forth--sans armour thou shalt take the field” (12) Byron writes, employing possible wordplay on the near homonymity of armour/amour, as marriage is no longer considered an outcome of love, but a financial transaction, as the poem’s narrator, Horace Hornem, points out in his note to the publisher: “our girls being come to a marriagable (or, as they call it, marketable age)” (CPW III:22, line 10). Byron couples “Waltz and war” (16) to mock them as the twin obsessions of the bon ton, led by the Prince Regent.

In his comparison of the waltz with another German “duty free” (31) import, hock, Byron indicates a direct connection between the permissiveness of the dance and cultural adulteration, “And hock itself be

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<sup>22</sup> As in Eustache Le Sueur's painting Terpsichore (1652/1655).

less esteemed than thee; / In some few qualities alike--for hock / Improves  
 our cellar--thou our living stock" (32-34). In the lines following Byron's  
 distinction between the two is based on the mind-body split, where bodily  
 corruption is only undergone by susceptible women, the possessors of  
 "heedless heart[s]" (36); "The head to hock belongs" (35) whereas the Waltz,  
 "Intoxicates alone the heedless heart; / Through the full veins thy gentler  
 poison swims, / And wakes to wantonness the willing limbs"(36-38)  
 reiterated by his use of "wantonness" (38), a word mostly used with  
 reference to women (OED). Byron continues to present evidence of the  
 English woman's decadence, complaining that hooped skirts which  
 "symbolized additional restraint and 'distance'" (Katz 371) were "no more"  
 (181) and that "Morals and minuets, Virtue and her stays" had all "had their  
 days" (182-3).

The anxiety around this female agency in reproduction and  
 husbandry recurs in the poem in Byron's use of such words as "begetting"  
 (46), "living stock" (34), "impregnable" (13), "stud" (52) and finds its full  
 expression in lines 93-108. Burke attributes the "chaotic anarchy" of  
 Revolutionary France to "mothers and daughters" who "cuckoo-like  
 adulterously lay their eggs" (219) and Byron likewise, describes husbands as  
 perpetual victims of female betrayal, cuckolded from the start, and implies  
 that women are inculcated with deceptive behaviour by their mothers: "ye

matrons, ever on the watch / To mar a son's, or make a daughter's match"  
(100).

The female capacity to reproduce is inseparable from female sexual transgression as these lines imply: "To you--ye children--of whom chance accords, / Always the ladies and sometimes their lords" (101-2), "for reproduction evokes, if not reenacts, the initial fall from grace" (Francus 829). Byron had originally written "ye daughters" (CPW III:26) instead of "children" and envisioned England as a nation overrun with the daughters of Eve:

Shades of those belles, whose reign began of yore,  
With George the Third's--and ended long before;  
Though in your daughters' daughters yet you thrive,  
Burst from your lead, and be yourselves alive!  
Back to the ball-room speed your spectred host,  
Fools' Paradise is dull to that you lost;  
(133-138)

comparing the ballroom to the site of the fall of man, wrought by women "from Countesses to queans" (153). This verse recalls Byron's lines addressed to Caroline Lamb after their relationship had soured:

For the first step of Error none e'er could recall,  
And the woman once fallen forever must fall;  
Pursue to the last the career she begun,  
And be false unto many as faithless to one.  
("To Lady Caroline Lamb", CPW III:16, lines 13-16)

The waltz, albeit foreign influence, is responsible for changing female behaviour from one of delicacy and passivity to one that is sexually active, and even possesses a degree of voraciousness that can barely be concealed:

Flush in the cheek and languish in the eyes;  
 Rush to the heart, and lighten through the frame,  
 With half-told wish, and ill-dissembled flame;  
 For prurient nature will storm the breast--  
 (225-228)

This deviation from behaviour traditionally expected from women makes them, Byron suggests, akin to tainted goods, "beauties quite so cheap" (232), spoiled by the imprints of "hands promiscuously applied" (234), the "lewd grasp, and lawless contact" (237). This objectification recalls the metaphor that Burke uses to describe cultural adulteration:

the counterfeit wares which some persons, by a double fraud, export to you in illicit bottoms, as raw commodities of British growth, though wholly alien to our soil, in order afterwards to smuggle them back again into this country, manufactured after the newest Paris fashion of an improved liberty. (425)

Such women, Byron deems, are undeserving of male attention, and indeed the protection of the state: "If such thou lovest--love her then no more, / Or give--like her--caresses to a score;" (244-45). This echoes his lines to Susan Vaughan ("Again Deceived! Again Betrayed" CPW III:3) on his discovery of her infidelity:<sup>23</sup>

In turn deceiving or deceived  
 The wayward Passion roves,  
 Beguiled by her we most believed,  
 Or leaving her who loves.

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<sup>23</sup> McGann quotes both these lines and the lines addressed to Caroline Lamb above in a discussion of Byron's "misogynist inversion of a central myth of the sentimental program" (BR 59), the betrayal of love, that Byron often pursues in lyrics addressed to women between 1808 and 1816. McGann describes these betrayals as violations of the "contract of love" (BR 59), and I would argue that Byron envisions female transgression in The Waltz as subversive of native love as well.



(8-11)

The poem ends with "Horace Hornem" announcing that his "wife now waltzes" and his "daughters shall" (251), which no doubt will yield him heirs, but by several of his son's friends, an ironic acceptance of the culture of adultery the dance (and its avid female partakers) have fostered.

The waltz, Byron suggests, not only violates the sphere of domestic affections, but also creates a carnivalesque world where class differences are eradicated and "maids and valets" (154), "clumsy cits" (157) (derogatory slang for citizens) and "cockneys" (158) are all drawn into the same "witching circle" (155) as their social superiors. Byron implies, then, that not only is the depravity of women responsible for violating the sphere of domestic affections, it also disrupts the social order and condemns the nation to ruin. Though this can be read as aristocratic disdain, it is complicated by the fact of the Prince Regent being the intended target of the satire. However, though the Regent himself may not have been characterised as effeminate, his susceptibility to fashion Byron suggests makes him so, the consequence of which will be revolution. Byron's fears echo Burke's analysis of Revolutionary France, which he felt fell prey to "a ferocious dissoluteness in manners" when "she let loose the reins of regal authority" and released "through all ranks of life [ . . . ] the unhappy corruptions that usually were the disease of wealth and power" (431).

II.iv. Caged birds and haram queens: contestations of space and discourse in the Turkish Tales

Byron's awareness that he was going over well-trodden ground in Cantos I and II of CHP in having Spain and Greece as his subject matter is clear from these lines: "Ye, who would more of Spain and Spaniards know / Go hie ye hence to Paternoster Row" (original lines for CHP I.891-2, CPW II:41) and "Soon shall thy voice be lost amidst the throng / Of louder minstrels in these later days" (CHP II.884-5). However, he felt what set his work apart was "the authority gained through his physical presence upon the spot - the materiality [ . . . ] of his bodily situatedness" (Cheeke 48). Byron emphasises this authority by opening his long commentary on Greece (appended to CHP II stanza 73, CPW II:199) with his combative remarks on Sydney Owenson's book, Ida of Athens:

Before I say any thing about a city of which every body, traveller or not, has thought it necessary to say something, I will request Miss Owenson, when she next borrows an Athenian heroine for her four volumes, to have the goodness to marry her to somebody more of a gentleman than a 'Disdar Aga' [ . . . ] I speak it tenderly, seeing I was once the cause of the husband of 'Ida of Athens' nearly suffering the bastinado [ . . . ] a turbulent husband [who] beats his wife [ . . . ] Having premised this much, on a matter of such import to readers of romances, I may now leave Ida, to mention her birthplace.  
(CPW II:199)

Though Byron's animosity towards Lady Morgan may have been an outcome of her considerable commercial success with The Wild Irish Girl

and Ida, the footnote is also an argument for the lack of wisdom in heeding the unqualified and inexperienced (read female) writer in such matters as politics and history. He enlarges on his attack on “readers of romances” (CPW II:199), (who were by implication female), to whom accuracy is obviously not of import, by assuming an ironic show of modesty regarding the weight of his opinion on Greece:

For my own humble opinion, I am loath to hazard it, knowing, as I do, that there be now in MS. no less than five tours of the first magnitude and of the most threatening aspect, all in typographical array, by persons of wit, and honour, and regular common-place books. (CPW II:201)

McGann states that the “five tours” referred to the works of Hobhouse, John Galt, Leake, Henry Holland and Dodwell, who had all written variations on the Greek travel theme (CPW II:291). However, though people of both sexes kept commonplace books, a larger number of women kept literary commonplace books (St Clair 225) and Byron was possibly also alluding to his female competitors who used Greece and Spain as convenient “exotic” locales. Contemporary reviews of Ida of Athens also criticised it on the grounds of inaccuracy as well as Owenson’s presumption to write of matters with which she did not have first hand experience:

Miss Owenson is quite as full of blunders in this part of her performance as any young lady would wish to be on so unfashionable a subject; and surely no fair reader of novels, however high in the ranks of the haut ton, will scruple to add Ida of Athens to her select library, when she is informed that, however great the display of learning, she presents at least a

reasonable proportion of elegant ignorance [ . . . ] She is, very much indeed, too fond of making a display of her reading on all possible subjects; and the air of pedantry which is thus thrown over her writings, becomes doubly and trebly ridiculous when it betrays her into the errors of ignorance. (Critical Review 283-284)

In light of Owenson's reception, Byron's reference to her can be seen as a device to distance himself from his female competitor and moreover, to clarify that his observations, in contrast, should be regarded as serious political commentary.

Byron, in writing his *Turkish Tales*, was drawing on an already well established literary tradition whose most prominent predecessor was Antoine Galland's translation of the Arabian Nights, the first volume of which appeared almost simultaneously in England and France in 1704. He also drew heavily on Montesquieu's Letters Persanes (1721) as well as Beckford's Vathek (1786), a debt he readily acknowledged in his notes to the tales. He was also well acquainted with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Turkish Embassy Letters (1763). Byron didn't treat Montagu with quite as much disdain as he reserved for the Bluestockings (the most consequential of whom was considered to be Montagu's niece Elizabeth) for in spite of her progressive views, Montagu was a self-conscious aristocrat whereas the Bluestockings were defined by their ties to the professional middle class (Kelly 163) and Byron felt a certain class affinity. Her association with Pope may also have contributed to his positive attitude towards her.

Despite his lack of antipathy towards her, he refers to her chronicles dismissively in a letter to his mother, written from Constantinople: “her Ladyship, as far as I can judge, has lied, but not half so much as any other woman would have done in the same situation” (BLJ 1:250). He impugns her judgement, as it happens, on false grounds, when he writes: “Of Constantinople you will find many correct descriptions in different travels, but Lady Wortley errs strangely when she says ‘St. Paul’s would cut a poor figure by St. Sophia’s’” (BLJ 1:250). Marchand points out that Montagu had not compared St Paul’s to St Sophia’s but to the mosque of the Sultana Validé, about which she had written “That of the Validé, is the largest of all, built entirely of Marble, the most prodigious and I think the most beautiful structure I ever saw . . . (between friends) St. Paul’s Church would make a pitiful figure near it” (BLJ 1:251n.)

I would suggest that Byron’s anxiety to prove Montagu as an unreliable source of information about the East is representative of the kinds of competing discourses that emerged as a consequence of authors appropriating “images of Turkish despotism in a rhetoric of differentiation and identification as a means to articulate often diametrically opposed worldviews” (Turhan 8). Joseph Lew has similarly demonstrated, contrasting a letter of Montagu’s describing her visit to the Turkish baths with a letter from Montesquieu’s fantasy of harem life, that the Orientalist discourse as

described by Edward Said is “by no means monolithic; rather, as Bakhtin argues for all discourse, it achieved cultural hegemony only in the face of counter discourses” (433). The discrepancy between Byron’s and Montagu’s representations of the East, especially in their representations of women, are of particular significance given that they had both had been “on the spot” (Cheeke 7) as it were, except for one rather significant difference. Due to her gender and position, Montagu had been allowed inside the Turkish baths, the consequences of which would be “no less than Death for a Man” (60). Much in the manner of Byron’s debunking Sydney Owenson’s claims in her work The Ida of Athens, Montagu writes,

I could also, with little trouble, turn over Knolles and Sir Paul Rycout to give you a list of Turkish Emperours, but I will not tell you what may find in every Author that has writ of this country . . . I am more enclin’d, out of a true female spirit of Contradiction, to tell you the falsehood of a great part of what you find in authors. (133)<sup>24</sup>

What Montagu found most appealing about the Turkish treatment of women (which she found to be exemplary) was the existence of entirely feminized spaces which did not allow the possibility of male intrusion, that were not necessarily “private retreats but public institutions--civic spaces in which women from different households could come temporarily together” (Yeazell 40) such as in the case of the baths. She characterised the baths as “the

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<sup>24</sup> Knolle’s The Generall Historie of the Turkes and Rycout’s The Present State of the Ottoman Empire were both 17th century sources that Byron was also believed to have consulted.

Women's coffee house, where all the news of the Town is told, Scandal invented etc." (59).

The institution of the British coffee house in the early eighteenth century was considered as a site conducive to convivial moral conversation and was consequently considered to be a hallmark of English civilised enlightened culture. At the time at which Montagu was writing the coffee-house was not an entirely male preserve, given that such institutions were often run by and staffed by women but the position of the "coffee-woman" was more akin to that of a "subversive sexual renegade" (M. Ellis 31-33) than as one partaking of the environment of sociability that the coffee-house engendered. Often the "beguiling flirtation of the coffee-women offered their sexuality as a commodity alongside the addictive bitter liquid" (M. Ellis 32). Ellis cites James Miller's lightly satirical comedy The Coffee House (1737) that introduces the radical idea of a woman's coffee house when the main character, the innocently transgressive Kitty suggests: "we'll have a Room for the Women too [ . . . ] for 'tis an unreasonable thing that Women should not come to the Coffee-House" an idea that Ellis suggests throws the play's conservative closure into limbo (42). Bearing in mind that Montagu revised and refined the letters after her return, and that these letters were published after her death in 1762, her contrast and critique of English culture with that of the Turkish seems even more acute.

Montagu mocked the male representations of the Turkish women's lack of freedom: "Tis very pleasant to observe how tenderly he [the travel writer Aaron Hill] and all his Brethren of Voyage-writers lament the miserable confinement of the Turkish Ladys" who she claimed were "the only free people in the Empire" and even more controversially: "Tis very easy to see they have more Liberty than we have" (134). It is significant however that Montagu's accounts were of an aristocratic Turkey, having little interest in anyone "who is not 'of Quality' in her repeated phrase, while her criticism of previous travellers frequently amounts to the complaint that they failed to see the right people" (Yeazell 86). Byron, on the other hand, appropriated "the otherness of Islamic culture" to "stress on its brutality [ . . . ] endorsing its overthrow by subjugated Greece" (Franklin, Heroines 34). The heroines of Byron's tales are, in contrast to Montagu's representations "triply oppressed: by her class, race, and sex" (Franklin, Heroines 36). What is at issue here is not the verisimilitude of either account, but both Byron's and Montagu's awareness of the palimpsestic nature of conflicting discourse and how its dissemination could overwrite previous discourses in readers' minds. Byron was acutely aware that the female reader was particularly susceptible to such discourse, and attempted through his writing to create a version of domestic ideology that would be both palatable and influence the female reader.



At the heart of the discrepancy between Montagu's and Byron's accounts is the treatment of space and the way women are depicted in their negotiations with those spaces. Gavin Hopps has alluded to the "ghostly" or "negative" space in Byron's poetry, and in the Turkish tales the deaths (and disappearances) of his heroines create "object-shaped spaces" the nature of whose fate and treatment (both authorial and societal) is left up to the reader to determine, a response made complex by the plethora of Oriental texts that gave divergent representations of the contexts of these tales.

The Giaour (CPW III:39) opens with a description of the Greek landscape that expresses a point of view that McGann describes as being akin to that of Byron, i.e. contemporary and English (CPW III:415). The narrator's gaze starts from the lowest point of the landscape, "the wave / That rolls below the Athenian's grave" (lines 1-2) and sweeps up to "that smiling sky" (32), and subsequently dips and soars, asserting its all encompassing nature and authority. This description endows the landscape with feminine attributes possessing "charm and grace" (48) that man will "mar . . . into wilderness" (51); exploit its vulnerability by exposing it to "lust and rapine" (60) that will "darken o'er the fair domain" (61), characterising the conflict between nature and man as a battle between heaven and hell (63-67). The qualities of Leila, the "ghostly presence" (Franklin, Heroines 40) and the absent heroine of the poem, are mapped onto the landscape, making the

analogy with hapless Greece and its despoiling Turk tyrants explicit.

Monuments serve as topographical mnemonic markers of Greece's former glory:

While kings in dusty darkness hid,  
Have left a nameless pyramid,  
Thy heroes--though the general doom  
Hath swept the column from their tomb,  
A mightier monument command,  
The mountains of their native land!  
There points thy Muse to stranger's eye,  
The graves of those that cannot die!  
(130-135)

"Leila sleeps beneath the wave" (675) and Hasan's mother looks "from her lattice high" (690), and "could not rest in the garden-bower / But gazed through the grate of his steepest tower" (696). Byron reinforces the idea of the Turkish woman trapped beneath the weight of male tyranny, recalling the fleeting mention of the "sacred Haram's silent tower" in the second canto of CHP (496). That silence is contrasted with the "busy preparation" (CHP II.501) of the court, indicating that despotic authority even forbade women to even speak, and is reiterated five stanzas later:

Here woman's voice is never heard: apart,  
And scarce permitted, guarded, veil'd, to move,  
She yields to one her person and her heart,  
Tam'd to her cage, nor feels a wish to rove:  
(CHP II.541-544)

Montagu and the late eighteenth century travel writer Elizabeth

Craven both, however, present the obverse of this scenario: constructing the harem as a space that "never appears to shut women in" but rather worked

“to keep the other sex out” (Yeazell 87), relating how the “Haram (or Women’s apartment) . . . remains unsearch’d entire to the Widow” (Montagu 72). Montagu presents Turkish women being veiled as aiding their independence and mobility, for, as she wrote: “This perpetual Masquerade gives them entire Liberty of following their Inclinations without danger of Discovery” (71). But Byron persists in his representations of Turkish women in the Tales as enslaved to the whims of their owners, or fathers, who represent Ottoman patriarchy.

In The Bride of Abydos (CPW III:107) Byron again uses the trope of the caged bird (I.103) to describe Zuleikha whose innocence is prefigured in the description of the landscape, “Where the virgins are soft as the roses that twine” (I.14). Her father, the despotic Pacha, castigates her lover Selim as effeminate, not only for his unmanly admiration for natural beauty rather than warfare but that he does so in the “secret bower” (I.79) intended for the women of the harem. Selim’s repeated claim that he was not what he seemed is embodied by his possession of the haram key, which endows him with a male potency that is at odds with the Pacha’s accusations of effeminacy. These accusations were fostered by the feminized space he was forced to inhabit:

What could I be?--Proscribed at home,  
And taunted to a wish to roam  
[ . . . ]

He even went to war alone,  
 And pent me here untried--unknown--  
 To Haroun's care with women left,  
 By hope unblest--of fame bereft.  
 While thou--whose softness long endeared,  
 Though it unmanned me, still had cheered--  
 (II.321-2, 329-334)

Conrad, the pirate hero of The Corsair (CPW III:148), undergoes a similar fate, but in reverse. Byron yet again uses the caged bird-tower trope in his staging of Conrad's leave-taking of Medora:

Thus with himself communion held he, till  
 He reached the summit of his tower-crowned hill:  
 There at the portal paused--for wild and soft  
 He heard those accents never heard too oft;  
 Through the high lattice far yet sweet they rung,  
 And these the notes his bird of beauty sung:  
 (I.341-346)

His rescue by the "Haram queen" (II.224) Gulnare results in a destabilisation in traditional gender roles that defines the action of the poem as well as of what Byron called a sequel to The Corsair, Lara. Conrad is imprisoned by the Pacha "In the high chamber of his highest chamber" (II.366), putting him in the same position of the heroines of the Tales, and effectively feminizing him. Gulnare, on the other hand, appears initially as a vision of idealised female beauty: "That form, with eye so dark, and cheek so fair, / And auburn waves of gemmed and braided hair; / With shape of fairy lightness--naked foot" (II.402-404). After her murder of Seyd however, she appears less so: "That spot of blood, that light but guilty streak, / Had banished all the beauty from her cheek!" (III.426-427) Byron portrays her actions as initially motivated by

some somatic, undefineable impulse, "I come through darkness--and I scarce know why" (II.439); "I felt--I feel--love dwells with--with the free" (II.502); "nor yet she knew / How deep the root from whence compassion grew" (III.200-201). Gulnare's existence as a haram slave, Byron seems to imply, enables her to only act corporeally but, in her speech before she murders Seyd, she tells Conrad: "I see thee shudder--but my soul is changed--" (III.320). With the death of Seyd and her liberation from the harem, Byron implies she is divested of her feminine function in Turkish society, for she is not a wife or a virgin, and inhabits a liminal space till she disappears entirely from the poem, a shift marked in the last lines of her final utterance in the poem, an echo of Selim's declaration in The Bride of Abydos, "Think not I am what I appear" (I.380)--"I am not what I seem" (III.471).

Byron in his Turkish Tales was experimenting with the kind of heroine that met with critical and public approval, excessively sentimentalised, their "gentleness" and "submission" being their most attractive features for an early nineteenth century audience (Franklin, Heroines 36). His representations of the status of Turkish women are distinctly at odds with those described by Montagu, who saw the harem as an inviolable space and a realm of female autonomy and control (Yeazell 89) and instead asserts "authorial hegemony over the feminized East" to "bring it under the regulation of the masculine West" (Meyer 660).

Byron's cosmopolitanism, then, lends weight to the authority of his discourses on the East, allowing him to contribute constructively to the very nationalist rhetoric he had initially opposed, as well as establishing him as a figure of political consequence in the years before the Separation Controversy in 1816.

### Chapter III: “Like Distance in a Landscape”: Byron’s Ways of Seeing

#### Introduction

Byron's bitter separation from his wife Annabella Milbanke in 1816 caused him to leave England under a cloud of opprobrium, never to return. Byron's departure from England was marked by a tangle of emotions--an almost manic glee at being released from the propriety and responsibility of British manners<sup>1</sup> that disguised a heart heavy with loss and regret. Outwardly buoyant, the only witness of his true emotional state was his half-sister Augusta, to whom he wrote poems and letters and for whom he recorded observations in his “Alpine Journal” (BLJ 5:96-105). Though he resumed CHP soon after he left British shores, the tenor of the poem changed considerably, and it reads almost like a different poem altogether, though its metrical structure was to remain the same. Where Cantos I and II were the attempts of a young aristocrat to assert himself and the authority he felt was his birthright, Canto III is a chronicle of the dissolution of a sense of self that he eventually regains, but not without undergoing some significant changes. He was to compare his sense of fragmentation to “a broken mirror, which the glass / In every fragment multiplies” (CHP III.289-90).

In Cantos I and II, Byron's feminization of landscape as well as his

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<sup>1</sup> Byron's travelling companion, Polidori, recorded that as soon as they reached their rooms at their hotel in Ostend, Byron “fell like a thunderbolt upon the chamber maid” (MacCarthy 284).

descriptions of English and Spanish women, and more specific portraits such as that of the Maid of Saragoza make explicit Byron's colonising and scopophilic gaze and are a performance of his sense of male entitlement. But in the third canto, Byron's perception of himself is more unstable, and this finds expression in the shift in his treatment of Nature and landscape as well as that of his own persona as narrator.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will discuss at the outset Byron's treatment of the feminine in Canto III of CHP--both as a characteristic attributed to the world of Nature and in his addresses to his infant daughter Ada--and the implications this treatment holds for his approaches to domesticity in his future poetry. Taking the poems written over this period as a whole, important themes begin to emerge, all of which rely on female personification or the embodiment of the feminine in some way. Nature appears in her guise of "maternal Nature" in Canto III of CHP, Augusta, Mary Chaworth and Ada appear as idealizations of female virtue, and Venice is configured as Venus de Medici and the martial goddess Cybele in Canto IV of CHP. As I will demonstrate later in the chapter, these personifications develop into allegorical configurations in DJ. These myriad representations display the shifting attitudes that Byron has towards the

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<sup>2</sup> I utilise a capitalized Nature here to refer Byron's sustained personification throughout the third canto.



feminine, and how those conflicting attitudes foster the emergence of a new poetic voice. I will show how this new poetic voice entails a writing back to England in the tenor of one of its greatest poetic sons, Edmund Spenser, and how this emulation contains within it the ambivalence that was contingent on Byron's conflicted feelings towards his country.

### III.i. "A Sand-Jar of Atoms" : Byron's disintegrating sense of self

The "Wordsworthian"<sup>3</sup> attributes of the third Canto of CHP,<sup>4</sup> especially the influence of "Tintern Abbey", were noted by contemporary reviewers<sup>5</sup> and have also been a topic of much academic discussion. An aspect that both poems have in common is that they are addressed to a female auditor/reader--in Wordsworth's case, his sister Dorothy, in Byron's case, his infant daughter Ada. Marlon Ross has argued that Byron manages to retain his mastery of his masculine guise by shifting the focus of emotional excess onto female figures ("Quest" 37). However, I will demonstrate that in Byron's early years of exile, this masculine subjectivity came under threat.

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<sup>3</sup> Byron read Wordsworth mostly at Shelley's urging, "Shelley, when I was in Switzerland, used to dose me with Wordsworth even to nausea; and I do remember then reading some things of his with pleasure. He had once a feeling for Nature, which he carried almost to a deification of it" (Medwin 194).

<sup>4</sup> Byron started writing Canto III on April 25<sup>th</sup> while crossing the Channel and completed it on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1816. It was published by John Murray in November 1816.

<sup>5</sup> The reviewers of the Critical Review and the Champion both approved of this influence, observing that "this new course of reading has certainly made Lord Byron an altered poet, it is not perhaps too much to say, that it has had some influence, in concurrence with circumstances, in making him an altered man" (RR 659) and felt that, unlike the misanthropy of Cantos I and II of CHP, Canto III had "a fine vein of humanity running through it" (RR 526).

Byron's unease found expression in much of his poetry at this time, and caused him considerable consternation, as he wrote in the "Alpine Journal": "[The Alps have not] enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty & the power and the Glory--around--above--& beneath me" (BLJ 5:105)

Byron's attempts to escape this "wretched identity" manifest as a process of fragmentation that is evident by his continued use of self-effacement in the poems of his early exile. His self examinations during this time of uncertainty and doubt find voice in poems of longing, both for posterity, as exemplified in "Churchill's Grave" and "Monody on Sheridan" and also for the land that he had left behind, as immortalised in "The Dream" and "Epistle to Augusta".<sup>6</sup>

Traditional feminist readings,<sup>7</sup> such as those that inform the readings of CHP in the previous chapter, posit the Woman/Nature coupling as passive and victim to the masculine gaze, but this undergoes a curious subversion in "The Dream" (CPW IV:22). Anne Mellor, in her discussion of gender in masculine romanticism, uses the example of Wordsworth to show how

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<sup>6</sup> With the exception of "Epistle to Augusta" these poems were published in The Prisoner of Chillon and Other Poems by Murray in December 1816, shortly after the publication of Canto III of CHP in November.

<sup>7</sup> The most significant of these in recent years can be found in the work of the geographer Gillian Rose, who in her seminal work Feminism and Geography explores the ramifications of "the seen image [which] is central to feminist psychoanalytic theory: the gaze is eroticized through heterosexual desire"(103).

gendering nature as feminine is a strategy to silence or erase the female from discourse. Moreover, this gendering facilitates the poets' attempts to "usurp female procreative power" (20). Similarly, Alan Richardson suggests that "women featured not as active, creative subjects but as passive, quasi-natural objects" whose feminine qualities the male romantics colonized through "incorporating" ("Colonization" 13, 15). I would argue that Byron's relationship with the feminine in the period after his departure from England is more parasitic, rather than one of colonization, a term which implies an exercising of power. This is not to say that the terms of this equation remain consistent, for, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, Byron regains his masculine authoritative voice in the fourth canto, but in the poems written in his early exile, he becomes reliant on female sentiment and sensibility to sustain him, and adopts it temporarily as a new poetic voice. Byron's deeply nostalgic "The Dream", a narrative of the relationship between him and Mary Chaworth (who he was deeply infatuated with while he was an adolescent), demonstrates this parasitic relationship, undermining Mellor and Richardson's assumptions in interesting though transient ways--instead of silencing or erasing the female, Byron foregrounds Chaworth and as I will demonstrate, effaces himself.

Initially, Chaworth is represented as inscribed onto the landscape, in the traditional manner of conflating woman and nature, gazing "on all that

was beneath / Fair as herself" (lines 40-1) and the "youth" who represents Byron, "gazed on her" (41). But in a surprising relinquishing of agency, she becomes the lens through which he envisions the world:

He had no breath, no being, but in hers;  
 She was his voice; he did not speak to her,  
 But trembled on her words; she was his sight,  
 For his eye followed hers, and saw with hers,  
 Which coloured all his objects;--he had ceased  
 To live within himself; she was his life.  
 (51-56)

Byron effaces himself in the opening of the third canto of CHP: "What am I? Nothing" (50) and "Invisible but gazing" (52) show this dematerialisation of self--but fusing himself with and metaphorically inhabiting Chaworth's body endows him with the ability to take on the characteristics of his host body, as it were, and to still be alive to feeling ("Dream" 56). Byron enacts a swift diminishment of form from that of the rider possessing mastery over the waves to that of a weed flung about, helpless as a child:

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!  
 And the waves bound beneath me as a steed  
 That knows his rider.  
 [ . . . ]  
 Still must I on; for I am as a weed,  
 Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam to sail  
 Where'er the surge may sweep, or tempest's breath prevail.

(CHP III.10-18)

Stanzas 72-75 and Byron's monistic declaration "I live not in myself, but I become / Portion of that around me" (III.680-1) witness his wish to escape from corporeality, to return to the womb of nature, to become "bodiless

thought" (III.705) that is "[R]eft of its carnal life" (III.700), thus to return to a prelapsarian state of innocence, better to become "the Spirit of each Spot" (III.705) much in the way he merges with Chaworth.

It is significant that Chaworth embodied Byron's first experience of female betrayal, and inspired his mingled feelings of nostalgia and betrayal that later characterised Byron's relationships with both women and England. Byron's recollection of an intimate moment shared with his childhood love Chaworth describes how their union, had it ever come to pass "would have healed feuds in which blood had been shed by our fathers--it would have joined lands--broad and rich" (BLJ 9:34). The way Byron envisions the promise of this unreciprocated romance as a way of preserving lineage and in terms of property as heritage demonstrates how he tended to conflate Mary Chaworth, and consequently other women who were to become important to him, with land and landscape. Consequently, Byron's feelings towards the British nation, his "native land" was influenced by this tendency--he perceived of Britain as a feminized nation. In his period of exile, therefore, his nostalgia for Britain found expression in his longing for such female figures as Ada and Augusta. For Byron, the "haunted spot" (Chalk 53) is often beset with memories of former relationships, such as those with Chaworth or Augusta Leigh, where geographic location becomes a signifier of incidents of inner turmoil, and is feminized. The quotation from

the letter above recalls a fragment dedicated to Mary Chaworth, written after her wedding:

Hills of Annesley, bleak and barren,  
 Where my thoughtless childhood stray'd,  
 How the northern tempests, warring,  
 Howl above thy tufted shade!

Now no more, the hours beguiling,  
 Former favourite haunts I see;  
 Now no more my Mary smiling  
 Makes ye seem a Heaven to me.

(CPW I:3, 1-8)

"The Dream" is similarly marked by geographical accuracy, Byron making particular reference to "a peculiar diadem of trees" (lines 36-37) that circled the top of the hills of Annesley, surrounded by a "most living landscape" (32).

Byron's early conceptions of home were disrupted by his sudden move at the age of ten from Scotland to Newstead Abbey. Byron's defining of himself and his experience using the markers of place emerges far before his travels, taking root early in his life where Newstead becomes a "synecdoche of identity" (Cheeke 17) for Byron. This identification is made explicit in his poem "To [Augusta]" (CPW III:386), where she is delineated as a paragon of constancy and integrity. Byron compares her to a tree, whose branches shelter a "monument" (28) that represents Byron, in an exemplary display of the kind of "masculine romanticism" that Mellor has discussed. It is significant that in "The Dream" Byron's nostalgia reaches far back into his

adolescence, for it represents a period in his life when his subjectivity was still evolving.<sup>8</sup> His nostalgia for Newstead is conflated with that for Augusta in his "Epistle to Augusta" (CPW IV:35):

our own dear lake  
 By the old Hall which may be mine no more--  
 Leman's is fair--but think not I forsake  
 The sweet remembrance of a dearer shore--  
 Sad havoc Time must with my memory make  
 Ere that or thou can fade these eyes before--  
 Though like all things which I have loved--they are  
 Resigned for ever--or divided far.  
 (lines 73-80)

Female figures such as Ada, Augusta and Mary Chaworth act as guarantors of "home" for Byron<sup>9</sup> in this period, and his "home desolation" (BLJ 5:104) manifests itself through poems addressed to them. By extending the conflation of woman and home, it is made clear why Byron's perception of his homeless condition is expressed in terms of corporeal estrangement, as his nostalgia for the past manifests itself in its apprehension of the nation as

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<sup>8</sup> A sense of place is integral to one's sense of identity, and those memories of places lived in during childhood especially crucial in this identity formation. The concept of "place-identity" is used in environmental and social psychology to explore the impact of one's environment on one's sense of self. Proshansky, one of the key theorists of this concept, writes about the relationship between memory and place: "At the core of such physical environment-related cognitions is the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological, social, and cultural needs." (59)

<sup>9</sup> McGann points out how the recurring motif of the fountain of the desert functions as a signifier of "home" to Byron, whose presiding spirit is always female--representing "a kindred or tutelary spirit" that he invariably sought for his famous despair (PS 155). Byron's imagination "sees woman as a figure of exquisite contradiction: at once the emblem of perfection and byword of faithlessness" (PS 156) and in both the "Epistle" and "The Dream", these idealised female figures are endowed with unusual agency, thus fulfilling their roles as tutelary spirits.

the maternal body. His departure from Britain almost immediately leaves him metaphorically motherless, for his alienation from Britain divests him of any sense of subjectivity. The origins of nostalgia, a form of melancholia caused by prolonged absence from one's country, Deborah Lutz suggests, can be found in Freud's formulation of the uncanniness of female genitalia:

This unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that "Love is home-sickness"; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: "this place is familiar to me, I've been here before", we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. (32)

The feminine spirit that presides over Canto III is Ada, who is present from the very beginning of the poem. As in "The Dream", Byron can only find happiness with Ada in an alternative world, the realm of sleep, where Byron tries to alter the reality that he cannot face: "And then we parted,--not as now we part, / But with a hope.-- / Awaking with a start" (III.4-6). The dashes imply a growing speechlessness, their abrupt texture showing a grief that Byron cannot even bear to put down in words. This grief is echoed in his anguish at being parted from his homeland which numbs him to all feeling: "Whither I know not; but the hour's gone by, / When Albion's lessening shores could grieve or glad mine eye" (III.8-9). This numbness is akin to a feeling of being orphaned and of abandonment, and this canto is an exploration of the limbo Byron experiences suspended between his native



land and that of the wilds of exile. The action and the progress of the poem reflect one another--the birth of the poem and of Ada coincides with Byron birthing himself: "Awaking with a start, / The waters heave around me" (III.5-6) Byron writes, a description that recalls the moment of childbirth.

It is this doubleness of vision that characterises much of Byron's poetry at this time--instead of the paternalistic authoritative masculine figure who wrote Cantos I and II of CHP, the Byron of this period is less reluctant to "unman" himself, especially in the service of his poetry. The trope of "He was not / Himself like what he had been" ("The Dream" lines 109-110) which during the period of the Turkish Tales gestured towards Byron's complex cosmopolitanism, is now as a poignant recognition of his desolate condition.

The other figure Byron "diminishes" in the poem is Napoleon, who, as Theresa Kelley has illustrated, was portrayed at times as "a colossal figure who strides the globe and at others a small, feminized figure who challenges fatter and bigger adversaries . . . continually subject to sudden reversals in scale" ("Turner" 353). Napoleon is represented by Byron as dramatizing what Kelley refers to as the "characteristic doubleness of the Byronic hero/villain" ("Turner" 369):

antithetically mixt  
 One moment of the mightiest, and again  
 On little objects with like firmness fixt,  
 Extreme in all things!  
 (CHP III.317-321)

Byron echoes his own description of himself “What am I? Nothing” in his description of Napoleon: “thy wild name / Was ne’er more bruted in men’s minds than now / That thou art nothing” (III.326-328). Napoleon’s incommensurability is further emphasised by playing with notions of scale: “more or less than man” (III.334), “[N]ow making monarchs’ necks thy footstool” (III.336) in keeping with the persistent refusal of Romantic writers (and caricaturists) to represent the figure of Napoleon in ordinary human scale (Kelley, “Turner” 354). Byron’s narrative of Napoleon’s and his parallel fates is further made explicit:

Yet well thy soul hath brook’d the turning tide  
 With that untaught innate philosophy,  
 Which, be it wisdom, coldness, or deep pride,  
 Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.  
 When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,  
 To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast smiled  
 With a sedate and all-enduring eye;--  
 (III.343-349)

“[T]he turning tide” (343) echoes the tide rising in Byron’s “alter’d eye” (“Epistle to Augusta” line 72) and the depiction of Napoleon as “shrinking” reducing him to an “all-enduring eye”, echoes that diminishing that Byron attributes to himself throughout the canto. However, Byron is careful to distinguish himself from his hero in one important regard: he portrays Napoleon’s soul as not content to dwell “In its own narrow being, but aspire / Beyond the fitting medium of desire;” (III.374-5) trapped, like Harold, in the sphere of human community: “Droop’d as a wild-born falcon

with clipt wing, / To whom the boundless air alone were home" (III.129-30).

Harold is bound by his distaste for "[M]an's dwellings" (III.127). Unlike the

narrator-poet, he spurns community, "But soon he knew himself the most

unfit / Of men to herd with Man" (III.100-1), for he lacks the qualities of

sympathy, that Byron suggests can only be taught (III.102). Similarly

Napoleon's lack of fellow feeling is reiterated in a note:

The great error of Napoleon, 'if we have writ our annals true',  
was a continued obtrusion on mankind of his want of all  
community of feeling for or with them; perhaps more offensive  
to human vanity than the active cruelty of more trembling and  
suspicious tyranny. (CPW II:304)

This lack of sympathy is fated to be an instrument of self destruction: "a

sword laid by / Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously" (III.396-7), a

symbol of aborted male power. Napoleon being "antithetically mixed"

exemplifies Byron's self-division at this time, that is represented by a conflict

between masculine (Harold) and feminine (the narrator/Byron) qualities.

Accordingly, Harold is depicted as possessing "the breast which fain

no more would feel" (III.67) as embodied and substantial: "his spirit now so

firmly fix'd / And sheath'd with an invulnerable mind" (III.84-5) but

encumbered with the chains of regret: "Which gall'd for ever, fettering

though unseen, / And heavy though it clank'd not; worn with pain" (III.78-

79). Whereas the narrator/Byron vaporises into a "a whirling gulf of

phantasy and flame" (III.58), Harold's soul is trapped but still continues to

personify the masculine sublime. The phrase "To live within himself" ("The Dream" 56) is used to describe Harold in Canto III but its altered context demonstrates the tension between the masculine and feminine, pitting isolation against community:

He would not yield dominion of his mind  
To spirits against whom his own rebell'd;  
Proud though in desolation; which could find  
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.  
(III.105-109)

The feminine ideal of community is explored by Byron in the poems of this period through the ties of family. The two female figures who Byron does not consider in terms of betrayal are Ada and Augusta, for they are related to him by blood. "Epistle to Augusta" opens with "My Sister--my sweet Sister" (1) and this reference to consanguinity is echoed in the opening lines of the third canto: "Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child! / Ada! Sole daughter of my house and heart?" (III.1-2). These lines immediately designate Ada as an instrument of transmission, of inheritance and embodying the themes of this Canto. "The Prisoner of Chillon" (CPW IV:4) written while Byron was writing Canto III of CHP, is a reflection of the themes that were uppermost in Byron's mind at this time. It places similar strong emphasis on the strength of familial ties,<sup>10</sup> the tale of the three

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<sup>10</sup> Andrea Henderson locates the appeal that the idea of family holds for Byron in the recurring memorialization of family: the seven pillars and the seven columns echoing the seven brothers (Identities 78) and the three surviving brothers inscribed upon the landscape

brothers languishing in a dark prison, who are still bound by the ties of sympathy: "And thus together, yet apart / Fettered in hand, but pined in heart" (lines 54-55). Byron invents another brother for Bonnivard, the eponymous prisoner, (the historical Bonnivard only possessing one) and the two brothers embody the contours of gendered duality that characterise Byron's poetry at this time. The youngest brother is described using excessively feminine signifiers: "beautiful as day" (79), "pure and bright" (86) and "But he, the favourite and the flower / Most cherish'd since his natal hour, / His mother's image in fair face" (164-166) and his death is described in similarly affecting terms, "withered on the stalk away" (175)

The middle brother on the other hand, is "formed to combat" (93) "[s]trong in his frame" (94) "a hunter of the hills" (103). Byron's delineation of these two characters with such strongly drawn strokes suggests an engagement with gender difference--though the character of the Prisoner himself is curiously effaced, his only defining characteristics being his descent from a noble line, and his desolation that informs the narrative of the poem. Byron added in a note to the poem that he was not aware of the real Bonnivard's "courage and . . . virtues" (CPW IV:453) at the time of writing, and hence could not elaborate on them. But by drawing parallels between Byron and

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as the "three tall trees" (line 346) on the island that Bonnivard can see from his window (Identities 85).

Bonnivard--both outmoded aristocrats, literally and metaphorically pent up by their fellow men, it is possible to read Byron's elision of Bonnivard's character as a representation of his own position, which left him with "no thought, no feeling--none" (235), recalling the numbness that he felt on leaving "Albion's lessening shore" (CHP III.8).

This limbo, as demonstrated by Byron's constant, almost plaintive appeal to members of his family, can be considered as a state of temporary orphanhood, a state of abandonment by the maternal body politic that leads Byron to look to Nature as surrogate kin. In the "Epistle" he writes:

The world is all before me--I but ask  
                   Of Nature that with which she will comply--  
 It is but in her Summer's sun to bask--  
                   To mingle in the quiet of her sky--  
 To see her gentle face without a mask  
                   And never gaze on it with apathy--  
 She was my early friend--and now shall be  
 My Sister--till I look again on thee.  
 (81-88)

Guinn Batten in her work on the orphaned imagination writes how Byron makes "a home for himself in verse straying between a home country whose language he could not abandon and the fecund foreignness of other languages and verse forms" (23). Till he reaches Italy, Byron seems to be in a state of suspended animation, a state that he was to eloquently describe in DJ: "Between two worlds life hovers like a star, / 'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge" (XV.99.785-6).

Byron reflects on the cantos that catapulted him to fame contrasting the fruitlessness of that masculine endeavour to the creation of Ada, who personifies female agency and its potency:

in that Tale I find  
 The furrows of long thought, and dried-up tears,  
 Which, ebbing, leave a sterile track behind,  
 O'er which all heavily the journeying years  
 Plod the last sands of life,--where not a flower appears.  
 (CHP III.24-27)

He acknowledges the inspirational power of this agency: "To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme" (III.36). In his disillusionment and world weariness "He, who grown aged in this world of woe" (III.37) attempts to take on the female specific role of reproduction:

to create, and in creating live  
 A being more intense that we endow  
 With form our fancy, gaining as we give  
 The life we imagine, even as I do now.  
 (III.46-49)

Byron's description of this "being" is a curious reworking of the opening verse of the canto, this child of his imagination as his own version of Ada:

Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,  
 Invisible but gazing, as I glow  
 Mix'd with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,  
 And feeling still with thee in my crush'd feelings' dearth.  
 (III.51-54)

This procreative impulse and the sustaining power of nature featured as aspects of the love and attachment that Ada inspired within Byron: "The helpless looks of blooming infancy, / Even in its earliest nurture" which "In him [ . . . ] glowed when all beside had ceased to glow" (III.480-81, 486) and

induced “a sense of affection and tenderness” that falls into the domain of the Burkean conception of the beautiful (Mellor 87). The motif of the daughter as saviour is reiterated in his anecdote of the young priestess who sacrificed her life to save her father (III.626-635), Byron deeming this incident in a note as more “affecting . . . of deeper interest” (CPW II:308) than the accounts of battles and patriots that he describes in the previous stanzas 63-65. Byron depicts himself as the “fallen Lear-like father nourished and redeemed by daughter-mother” (Franklin, Literary 94).

The narrator’s chronicle of war and destruction describes the fate of those “fair women” (CHP III.184) left behind, rather than acts of heroism, aligning his sympathies with their loss, those “ghastly gap[s]” (III.272) left behind by those “brave men” (III.184) who fell in combat. The heart that breaks but will “yet brokenly live on” (III.288) of necessity is portrayed as a feminine imperative that Byron adapts as opposed to Harold’s determined despair.

Byron momentarily celebrates the world of the solitary man who “surpasses or subdues mankind” (III.399). However, in the next stanza he abruptly rejects this vainglorious world he has constructed: “Away with these! true Wisdom’s world will be / Within its own creation, or in thine, / Maternal Nature!” (III.406-408, emphasis added), asserting his own sympathy for the world of the feminine. Byron portrays Harold going



through similar epiphanic motions as himself, as he meditates on the gruesome legacy of war and the sterile futility of that endeavour:

There was a day when they were young and proud,  
Banners on high, and battles pass'd below;  
But they who fought are in a bloody shroud,  
And those which waved are shredless dust ere now,  
And the bleak battlements shall bear no future blow.  
(III.419-423)

He contrasts this legacy with the rejuvenating and eternal nature of water:<sup>11</sup>

“But Thou, exulting and abounding river! / Making thy waves a blessing as they flow / Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever” (III.442-444). Byron, however, is not entirely convinced of the redemptive power of nature and its capacity to eradicate suffering:

Thy tide wash'd down the blood of yesterday,  
And all was stainless--and on thy clear stream  
Glassed, with its dancing light, the sunny Ray;  
But o'er the blackened Memory's blighting dream  
Thy waves would vainly roll, all sweeping as they seem.  
(III.455-459)

In spite of this, Nature does recall to Harold's mind the “one fond breast, to which his own would melt” (III.476). With this change of heart and sentimental remembrance, Harold and the narrator-poet are collapsed into a single entity, causing Harold to subsequently disappear from the poem, never to be glimpsed again.

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher Hitt in his essay “Toward an Ecological Sublime” shows how a similar comparison is made in Canto IV of *CHP*: “[Byron] intersperses celebrations of nature with meditations on the ruins of human cultures . . . In an apostrophe to the ocean, hailed as ‘boundless, endless, and sublime,’ Byron draws a contrast between the durability of the ocean--an ‘image of Eternity’ (IV.183)--and the mortality of human beings, who wreak destruction upon themselves” (618).

Byron substitutes the body politic--a "contentious world" (III.661)--with maternal nature, that nourishes him as the "nursing lake" (III.674) feeds the earth "as a mother who doth make / A fair but froward infant her own care, / Kissing its cries away as these awake" (III.674-677), inspiring him to

remount at last  
 With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,  
 Though young, yet waxing vigorous, as the blast  
 Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,  
 Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.  
 (III.693-698)

This rejuvenation signifies Byron's return to his tendency of equating masculinity with strength--which now manifests itself in his personification of the Rhone as male: "Now--where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between / Heights which appear as lovers who have parted / In hate" (III.878-880) and "where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way" (III.887). Byron depicts the river as an active force that divides, rather than flows and connects, and sees the world through the eyes of Rousseau, whose Heloise had inspired the voyage around the lake of Geneva undertaken by himself and Shelley. This appropriation of Rousseau's vision marks the shift from a feminine-inflected poetics that characterised "The Dream" and the earlier half of the third canto to a potent, masculine voice. The generative power that Byron so far had considered to be feminine, is replaced by a male God who "Is a pervading life and light" (III.934) penetrating every corner of this earthly paradise.

His recollection of men he admires such as Rousseau, Gibbon and

Voltaire, men of "Gigantic minds" (III.981) and "Titan-like" (III.982) seems to revivify him, restoring him from "Nothing" to a male figure of agency who is able to "pierce" the clouds and "survey whate'er / May be permitted" (III.1018-1019). This transition is noted: "We are not what we have been" (III.1033) as is his realisation "We are not what we should be" (III.1034), where what Byron believes, despite himself, or maybe has proven to himself anew, is that what he "should be" is a commentator on the state of the nation. His recovery from his orphaned state is only achieved when he becomes a parent, and forgives his abandonment: "I have not loved the world, nor the world me,-- / But let us part fair foes" (III.1059-60) and consequently believes "that there may be / Words which are things" (III.1060-61) he will inscribe on the page of history.<sup>12</sup>

His words to Ada: "I see thee not,--I hear thee not,--but none / Can be so wrapt in thee" (III.1069-1070) accurately describe Byron's feelings about England during his years in exile, undeniably asserting the attachment, however ambivalent, he felt towards the country of his birth. His negative feelings towards Britain were, as he articulated in Poems on his Domestic

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<sup>12</sup> Cheeke has pointed out how the figure of the "page" will begin to recur frequently in Byron's poetry written post-1816: "As a metaphor for reading the landscape it is of course complicated by the occasions when nature's page becomes history's page . . . Inscription, both 'natural' and man-made, comes to dominate and indeed determine the map of Childe Harold, and the material ways in which history has marked the landscape--monuments, epitaphs, ruins, relics, souvenirs--contest the page with the non-material and glassy signature of 'nature'." (69)

Circumstances, shaped by women, and the female figures of Augusta and Ada embodied his positive feelings towards Britain. A theme that emerges in the third canto (and would be continued in DJ) is Byron's belief in the inadequacy of women as nurturers and caregivers for shaping future citizens of the nation. Byron lists a catalogues of domestic affections he wishes he could experience first hand:

To aid thy mind's development,--to watch  
 Thy dawn of little joys,--to sit and see  
 Almost thy very growth,--to view thee catch  
 Knowledge of objects,--wonders yet to thee!  
 To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,  
 And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,--  
 (III.1076-1081)

This subverts the traditional idea of the domestic space as only the domain of the mother. Byron's statement: "This, it should seem, was not reserv'd for me" (III.1082) is the case due to both circumstance as well as traditional gender roles, and the impulses to nurture and educate that he learnt from "Maternal Nature" in the earlier verses of the Canto have left their imprint: "Yet this was in my nature:--as it is, / I know not what is there, yet something like to this" (III.1083-1084), conflating the separate roles of mother/nurse and father/teacher, as defined by Rousseau in Emile (14).

The third canto of CHP and other poems written in this period track Byron's transition from a figure who perceives himself as lacking in agency with regards to his role as a subject of the British nation, to one who

rediscovers his voice and recovers that agency. The consequence of this transition that is marked by a gendered shift becomes apparent in the fourth and last canto of CHP.

### III.ii. The “dangerous goddess” : Byron’s material temptation

Six months had elapsed between the publication of Canto III of CHP and Byron’s starting on Canto IV in July 1817. Byron was now in Venice, luxuriating in all that the city that he called “the greenest island of my imagination” (BLJ 5:129) had to offer. Byron’s travels that began in 1816 and brought him to Italy were much closer to the traditional notion of the Grand Tour than his previous journeys.<sup>13</sup> Chloe Chard lists certain requisites for one’s travels to be qualify as the Grand Tour: firstly, one should “register a desire or intention to visit Rome” and the “narrative of the tour is punctuated by sights . . . that others before them have deemed worth seeing” (Pleasure 15, 18). However, as an aristocrat in exile, Byron was to acculturate himself so capably in Italy, that as Maria Schoina has pointed out, Mary Shelley used him as a template for an exemplary Anglo-Italianness (par. 1).

The fourth canto of CHP exists in tension with Byron’s eventual acculturation, for he cultivates the pose of an aristocrat on the Grand Tour in his writing and thus distances himself from the country that was to become

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter II for the distinction I have made between his travels to Greece and Turkey, and the Grand Tour.

his temporary home. Unlike the parallels Byron (and other authors) had attempted to draw between Spain and Britain, he is careful to distinguish between Italy and England:

It is also a delicate, and no very grateful task, to dissert upon the literature and manners of a nation so dissimilar; and requires an attention and impartiality which would induce us,-- though perhaps no inattentive observers, nor ignorant of the language or customs of the people amongst whom we have recently abode--to distrust, or at least defer our judgement, and more narrowly examine our information. (CPW II:122, emphasis added)

There is an instability here between being an “observer” and a temporary inhabitant, enacting the shift that Chard makes between the traveller, (or what I am calling the adventurer-explorer) who undertakes travel as “a form of personal adventure . . . crossing symbolic as well as geographical boundaries” as opposed to “the tourist . . . who attempts to keep the more dangerous and destabilizing aspects of the encounter with the foreign at bay” (Pleasure 11).

John Cam Hobhouse, Byron’s intermittent travel companion, provided historical notes to the canto. The empirically informed notes stand as counterweight to the feminization that was considered a consequence of viewing art and being exposed to the foreign. The masculine authority of the notes lends weight to a discourse that could otherwise be undermined-- serving as the travelogue aspect of the poem in their provision of the necessary facets of “imaginative seduction” as well as “the claim to be

ordering knowledge and, however obliquely, offering practical advice”

(Chard, Pleasure 10).

Byron’s assumption of the pose of the touring aristocrat, albeit in exile, demonstrates a renewed confidence in his writing and a strengthened subjectivity. Canto IV opens with Byron taking a far more assertive stance than in the poetry of his recent past; he seems to have recovered some of his sense of self, and the canto opens with a reiteration of the embodied I:

I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;  
A palace and a prison on each hand:  
I saw from out the wave her structures rise  
As from the stroke of the Enchanter’s wand:  
(lines 1-4, emphasis added)

He seems, too, to have rediscovered the potency of his imagination, for he speaks of Venice as his Venice, as he writes: “I lov’d her from my boyhood--  
She to me / Was as a fairy city of the heart, / Rising like water-columns from  
the sea” (IV.154-156), making him the aforementioned Enchanter. Venice becomes a representative of Byron’s “baffled love” (“To Augusta”, line 37) for Britain, but more specifically for Britannia, whose current condition as an imperialist nation seems to match those held by Venice in her golden years, as: “a boast, a marvel, and a show” (IV.162)

Although Canto IV of CHP is a meditation on culture rather than nature, the spectre of feminized space still looms large in Byron’s consciousness. One major reason for this was the feminine identity that Italy

held in European consciousness,<sup>14</sup> Venice in particular.<sup>15</sup> The transition from nature to culture corresponds with Henri Lefebvre's formulation of the transformation of space from "absolute space"<sup>16</sup> to "abstract space" (48) where even though the forces of history act on absolute space, they do not cause it to disappear in the process. Byron's articulation of the persistence of absolute space: "States fall, arts fade--but Nature doth not die" (IV.24), defies the silent spaces left by ruin, using his imagination to "repeople" "the solitary shore" (IV.36). This recalls both Harold's stargazing which he "peopled . . . with beings bright" (III.119) and Byron's own creating "a being

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<sup>14</sup> Sandra Gilbert's essay on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's imagining of the reunification of Italy as an embodiment of her own condition, that of a "wounded woman/land" traces the various, always feminine metaphors of Italy used in European literature from the sixteenth century onwards. She points out that especially from the eighteenth century, Italy began to be described as a "sort of fallen woman" (195) and posits five ways in which Italy came to be defined: "(1) Italy as a nurturing woman--a land that feeds, (2) Italy as an impassioned sister--a land that feels, (3) Italy as a home of art--a land that creates, (4) Italy as a magic paradise--a land that transforms or integrates, and (5) Italy as a dead, denied, and denying woman" (196). This conception of Italy had contemporary resonance for readers of De Stael's Corinne, or Italy which, as Glenda Sluga, amongst others, points out, entwines the fates of the nation and its eponymous heroine (241). See Maura O' Connor's The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination (1998) for a more detailed examination, also Joseph Luzzi's "Italy without Italians: Literary Origins of a Romantic Myth" (2002) that tracks the perception of Italy's transition from Europe's "museum" to "mausoleum" (50).

<sup>15</sup> "Conyers Middleton, in his Letter from Rome (1729), suggests that the pleasures of the Grand Tour "grow by Degrees, as we advance towards Italy, more solid, manly, and rational, but attain not their full Strength and Perfection till we reach Rome" (qtd. in Chard, "Topography" 105) whereas Venice was compared by Hester Piozzi to a "syren" (qtd. in Chard, Pleasure 17). Byron was familiar with the works of Middleton, whose Life of Cicero he quotes in a note to CHP IV.44 (CPW II:234).

<sup>16</sup> Lefebvre defines absolute space as being made up of fragments of nature located at sites which were chosen for their intrinsic qualities (cave, mountaintop, spring, river), but whose very consecration ended up by stripping them of their natural characteristics or uniqueness. Thus natural space was soon populated by political forces. Typically architecture picked a site in nature and transferred it to the political realm by means of a symbolic mediation. (48)



more intense" (III.47). These spirits are versions of the feminine procreative impulse, "the refuge of our youth and age" (IV.46) that Byron now feels prepared to relinquish in favour of "waking Reason" (IV.61), the faculty that masculinizes him, and gives expression to his ambition: "I twine / My hopes of being remembered in my line / With my land's language" (IV.76-78).

Though the civic nature of Venice is conveyed by the mention of "A palace and a prison on each hand" (CHP IV.2), Byron's compares the city to the mother-goddess Cybele, much in the way he maternalizes nature in the previous canto:

She looks like a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,  
Rising with her tiara of proud towers  
At airy distance, with majestic motion,  
A ruler of the waters and their powers:  
And such she was;--her daughters had their dowers  
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East  
Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.  
In purple was she robed, and of her feast  
Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increased.  
(IV.10-18)

Byron's use of Cybele is apposite for though she was worshipped as a Mother Goddess, she was considered a martial rather than nurturing deity, who according to ancient sources delighted "in the clangour of castanets and drums, the roar of flutes, the clamouring of wolves and bright eyed lions" (qtd. in Roller 1) who (as denoted by her diadem) was considered the deity of the Roman state (Roller 4) much in the way Pallas Athene/Minerva was considered the patron goddess of Athens. Byron historicises the nexus

between femininity, commodification, and consumption, by alluding to the minor islands of Venice as “her daughters” while simultaneously figuring these forces as “a set of things/signs” (Lefebvre 49) rehearsing a gesture that would be performed in his writing of DJ.

This declaration ushers in descriptions of Venice as a widowed “queen with an unequalled dower” (IV.99) her hour of “glory” (IV.118) depicted as when “she bore o’er subject earth and sea; / Though making many slaves, herself still free” (IV.121-122), echoing the fusion of “liberal, conservative, humanist and romantic sentiment” (Beatty 154) already put in place in the national consciousness by James Thomson’s Rule Britannia.<sup>17</sup>

This comparison is made explicit, though Byron is careful to address Britain as Albion, rather than Britannia, a distinction that he made in Canto II of

CHP:

Thus, Venice, if no stronger claim were thine,  
Were all thy proud historic deeds forgot,  
Thy choral memory of the Bard divine,  
Thy love of Tasso, should have cut the knot  
Which ties thee to thy tyrants; and thy lot  
Is shameful to the Nations,--most of all,

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<sup>17</sup> Though Rule Britannia is popularly considered to echo jingoistic sentiments, Suvir Kaul has pointed out that the poem “began life as a potent piece of opposition propaganda” (3) and that Thomson wrote as one of the Whig supporters of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who styled themselves Patriots. Christine Gerrard, however, thinks of “Rule, Britannia!” as an “apparently straightforward expression of patriotism [that] proves resistant to analysis” as the “Walpole era witnessed not one, but a number of complex, interrelated forms of patriotism” (qtd. in Kaul 5). This meant that propagandists opposed to each other often shared a “patriotic vocabulary and icons” (Kaul 6) demonstrating what Beatty has called the paradoxical nature of Byron’s patriotism.

Albion! to thee: the Ocean Queen should not  
 Abandon Ocean's children; in the fall  
 Of Venice think of thine, despite thy watery wall.  
 (IV.145-153)

Byron's translation of Filicaja's sonnet "Italia, Italia" subtly reassigns agency to the feminized nation itself; where the original bemoaned the "unhappy gift of beauty" that fate had endowed, Byron translates this as the "fatal gift of beauty" (IV.371). He then posits two models of femininity: "Oh God! that thou wert in thy nakedness / Less lovely or more powerful" (IV.375-6) or "less desired / Be homely and be peaceful, undeplord / For thy destructive charms" (IV.379-380) containing within this description both the monstrous and nurturing aspects of feminine nature that Rose has described as a "seductively sexual vision of narcissistic reunion with the phallic mother" (105) who both attracts and repels. By placing this translation in the context of a roll call of prominent figures of Italy's literary history, such as Petrarch, Tasso, Dante and Ariosto, Byron implicitly establishes his own relationship to England in parallel, a relationship that is simultaneously characterised by loss, lack and desire (Rose 104).

Byron celebrates the "Luxury of Commerce" (IV.431) that facilitated the rise of "buried Learning" (IV.432), its embodiment as the Venus de Medici emphasising its feminine and voluptuous nature:

We gaze and turn away, and know not where,  
 Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart  
 Reels with fulness; there--for ever there--

Chain'd to the chariot of triumphal Art,  
 We stand as captives, and would not depart.  
 (IV.442-446)

Byron's ambivalence on seeing the statue of Venus de Medici echoes the allegorical tale of the choice of Hercules, torn between Virtue and Pleasure, the two qualities that Shaftesbury attributed to fine art that would inspire the "true citizen" to become both "polished as well as politicized" (Barrell "Dangerous" 104, 102). Within the discourse of civic humanism (the republicanist tradition to which Byron pays homage in his allusions to the contributions of figures such as Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio to the Italian republic during the Renaissance), to make the right choice "represented civic freedom not only as emancipation from servility and dependence but as an emancipation from desire" (Barrell "Dangerous" 105), where desire encompassed both desire for material possessions as well as sexual desire.

The figure of Venus was considered the most

dangerous threat to manly virtue and the most perfect  
 polishing agent the fine arts had been able to conceive. Images  
 of Venus, therefore were thought to be as unstable, as  
 untrustworthy, as the character attributed to the goddess  
 herself. (Barrell, "Dangerous" 106)

Byron makes this explicit in his account of Venus' seductive power over Paris and Achises, her "lava kisses melting while they burn" (IV.458). Shaftesbury's prescription for safeguarding against this emasculating effect of the female naked body was "to produce a theory of art which prescribes . . . how they are to be consumed, if their didactic and aesthetic functions are to

be compatible" (Barrell, "Dangerous" 104). Byron, however, rejects this function of criticism, "the paltry jargon of the marble mart" (IV.448):

I leave to learned fingers, and wise hands,  
 The artist and his ape, to teach and tell  
 How well his connoisseurship understands  
 The graceful bend, and the voluptuous swell:  
 Let these describe the undescribable:  
 I would not their vile breath should crisp the stream  
 Wherein that image shall for ever dwell;  
 The unruffled mirror of the loveliest dream  
 That ever left the sky on the deep soul to beam.  
 (IV.469-477)

The waning relevance of Shaftesbury's formulation, Barrell proposes, is due to "a developing difficulty in the decades after the death of Shaftesbury in conceiving of the republic of taste and the political republic as fundamentally the same constituency" ("Dangerous" 108). This shift is demonstrated in James Thomson's Liberty where "Public Virtue . . . becomes Venus" which "strikes at the heart of civic discourse, because civic iconography defined Virtue, more specifically Public Virtue, as at all points the opposite of Venus" (Barrell, "Dangerous" 112), that opposition embodied by the tradition of depicting Minerva as opposed to Venus. If the virtuous face of England is represented by Albion/Minerva, then Britannia with its feminised culture and women as the determinants of taste, represent the seductive Venus whose power Byron feels impotent to resist. By his rejection of the arbitrating critic, Byron is simultaneously accepting the democratisation of taste as well as the failure of the tradition of civic humanism that so strongly inflected

Whig rhetoric. However, Byron is never comfortable with this position, and this is most apparent in DJ. Eric Strand describes his discomfiture in terms of

a:

contradictory political stance . . . the constant deflation between a populist rhetoric of resistance, and the self-mocking deflation of this rhetoric--can be linked to his troubled relationship to this world-system: the love of wealth and pleasure, of unbridled consumption that the system offers, countered by the awareness that this consumption decenters any conception of struggle versus power, of a movement for liberation. (506)

Byron's later poem The Prophecy of Dante (1820) demonstrates the conflict between these civic humanist ideals and the world of commodified literature. The rise of the professional heralded the emergence of institutionalised professions in Renaissance Italy. The authors of this golden age were amongst the first who had to contend with incipient professionalisation and the impact of the early printing press, and Byron recognised elements of his crisis in their circumstances. Byron particularly found resonances in the life and works of Dante Alighieri, whose work he possibly encountered initially in the influential translation by Henry Cary whose translation of the Inferno was published in 1805-6, and whose more comprehensive and very popular The Vision of Dante Alighieri, or Hell, Purgatory and Paradise was published in 1814, and reprinted in 1819.<sup>18</sup>

Though the nature of their exiles was dissimilar (Dante's was a political

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<sup>18</sup> See Saglia's article (2002) for the translation and appropriation of The Divine Comedy for nationalist ends.

sentence whereas Byron's was self-imposed), this did not prevent Byron from inhabiting the persona of Dante in his work PD (CPW IV:214). Byron temporally locates his Dante after the completion of the composition of The Divine Comedy, and just before his death composing a paean to his two great loves: Beatrice and the city of Florence, both of whom Byron apostrophises in the first canto (lines 18 and 60). Byron intentionally indicates his appropriation of Dante's poetic voice by several markers; and his dedication echoes his mythical Dante in addressing his great love Teresa, as the inspiration for the work. The parallel between Florence and England may seem less obvious, given Byron's stated overblown distaste<sup>19</sup> "for the cold and cloudy clime" ("Dedication" line 1) where he was born, but it is an unavoidable allusion.

Although Byron's poem is not a translation but a creation of his own imagination, he still refers to his exercise of appropriation as one of a translation of the spirit of Dante's work. As Saglia points out, this in itself was considered part of the nationalist project, given Dante's significance in British literary culture, invoked as he was "as a sanctioning authority for the development of English verse starting from Thomas Warton's fundamental

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<sup>19</sup> In a letter to John Murray dated 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1819 Byron wrote, "I am sure my Bones would not rest in an English grave--or my Clay mix with the earth of that Country:--I believe the thought would drive me mad on my death-bed could I suppose that any of my friends would be base enough to convey my carcase back to your soil--I would not even feed your worms--if I could help it." (BLJ 6:149)

History of English Poetry . . . which contained a prose translation of the Conte Ugolino episode from the Inferno" ("Translation" 102). The hermit in James Thomson's patriotic play Alfred, A Masque tells of a time where Britain will exercise her right to all the good things of the earth:

I see thy Commerce, Britain, grasp the world:  
 All nations serve thee; every foreign flood  
 Subjected, pays his tribute to the Thames.  
 Thither the golden South obedient pours  
 His sunny treasures: thither the soft East  
 Her spices, delicacies, gentle gifts.  
 (qtd. in Kaul 4)

The nationalist project of translation and appropriation often worked in a similar fashion; operating on the assumption that all the world's knowledge must be modified in such a way so as to be made fit for Britain's consumption. The intended audience for Prophecy, as Byron articulates in the Preface, is English rather than Italian:

He may also pardon my failure the more, as I am quite sure that he would be pleased with my success, since the Italians, with a pardonable nationality, are particularly jealous of all that is left them as a nation--their literature; and in the present bitterness of the classic and romantic war, are but ill disposed to permit a foreigner ever to approve or imitate them without finding some fault with his ultramontane presumption. I can easily enter into all this, knowing what would be thought in England of an Italian imitation of Milton, or if a translation of Monti, or Pindemonte, or Arici, should be held up to the rising generation as a model for their future poetical essays. But I perceive I am deviating into an address to the Italian reader, when my business is with the English one, and be they few or many, I must take leave of both.  
 ("Preface" 38-51, CPW IV:215)

Byron's reference to himself as a "foreigner" reveals that he still thinks



of himself as English rather than Italian, and heir to an English literary heritage. The potential audience for The Prophecy of Dante was already primed to receive this work, due to their exposure both to Cary's Dante and to Gifford's Juvenal,<sup>20</sup> whose style influenced Byron profoundly. Byron surely was aware of the contemporary popularity of his sources, and his comments in his Preface illuminate Newlyn's hypothesis:

Writers who are robustly revisionary in relation to past authors can be prescriptive when it comes to imagining their own reception, and this equivocation with respect to interpretative freedom is sometimes reflected in the way they imagine or theorize the reader's role. (viii)

The articulation of the English as his intended audience is, in a sense, an explication in shorthand of Byron's vision of the role of poetry at this historical moment, as "poets in the long eighteenth century imagined poetry to be a unique and privileged literary form for the enunciation of a puissant (and plastic) vocabulary of nation" (Kaul 5). Dante was considered Italy's foremost national poet, hailed as the great "Padre Alighier" and Byron casts himself in a similar mode with regards to England, in what seems to be a characteristically equivocatory move. But it seems that Byron is using this poem as a forum for airing his vexed feelings for England but asserting that in spite of his ambivalence, he was English still:

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<sup>20</sup> "Gifford's Satires of Juvenal was by far the best known translation of the Roman poet in the early nineteenth century. Making its first appearance in 1802, it was followed by a second edition in 1806 and a third (in two volumes and also including the satires of Persius) in 1817" (S. Jones, "Intertextual" 772).

as the bird

Gathers its young, I would have gather'd thee  
 Beneath a parent pinion, hadst thou heard  
 My voice; but as the adder, deaf and fierce,  
 Against the breast that cherish'd thee was stirr'd  
 Thy venom, and my state thou didst amerce,  
 And doom this body forfeit to the fire.  
 Alas! how bitter is his country's curse  
 To him for that country would expire,  
 But did not merit to expire by her.  
 And loves her, loves her even in her ire.  
 (62-72)

Byron's use of the word "amerce"<sup>21</sup> in line 67 alludes not only to the forfeit of his home: "No, --she denied me what was mine--my roof" (83), but the word's commercial aspect lends itself to a complaint regarding the deprivation of his livelihood as a poet. The "she" represents the figure of the betraying woman who, as I have demonstrated, regularly makes appearances in Byron's poetry, both in the context of real women who had betrayed him, by also in the context of the betraying nation, Britannia. Yet, as PD demonstrates, Byron's attachment to the British nation is undeniable, and he continues to think of England as "home."

PD is an indignant diatribe on the trials of being a poet, and in Byron's case, a satirist, in both the professional marketplace as well as a nation which shall not heed the voice of its critics, its "true citizen[s]" (89). These lines also recall those paternal feelings that Byron refers to with

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<sup>21</sup> "To punish by a pecuniary penalty, the amount of which is not fixed by law, but left to the discretion of the court" (Webster, 1913).

regards to Ada in CHP III.1081 and more distantly bear echoes of EBSR where Byron wrote of tearing a feather from the “parent bird to form a pen” (9). The “parent bird” can be taken as a reference to England’s national literary heritage. As I will illustrate in the next section, Byron strives in DJ to assert his position in the English literary tradition by emulating Spenser, using allegorical configurations that deploy female figures to describe the state of the nation.

### III.iii “England! with all thy faults I love thee still” : Byron’s allegorical representations in DJ

Byron’s debt to Spenser is most prominent in his use of the Spenserian stanza for works such as CHP, which features a quasi-Spenserian protagonist in the figure of the Childe, and the “pilgrimage” could be understood to be a version of the Spenserian quest, such as the one that featured in The Faerie Queene. Michael Cooke writes that “While making much of Pope in public statements, [Byron] found Spenser’s “the measure most after [his] own heart” and implied that he found it “easiest to wield”, the use of which shows Byron’s “ability to honour his forerunner while exploiting him, to reminisce while also reconstituting him” (125-6). But as Greg Kucich has persuasively argued, Spenser’s influence is also palpable in Byron’s use of a “descriptive/reflective style of allegory” (114) that was also to be found in the work of Beattie and Thomson, both of whose influences Byron acknowledges

in the preface to CHP. The “act of the mind doubling in on itself” that especially characterises the work of the younger Romantics was a resonance that they found in Spenser’s work that “particularly embodie[d] the contraries of idealism and actuality” (Kucich 4).

Despite the professed adoration and respect accorded to Spenser by Byron’s contemporaries, Byron himself was reluctant to admit to any kind of adulation, despite his emulation of the Spenserian stanza in CHP. Leigh Hunt recalled:

I lent him a volume of the ‘Fairy Queen,’ and he said he would try to like it. Next day he brought it to my study-window, and said, ‘Here, Hunt, here is your Spenser. I cannot see anything in him:’ and he seemed anxious that I should take it out of his hands as if he was afraid of copying so poor a writer.  
(Marchand, Biography 3:1014)

Byron’s disingenuous<sup>22</sup> deprecation owed in part to an anxiety born of emulating a figure who was perceived as less than strongly masculine, unlike Milton, who was considered an intimidating and forbidding predecessor, representing a burden of a literary past whose brilliance would be difficult to replicate. Kucich points out that one reason for Spenser’s accessibility and popularity with his poetic descendants was his “tenderness of sentiment”

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<sup>22</sup> Byron had obviously encountered Spenser before Hunt’s loan of FQ, and Cecil Lang points out that Byron was clearly reading FQ during his Eastern tours in 1809, for he pointed out an Albanian reference to Hobhouse in FQ III.12 (146) as well as having Spenser on his mind in 1822 as evident by his parody of Spenser by inversion in Canto 7 of DI which he completed a few days before Hunt’s arrival (161). Thomas Campbell’s Specimens of the British Poets and Beauties of English Poetry which Byron had in his library (CMP 246-7), both contained excerpts from Spenser although he did not actually possess a copy of the FQ.

(17) and “benevolent characteristics” (18) and the qualities associated with Spenser’s writing, those of gentleness and amicability, made him a more approachable poetic father than the more formidable Milton (68). But consequently, Spenser’s writing could be seen as emasculating and infantilistic, as evident in this account of Cowley’s reading of Spenser:

I . . . was infinitely delighted with the Stories of the Knights, and Giants, and Monsters . . . and by degrees with the tinkling of the Rhyme and Dance of the Numbers . . . I think I had read him all over before I was twelve years old, and was thus made a Poet as irremediably as a Child is made an Eunuch. (qtd. in Kucich 5)

Byron’s deprecation, hence, was an outcome of wishing to be dissociated from such a feminine poetics--and one he would strive to masculinize in his epic poem, DJ. In choosing to write the epic poem, Byron was distancing himself from the feminized literary marketplace, and attempting to place himself in a national literary tradition. DJ is, consequently, is as much about the condition of England as it is about Juan--Byron uses his role as narrator/commentator of the long poem to explore the ramifications of being a subject of a feminized body politic. He explores the different facets of the relationship between subject and nation in DJ by his deployment of various female figures, which can be seen as allegorical representations of these aspects.

Kelley locates the ambivalence of the romantics towards allegory in their discomfiture with “the spectre of allegorical figures alive and on the

move" (Reinventing 93). However, while Byron demonstrates that "[r]omantic allegory welds its abstractions to 'flesh and blood,' the world of lived particulars and feeling" (Kelley, Reinventing 94) he reconciles it with the traditional Spenserian excess that was the source of the antipathy of Byron's contemporaries for allegory. Thus, as Kucich points out, "Byron confronts Spenser so much more directly than had earlier imitators and redeems his duality with . . . greater complexity" (115). For Byron, Spenser's duality between realism and ideality conformed to his way of envisioning the nation--the ancient idealised national body of Albion (and not uncoincidentally Spenser's idealised nation in FQ) as opposed to Britannia, the imperial gynocracy. Kelley remarks that the Romantic tendency is to mask the "otherness" of nostalgia by incorporating it into allegory (Reinventing 96). Byron's nostalgia is two-fold: caused by temporal distance from Albion and by geographical distance from Britannia, and both are irreconcilable.

The allegorical figure of Britannia had undergone changes during her long life--she was initially portrayed in the first century as a coerced amazon at the mercy of the Roman emperor Claudius, signifying Britain's status as a conquered nation. She then evolved into a triumphant figure in the sixteenth century, bearing the hallmarks associated with Pallas Athene such as the shield and the breastplate as well as the qualities embodied by the goddess

such as “the champion of heroes, protector of cities, and keeper of the nation’s conscience . . . action and contemplation, strength and compassion” (Hewitt). Though her female identity was perpetuated by Elizabeth I’s long rule, it was at odds with the reality of the lack of influence women possessed in England both socially and politically in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Marina Warner describes the evolving identity of Britannia:

As Britannia stepped into the controversies dramatized by political images, tableaux, performances and cartoons, she lost her inert, abstract character. She was always associated with patriotism, especially after 1672, when the crosses of St George and St Andrew appeared on her shield. But her primary significance was the British constitution, her secondary, the pride that grows from the benefits it confers. The legend that Neptune, lord of the seas, had yielded his sceptre to Britannia became popular as a new, founding myth of the triumphant naval nation. (46)

Byron describes this myth accordingly--“the rights of Thetis, / Which Britons deem their ‘uti possidetis’” (DJ X.45.360). The male counterpart of Britannia, “John Bull” is portrayed as a “bottle-conjuror” (VII.44.347), a Falstaffian figure who enjoys his roast beef (XV.71.564) and alcohol (XI.85.679). The figure of Britannia, however, makes a brief appearance in the very first canto of DJ--“Nelson was once Britannia’s God of War” (I.4.25)--never to appear again except as the capitalised “She” (X.67.529) representing all that Byron disdains about her imperial rule. She passes into the realm of the unrepresentable, and Byron’s patriotism into that of beyond description, an idea that reverberates through DJ. As the “female form tends to be

perceived as generic and universal, with symbolic overtones" (Warner 12), Byron uses most of the female characters in the poem as ciphers for negotiations of his relationship with the British nation. These represent different versions of femininity as well as allegorical and domesticised spaces: Julia in her bower, Haidee in her womb like cave, Gulbayez in her glittering palace, and Catherine herself as the body politic: "the grand Epitome / Of that Great Cause of War, or peace, or what / You please (it causes all the things which be)" (IX.57.449-451).

Though DJ is not an allegory in the strictest sense, it is rife with "abstract nouns with capital letters" (Lerner 771), in other words with personifications,<sup>23</sup> and Juan's travels can be likened to a nostalgic quest for home.<sup>24</sup> Juan's wandering in the wilderness, "[H]is home deserted for the lonely wood" (I.87.690) can be likened to a quest to escape the maternal body and to look for an ideal love, "[P]latonic, perfect" (I.79.629). Transposed to the context of love of nation, this exploration echoes Byron's quest to reconcile his cosmopolitanism with his love for England, a comparison that Kipp discusses in some detail:

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<sup>23</sup> A few examples of personification in DJ: "Glory . . . / Ends in a rusty casque, and dubious bone" (X.73.581-2); "Memory's crupper" (XI.72.573); "So Cash rules Love the ruler" (XII.14.109); "Oh Death! thou dunnest of all duns!" (XV.8.57); "Rumour / That live Gazette" (XV.11.81-2) and so on.

<sup>24</sup> See Hermione de Almeida's Byron and Joyce through Homer: Don Juan and Ulysses (1981) for the similarities between Juan and Homer's Odysseus.



A number of Romantic-period writings . . . deployed maternal imagery as a way to reconfigure the “true” nature of romantic love: not as a form of sympathy which depends upon the colonization of the other or reflects a narcissistic desire to obliterate difference, but as mutuality, exchange, a kind of interactive independence. The politics informing the deployment of this type of maternal imagery resembles that of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism; mother-child bonds may function in this context as part of a broader critique of Romantic nationalism rather than serving to exemplify a totalizing connection between individual and motherland. Appeals to the maternal body as a borderless “state” helped naturalize a cosmopolitan world view, even as these pointed glaringly to some of the more problematic aspects of realizing such an ideality. (11)

This ideal love, according to Juan, entwines both “transport and security . . . the empire of thy perfect bliss” (I.88.699-700).

Britain to Byron’s mind (and his readers’) was a female entity, allegorized enduringly as Britannia, and Elizabethan iconography had strengthened this idea of Britain as a feminised, imperial nation.<sup>25</sup> The tradition of great queens in Britain meant that

they came to symbolize the nation in their own persons, to represent the different ways both figurehead and ship [ . . . ] Elizabeth I was the monarch in whose person imago and ego were most thoroughly confused, in the pageants, progresses and portraits that conjured her as Gloriana and Astraea and

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<sup>25</sup> The iconography that enabled these ways of thinking about the English nation was to emerge in the sixteenth century, when Elizabethan geographers and cartographers such as John Dee “helped develop a set of attitudes and assumptions that encouraged them to view the English as separate from and superior to the rest of the world” this message being reinforced by such iconographic representations (Cormack 1). Dee, who was astrologer to Queen Elizabeth, on the title page of his book *General and Rare Memorials Pertayning to the Perfect Arte of Navigation* (1577) depicted Britannia as a counsellor to Elizabeth, beseeching her to use the navy “a fully equipped expeditionary force” for protection but to also “make vs, also, Partakers of Publik Commodities Innumerable, and (as yet) Incredible” (qtd. in Cormack 6).

structured her reign from her accession to her death (Warner 42-43)  
 Catherine, Cleopatra and Semiramis (who all make appearances in DI)  
 represent, like Elizabeth, the figure of the militant queen who destabilises the  
 received ideal of legitimate state authority being represented by the “ruling-  
 class white male body” (Judson 248). They are defined by lust--for both  
 political power and sex, and by their transgressions into those spaces that  
 both physically and metaphorically were traditionally gendered male. Byron  
 wrote to Thomas Moore that women were incapable of writing tragedy  
 though “Semiramis or Catherine II. might have written (could they have  
 been unqueened) a rare play” (BLJ 4:290). The specific condition “could they  
 have been unqueened” reveals Byron’s anxieties about his own role as a  
 legitimate subject, for he is aware of the power of the absolute ruler “unlike  
 the playwright who enjoys absolute sway only in his mental theatre . . .  
 monarchs made their visions real on the stage of history” (Judson 247).  
 Semiramis makes brief appearances in the poem, also appearing in Byron’s  
 generically ambivalent play Sardanapalus<sup>26</sup> as a fearsome embodiment of  
 maternal sexuality, his portrait recalling earlier figurations of the  
 “monstrous” woman:

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<sup>26</sup> Byron started Sardanapalus in January 1821, just after he finished Canto V of DI which mentions Semiramis in stanza 60.

but the woman,  
 The female who remain'd, she flew upon me,  
 And burnt my lips up with her noisome kisses,  
 And, flinging down the goblets on each hand,  
 Methought their poisons flow'd around us, till  
 Each form'd a hideous river. Still she clung;  
 The other phantoms, like a row of statues,  
 Stood dull as in our temples, but she still  
 Embraced me, while I shrunk from her, as if,  
 In lieu of her remote descendant, I  
 Had been the son who slew her for her incest.  
 (148-158)

Juan's quest to return to the maternal body is allegorised:

for after all,  
 From thee we come, to thee we go, and why  
     To get at thee not batter down a wall,  
 Or waste a world? since no one can deny  
     Thou dost replenish worlds both great and small;  
 (IX.56.442-446)

Kelley points out that Romantic allegories use "distortions of human scale and proportions" (*Reinventing* 97) and Catherine, the embodiment of lust and war, is represented as that which cannot be encompassed.

Peter Manning in his discussion of *DJ* writes that "Juan's education is his experience with women" (40). That women and Juan's experiences of them inform the central theme of *DJ* is universally recognized, and Byron's apprehension felt towards the "gynocracy" is documented both within the poem and in critical examinations of it. Though Byron's epithet can be seen as an ironic observation of the influence feminine taste had on contemporary literary taste, it belies a deeper anxiety about female power that manifests itself in his preoccupation with the figure of the queen, an anxiety which

finds its precedent in perceptions of Queen Elizabeth.

The historical anxiety that female political authority provoked was articulated by John Knox's tract The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558) that he published immediately before Elizabeth's accession, where he invited his readers to contemplate the following spectacle of a body politic with a female head:

See a woman sitting in judgement, or riding from Parliament in the midst of men, having a royall crowne upon her head, the sworde and sceptre borne before her, in signe that the administration of justice was in her power: I am assuredlie persuaded, I say, that such a sight shulde so astonishe them, that they shulde judge the hole worlde to be transformed into Amazones, and that suche a metamorphosis and change was made of all the men of that countrie, as poetes do feyn was made of the companions of Ulisses, or at the least, that albeit the outwarde forme of men remained, yet shuld they judge that their hartes were changed frome the wisdome, understanding, and courage of men, to the foolish fondnes and cowardise of women. (374)

When this anxiety was made flesh, as it were, with the accession of Elizabeth I to the throne, Spenser, in his epic FQ, reconfigured the "Elizabethan political imaginary . . . the collective repertoire or representational forms and figures-mythological, rhetorical, narrative, iconic" and "narrativizes the monstrous regiment of women in numerous variations" (Montrose 907, 909). Montrose writes that Spenser's epic contains

both Amazonian and Circean figures . . . male figures under the influence of powerful female ones--whether goddesses, sorceresses, lustful tyrannesses, or virtuous and beautiful

ladies; and the linkage between both of these features and the more explicitly political topic of women's regiment. (909) This "women's regiment" finds its contemporary echo in Byron's "gynocracy."

Montrose defines the place of the male subject in Elizabeth's court as one who "by virtue of their status, office, education, and/or perceived moral rectitude--could claim a place in the political nation and a voice in the governance of the state" (911). He also tracks the emergence of the unprecedented importance of the "humanist concept of counsel and the office of counsellor" (911) in England to this historical moment, due to Henry VIII's three consecutive successors being childless. The significance of the role of counsel in effective governance had been successfully established by Niccolo Machiavelli in his work Il Principe (1513), as Byron writes: "So said the Florentine: ye Monarchs, hearken / To your instructor" (X.80.633-34).

The role of counsel, in the context of the English body politic, was equivalent to "free speech" and "to be conceived as both a duty and a right" (McLaren qtd. in Montrose 911). The role of counsellor was still crucial in Byron's age,<sup>27</sup> his ironic take on the role precipitated by the isolation he felt as a failed politician and exile:

But since 'there's safety in a multitude

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<sup>27</sup> In The Curse of Minerva Byron bemoans the ineffectuality of counsel in an imperial state: "Then in the Senate of your sinking state, / Show me the man whose counsels might have weight. / Vain is each voice where tones could once command, / E'en factions cease to charm a factious land" (lines 273-276).

Of counsellors,' as Solomon has said,  
 Or some one for him, in some sage grave mood;--  
 Indeed, we see the daily proof displayed  
 In Senates, at the Bar, in wordy feud,  
 Where'er Collective Wisdom can parade,  
 Which is the only cause, that we can guess  
 Of Britain's present wealth and happiness;--  
 (XIII.29.225-32)

Much in the same manner that circumstances had demanded Spenser's reconception of the political imaginary, Byron realised that if he hoped to be of political consequence in England, he would have to address the phenomenon of gynocratic authority, and utilise it to his advantage.

Displaced from the "primary institutional locus for counsel . . . the Parliament" (Montrose 911) and in keeping with his humanist heritage "Byron consciously adopted the persona of the 'poet-statesman' inherited from Sir Philip Sidney and other Renaissance courtiers" (Mellor 6).

Though Byron's historical moment differed considerably from that of Spenser, for George IV was on the throne rather than a female monarch, women played an undeniably prominent role in the British polity, a fact that Byron felt considerable ambivalence towards. As Susan Wolfson has pointed out, though one of his favourite rhymes for gynocracy was "hypocrisy":

Even to say "our Gynocracy" implies a certain pride of identification. Indeed . . . the third rhyme word, significantly, is "aristocracy"--as if signalling his awareness that women are culpable of nothing more than disclosing the master-trope of all social success. (589)

The skills required by the self-fashioning courtier/counsellor were no longer

only restricted to

might and cunning but on the gentler skills of courtesy, dress, conversation [ . . . ] Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* [1528] is rampant with anxiety, expressed in the language of the body, that men engaged in such pursuits . . . could become like [women] and, even more threateningly, that women could become like men. (Laqueur, *Sex* 125)

This is an anxiety that forms one of the central preoccupations of DJ. Juan, who is portrayed at the outset of the poem as an effeminate young man, becomes both a capable diplomat and a judicious blend of male and female qualities by his arrival in England, thus making him the exemplary courtier.

Juan's first appearance in the poem is as "A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing, / And mischief-making monkey from his birth" (I.25.193-195), and like a wild animal who has not been domesticated, literally--"in infancy a little wild, / They tamed him down amongst them" (I.50.395-6). Efforts "to destroy / His natural spirit" (I.50.396-7) along with his "strictly moral" (I.39.308) training results in Juan's education resembling that given to young women of the time. In spite of his exposure to masculine activities such as "riding, fencing, gunnery" (I.39.305), Byron portrays him as being "shut . . . up" (I.52.413-4), learning virtue by rote. But unlike his father, aspects of whose personality are conveyed to the reader, Juan is depicted only in corporeal terms: "Tall, handsome, slender but well knit" (I.54.426). Juan in the early cantos resembles the heroines of sentimental novels, who are virtuous but lack reason and are consequently susceptible to moral

downfall.<sup>28</sup>

Both McGann and L.E. Marshall (817) have pointed out how the “sad trimmer” (III.82.649) poet, while being a portrait of Byron’s “dark double” (BR 42) Robert Southey, contains within it truths about Byron himself that he was reluctant to explicitly acknowledge. The clothing metaphor (trimmer, apart from meaning a political apostate as used here, also meant a milliner’s assistant) that is continued in Byron’s description of Southey as a “turncoat” (XI.56.448) is echoed in Juan’s forced “travesty” (V.74.589). The conversation between Juan and Baba can be read as Baba offering Juan an agency which he would not possess otherwise--to go into the inner sanctums of the palace:

‘What, sir,’ said Juan, ‘shall it e’er be told  
That I unsex’d my dress?’ But Baba stroking  
The things down, said--‘Incense me, and I call  
Those who will leave you of no sex at all.

‘I offer you a handsome suit of clothes:  
A woman’s, true; but then there is a cause  
Why you should wear them.’--‘What, though my soul loathes  
The effeminate garb?’  
(V.75-76.597-604)

However, the metaphorical agency that this “effeminate garb” offers

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<sup>28</sup> Pam Perkins in her discussion of sentimental fiction and the moral education of women gives examples of Frances Burney’s eponymous heroines Camilla and Evelina who receive educations that strive “to reconcile opposites to create women of judgment with their personalities left blank” (Spencer qtd. in Perkins) and of Maria Edgeworth’s Rachel in her anti-Rousseauvian novel *Belinda* where the virtuously vapid Belinda is rejected by the hero Clarence Harvey in favour of the rational Belinda, the first description of whom in Edgeworth’s novel is similar to that of descriptions of Juan: “Belinda was handsome, graceful, sprightly, and highly accomplished” (*Belinda* 1) with the notable exception that Juan is not described as “highly accomplished” or otherwise. Indeed, Inez’s exposure to Edgeworth and conduct books is noted (I.16.121-129) and this would have shaped her ideas of education, albeit an education suitable for a daughter rather than a son.



Juan is the gain of those feminine qualities that would facilitate his career as a diplomat. It is only after he allows this travesty that Byron starts to portray Juan as more effective and assertive, qualities that are traditionally considered more masculine. His longest speech thus far in the poem is delivered soon after he is presented to Gulbayez in his feminine garb:

‘Thou ask’st, if I can love? be this the proof  
                   How much I have loved--that I love not thee!  
 In this vile garb, the distaff, web, and woof  
                   Were fitter for me: Love is for the free!  
 I am not dazzled by this splendid roof.  
                   Whate’er thy power, and great it seems to be,  
 Heads bow, knees bend, eyes watch around a throne,  
 And hands obey--our hearts are still our own.’  
 (V.127.1009-1016)

His growing success at becoming an adept politician is evident from his behaviour at Catherine’s court, where, though his appearance is described as effeminate, “There lurk’d a Man beneath the Spirit’s dress” (IX.47.374). Judging from Johnson’s speech to Suwarrow (VII.62.495-6) Juan is as great a warrior as a lover. Traditional views of tragedy “focus on a male ruler torn between the antithetical claims of love for a woman and service to the state, a conflict eventually resolved in favor of political commitment . . . repudiat[ing] pleasure in the interests of the commonwealth” (Judson 248). But the body that can inhabit both spheres, as Byron demonstrates in his description of Juan, is the one who is guaranteed ultimate success, in a gynocratic world where true queens such as Catherine are not forced to

make this choice but are free to enjoy both love and war. Wolfson describes Adeline, one of the central female figures of the English cantos as “an epic renegade, loyal to no sex” (590). Her “mobility” shows itself in a political context while she helps to campaign for her husband’s re-election. It is a quality that is attributed to, amongst others, “diplomatists” (XVI.98.827) and it is this same attribute that makes Juan politically effective. Lord Amundville’s political success is based on his following the Machiavellian tenets that instruct one to “Be wary, watch the time, and always serve it” (XIII.18.140) and the parallels drawn between Lord Amundville and Juan-- “In birth, in rank, in fortune likewise equal, / O’er Juan he could no distinction claim” (XIII.20.153-4) demonstrate Juan’s success. However, Amundville is also described as “Always a Patriot, and sometimes a Placeman” (XIII.21.168) which is complicated in Juan’s context, for he seemingly owes no country his allegiance.

Elizabeth I’s unmarried status led her subjects to articulate their relationships to her using “conjugal, amatory, and maternal-filial metaphors . . . this symbolic transfer of domestic gender paradigms to the public domain eased the negotiation of the anomalous female regiment” (Montrose 916). Similarly, Byron configures Juan’s relationships with several of his lovers as permutations and combinations of these different impulses. Consequently, most of Juan’s objects of affection are depicted as either possessing regal

qualities, or actually being queens, in the cases of Catherine and Gulbayez, as well as being portrayed as acquisitive and maternal, characteristics that stifle Juan, each of his escapes consequently furthering the action of the poem.

Donna Julia bears all those defining hallmarks that are common to most of Juan's lovers: that of aristocratic, or royal bearing--her "cheek all purple" (I.61.484), purple signifying the blush of royalty for Byron and she "in sooth, / Possess'd an air and grace by no means common" (I.61.487). Both she, and the other women Juan encounters, possess both maternal and romantic attributes. The bower where Julia and Juan consummate their love recalls at first Spenser's bower of bliss, but is subverted immediately by Byron's divesting it of its Christian associations: "When Julia sate within as pretty a bower / As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven" (I.104.827-828), Byron uses the motif of the bower in his poetry to focus:

on [the bower's] relationship to a postlapsarian world, creating bowers that resemble "postlapsarian wombs." They do not suggest a return to an Edenic utopianism, but an enclosure where the fallen man can escape society to explore his definition of self and his relationship with others. (Bury)

As Byron writes: "[T]he tree of knowledge has been pluck'd--all's known" (I.127.1012). Julia calls to mind the figure of Spenser's Acrasia in the Bower of Bliss who is "represented as a doting lover and controlling mother to a subordinate, passive, or infantilized male" (Montrose 926).

Juan's departure from Spain echoes other episodes of leave taking in

Byron's earlier poetry, such as in CHP the experience described as one that "unmans" (II.90) and as particularly painful when "life is rather new" (II.91), exacerbated by his separation from his mother and mistress, effectively conflating "native" (II.106), maternal and romantic love. Manning, amongst others, has convincingly argued Haidee's maternal inclination towards Juan, for after the shipwreck in Canto II, he "is reborn from the sea and nursed back to health in Haidee's warm, well-provisioned, and womblike cave" (118). She embodies both the drives of thanatos and eros, her "maternally protective gestures [bearing] in exact relation to their nurturing power, vampiric suggestions" and Manning attributes this configuration to the threat posed by an idealized fusion, which to an autonomous being, is equivalent to a dangerous dissolution (119). This threat recalls the anxiety Byron feels in the third canto of CHP, where he too emerges from the "waters", devoid of subjectivity. Haidee, like Julia, is also represented as possessing regal attributes--Byron describes her as having an air that "bespoke command" befitting "one who was a lady in the land" (II.116.926-28). She and her companion are likened to "princesses in disguise" (II.124.986) and she possesses the same "purple" (II.150.1195) tinge of cheek as Julia. Her commanding manner is further reiterated, her mellifluous voice described both as "soft", "sweet" (II.151.1204) yet possessing "a overpowering tone, / Whence Melody descends as from a throne"

(II.151.1207-8).

The exploits of Haidee's father Lambro, who Eric Strand describes as a "piratical merchant capitalist" (510) explain her trappings of wealth: her brow "overhung with coins of gold" (II.116.921), her "finely spun" dress (II.121.962), "golds and gems" woven through her hair, adorned with "the richest lace" (II.121.965) and "many a precious stone" (II.121.966), and Haidee is not portrayed as an innocent consumer of these spoils, but as the "greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles" (II.128.1017). Both father and daughter are portrayed as preying on men: Lambro selling his prisoners in the slave-market (II.126.1006), Haidee rejecting one suitor after another "just to learn / How to accept a better in his turn" (II.128.1023-24). Byron attributes to both the quality of a coiled snake, poised to strike (II.117.935 and III.48.380). Their mutual similarity is further emphasised: "they were alike, their features and / Their stature differing but in sex and years" (IV.45.353).

Juan, to Haidee, is "A something to be loved, a creature" (II.172.1373) "her own, her ocean-treasure" (II.173.1383). In spite of the apparent distance of this desert island from Byron's England where currency of "common things" holds sway, Juan is a commodity, a slave of sorts, as denoted by "her boy" (II.174.1386). His relative lack of autonomy is emphasised by opposition in the next stanza, and indicates that the island is, in her father's absence, Haidee's domain:

Then came her freedom, for she had no mother,  
 So that, her father being at sea, she was  
 Free as a married woman, or such other  
 Female, as where she likes may freely pass,  
 (II.175.1393-1396)

Juan and Haidee are unmarried (III.12.89) and she is “princess of her father’s land” (III.72.569) and the more legitimate heir, but Byron portrays Juan as usurper in order to sustain the “unmistakable Oedipal overtones” (Manning 125) that creep into the triangular relationship of Julia-Alfonso-Juan as well as Haidee-Lambro-Juan. Byron’s sympathetic portrayal of Jose, Alfonso and now Lambro’s destruction of domestic peace has obvious personal resonances, and emphasises that women, instead of preserving domestic peace are responsible for ruining it.

After receiving news of Lambro’s death and observing a suitable period of mourning Haidee keeps “house upon her own account” (III.38.304). Her turning “the isle into a place of pleasure” (III.39.306) in contrast to Lambro’s more frugal ways and “temperance” (III.53.420) feminizes conspicuous consumption, “pleasure” and “treasure” (III.39.310) being a favourite rhyme, rhymed sometimes with “leisure” (I.118.942, I.217.1732), that other signifier of the newly emerging English middle class. There is slight confusion as to who is in control of the island:

A second hiccup’d, ‘Our old master’s dead,  
 You’d better ask his mistress who’s his heir.’  
 ‘Our mistress!’ quoth a third: ‘Our mistress!--pooh!--  
 You mean our master--not the old but new.’

(III.43.341-344)

This misreading of the power structure of the island gestures towards ideas of legitimacy that become particularly significant in the inheritance of male power by a female heir.

Juan's literary precedents such as Odysseus in his encounter with Nausicaa or Ferdinand in The Tempest both possess more agency than Juan, who is debilitated by the lack of language. Haidee's lava kisses (II.186.1486) and the reference to her being "Fit for the Model of a Statuary" (II.118.941) recall the dangerous goddess of the fourth Canto of CHP, suggesting the thin line between piracy and the spoils of imperialism, as explicated in his description of Lambro's trade:

Let not his mode for raising cash seem strange,  
   Although he fleeced the flags of every nation,  
 For into a prime minister but change  
   His title, and 'tis nothing but taxation  
 (III.14.105-108)

Byron emphasises Haidee's otherness, elaborating on her difference of attire from that of Spanish women (II.120.953-968) as well as her foreign speech:

"Juan could not understand a word" (II.151.1201), her unfamiliarity rendering her akin to the Freudian metaphoric "dark continent".<sup>29</sup> Her vampiric tendencies that threaten to engulf Juan are embodied as "death", personifying Byron's fears of the obliteration of his status as a British subject.

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<sup>29</sup> Luce Irigaray discusses how Freud described female sexuality as the "dark continent" due to its unfathomability and unknowability (48). The metaphor itself is taken from the world of archaeology and exploration borrowed from an account of the Victorian explorer Stanley.

Haidee's death is necessitated by her impregnation by Juan, which would result in an alien child, polluting Juan's line. The undesirability of miscegenation is already touched upon in the narrative of Julia's ancestry (I.57.449-464). Haidee and her maid Zoe's dressing Juan "like a Turk, / Or Greek" (II.160.1276-77) is at odds with Juan's vaunted capacity at the "art of living in all climes with ease" (XV.11.88), for rather than acclimatising himself, he is forced to go native, as it were, having no recourse to intelligible language, and hence protest. His love for Haidee is compared to a form of enchantment: "And Juan gazed as one who is awoke / By a distant organ, doubting if he be / Not yet a dreamer, till the spell is broke" (II.152.1209-1211). Moreover, Juan seems ensnared by the opulence of the luxury that the island offers, "A gentleman so rich in the world's goods, / Handsome and young, enjoying all the present" (IV.51.404-405), a desirable and enviable position for a young man with few financial prospects.

The violent end encountered by the romance of Juan and Haidee by the arrival of Lambro who arrests Juan in order to sell him into slavery, causing Haidee to die of grief, symbolises the severe ambivalence felt by Byron towards (what he held as) the dichotomy between material wealth and political ideals, where the success of the triumph of one meant the decay of the other. In an inverted world (Strand 509) where Guyon of FQ succumbs and Mammon represents temperance, the quest can only continue if



Juan/Guyon accepts his status as commodity, for it is impossible to return to that condition of pre-lapsarian innocence.

Gulbayez, who buys Juan as a slave, is “queenly” (V.95.754) with a “deep-purple robe” (V.96.768), “[H]er presence as lofty as her state” (V.97.769). Byron compares her to Mary, Queen of Scots whom “tears / And love destroy” (V.98.781), and when left alone with Juan, she assumes an expression “Of half-voluptuousness and half command” (V.108.864). Juan however has no idea whether she is actual royalty or not, though his palatial surroundings may have led him to believe so, and she is revealed to be a “sultan’s bride” (V.111.888), an epithet that does not suggest actual authority. Gulbayez does not wield any political power of her own, and in spite of her high status, is reduced to a mere accessory for the Sultan “liked to have a handsome paramour / At hand, as one may like to have a fan” (VI.91.723-4) recalling Byron’s days as a cavaliere servent when he carried his mistress’ “fan and tippet, gloves and shawl” (Beppo, CPW IV:129, line 40).

Byron, in a grotesque conflation of warfare and the feminine describes the encounter of “our little friend, Don Juan” (VIII.52.410) with carnage and warfare:

And here he was--who upon Woman’s breast  
                   Even from a child, felt like a child; howe’er  
 The man in all the rest might be confest,  
                   To him it was Elysium to be there;

(VIII.53.417-420)<sup>30</sup>

Though much of Byron's account of the battle in Cantos VII and VIII is taken from Castlenau, he intersperses this description with these lines: "Being grenadiers they mounted one by one, / Cheerful as children climb the breasts of mothers, / O'er the entrenchment and the palisade," (VIII.15.117-119) recalling the threat embodied by maternity, as personified by Haidee previously.

The first mention of Catherine the Great in the poem is as the "greatest of all sovereigns and w\_\_\_\_s" (VI.92.736), and then as "[T]his modern Amazon and Queen of Queans" (VI.96.764). Like Elizabeth, she had a series of lovers and favourites, though she was secretly married to Potemkin whose death and virility Byron mentions in passing (VII.37.290-296). The distinction that Elizabeth made between her "masculine political body and her feminine private body in creating an erotics of court life" (Laqueur, *Sex* 122) finds its correlation in Byron's description of Catherine: "Then recollecting the whole Empress, nor / Forgetting quite the woman (which composed /At least three parts of this great whole)" (IX.58.457-9), her embodiment of the body politic

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<sup>30</sup> Manning points out how love and war evoke similar responses in Juan:

Juan is "nursed" in battle as he is nursed by Haidee; for Juan to be alone with Haidee "was another Eden" (IV.10), and for him to be fighting "was Elysium" (VIII.53). Byron announces "fierce loves and faithless wars" (VII.57) as his subject, and the reversal of Spenser is possible because at one level love and war function identically [ . . . ] Common to the intensity of war and love is an obliteration of detachment, and, as the introduction and configuration both here and in the Haidee episode insinuates, the prototype of this experience, erasing the outlines of the self, is the fusion of infant and mother. (121)

denoted by her comparison to Pallas Athene (IX.71.567). Indeed, the only mention of Elizabeth in the poem is as a foil to Catherine:

Love had made Catherine make each lover's fortune;  
 Unlike our own half-chaste Elizabeth,  
 Whose avarice all disbursements did importune,  
 If History, the grand liar, ever saith  
 The truth; and, though Grief her old age might shorten,  
 Because she put a favourite to death,  
 Her vile ambiguous method of Flirtation,  
 And Stinginess, disgrace her Sex and Station.  
 (IX.81.641-648)

Suwarrow, Catherine's able general under whose command Juan and Johnson serve in Canto VII, wrote a booklet called "The Science of Victory" that contains his maxims for glory in warfare including such exhortations as "Die for the Virgin for your mother the Empress" (Cochran's note to VII.463), demonstrating how both queens were regarded and similarly referred to in terms of "conjugal, amatory, and maternal-filial metaphors" (Montrose 916). The contrast between the small child-like subject and the overwhelming maternal body is embodied by Catherine, who is described as "spacious" (IX.58.463), her size (and Juan's relative diminutiveness) emphasised in the lines: "While her young Herald knelt before her still. / 'Tis very true the hill seemed rather high / For a Lieutenant to climb up" (IX.66.524-6); "Her Majesty looked down, the Youth looked up-- / And so they fell in love" (IX.67.529). Donna Inez's reference to an "Empress's maternal love" (X.32.256) enlarges upon this relationship. Juan's activities "beyond the

drawing room" (X.5.37) in Catherine's "boudoir's precincts" (IX.63.501) are a risqué version of the "privately shared space signified by the womb or the maternal breast" (Kipp 1) that expands itself on Juan's arrival to Britain:

a space  
 Which well beseemed 'the Devil's drawing room,'  
 As some have qualified that wondrous place.  
 But Juan felt, though not approaching home,  
 As one who, though he were not of the race,  
 Revered the Soil, of those true sons the Mother,  
 (X.81.642-646)

Juan's arrival to Britain is characterised by "A kind of pride" (X.65.517) for a nation that is not his, whereas Byron-as-narrator feels "a mixed regret and veneration / For its decaying fame and former worth" (X.66.524-5). This "former worth" is denoted by Byron's use of Albion in the following stanzas, that Spenser described as "Elizas blessed field" (EQ 20), expressing Byron's nostalgia for England's lost golden age.

The women who are treated sympathetically in the poem are of low status such as Dudu, Juan's companion in the harem and the unnamed pregnant "country girl" (XVI.61.531) on Lord Henry's estate. Dudu, unlike her regal counterparts, is described as a "soft Landscape of mild Earth" (VI.53.417) recalling Byron's earlier descriptions of female beauty in the first two cantos of CHP--her passivity distinguishing her from her predecessors, her lack of agency conveyed by the fact "She never thought about herself at all" (VI.54.432). Dudu, in spite of her low status, embodies "harmony and

calm and quiet, / Luxuriant, budding" (VI.53.417-18)--in short an embodiment of the domestic ideal. Despite Byron's extended convoluted commentary on the "age of Gold" (VI.55.434) Dudu's virtue lies in her lack of ostentation, portrayed as a "Child of Nature" (VI.60.475). This representation of domestic happiness is comically reinforced by Juan being portrayed, amidst the tumult and commotion caused by Dudu's "dream": "As fast as ever husband by his mate / In holy matrimony snores away" (VI.73.579-80).

Byron's vindication of the domestic ideal as well as his emphasis on "common things" constituted, in a sense, his most overt statement of patriotism, and will be discussed in fuller detail in the next chapter. Clifford Siskin writes: "all literature is either implicitly or explicitly a social gesture, from the poet's general conception of who he is speaking to and why to the functions of the most minute formal features of his work" ("Community" 372). "The Augustan fiction of uniform community as the basis for communication is replaced by the Romantic fiction of communication as the basis of a new human community" (Siskin, "Community" 373), a fiction that Byron strengthens by his use of allegory and personification. Personifications are scattered throughout the early cantos of the poem but throng together in the English cantos, and these universal "personified characteristics" (Siskin, "Community" 377) not only help to generate a sense of community between the poet and reader, but also to build a bridge between Spenser's Albion and

Byron's Britannia.

This chapter has tracked Byron's shifting attitudes towards both gender and nation in the context of his exile and how these forces shape and affect his poetics during this period. His perception of his lack of subjectivity can be understood as an alienation from the maternal body politic, akin to a state of being orphaned, thus bringing to the fore the issues of paternity and transmission which play a large part in the action of DJ. Juan's lack of agency in his romantic adventures enacts Byron's own feelings of being marginalised and becoming obsolescent in an increasingly gynocratic world. These issues inform and influence Byron's treatments of domesticity that I will discuss in the next chapter. These treatments are of crucial significance in understanding Byron's configurations of home, especially in context of his "native land", England.

## Chapter IV: “To write so as to bring home the heart”: Byron and the figure of home

### Introduction

The only specimen of Annabella Milbanke’s handwriting that Byron had left, after returning her letters, and burning the last note he had received from her after his departure from England, was the word “Household” written twice in an old account book. The persistent resonance of this word in Byron’s life and works in his period of exile becomes evident in his original epigraph to DJ: Domestica facta, or “domestic facts”. Hobhouse advised on the proofs--“Do not have this motto”--for he assumed that most of Byron’s contemporary readers would be quick to identify the events of the poem to “Lord Byron’s affairs” (Graham 15). Indeed, had Byron chosen to keep the motto, it would have surely have had resonance for readers who had already been exposed to Poems on his Domestic Circumstances (1816). However, the context of the quotation, “nor have those who have dared to abandon the path of the Greeks and celebrate our homeland’s deeds deserved least honour” (Ars Poetica 286), widens the scope of the quotation, and as, Graham observes “[r]educing domestica facta to either private affairs or public events would ignore a dimension of Don Juan” (15). The former epigraph reiterates the “domestic” as both homeland and household, themes inextricably entwined in the epic poem. Herbert Tucker, in his article on the

domestication of English poetry in the 1820s, observes that the “idealized, often dematerialized, imagination of home” begins to co-exist with the concrete idea of a house as a home (522). Tucker notes a trend towards an “indoors migration of poetry [that] was ironically portended by Byron’s sending the wicked Don Juan home in 1823 to British soil, and British topics, for the action of its final cantos” (525).

This preoccupation with home was remarked upon by an Italian traveller who, recalling his visit to England in the 1820s, noted that “comfort is in the mouth of every Englishman at every moment and that the family took the place of continental society; even the English national song seemed to be ‘Home Sweet Home’” (Davidoff and Hall 360). This engagement manifests itself “in both ideological and material senses” (Tucker 525) in DJ, one of its major themes being the influence of domestic activity within the home and on the nation. By placing an emphasis on domesticity, Byron was endorsing Burke’s model of successful human community based on the organic development both of the mind and political body under benevolent parental control:

Man found a considerable advantage by this union of many persons to form one family; he therefore judged that he would find his account proportionably in an union of many families into one body politic. And as Nature has formed no bond of union to hold them together, he supplied this defect by laws.  
(34)

However, for Byron this endorsement was not problematic as the domestic



sphere was considered the domain of female influence. Byron's negative experiences of, and attitudes towards, women meant that he perceived contemporary ideals of domesticity as tainted, a condition that could only be ameliorated by an assertion of patriarchal authority. Batten argues that Byron "wrote in order to restore some notion of familial love (even, mischievously, incestuous love) to a commercial world of exchange" (26) where the poetic creator felt alienated from the product of his poetic labours, a phenomenon that she calls "the orphanage of culture" (2). Byron's perception of himself as an alienated subject turns upon his anxiety regarding his own commodification and his self-exiled status. DJ is thus largely concerned with the relationship between domesticity and commercial commodification, a relationship that, as I shall demonstrate in this chapter, is necessarily inflected with gender.

Mythic representations of Byron often followed the template that Thomas Moore, in a bid to rescue his subject's reputation after the fallout of the Separation Controversy, delineated in his biography, that of a man possessing "the higher order of genius" (3:125) to whom domesticity could only be detrimental. However, Ross persuasively argues that Byron's denigration of the domestic and Wordsworth's celebration of it, rather than being antithetical, both serve the same function of trying to appropriate this strongest bastion of female influence: "Where Byron seeks to escape

domestication in order to master it, Wordsworth seeks to master domestication by inhabiting it, transforming it and thus ruling it" (Contours 37). The increasing professionalisation of poetry is equated with a domestication of sorts, for both Byron and Wordsworth are aware that it is a shift predicated by the intervention of women in the literary field.

Tucker shows how the most popular female poet of the time, Felicia Hemans, influences the way that male poets thought about domesticity--her account in a letter of her visit to Wordsworth in 1830, "suggest[s] a quiet habit of cautiously indulged yet intensely felt professional self-congratulation" (533) when she witnessed Wordsworth's display of exemplary domesticity as both poet and family man.<sup>1</sup> The mutual

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Hemans refers to Moore's formulation of the incompatibility of domesticity with genius in discussion with Wordsworth, demonstrating the impact of his comments on such matters:

You may remember how much I disliked . . . that shallow theory of Mr. Moore's with regard to the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness. I was speaking of it yesterday to Mr. Wordsworth, and was pleased by his remark, "It is not because they possess genius that they make unhappy homes, but because they do not possess genius enough; a higher order of mind would enable them to see and feel all the beauty of domestic ties." He has himself been singularly fortunate in long years of almost untroubled domestic peace and union. (Chorley 120)

It was Moore's Life, rather than any of Byron's poetry, that turned Hemans irrevocably against her poetic hero:

Her anxiety to see the memoirs was extreme, her disappointment at the extracts which appeared in the periodicals so great as to prevent her reading the work when published. "The book itself," says she, in one of her notes, "I do not mean to read; I feel as if it would be like entering a tavern, and I shall not cross the threshold." She found the poet whom she had long admired at a distance invested with a Mephistopheles-like character which pained and startled her. (Chorley 22)

Her disillusionment caused her to discard a brooch of a lock of Byron's hair that she had once treasured. Chorley also refers to her censorship of poems

borrowings of Hemans and Byron are rather more reciprocal than comparisons of the two poets would suggest and, although Byron was hesitant to display the breadth of Hemans' influence, it is likely that his way of thinking about home was shaped by her 1812 work Domestic Affections. Peter Cochran attributes Byron's animosity towards Felicia Hemans to the possibility that he may have seen her as another version of himself (16).<sup>2</sup> Tucker tracks Hemans' treatment of domesticity from one that inspired "bliss", as chronicled in the title poem Domestic Affections, to one of a yearning for that bliss, fuelled by nostalgia (535). Given the scope of Byron's influence on Hemans, it is possible that her emulation stretched to replicating that nostalgia that pervaded the later cantos of CHP and the English cantos of DJ. Hemans' strategy that "consistently refamiliarizes nostalgic alienation in terms of bourgeois domesticity" (535) could have been learnt from DJ, but as Tucker argues, with one significant difference--Hemans' poetry of the

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that met with her disapproval:

If any passage in one of her most favourite writers offended her delicacy, the leaf was torn out without remorse ; and every one familiar with her little library will have been stopped by many a pause and chasm, of which this is the explanation. (23)

Chris Hart shows how this dissonance between Hemans' perception of Byron the man and Byron the poet came about: "Byron's audience . . . imagined an uncrossable chasm between their heroes and their authors, so that even if they called him 'the Giaour' or 'Childe Harold' (as they had called Matthew Lewis 'the Monk') they never seriously believed that the villainy and repulsiveness Byron always claimed for his heroes was a realistic description of himself." (xi)

<sup>2</sup> Elfenbein has also offered a similar reasoning of Byron's anxiety regarding Hemans: "His indictment of Hemans was also partly an indictment of himself, since, as he admitted, one of the styles that she imitated was his own." ("Heterodoxy" par.2)

home is characterised by “architectural nondescription” (537). Unlike Byron’s DJ, in which verse after verse is spent detailing interiors and objects, Hemans abstains from such particularities in order, according to Tucker (537), to boost “universality of appeal”. DJ seems to be Hemans’ Domestic Affections transposed to another key. Inherent to Hemans’ dedication to domesticity is a patriotism that Byron is reluctant to wear on his sleeve, and thus visits through these muted themes.

Literary professionalisation of the kind that Hemans and other female poets represented resulted in the further commodification<sup>3</sup> of poetry, leading to a sense of alienation of the poet/producer from the fruits of that labour. This alienation, in the case of Byron, is intensified by his other experiences of personal alienation, from both his home and the nation, and this becomes explicit through the major themes of DJ which are paternity, legitimacy and transmission.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Henderson points out that “the growing potency of the commodity could be used as a lever for asserting the political independence of the laborer/producer over against the aristocrat/consumer” (“Wanderer” 3). This tension put Byron in a paradoxical position, as, in order to free himself from the ties that bound him to the nation he would have to accept his status as labourer or as a professional.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Mackovski compellingly demonstrates how the prevalence of primogenitary themes in Gothic literature finds its parallel in the handing down of texts, revealing a “remarkable correspondence between the way landed property, family castles, and dowries are inherited across generations--and the ways texts are read, copied, imitated, plagiarized and forged through time” (32). His discussion of the Gothic episodes in DJ shows how “primogenitary strains are repeatedly textualized” (35).

#### IV.i. Domesticity begins at home: the Separation Controversy and the aftermath

Byron's portrayal of domestic relationships between men and women had, until 1816, been firmly anchored in the exotic,<sup>5</sup> such as in those Turkish Tales that were situated in other cultures rather than his own, and by virtue of this fact were not "domestic".<sup>6</sup> He had delineated with care the impact of local cultural mores and expectations on the relationships of the heroes and heroines of the tales, so that in spite of parallels that may be drawn between such exotic worlds and that of the English reader, they were obscured by the intensely felt passions of the protagonists, their transgressions as well as the frisson created by this textual encounter with an exotic other, providing vicarious pleasure for the domestic female reader.<sup>7</sup> Caroline Franklin writes that in The Corsair "the bourgeois ideology of domesticity [is] recognizable even in its exotic setting" (Heroines 65). This may have been a meditated move in order to distance himself from the ubiquitous female authored

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<sup>5</sup> Davidoff points out that "while conceptual dichotomies such as public and private are constructed with a drive to fix boundaries between at least two different constructs which can be separated and contrasted, the concept of domesticity and its concomitant, domestic ideology, seems historically to have no other 'half'. (The literal opposite of domesticity would be the wild or untamed or, alternatively, foreign or strange, as in domestic goods versus foreign imports)" ("Regarding" 166). The "wild or untamed" model is also applicable here for Islam was seen as the uncivilised counterpart of the dominant Christian ideology that was used to justify British imperial expansion.

<sup>6</sup> The OED defines "domestic" as "Of or pertaining to one's own country or nation; not foreign, internal, inland, 'home'".

<sup>7</sup> Lady Melbourne wrote on reading Byron's The Giaour: "The description of Love almost makes me in love [ . . . ] Certainly he excels in the language of Passion, whilst the power of delineating inanimate nature appears more copiously bestowed on other poets" (qtd. in St Clair 398).

domestic novel, that sought “to define the correct relationship between knowledge, romance, sexuality, familial obedience, and the constraints of both property and propriety on the lives of women” (Mellor 5). The influence of these novels was considerable: Mellor proposes that female authors of the late eighteenth century challenged the public realm’s usurpation of “the prerogatives and virtues of the private realm” by recolonising

the public sphere under the governance of women and feminine virtue, celebrating the social and political domination of a domestic sphere located either in an idealised version of the feudal past or in an utopian future, as did Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe. (9)

However, Byron’s own domestic strife, that resulted in his separation from Annabella Milbanke, was responsible for a shift that manifested itself in the poetry written in its wake. In a letter to Milbanke, written in the aftermath of their separation, Byron wrote that he had written the “first verses” that he had ever written about her, and that they probably would be the last he ever wrote (BLJ 5:51). Aware of how this histrionic statement might be received, he clarified: “This at such a moment may look like affectation, but it is not so. The language of all nations nearest to a state of nature is said to be Poetry. I know not how this may be; but this I know.” (BLJ 5:52).

This pronouncement was certainly disingenuous, as Byron had fifty copies of the verses “Fare Thee Well” privately printed in order to distribute

amongst Milbanke's disapproving circle of friends, in order to convey his distress to both his ex-wife as well as her acquaintances. However, it appeared in the liberal periodical The Champion without his permission, possibly as a consequence of the actions of his nemesis Henry Brougham, who was ostensibly meant to be working in the interests of both parties, but in reality, was Lady Byron's supporter throughout. Consequently, the poem was reproduced along with the vituperative satire on Annabella Milbanke's confidante and former governess Mrs Clermont, "A Sketch from Private Life", in several pirated editions that were entitled Poems on his Domestic Circumstances by Lord Byron, the radical publisher William Hone's publication going through fifteen editions in 1816 alone (Chew 20).<sup>8</sup> While "Fare Thee Well" had a sympathetic reception from both readers and reviewers alike who read it as a "cri de coeur from a heartbroken husband"

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<sup>8</sup> William Hone's pirated edition was prefaced by his robust defence of Byron's behaviour, and its resulting effusions:

To speak of "Fare Thee Well!" as an insult to Lady Byron, is singular enough, as it is a string of emphatic compliment from beginning to end; the simple fact of unforgiveness only being stated, without even being accompanied by the assertion of deserving it. It is the humble plea of acknowledged error which ventures to suggest the beauty of mercy. The "Sketch" is another affair, and so entirely depends upon the facts which gave rise to it, that it will be impossible to judge of any thing, except its talent, until they are made known. To suppose that Lord Byron did not imagine himself injured, would be to infer his insanity; and who, possessed of his power of satire, under the impression of an insidious influence exerted against domestic peace, would not be tempted to exercise them as he has done? On the other hand, it is but justice to the individual attacked to admit, that the agonised mind of a deeply wounded husband might not be sufficiently cool for nice discrimination ; and that a strong satiric talent, exerted in a moment of real or imagined provocation, is always to be understood with some grains of allowance. (6)

(McGann, BR 81),<sup>9</sup> any positive effect the poem had on Byron's reading public was undone by the vindictive "A Sketch From Private Life". Its "libelous invective" (qtd. in Reiman 646) was considered beneath the dignity of a nobleman in its vicious attack on both a servant and a woman and can be read as a resurfacing of the kind of trenchant misogynist satire<sup>10</sup> that Byron produced before his meteoric fame, possibly an impudent gesture hinting that he no longer felt the need to pander to a female audience by writing "amorous," sentimental verse. But the poem also foreshadows some of the issues that would become central to DJ: namely the lack of wisdom in placing faith in women as caregivers and educators of a nation, due to their fallen natures. Byron was disturbed by the power women wielded within the domestic sphere as the first educators of children, particularly as performed by maternal substitutes from the lower strata of society, such as governesses:

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<sup>9</sup> The extent of the success of the poem to evoke sympathy is apparent from this letter written by one of Byron's usually more scathing critics, Mary Russell Mitford:

Are not Lord Byron's leave-taking verses beautiful? I believe I indulged myself with abusing him to you, but ever since those verses I have felt certain relentings towards the luckless author. Partly I believe this effect may be owing to some particles of contrariness in my disposition, which have been a good deal excited by the delicate morality of his admirers in this neighbourhood, who excuse themselves to themselves for their *ci-devant* admiration by a double portion of rancour towards his lordship and pity towards his wife. "Poor Lady Byron!" "Unfortunate victim!" "Hapless sufferer!" and so forth, are her style and titles at present. Now without at all attempting to vindicate him or accuse her, I cannot help thinking this immense quantity of sympathy rather more than the case requires. Why did she marry him? For, to do the man justice, he was no hypocrite; his vices were public enough. (329)

<sup>10</sup> See "A Portrait" discussed in Chapter I.



“An only infant’s earliest governess! / She taught the child to read, and taught so well, / That she herself, by teaching, learn’d to spell” (“Sketch” lines 12-14).

Jane Rendell argues that “the representations of gendered space in any patriarchal culture will play an important role in ‘placing’ men in dominant roles in relation to public and private spaces” (*Pursuit* 20). Byron’s fury at Clermont is symptomatic of a feeling of displacement he feels as a patriarchal figure, similar to the kind of marginalisation he was already experiencing to an extent by the influence of women writers and readers in the literary marketplace. Unlike his earlier youthful work that was a learnt performance of misogyny, “A Sketch” was a scathing work that drew “the reader into a realm of personal anger where the subject of poetry is Byron’s enemy and the object is revenge [ . . . ] a disturbingly intimate poem, whose problem is not theatricality but its relentless sincerity” (Stauffer 23).

The poem, which maps Clermont’s rise from the ranks of domestic servant<sup>11</sup> to her mistress’ confidante as a journey through Byron’s “domestic hell” (54), describes her as a “snake” (47) oozing “black slime” (48) and a

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<sup>11</sup> With the rise of the middle class, labour within the home became more diffused, with women delegating housework and childcare to lower class women (Davidoff “Regarding” 172). But this act in itself was considered potentially problematic, as maidservants were perceived by the Pittite government as a threat to moral order (Colley 242). Working class women coming into London looking for employment at the turn of the century were considered transgressive bodies who endangered and could potentially violate the sanctity of class, a suspicion that seems to inform Byron’s furious attack.

“viper” (49) equipped with “venom” (50)<sup>12</sup> recalling the trope of the monstrous female--the “hag of hatred” (51) echoing the “hag” who first appeared in his early poem “A Portrait”. The parallel Byron draws between the home as Eden, and Clermont’s personification as the “eternal evil” (52) who violates its sanctity is obvious. The monstrous woman occurs in various formulations and to various extents in Byron’s corpus: the Maid of Saragoza, made monstrous and Gorgonesque (CHP I) by her martial behaviour, an epithet Byron recycles here: “With a vile mask the Gorgon would disown” (64) or the active phallic Gulnare compared to the more passive and domestic Medora in The Corsair, creating a contrast between the corrupt and the pure that Byron recreates here, Annabella being described as “Serenely purest of her sex that live” (31).

The title of the poem, “A Sketch From Private Life”, becomes an act of equivocation on publication, for that which is now public can no longer be considered private and this foregrounds “the proper relation of the public

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<sup>12</sup>Elizabeth Grosz encapsulates the fears that the use of such liquid metaphors embody in male representations of the female body as being:

as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting . . . a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order? [ . . . ] Instead, my hypothesis is that women’s corporeality is inscribed as a mode of seepage [ . . . ] The metaphors of uncontrollability, the ambivalence between desperate, fatal attraction and strong revulsion, the deep-seated fear of absorption, the association of femininity with contagion and disorder, the undecidability of the limits of the female body (particularly, but not only, with the onset of puberty and in the case of pregnancy), its powers of cynical seduction and allure are all common themes in literary and cultural representations of women (203).

sphere to an increasingly powerful private sphere" (Mellor 5). New tensions between the public and private spheres resulted in "a fundamental ambiguity governing the term privacy" (Davidoff, "Regarding" 167), an instability that manifested itself in the glut of first person memoirs that was saturating the nineteenth century literary marketplace.

#### IV.ii. Outside looking in: male subjectivity and domesticity in DJ

Hobhouse's comments prompted Byron to replace the motto with Difficile est proprie communia dicere: "Tis no slight task to write on common things." As the poem was published without dedication or preface, the epigraph was the only introduction to the poem apart from the network of expectations set up from the title itself.<sup>13</sup> This shift from "domestic facts" to "common things" is more seamless than seems immediately obvious, for a feature that characterised this turn of the century engagement with the ideals of domesticity and the home was its preoccupation with things, or commodities.<sup>14</sup> In the fourth canto of CHP, Byron personifies this seductive appeal of the commodity as feminine, embodied by the statue of Venus de Medici that causes one to both "gaze and turn away" (line 442) and his

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<sup>13</sup> Moyra Haslett in her book Don Juan and the Don Juan Legend explores the "network of allusions--sexual, political, and personal" (11) that the title and expectations of its subject matter evoked.

<sup>14</sup> McCracken illustrates the connections between domesticity and commodity consumption: "the family and its meaningfully charged complement of consumer goods and activities were in a process of constant interaction from the sixteenth century onwards [ . . . ] It is a cultural commonplace in the West to equate the "family" with the bundle of material objects we call the 'home'." (150)

engagement with this culture of consumption finds its ultimate expression in DJ, that poem that at its outset declares its concerns with “common things”.

In DJ Byron dedicates himself to producing detailed descriptions of domestic spaces and the interaction of the poem’s characters with both the spaces themselves as well as the “common things” within them, a gesture towards which he feels considerable ambivalence: “I won’t describe; description is my forte” (V.52.409). The purposes of these descriptions, however, are to interrogate existing gendered concepts of domesticity that were prevalent in Byron’s England: whether women did indeed “form good housekeepers to breed a Nation” (XIV.24.192), the ramifications of “Petticoat influence” (XIV.26.201), and men’s roles within these paradigms. Moyra Haslett has illustrated how the title of DJ had a “talismanic significance” (11) that led contemporary reviewers to interpret Byron’s Juan as the “traditional, amoral Don Juan of legend” (76). But the poem is shot through with an engagement with middle class domesticity that betrays these expectations set up by the title. In DJ, as this chapter will demonstrate, Byron continually aligns commodification and conspicuous consumption with women, and attributes to them the violation of the private sphere. Byron sought to master the idea of gynocentric domesticity<sup>15</sup> in an attempt to undermine it, and to

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<sup>15</sup> Byron pondered the advantage of domesticised femininity in the context of the Greeks:

illustrate the fate of fathers in this economy of “things” both reified and material, exploring those themes that he had glanced at in the fourth Canto of CHP.

Robert Burton, in his seminal work The Anatomy of Melancholy wrote that he was “A mere spectator of other men's fortunes and adventures, and how they act their parts, which methinks are diversely presented unto me, as from a common theatre or scene” (16). Byron echoes these words<sup>16</sup> in DJ, as he portrays himself, unlike Juan, as one who looks on as “a mere spectator” (a phrase that he repeats in XIII.7.54) or even “as a mourner or a scorner” (XI.69.550). This melancholia is an outcome of commodity culture, a culture that, as Batten has pointed out, “denies its origins even as its desires bespeak its unconscious attachment to what it claims to have relinquished” (4). The isolation felt by both Burton and Byron is a consequence of the increasing status of the thing, the material object, that simultaneously devalues yet appeals to humankind.

Laura George in her examination of reification and Byron's

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Present state, a remnant of the barbarism of the chivalry [sic] and feudal ages--artificial and unnatural. They ought to mind home--and be well fed and clothed--but not mixed in 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 and ploughing now and then. I have seen them mending the roads in Epirus with good success. Why not, as well as hay-making and milking? (BLJ 8:15)

<sup>16</sup> Byron was an admirer of Burton's work, possessing two copies of the Anatomy and believed that it was “The Book . . . most useful to a man who wishes to acquire a reputation of being well-read” (CMP 6).

representation of the dandy designates McGann's formulation of a poetry of dandyism as "treating oneself as a thing" (par. 1), a necessary strategy in an increasingly commercial world where everything is prey to commodification. Byron wrote that DJ was written "in the style of Beppo" a poem that Francis Jeffrey regarded as "a thing of nothing [ . . . ] entirely composed of common words in their common places" (qtd. in George par. 2). The motto of DJ then could be seen as Byron trying anew to write on "common things" for, as George points out, "anxieties about reification predate large-scale industrialization and may in fact be a function of the emergence of consumer culture more than a function of industrialization or late capitalism" (par. 9). Common things, domestic objects, are important to the action of the poem--such as Inez's ornamented Missal that is considered a potent instrument of corruption (I.46.361-368), or Juan's shoes that expose his presence to the cuckolded Alfonso--demonstrating how it is "occasions of contingency--the chance interruption--that disclose a physicality of things" (Brown 4).

The emergence of a bourgeois consumer culture spearheaded by women in the early nineteenth century shifted the focus on to the material object, and it is this segment of society which responded to the reification of national and patriotic sentiment in the form of Britannia,<sup>17</sup> an allegorical figure who was ubiquitous, appearing in political images, tableaux,

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter III for my discussion of the allegorization of the British body politic.

performances and cartoons. This is reiterated in the roll call of names of heroes in DJ whose deeds, heroic or otherwise, are reduced to material objects such as “sign-posts” (I.2.12) and newspapers (I.2.16). The significance of the commodity for the burgeoning bourgeoisie is illustrated by Henderson:

In the context of the heated political debates of the 1790s and early 1800s, in which everything from monarchy to property to the institution of marriage was questioned, only the value of objects still seemed secure, and it was the consumer's capacity to recognize and respond to the commodity's apparent individuality, novelty and autonomy that enabled him to re-enchant his world. Increasingly, it was consumer goods that inspired the hopes and loyalties of the English subject. (“Wanderer” 11)

The emphasis on the body as commodity in the Regency period created a corporeal economy where physicality became a counter of currency, be it in the form of wagers placed on sporting talent or paying for sex. While the Biblical allusion to Juan’s patrilineal descent (I.9.70-71) from the thoroughbred Hidalgos defines Juan’s father Don Jose (I.9.66), his mother Donna Inez, is compared to commodities such as clocks and Macassar’s hair oil (I.17.136).<sup>18</sup> Byron’s uncharitable description of Donna Inez subverts the

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<sup>18</sup> Byron’s mention of the brand of hair oil by name, as well as alluding to the advertisement, is significant in its apprehension of a world rapidly filling up with commodities:

[W]ith the late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century inventions of transfer printing, the lithograph, and the papermaking machine was the large-scale production of distinctively labeled products possible [ . . . ] In the 1760s, however, this began to change. Encouraged by the population boom in London’s suburbs and improvements in transportation, several manufacturers established regional, national, or even international networks

expectations of domesticity raised by her role as mother for, though virtuous, his description of her conveys a woman who was more interested in intellectual (read masculine) pursuits (dedicating five stanzas to her accomplishments), as well as possessing “sublimity” (a masculine attribute in Byron’s vocabulary) rather than being a good wife and mother. In this new economy of “common things”, the domestic and the quotidian, Jose dies of “the slow fever call’d the tertian” (I.34.271), as the unquantifiability of “his worthlessness or worth” (I.36.281) makes him obsolete.

In one of his digressions on man in the first canto of Byron writes that

Man’s a strange animal, and makes strange use  
Of his own nature, and the various arts,  
And likes particularly to produce  
Some new experiment to show his parts;  
This is the age of oddities let loose,  
Where different talents find their different marts;  
(I.128.1017-1022)

His rhyming of “parts” with “marts” makes explicit the nexus between the body and cash. Juan is a body, “a thing among things” (Merleau-Ponty 164), whose worth is his capacity to make love, which is “a marketable vice” (I.64.512), his somatic value (as well as the poem’s theme) emblemized by the epigraph. Juan is portrayed as successfully assimilated into this world of

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to distribute their products. Shedding its stigma, branding proved an ideal method of expanding distribution, since it allowed producers to establish “reputations and relationships with as surely as the corner grocer did through personal contact and personality.” Early brand-name advertising, like advertising today, aimed to convince the consumer that a certain product was worth asking for by name. (Mason 417-418)



things, this nation of “haughty shop-keepers” (X.65.518), and in a position to enjoy the fruits of this assimilation, being “careless, young and magnifique / And rich in rubles, diamonds, cash, and credit” (X.70.553-4) as one would have to be in “A country in all senses the most dear” (X.77.613). Juan is designated with all those hallmarks of the early nineteenth century commodity that “inspired emotions of a particular kind: it was idealized and perceived as attractively individualized, aloof, exotic, and changeable, and it elicited a passionate and sometimes even painful form of desire” (Henderson, “Wanderer” 2). His desirability is enhanced as he is “young and handsome, / Noble, rich, celebrated and a stranger” (XI.74.585-6). He is fetishised by virgins and married women alike, unhampered by his limited grasp of English (XI.12.89-90).

Byron writes in his account of the slave market “‘Tis pleasant purchasing our fellow creatures; / And all are to be sold” (V.27.210-11). In the English cantos both the “pedestrian Paphians” (XI.30.236) who walk the streets and are “[C]ommodious<sup>19</sup> but immoral” (XI.30.238) and the respectable society women of the London ballroom are signified by their saleable sexuality:

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<sup>19</sup> Grose’s Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, the “canting dictionary that Byron referred to for the ‘flash language’ employed in DI” (Dyer, “Thieves” 564), defined commodity as “the private parts of a modest woman, and the public parts of a prostitute” (96).

Fair virgins blushed upon him; wedded dames  
 Bloomed also in less transitory hues;  
 For both commodities dwell by the Thames,  
 The painting and the painted; youth, ceruse,  
 (XI.48.377-380)

Byron often uses the ballroom as a space of male downfall brought about by the association with women, a space where, like the domestic sphere, women are endowed with relatively more agency of men. "The Charity Ball" (1820) (CPW IV:131) was apparently written by Byron on reading of Lady Byron's appointment as patroness of that annual event. In this bitter and vengeful piece, he attacks Lady Byron and her lack of feeling, characterising her as uncultured and susceptible to flattery:

What matters the pangs of a husband and father,  
 If his sorrows in exile be great or be small  
 So if the Pharisee's glories around her she gather,  
 And the witch patronises her Charity Ball.  
 (lines 1-4)

Byron however, turns the representation of objectification on its head by casting Juan as the most desirable commodity in London "a bachelor--of arts, / And parts, and hearts" (XI.47.369-70), and making the women most significant consumers in this economy. Private masculine spaces like the "Hells" (XI.29.232) or the "fisty ring" (XI.55.434) are merely glanced at and elided in favour of those public spaces of display such as "Parks" (XI.66.524) or the ballroom lorded over by "the noble Hostess" (XI.68.537). Juan is

presented as an aspiring Corinthian<sup>20</sup> “lounging and boxing” (XI.66.522), who is in his “proper place” (XI.70.557) amidst the “gems and plumes, and pearls and silks” (XI.70.556) encouraged to “get opposite and ogle” (XI.72.570) the object of his desire. Byron bemoans the accelerated obsolescence created by this feminised consumer culture:<sup>21</sup>

As for the ladies, I have nought to say,  
                   A wanderer from the British world of fashion,  
 Where I, like other ‘dogs, have had my Day,’  
                   Like other men too, may have had my passion--  
 But that, like other things, has pass’d away,  
 (II.166.1321-4)

For ten verses Byron meditates on the transience of human existence, but is particularly perturbed by the rapidity with which these changes have taken place: “In short, the list of alterations bothers: / There’s little strange in this, but something strange is / The unusual quickness of these common changes” (XI.81.646-648). These “common changes” are wrought by the paramount importance of “common things” that make “the past recede more quickly

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<sup>20</sup> In her analysis of journalist and writer Pierce Egan’s 1821 book *Life in London* Jane Rendell teases out the differences between the three character types who propel the action of the book: the Corinthian, the dandy and the Rambler. She makes a distinction between the more effeminate dandy who represented the threat of the rising bourgeoisie as well as “continental deviancy”, whose main sport, gambling, took place indoors (*Pursuit* 114) in opposition to the Corinthian and Rambler who would participate in physical activity such as pugilism in order to emphasise their masculinity and by association their patriotic affiliations. However, this “masculinity” of the Rambler, is destabilised by his desire to be looked at, and to be treated as spectacle, a feature Rendell points out, “associated with femininity in patriarchal ideology” (“West End” 23).

<sup>21</sup> McCracken notes that studies of the history of consumption have resulted in the significant observation that the “effect of fashion” alters “our cultural categories of time and space [ . . . ] This systematic turnover of styles in clothing, pottery, food, furniture, architecture, and other product categories intensified the ‘periodicity’ of Western time. The constant innovation of style created an increasingly ‘narrow’ present” (144).

and the future approach with new rapidity” (McCracken 144). Byron’s “unconscious attachment to what (he) seems to have relinquished” is the old model of the British nation, in other words Albion, and he remains “unreconciled to the compensatory strategies” (Batten 3) of British commodity culture.

Strand has persuasively argued that DJ, amongst other things, is Byron’s “critique of globalizing capitalism” (503) which vindicates “the rational spirit of accumulation” (507) embodied by the miser for: “[P]lodd[ing] through vulgar fractions is all that is ultimately real, in the end; a cycle of production and consumption generates a world of surfaces, without depth” (510). Byron defines this world as one of ephemeral materiality: Juan finds himself: “more gaily classed / Amongst the higher spirits of the day, / The sun’s true son, no vapour, but a ray” (XI.64.510-12); his business “[W]as like all business, a laborious nothing” (XI.65.512) and his “proper place” (XI.70.558) is “[D]issolving in the waltz to some soft air” (XI.70.559) or displaying “mercurial skill” (XI.70.559). The miser is “your only poet” (XII.8.57) for he triumphs over “money, that most pure imagination” (XII.2.15) by turning that “bark of vapour” into gold (XII.4.32). The world of objects and wealth, such as those that characterise Gulbayez’s court create “[A] rich Confusion” (V.93.739) that

form’d a disarray

In such sort, that the eye along it cast  
 Could hardly carry any thing away,  
 Object on object flash'd so bright and fast;  
 (V.93.739-742)

is echoed in Byron's complaint (that tellingly forms the core of the English cantos): "And that which after all my spirit vexes, / Is, that I find no spot where man can rest eye on, / Without confusion of the sorts and sexes"

(XI.3.19-21). Byron's descriptions of wealth and commodification of the body recall Burke's famous description of the behaviour of the gaze when encountering a woman's "most beautiful" parts,

about the neck and breasts; the smoothness, the softness; the easy and insensible swell; the variety of the surface, which is never for the smallest space the same; the deceitful maze through which the unsteady eye glides giddily without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried. (80)

These associations make the link between the feminine and the world of commerce and conspicuous consumption explicit.

Byron's ambivalence towards this cycle is caused by his paradoxical position of "wanting to tell the truth about political tyranny, but compromised because his poem is part of the very economic system that underlies the tyranny" (Strand 526). Byron's attempt to resolve, or at least displace this anxiety is accomplished by casting women and their untrammelled consumption as the agents who perpetuate that tyranny. This world of surfaces is the "earthly Paradise of 'Or Molu'" (XI.67.536) presided over by its "noble Hostess" (XI.68.537). Byron conveys the feminine nature of

the excesses of capitalism and commodities by employing the use of “word clusters”<sup>22</sup> in conjunction with women: “Saloon, room, hall o’erflow beyond their brink” (XI.68.541), and items of “female want” regularly spill over to the next line: “French stuffs, lace, tweezers, toothpicks, teapot, tray / Guitars and castanets from Alicant” (III.17.133-4) and “much linen, lace, and several pair / Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete, / With other articles of ladies fair” (I.143.1139-41). Similarly Byron used his numerous digressions or “accretions” to furnish the poetic space of DJ, adding them interstitially only once the primary text of the poem was established, echoing that sense of profusion and extravagant excess that forms the subject matter of the poem.

As Davidoff and Hall have noted, women played a large role in the creation of middle class domesticity,<sup>23</sup> and the presence of female influence

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<sup>22</sup> “[R]elated words grouped together, thereby accumulating elements of a parallel nature.” (Rommel 7)

<sup>23</sup> The divorce trial of Queen Caroline in 1820 was to have a crucial impact on ideas of domesticity and the role of women in both the public and private spheres. The death of George IV’s daughter Princess Charlotte (to whom Byron had addressed his “Lines to a Lady Weeping”) had already had a devastating impact on the incipient middle classes to whom she was an iconic figure—her pleasure in “simple domestic duties, and the creation of a beautiful home and garden for herself, her husband and her prospective child were chronicled”, representing an antithesis to the Regent’s decadent world of public entertainment and lax morality (Davidoff and Hall 153). The centrality of the queen to public consciousness persisted when Charlotte’s mother, Queen Caroline returned in 1820 after the death of George III to claim her position as queen, a move that George IV stoutly resisted in the face of their earlier separation. The sympathy for both Caroline and her daughter, would particularly influence those configurations of domestic ideology that would dominate public opinion in the 1820s and 1830s. Support for Queen Caroline “was in fact spread widely throughout the nation, from many of the landed classes to radical working classes” (Wahrman 402). But the Queen Caroline affair was a watershed in that it was the first issue of the nineteenth century in which “women acted as defenders of familial values and communal morality” (Laqueur, “Politics” 442).

therefore seemed inextricable from domestic peace, a fact that Byron's contemporary Leigh Hunt<sup>24</sup> celebrated in his writings. Elizabeth Jones has pointed out that:

Hunt was perhaps most eloquent on the pleasures of domestic existence, pleasures which, in their delight in the quotidian--indeed, in their domestic naturalness--provided a radical contrast to the ornamentation and throbbing eroticism of his narrative poems. (83)

Despite their often strained relations, Byron possessed a grudging respect for Hunt that, initially, was based more on his admiration of Hunt as a person rather than a poet. By the time they came to collaborate on The Liberal<sup>25</sup> Byron had a healthier respect for Hunt's politics, though his patience with Hunt himself was waning.<sup>26</sup> Hunt in a note to his 1815 edition of The Feast of the Poets advised Byron to

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<sup>24</sup> Leigh Hunt was the editor of the radical periodical The Examiner, whose writings reflected the tastes of an emerging urban middle class. His prison cell from which he published The Liberal with the help of his brother, was a space representative of the new dangerously domesticated male; bestrewn with flowers and reproductions of famous paintings, its décor was redolent of the furnishing taste of a middle class woman--echoing its purpose as a site of transgressive politically subversive publishing in its insouciant, almost aggressively domestic décor. John Gibson Lockhart in a series of pseudonymous articles published in Blackwood's Magazine in 1817 famously denigrated Hunt and his literary associates Keats and Hazlitt as the "Cockney School" of poets, compared Hunt's writing to "the gilded drawing-room of a little mincing boarding school mistress" where "everything is pretence, affectation, finery and gaudiness" (RR 50) which was unintentionally descriptive and evocative of the site of that writing itself.

<sup>25</sup> See Leslie Pickering's Lord Byron, Leigh Hunt and the Liberal (1925) as well as Jeffrey Cox's comprehensive work, Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle (1998) for an account of the establishment of the periodical.

<sup>26</sup> Byron believed that Hunt was a "good man, with some poetical elements in his chaos", and that his The Story of Rimini was "good poetry at bottom, disfigured only by a strange style" (BLJ 6:46). His relationship with Hunt soured considerably after the latter unapologetically imposed on him financially, and after the Hunts moved to Italy and moved into Byron's villa. Byron was irritated by Hunt's wife and described Hunt's children as "dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos." (BLJ 10:11).

habituate his thoughts as much as possible to the company of those recorded spirits and lofty countenances of public virtue, which elevate an Englishman's recollections, and are the true household deities of his country. (128)

He added that Byron should "study politics more and appear oftener in parliament" and "study society in those middle walks of life, where he may find the most cordial sum of its happiness" (128). Byron for his part, commented on a manuscript of The Story of Rimini that Hunt had sent him that Hunt seemed to be avoiding "saying common things in the common way" (BLJ 4:320). Hunt and Byron's mutual comments seem to echo both the original epigraph of DJ and its substitute, showing the centrality of these issues to Byron's poetic practice. Significantly, Byron did admire Hunt's qualities as a family man, though tempered with irony:

But Leigh Hunt is a good man, and a good father--see his Odes to all the Masters Hunt;--a good husband--see his Sonnet to Mrs. Hunt ;--a good friend--see his Epistles to different people;--and a great coxcomb and a very vulgar person in every thing about him. But that's not his fault, but of circumstances. (BLJ 6:47)

betraying an ambivalence towards middle-class domesticity that would influence his portrayals of both marriage and family life in DJ.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This ambivalence has been encapsulated neatly by Sedgwick in her discussion of homosocial masculinity:

The phrase "A man's home is his castle" offers a nicely condensed example of ideological construction [ . . . ] It reaches back to an emptied-out image of mastery and integration under feudalism in order to propel the male wage-worker forward to further feats of alienated labor, in the service of a now atomized and embattled, but all the more intensively idealized home. The man who has this home is a different person from the lord who has a castle [ . . . ] The contradiction is assuaged and filled in by transferring the lord's political and economic control over the environs of his castle to an image of



In his Round Table and Indicator essays Hunt's "fireside musings" offered a picture of cosy domesticity, celebrating the middle class family home that contained various "middle-class 'appendages' of cultural refinement" (E. Jones 84). Lockhart (or "Z" as he signed his reviews) accused Hunt and his associates of being suburban, articulating a patrician fear of aspirational middle class values held by those moving to the outskirts of London that were becoming increasingly gentrified (E. Jones 78). Byron himself was to mock these domestic values in DJ:

Yet a fine family is a fine thing  
 (Provided they don't come in after dinner);  
 'Tis beautiful to see a Matron bring  
 Her children up (if nursing them don't thin her);  
 Like cherubs round an altar-piece they cling  
 To the fire-side (a sight to touch a sinner).  
 A lady with her daughters or her nieces  
 Shine like a guinea and seven shilling pieces.  
 (III.60.473-480)

Byron's description of the domestic interior undergoes transmutations during his poetic career, and reflects his relationship with nation as well as his role in it. In the opening stanzas of the first canto of CHP he describes the Childe's ancestral home :

The Childe departed from his father's hall:  
 It was a vast and venerable pile;  
 So old, it seemed only not to fall,  
 Yet strength was pillared in each massy aisle.

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the father's personal control over the inmates of his house. The ideological formulation thus permits a criss-crossing of agency, temporality, and space (14).

Monastic dome!  
(lines 55-59)

He does not detail its interiors, though the accompanying illustration (CPW II:11) depicts “concubines” (CHP I.17) and “wassailers” (CHP I.18) revelling in front of gothic archways, in an otherwise rather sparse space. The Childe’s description of his “own good hall” as “deserted” (CHP I.130) and “desolate” (CHP I.131), paints a picture of dereliction: “Wild weeds are gathering on the wall; / My dog howls at the gate” (CHP I.133-4). Byron’s twinning of women with commerce and conspicuous consumption seems *prima facie* a misogynist denouncement of the gender’s avarice:

Yea! none did love him--not his lemans dear--  
But pomp and power alone are woman’s care,  
And where these are light Eros finds a feere;  
Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare,  
And Mammon wins his way where Seraphs might despair.  
(I.76-81)

But it is also in its way a perpetuation of the status quo, of the ideology that needed to confine women to the domestic sphere in service to the nation.

Consumerism was seen as the undesirable alternative to domestic chores as it would allow women “to come into contact with new and disreputable ideas” and female enjoyment would be bought at the price of child-bearing and rearing which were necessary acts of patriotic duty (Colley 256).

These descriptions are echoed when the narrator comes across Beckford’s abandoned palace:

There thou too, Vathek! England’s wealthiest son,

Once form'd thy Paradise, as not aware  
 When wanton Wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,  
 Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.

Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of pleasure plan,  
 Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow:  
 But now, as if a thing unblest by Man,  
 Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou!  
 Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow  
 To halls deserted, portals gaping wide:  
 (CHP I.276-284)

For Byron's contemporary readers, it would be easy to furnish this "fairy dwelling" with their imagination, for "England's wealthiest son" (CHP I.275) William Beckford, in his romance The History of Caliph Vathek (1786) conjured up a world of oriental splendour that was gleaned from the Arabian Nights as well as from the "factual knowledge about the East that Western scholars had been accumulating since the seventeenth century" (Saglia, "Sparks" 77).<sup>28</sup> The austere habitation of Lara was similar to the Childe's, described as a "Gothic pile" (line 42) with dark galleries and long halls. Both are portrayed as masculine spaces without any trace of feminine inhabitants. Norman Abbey in DJ is described in similar terms (the blueprint for all of

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<sup>28</sup> Byron relied heavily on Vathek for his descriptions of interiors in the Turkish Tales: For the contents of some of the notes I am indebted . . . partly to that most eastern, and as Mr. Weber justly entitles it, "sublime tale," the "Caliph Vathek". I do not know from what source the author of that singular volume may have drawn his materials; some of his incidents are to be found in the "Bibliothèque Orientale"; but for correctness of costume, beauty of description, and power of imagination, it far surpasses all European imitations; and bears such marks of originality, that those who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be more than a translation. As an Eastern tale, even Rasselas must bow before it; his "Happy Valley" will not bear a comparison with the "Hall of Eblis". (CPW III:423)

these being Byron's own Newstead Abbey), but all that Byron describes of its interiors is an ekphrastic account of the paintings that line its "long galleries" choosing to spare his reader descriptions of "the furniture and plate" (XIII.74.592). Although Byron, unlike Hunt, often "employed a gothic mode to make domestic interiors uncanny or estranged" (Stabler, "Aesthetics" 97) (which he subverts to comic effect in the Black Friar episode in Canto XVI) his characterisations of male figures within domestic spaces and as paternal figures are often more sympathetic than those of their female counterparts.

Gulbayez's boudoir in DJ though a "sweet place . . . private, pleasing, lone" (VI.97.770-1) is described as a gilded cage:

many a precious stone  
Sparkled along its roof, and many a vase  
Of porcelain held in the fettered flowers,  
Those captive soothers of a captive's hours.  
(VI.97.773-776)

Gulbayez is also portrayed as exceedingly extravagant:

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 things she bought,  
(V.113.897-901)

Juan is but one of her extravagant purchases. Byron's original for line 903,

"Being a true woman in a State of Nature" explains her acquisitive nature, and conflates femininity with consumption. Byron universalises the figure of the consuming woman in his description of Gulbayez's reaction to Juan's

sudden outburst: "female hearts are such a genial soil / For kinder feelings, whatsoe'er their nation" (V.120.955-6). These juxtapositions of myriad beautiful exotic objects with oriental women, as opposed to the unadorned environs of the Byronic hero, serve the purpose of commodifying the oriental women, as well as associating them with conspicuous consumption. Byron's scrupulous attention to detail of the ornamented artifice of these oriental worlds of course functioned as a device to captivate his middle class readership, whom he both "courted and rejected"<sup>29</sup> (Stabler, "Aesthetics" 97).

Byron's distaste for the violation of the private sphere is evident from his violent reaction to the suicide of Samuel Romilly, who had represented Lady Byron during the separation proceedings.<sup>30</sup> Phrases from one of his letters resurface in his description of Don Jose, Juan's father, who "was an honourable man" (I.35.273): "It was a trying moment that which found him / Standing alone beside his desolate hearth, / Where all his household gods lay

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<sup>29</sup> Davidoff and Hall describe Byron as a popular author amongst the middle class, even though he may have seemed rather unlikely choice for many: "Jane Ransome Biddell, reader of Hannah More and writer of poetry full of flower images and pious aspirations, with themes centering around home, friendship and other domestic subjects, was such an admirer of Byron that she and her farmer husband named one of their sons 'Manfred' to honour the Byronic hero" (159).

<sup>30</sup> "I have at least seen Romilly shivered--who was one of the assassins.-- --When that felon, or Lunatic--(take your choice--he must be one and might be both) was doing his worst to uproot my whole family tree, branch, and blossoms; when after taking my retainer he went over to them--when he was bringing desolation on my hearth--and destruction on my household Gods--did he think that in three years a natural event--a severe domestic--but an expected and common domestic Calamity would lay his Carcase in a Cross road or stamp his name in a Verdict of Lunacy?--Did he (who in his drivelling sexagenary dotage had not the courage to survive his Nurse--for what else was a wife to him at his time of life?) reflect or consider what my feelings must have been?" (BLJ 6:150)

shiver'd round him;" (I.284-286). Both Lambro, Haidee's father as well as Zuleika's father in The Bride of Abydos are portrayed as harsh men who nevertheless experience strong paternal emotions:

At one kind word those arms extending  
 To clasp the neck of him who blest  
 His child caressing and carest,  
 Zuleika came--Giaffir felt  
 His purpose half within him melt;  
 Not that against her fancied weal  
 His heart though stern could ever feel--  
 Affection chained her to that heart--  
 Ambition tore the links apart.

(Bride I.184-192)

Byron's descriptions of the excessive luxury of Lambro's palace in the third canto were mostly taken from Tully's A Narrative of Ten Years' Residence at Tripoli--its sybaritic detail, Byron was anxious to add, was from much of his "own observation"<sup>31</sup> (BLJ 8:186). This excess seems to create an uneasy tension with the sacredness of home that accompanies the description of Lambro's unwelcome homecoming: "He enter'd in the house no more his home" (DJ III.51.401) and in its subtle variation repeated in III.52.409, its sanctity denoted by "His only shrine of feelings undefiled" (DJ III.416). Lambro's love for his domicile and his protective feelings towards it exist in parallel with his feelings towards Greece, his old attachment to his homeland having power over him still: "But something of the spirit of old Greece /

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<sup>31</sup> "Remember, I never meant to conceal this at all--& have only not stated it, because D[on] Juan had no preface nor name to it.--If you think it worth while to make this statement--do so--in your own way.--I laugh at such charges--convinced that no writer ever borrowed less--or made his materials more his own." (BLJ 8:186).

Flashed o'er his soul a few heroic rays" (III.55.433-4) and "Still o'er his mind the influence of the clime / Shed its Ionian elegance" (III.56.441-2). Lambro's veneration for "Old Greece" resonates with Byron's nostalgia for ancient Albion, their conceptions of domestic love encompassing both home and nation.

The two fathers in the "ghastly crew" (II.87.689) of the shipwreck both lose their sons--one is depicted as a picture of stoic fortitude: "'Heaven's will be done! / I can do nothing'" and watches him "thrown / Into the deep without a tear or groan" (II.87.694-6). The other nurses his son till the very end, and his reaction to the boy's death is sketched poignantly:

The boy expired--the father held the clay,  
 And look'd upon it long, and when at last  
 Death left no doubt, and the dead burthen lay  
 Stiff on his heart, and pulse and hope was past,  
 He watch'd it wistfully, until away  
 'Twas borne by the rude wave wherein 'twas cast;  
 Then he himself sunk down all dumb and shivering,  
 And gave no sign of life, save his limbs quivering.  
 (II.90.713-720)

Ideology, Batten suggests, is "engendered in the very locus of sexual desire and bodily reproduction" (2) where the writing process is rewritten corporeally: "But words are things, and a small drop of ink, / Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces / That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think" (III.88.793-795). "Thing" was Regency slang for male or

female genitals (Kelley "Turner" 365).<sup>32</sup> "At the margins of our systems of symbolic exchange, of the Lacanian 'Law of the Father' that could only come into being through the exclusion of 'the Real' dwell the banished objects whom these poets evoke" (Batten 3) and Byron attempts, in his almost obsessive revisiting of the theme of paternity, to perform this recovery. Much of Byron's grief at leaving England was caused by the fact that he was unsure that he would ever be able to see his daughter Ada again, and knew that he would possibly never get the chance to participate in her upbringing. Byron's regret at this absence has both personal and wider significance, finding expression in the treatment of the themes of paternity and transmission in DJ. Haslett points out that Byron's portrayal of an infant and teenage Juan was the one aspect that the many versions of the legend had left untouched: "Byron attempts the domestication of the figure" (88). The narrative is imbued with the spectre of Byron's own dead father whom he lost at the age of four: "I have no idea of boys being brought up by mothers. I suffered too much from that myself" (Medwin 101) making the elimination of Juan's father Don Jose from the narrative significant, for Juan's fate is shaped by his

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<sup>32</sup> William Hone in his political pamphlet "The Political House that Jack Built" (1819) refers to the printing press as a thing foregrounding its generative and reproductive power:

This is THE THING, that, in spite of new Acts,  
And attempts to restrain it, by Soldiers or Tax,  
Will poison the Vermin, that plunder the Wealth  
That lay in the House,  
That Jack Built.



upbringing as “An only son left with an only mother” (I.37.295). The subversion of this conventional idea of childrearing as a feminine occupation and foregrounding the role of the father, demonstrates how in *DI* “[s]igns that seem clear markers of difference can become agents of sexual disorientation that break down, invert, and radically call into question the categories designed to discriminate ‘masculine’ from ‘feminine’” (Wolfson, “Politics” 585). The figure Byron chooses to ironise the least in the poem is that of the father, often infusing his portrayals with tenderness and depicting fathers in nurturing roles, without reducing them to caricatures of effeminate men.

Juan’s first encounter with Leila, the Turkish child he rescues during the siege of Ismail is portrayed in affecting terms:

Just at this instant, while their eyes were fixed  
                   Upon each other, with dilated glance,  
 In Juan’s look, pain, pleasure, hope, fear, mixed  
                   With joy to save, and dread of some mischance  
 Unto his protégée; while hers, transfixed  
                   With infant terrors, glared as from a trance,  
 A pure, transparent, pale, yet radiant face,  
 Like to a lighted Alabaster vase,  
 (VIII.96.761-768)

Byron borrows the comparison to “a lighted Alabaster vase” from a description that was made about him by Scott--Leila takes on the characteristics of her maker who, Pygmalion like, breathes life into his creation and endows her with characteristics of his own in an act of parental

transmission. His creation of Leila echoes his wish to create “A being more intense” (CHP III.47) and his recollections of Ada in the third canto of CHP. Leila’s emergence from a pile of bloody bodies renders her almost autochthonic, thus divorcing her from any taint of maternity, her mother silenced by the sword of the invaders (of whom Juan is one).

Haslett, in her description of Juan and Leila’s relationship, argues that Byron did not intend for Juan’s relationship with Leila to be paternal (105) and Byron himself had written, “In his suite he shall have a girl whom he shall have rescued during one of his northern campaigns, who shall be in love with him, and he not with her” (Medwin 165). Byron does clarify in the poem that Juan and Leila share a love that is not “brother, father, sister, daughter love” (X.53.418) Medwin hypothesises that Leila was possibly based on his illegitimate daughter Allegra (101). As it happens, Juan does not play a significantly paternal role in Leila’s life, and “dispose[s]” (XII.41.321) of her by placing her in the care of Lady Pinchbeck--by which Byron indicates that Leila is merely a digression, rather than central to the narrative which he resumes after this episode: “But now I will begin my poem” (XII.54.425). Thus, Juan’s effeminate nature which Byron has been at pains to reiterate makes him unsuitable, in Byron’s eyes, to play a paternal role, and it is Byron himself who “fathers” Leila, both in the sense of poetic creation and imbuing her with inherited characteristics from himself.

The only heroine who triumphs entirely over the lures of the world of excess is Aurora Raby. Often compared by critics to Haidee, she resembles the orphan Leila in more significant ways. Byron may have intentionally made the two characters similar in an attempt to not upset the internal logic of the poem, for to propose a romantic attachment between Leila and himself would contradict Juan's promise, who "made a vow to shield her" (VIII.141.1128). It would also significantly violate the sacredness that he had attributed to paternal ties, during the course of the poem.

Aurora and Leila are both orphans, having an early acquaintance with death: "She look'd as if she sat by Eden's door, / And grieved for those who could return no more" (XV.45.360) echoes Leila's first appearance in the poem, surrounded by "murdered women" and the bodies of dead soldiers (VIII.91.723). Both are described as "radiant" (VIII.96.767; XV.45.357); committed to their religious beliefs: Aurora "was a Catholic too, sincere" (XV.46.361), whereas Leila "refused to be converted" (X.55.440) from Islam. Leila is the "last bud of her race" (XII.29.228) while Aurora "was the last" (XV.46.367) of a noble line. Both are taciturn and unaffected by the world: Leila "saw all Western things with small surprise" (XII.27.211) and Aurora "gazed upon a world she scarcely knew / As seeking not to know it" (XV.47.369-70). This lack of worldly interest marks Aurora out from the other heroines of DJ. Adeline's distaste for Aurora is based on her lack of

susceptibility to material objects: "Perhaps she did not like the quiet way / With which Aurora on those baubles look'd" (XV.53.417-18), and it is this indifference that makes her resistant to Juan. The "new world's ways" (XV.56.446) are those of commodification and objectification, where all is based on appearance and material value, and Juan fails to impress Aurora for "she did not pin her faith on feature" (XV.56.448) and his reputation materialises into a seal that "upon her wax made no impression" (XV.57.455). He appears to be not "worth a thought" (XV.77.612) to Aurora, whose interests are the metaphysical: "The worlds beyond this world's perplexing waste / Had more of her existence" (XVI.48.429), possessing a "heavenly ignorance / Of what is called the world, and the world's ways" (XVI.108.906-7).

What Aurora and Juan have in common is the state of being orphaned, though Juan is not "so in the strict sense of the phrase" (XVII.1.2). Byron's meditation in the seventeenth canto on the different forms that being orphaned can take, "orphans of the heart" (XVII.1.8), "'only' Children" (XVII.2.8) who are "orphans in effect" (XVII.2.16) hints at Juan's condition-- whose "art of living in all climes" (XV.11.88) effectively leaves him without a home. Only the orphaned Aurora is capable of recognizing that Juan is therefore "a theme for Pity" (XVII.3.22). The condition of being orphaned, Byron writes, is: "To feel, in friendless palaces, a home / Is wanting"

(XV.44.351-2) recalling Juan's situation in both Gulbayez and Catherine's courts. Byron wrote in his "Childish Recollections": "one who thus for kindred hearts must roam, / And seek abroad the love denied at home" (lines 215-16). This preoccupation with the state of being orphaned was a manifestation of Byron's eventual realisation that he quested forever for an imaginary homeland, to which no return is possible. In spite of all of Juan's material and political success, it is still his orphaned condition that defines him the most, and it seems that in this aspect, Byron identifies with Juan entirely.

#### IV.iii "The infant of an infant World : Byron's quest for paradise in The Island

The Island, written in early 1822, provides a vision of an alternative idyllic universe as compared to that of the corrupt England Byron chronicled in Cantos XIII-XVII of DJ, which were written immediately afterwards. The values of domesticity and community championed by Byron in the poem are only made possible by situating the action in a world untainted by commerce and consumption. The title of the poem The Island, or Christian and His Comrades reveals one reason why Carl Woodring felt it was "a flawed poem of great interest" (222) for the two themes, that of the love story between Neuha, Torquil and the island itself, and the narrative of the mutiny of the Bounty led by Fletcher Christian against Captain Bligh, yield a plethora of focalizers that destabilise the narrative of the poem as well as the sympathies

of its readers.

Byron described the South Sea fantasy The Island as “not in the same style with my former stories--not good enough perhaps to publish alone--but too good to throw away--it will make a respectable figure in any future collections of my writings” (BLJ 10:117), “a poem a little above the usual run of periodical poesy” (BLJ 10:90). What sets apart The Island from most of his “former stories” (a reference to his Turkish Tales) is the delineation of the heroine, Neuha. Designated by Franklin as an active heroine (Heroines 73) Neuha, unlike her counterparts in the Turkish Tales, is portrayed as mobile and not hemmed in by boundaries circumscribed by patriarchal authority. The song of the Toobanai damsels that lists a catalogue of delights of the island (II.52) uses a host of verbs to convey the dynamic nature of the women’s existence:

Yes--from the sepulchre we’ll gather flowers,  
Then feast like spirits in their promised bowers,  
Then plunge and revel in the rolling surf  
Then lay our limbs along the tender turf,  
And, wet and shining from the sportive toil,  
Anoint our bodies with the fragrant oil,  
And plait our garlands gathered from the grave,  
(II.21-27)

Neuha is “full of life” (135) “a billow in her energies” (142), while possessing such feminine qualities as sympathy: “To bear the bark of others’ happiness,  
/ Nor feel a sorrow till their joy grew less” (II.143-4). This mobility that Byron assigns to Neuha and her companions would appeal to his new working

class audience that the poem would receive as a consequence of his publisher, Leigh Hunt's brother, John Hunt. John Hunt's strategy of selling DJ in three different formats according to different income levels meant that Byron had access to the "whole reading nation simultaneously" (St Clair 327). Byron complained that the Hunts catered to "a specifically Cockney readership" which consisted of "free-floating individuals who were more mobile than their counterparts in the labouring classes" such as young legal and commercial clerks, seamstresses, apprentices and shop assistants (Dart 204).

Despite her heroic qualities, Neuha's ideal attributes are those that set her apart from those women who inhabit the "distracting World" (II.334) that Byron described in the English cantos of DJ; she "was all a wife" (II.333), her domestic virtue characterised by her awareness of "Her duty, and her glory and her joy" (II.339). Though critics such as Tim Fulford have argued that such a description seems like an idealised male colonialist fantasy,<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Fulford exemplifies a tendency in literary criticism to attribute "[e]quivalence between colonialist writing and writing about women" and has, along with other critics made the "invocation of the island as a place of heart's desire without concomitant, consequent or concealed exploitation" seem impossible (Addison, 688, 690). Fulford writes:

The effect of Byron's procedure was to impose an erotic fantasy upon South Sea women. This fantasy, although it was radical and libertarian with regard to European gender roles and to the fantasy which Southey and the missionaries were imposing on Polynesia, was deeply colonialist. Neuha may be generous, heroic and civilized rather than savage in Southey's sense, but she is the creature of Byron's desire for an ideal woman, both sexual and innocent, who is active yet still deferential. For Byron, Neuha, like the South Sea nature she embodies, desires only to give pleasure to another. (par. 31)

Catherine Addison has persuasively demonstrated that the island is

a site of relative peace and stability, a domain into which the male protagonist cannot be naturalized by his own heroic efforts, but only by becoming obedient and receptive to the feminine principle. (687)

While patriarchal authority has to be rebelled against and results in guilt typical of the Byronic hero, matriarchal authority is depicted as absorbing and ultimately non-threatening, as well as being a way back to community.

Torquil, one of the mutineers marked out as a favourite of Fletcher Christian, is the only one who achieves this transfer of affections successfully, due to the love of Neuha who is represented as the spirit of the island, as the other mutineers, including Christian, are condemned and hunted down for their choices. Byron similarly attempted to sublimate his native love by transferring his allegiance to other nations, hence his brief dalliance with revolutionary politics in Italy, as well as displaying a deep interest in South America that surfaces in The Island:

save where Columbia rears  
Twin giants, born by Freedom to her spheres,  
Where Chimborazo, over air,--earth,--wave,--  
Glares with his Titan eye, and sees no slave.  
(II.75-78)

As I will discuss in the next section, this sublimation finally manifests itself in his philhellenism. Just before Byron left for Genoa (where he wrote The Island) the spy Torelli recorded:

It is said that he is already sated or tired of his Favorite, the Guiccioli. He has, however, expressed his intention of not



remaining in Genoa, but of going on to Athens in order to make himself adored by the Greeks. (Marchand, *Biography* 3:388)  
 This could explain Byron's characterisation of Torquil as hailing from the Orkney islands and endowing him with a Scottish heritage, and adopting

"the discourse of poetic tartanry" to a concrete political purpose: the legitimization of revolutionary activity in the Greek archipelago. In Byron's view, the islands of Scotland, Polynesia and Greece are imaginatively identical, since their remote elemental setting provides a secure refuge from tyranny and a nurturing-ground for national heroes of liberation. (McKusick 840)

Torquil, a projection of Byron's narrative self, is depicted in terms of potential: "Bred to a throne, perhaps unfit to reign" (II.186) "patriot hero or despotic chief, / To form a nation's glory or its grief" (II.205) but is finally described as "The husband of the bride of Toobonai" (II.211).

Amongst the similarities which bind Neuha and Torquil together, such as their "mutual beauty" (II.302) is also a strong attachment to home, where Neuha embodies the genius of the island and Torquil can only find peace, and indeed be "tamed" by the beauties of the island, for it is an adequate substitute for his homeland. Though the idea of nationhood may be foreign to Neuha's civilisation, it is aware of the foreign other when "Fiji blew the shell of war, when foes / For the first time were wafted in canoes" (II.35-6). This invasion ushers in a post-lapsarian state of lost innocence where, "Forgotten is the rapture, or unknown, / Of wandering with the Moon and Love alone" (II.39-40). Never aggressors, the islanders are a

martial race nonetheless: “they taught us how to wield / The club, and rain our arrows o’er the field” (II.41-42) and Neuha is a “warrior’s daughter” (III.194). Neuha, who, again in the tradition of Byron’s heroines, is “[H]ighborn” (II.215) is a leader both in action and by birth “the sun-flower of the island daughters” (II.214) and embodies a benevolent maternal goddess determined to keep her wards from harm. Torquil is a beneficiary of her care:

No more the thundering memory of the fight  
 Wrapped his weaned bosom in its dark delight;  
 No more the irksome restlessness of Rest  
 Disturbed him like the eagle in her nest,  
 Whose whetted beak and far-pervading eye  
 Darts for a victim over all the sky:  
 His heart was tamed to that voluptuous state,  
 At once Elysian and effeminate,  
 (II.306-313)

This “taming” is divested of its negative connotations, in the context of a world where glory is meaningless in the absence of love, and where true happiness can only be found by absorbing oneself into community: “Strip off this fond and false identity!-- / Who thinks of self when gazing on the sky?” (II.392-3)

Byron was anxious to avoid “eulogizing Mutiny” (BLJ 10:90) and his sympathetic portrayal of Bligh, “The gallant Chief” (I.18) is contrasted with those

Men without country, who, too long estranged,  
 Had found no native home, or found it changed,

And, half uncivilised, preferred the cave  
 Of some soft savage to the uncertain wave--  
 (I.29-32)

Though Christian is depicted as the typical “Byronic hero” and consequently, as Addison and others have pointed out, is “closely related to the brooding Satan of Paradise Lost” (691)<sup>34</sup>, the mutineers “do not fit the expected pattern of demonic companions, Beelzebubs to his Satan, at all” (Addison 693). Consequently, Byron’s treatment of them marks them out as yet another point of view to be considered, though less sympathetic. Despite Byron’s narrator being “consistently deterministic and moral in his outlook” (Addison 693) towards the mutineers, they bear some similarity to Byron’s own situation, who resented the domesticity his life with Teresa Guiccioli had condemned him to. However, his scopophilic appreciation of Italy and its women in Beppo: “Soft as her clime, and sunny as her skies” (360) is echoed in his description of the mutineers’ attraction to the “sunny isle / Where summer years and summer women smile” (I.27-8). The oral tradition of the islanders is compared favourably to written narratives of history and “the accomplished art / of verse” (II.101-2), the markers of (pejorative) civilisation, in the same way the narrator of Beppo rhapsodises about Italian, “that soft bastard Latin” (line 345) as compared to the “harsh northern

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<sup>34</sup> This view was reinforced considerably by the veracity of Christian’s anguished declaration “I am in Hell! in Hell!” (I.164) in one of Byron’s primary sources for the story, A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board His Majesty’s Ship Bounty.

whistling, grunting guttural” of the English (351). Shortly after this contrast, however, he declares “England! With all thy faults I love thee still” (369).

Byron’s tone of castigation applied to the mutineers: their “desperate escape from Duty’s path” (I.60) and “For ne’er can Man his conscience all assuage” (I.63) seems to mark his own anxiety at his own desertion of home, and “going native” in Italy. This theme, as Cheeke has demonstrated, was prominent in Byron’s poetry of the time.<sup>35</sup> Byron wistfully acknowledges the circumstances that necessitate him and the “new-born heroes” (I.103) to “tame their fiery spirits down to love” (I.234):

Our means--our birth--our nation, and our name,  
Our fortune--temper--even our outward frame,  
Are far more potent o’er our yielding clay  
Than aught we know beyond our little day.  
(I.117-120)

Torquil’s fellow mutineer Ben Bunting’s intrusion into the island idyll, with his nautical swearing and unusual garb, and bearing news of “A strange sail in the offing” (II.503) as well as Fletcher Christian’s violent suicide are jarring “irregularities” (Stabler, *Poetics* 192) that Byron uses to

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<sup>35</sup> “Repeatedly Byron turns over the themes of acculturation and transplantation, of passing from one place and culture to another, and then passing further into the interior of that culture--becoming acclimatized or going native; being translated, both in the figurative and in the literal sense. These themes are informed by a set of assumptions about cultural and national identity derived from Enlightenment sources, most especially from Voltaire and Montesquieu, which are ironised in Byron’s writing. They are: that the chief determining factor in cultural identity is climate, or how hot the sun is; that this is closely linked to sexual appetite; that marriage customs and institutions control, regulate and disguise these appetites in doing so, marriage customs and institutions become the centrally defining aspect of cultural identity” (Cheeke 111).

unambiguously vindicate the triumph of feminine values over that of the masculine world of warfare. Torquil's happy fate, compared to that of his colleagues who were "crushed, dispersed or ta'en, / Or lived to deem the happiest were the slain" (III.9-10) is to be rescued and restored in a cave replete with domestic comforts prepared by Neuha:

The mat for rest; for dress the fresh gnato,  
 And sandal oil to fence against the dew;  
 For food the cocoa-nut, the yam, the bread  
 Born of the fruit; for board the plantain spread  
 With its broad leaf, or turtle -shell which bore  
 A banquet in the flesh it covered o'er;  
 The gourd with water recent from the rill,  
 The ripe banana from the mellow hill;  
 A pine-torch pile to keep undying light,  
 (IV.167-175)

Torquil is "welcomed . . . as a son restored" (IV.408) to the island where "all was Hope and Home" (IV.404) no longer "polluted with a hostile hue" (IV.402). His homecoming is a celebration of community: "The Chiefs came down, around the People poured" (IV.407), "The women thronged, embracing and embraced" (IV.409) that Torquil and Neuha are absorbed into, to live in "peace and pleasure" (IV.418).

#### IV.iv. "Greek love" and Byron's fatal love for Greece

The Island envisions various versions of homecoming: Bligh dreams "of Old England's welcome shore, / Of toils rewarded, and of dangers o'er" (I.19-20), contrasted with those of the mutineers who "still looked back to home" (I.230) but then "spurn their country with their rebel bark" (I.231) in

favour of “happy shores without a law” (I.209). Addison comments on the efficacy of replacing one’s homeland with another:

Although the narrator remarks that “No further home was theirs, it seemed, on earth, / Once renegades to that which gave them birth” (III.13-4) he nevertheless likens their fleeing to the wild places of the island to a child fleeing “to a mother’s bosom” (III.16). The suggestion is that maternal love might be available at bosoms other than those of an actual birth mother. (696)

By transposing the context of the mutineers to that of Byron, his decision to fight for Greek independence can be read as a transfer of loyalty from one country to another. Indeed Peter Hartocollis’ reading of Byron’s identification with the cause of the Greek War of Independence identifies a “fatal flaw” (his disability) and the wish to repair it by “uniting with the ideal mother” (15). While this may be a viable reading, I think it is more fruitful to read Byron’s last poems from Greece as a failure of that union, a narrative of disappointment with the fact that the figure of home would forever elude him.

Byron signed up to assist the Greeks in their struggle against the Turks in 1823. It was, as he was aware, a chance finally to prove himself in “action”, the spectre of which had forever haunted him. In an early overwrought prose piece written in 1806, The Death of Calmar and Orla, An Imitation of Macpherson’s Ossian (CPW I:112), the commemoration of the heroics of the eponymous characters is guaranteed by their choosing action

over restraint. The act of writing was the most easily available conduit for Byron's energies, though he resented this fact:

In the last three days I have been quite shut up--my mind has been from late and later events in such a state of fermentation that as usual I have been obliged to empty it in rhyme [ . . . ]this is my usual resource--if it were not for some such occupation to dispel reflection during inaction--I verily believe I should very often go mad. (BLJ 3:157)

In the stanzas "Could Love for ever" (CPW IV:243) written in the shadow of an imminent enforced separation from Teresa Guiccioli because of her possessive husband, Byron writes:

Like Chiefs of Faction  
His Life is Action,  
A formal paction,  
    Which curbs his reign,  
Obscures his Glory,  
Despot no more, he  
Such Territory  
    Quits with disdain.  
...  
    He must march on;  
Repose but cloys him,  
Retreat destroys him,  
Love brooks not a degraded throne!--  
(lines 31-38, 41-43)

Though Byron intended this poem to be self consolatory, the intensity of his belief that action equals glory cannot be denied. Byron equated action with masculinity for he believed that

the preference of writers to agents--the mighty stir made about scribbling and scribes, by themselves and others--a sign of effeminacy, degeneracy, and weakness. Who would write, who had any thing better to do? "Action--action--action"--said

Demosthenes: "Actions--actions," I say, and not writing,--least of all, rhyme. (BLJ 3:220)

Greece in its struggle for nationhood was an ideal arena for Byron to live out and assert his version of masculinity. As Cynthia Enloe has observed, masculinity and nationalism are inextricable for "nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope" (qtd. in Nagel 244), and this bond is further strengthened during times of war, for conceptions of western masculinity are circumscribed by such militarist notions as bravery, duty and violence.

However, definitive ideas held about hegemonic masculinity assume heterosexuality and Byron's final infatuation, for a Greek boy by the name of Loukas Chalandritsanos, may have somewhat detracted from this persona of masculine warrior.<sup>36</sup> Byron's love for Loukas had an almost aphrodisiac quality opposed to that for Teresa, whose love he felt was "in these days, little compatible with glory" (BLJ 9:198). But for Byron, "Greek love" was to be differentiated from an emasculating emotion because of that very epithet; he was aware that this love for Loukas could be read as a living out of Greek tradition where an older man's relationship with a younger boy was seen as an initiation into and an enhancement of masculinity that would prepare him

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<sup>36</sup> See Crompton (1985) Elfenbein (1999) and Gross (2001) for readings of Byron and homosexuality.



to be a warrior.<sup>37</sup> It can be argued then, that it was Byron's being physically located in Greece that for him erased the taint of the dark secret that had dogged him for much of his life. In fact, this mentoring paternal quality found other outlets during Byron's time in Greece--he became attached to an eight year old girl called Hatadjé Aga (MacCarthy 505) who he showered with gifts and love, and indeed his relationship to the Greeks was more like a chiding father figure than that of a military leader.<sup>38</sup>

Most of Byron's poems written at this time are addressed to, or at least inspired by his unconsummated love for Loukas; Greece, however, which he had written about at length earlier in his career, is notable by its absence. But as Mary Chaworth was to be a focus for a love unreturned, Loukas becomes a cipher for Greece. In "On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year (Messalonghi. January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1824)" forceful and defiant declarations of love "Yet though I cannot be beloved / Still let me love!" (lines 4-5) are muted by its constant associations with death and decay: "The worm--the canker, and the grief" (7); "The fire that on my bosom preys . . . / A funeral pile!" (9, 12),

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<sup>37</sup> "The pursuit of the adolescent boy by the older man was described by stereotypes that we associate with romantic heterosexual love (conquest, surrender, the "cruel fair", the absence of desire in the love object), with the passive part going to the boy. At the same time however, because the boy was destined to grow into manhood, the assignment of roles was not permanent [ . . . ] Along with its erotic component, then, this was a bond of mentorship" (Dover qtd. in Sedgwick 4).

<sup>38</sup> Byron was to write in an exasperated letter: "Whoever goes into Greece at present should do it as Mrs. Fry went into Newgate--not in the expectation of meeting with any especial indication of existing probity--but in the hope that time and better treatment will reclaim the present burglarious and larcenous tendencies which have followed this General Gaol delivery." (BLJ 11:32).

while the repeated use of exclamation marks creates what eventually emerges as a sense of a false and forced spirit of machismo. Hidden between what reads like rousing exhortations but are instead grim declarations, is Byron's acceptance of his failure to find a worthy home in Greece, or indeed anywhere: "'tis not thus--and 'tis not here" (18, emphasis in poem). Byron tries one last time to break free of the "Chain" (line 16) of illusion: "Awake my Spirit! think through whom / Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake, / And then strike home!" (26-28) but the poem's conclusion, coincides poignantly with Byron's own: "A Soldier's Grave--for thee the best; / Then look around and choose thy Ground / And take thy Rest!" (38-40)

## Conclusion

Anna Lætitia Barbauld wrote in a letter, “By the way, are you not sorry Lord Byron is dead, just when he was going to be a hero? He has filled a leaf in the book of fame, but it is a very blotted leaf” (127). Her comment demonstrates how Byron’s exploits at Missolonghi (and his consequent death) created a flashpoint for Byron’s future fame, and potential for interested parties to rehabilitate his reputation after his death. Byron’s “natural canonization” (25) that Hazlitt wrote was concomitant with death, was enhanced by the fact that “he . . . died a martyr to his zeal in the cause of freedom, for the last, best hopes of man. Let that be his excuse and his epitaph”<sup>1</sup> (26).

After Byron’s death, works that were originally published in the more expensive octavo and quarto editions were republished by Murray in various and cheaper formats, bringing his work to new audiences, such as working class women, ensuring his enduring popularity in the nineteenth century (Elfenbein, Victorians 61). Given his cachet as a cultural icon, various groups were eager to appropriate his reputation--the Chartists for example feted him as a “champion of liberty” and featured quotes from his poetry on their banners (Elfenbein, Victorians 87). Nowhere was the fate of Byron more

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Edgeworth wrote in a letter that “Lord Byron was extremely beloved and highly thought of by all whom he heard speak of him at Missolonghi, both Greeks and his own countrymen. He had regained public esteem by his latter conduct” (Life 103).

fiercely contested than in the arena of his biographies and memoirs, especially after the dramatic burning of his own memoirs, orchestrated by Murray and Hobhouse, in the fireplace of Murray's offices at 50 Albemarle Street.

What Byron's last actions at Greece had most indisputably established was a model of martial masculinity that allowed his memory to be cherished as a patriot and a hero. During his lifetime, Byron's androgynous appeal had been made much of; according to Hazlitt his portrait by Westall revealed a "soft hermaphrodite softness" (18:152) and in Sully's portrait, "feminine softness tames or complements masculine wildness" (Clubbe 108). But portraits not taken from life, such as Joseph-Denis Odevaere's idealised neo-classical painting of Byron on his death-bed, accurately renders the kind of afterlife that the keepers of Byron's flame wished for him, though not entirely divested entirely of feminine essence--his mouth, in keeping with previous depictions, is full and sensuous--his body is lean and toned, and he lies in noble profile under a statue of Eleutheria, the personification of liberty.

Similarly, though Thomas Moore did not shrink from mentioning Byron's "caprices, fits of weeping, sudden affections and dislikes" that may have betrayed a "feminine cast of character" (6:262), the overwhelming impression he strove to create, and succeeded, was that of an aristocratic

man of genius. This model of masculinity was enhanced by the heteronormative nature of Byron's sexual appeal as exploited by such biographers as John Mitford, whose Private Life of Lord Byron: Comprising His Voluptuous Amours . . . with Various Ladies of Rank and Fortune (1836) "offers a form of the celebrity genre of the 'love life' that salaciously celebrates the masculine private life" (Tuite 81). Elfenbein demonstrates how the appeal of Byron's looks and personality to women, rather than his poetry, acted as a tool for male writers and reviewers to denigrate female intellect:

The passionate female admirer of Byron became a convenient image onto which male reviewers could project a degraded aesthetic response. They could demonstrate their superior morality and judgement by scorning the female reader's supposed naivete. (67)

Byron's attire, poses and gestures made him a template for heterosexual masculine erotic appeal, that fed the "cult of the fatal man" that, as Tuite points out, formed the bedrock of nineteenth century romanticism (81). Till the twentieth century, Byron "fairly defined, in the broadest international context, the 'meaning' of romanticism" (McGann "Scholarship" 1) until he was obscured from view by Modernist thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. McGann attributes the cutting loose of Byron by the Modernists to a messiness, a refusal to conform to the ideals of the New Critics.

Byron's return to the cultural scene with McGann's editorial work in the 1960s was still as a "mess", his self-proclaimed "opposition" causing him

to be resistant to assimilation of any kind. However, the one facet that allowed Byron to be considered with even his most disparate contemporary, Wordsworth, was the conception of a “form of masculine empowerment [ . . . ] a paradigmatic form of manly action” (Ross “Quest” 40) that characterised male romanticism. This, in conjunction with his aristocratic status and revolutionary action in Greece,<sup>2</sup> made Byron a suitable poster boy and acceptable substitute for Wordsworth as the most “representative” romantic.<sup>3</sup> What this usurpation achieved was to perpetuate a myth of monolithic potent masculinity that few critics have attempted to redress.

As I demonstrated at the outset of this dissertation, Byron envisioned himself as an heir to a male poetic tradition, engaging in what might be considered a form of patriotic poetics--displaying a nostalgia for the glories of Albion. This nostalgia entailed a desire to return to a time when writing, especially that of poetry, was considered a vocation, only undertaken by men of a certain background and education. However, at the time of Byron’s writing, the increasing participation of women in the literary marketplace made it impossible for Byron to ignore the growing feminization of British culture. His discomfiture at the implications of this feminization was

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<sup>2</sup> Trelawny astutely commented that: “Men of books, particularly Poets, are rarely men of action, their mental energy exhausts their bodily powers. Byron has been generally considered an exception to this rule, he certainly so considered himself” (38).

<sup>3</sup> See *Romantic Revolutions* (1990) for conceptions of Romanticism that does not consider Wordsworth as its central figure.

magnified by his own participation in the literary marketplace, and the ambivalence he felt towards this collusion. He courted a female audience he loved to hate, and this ambivalence can be found in Byron's own personal relationships with women, and finds expression in much of his poetry.

For Byron, women embodied commodification and consumption, and consequently he identified "Britannia"--the imperialist nation--as female. Byron's personal relationships with women were characterised by both intense attachment and longing as well as extreme distaste, and his relationship with his "native land" possessed very similar characteristics. His failure to be politically effective and the scandal of his marital breakup contributed to this fraught attitude towards the British nation. His notorious irony masked his deep anxiety at being homeless, alienated from his motherland--as he wrote in CHP IV, he considered himself one of the number of the "orphans of the heart" (695).

This preoccupation with and need for belonging manifests itself in Byron's writings about domesticity--a mode which is at odds with the received myth of Byron, that of the glamorous, reckless poet who was famously described by Caroline Lamb as "mad, bad and dangerous to know." What I hope to have illustrated in this dissertation is that for Byron, due to the inextricability of the concepts of gender and nation, this is not the case at all. Byron's preoccupation with the marginalisation of the father

figure (as demonstrated in CHP and DJ) and castigation of maternal figures by making them seem monstrous, arose out of a conviction that in order for England to return to its former glory, it must conform to domestic ideals embedded in patriarchal values. Given Byron's huge impact historically and culturally, it can be argued that in spite of the glamour of his posthumous reputation, his conflicted poetics that were centred on his embodied masculinity contributed to the future of gender roles, most immediately in middle-class Victorian England.

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the constructions of gender and nation in Byron's poetry. I wished to do that, however, without losing sight of Byron's gendered embodiment, and to demonstrate that, given the historical circumstances of his age, Byron's own conception of his masculinity was in flux and constantly challenged by the dual forces of nationalism and gender.

Our understandings of romanticism have been diffused and prismatic, and while their most significant achievement is the recognition of the multivalent gendered voices that existed in the period, they have still resulted in a "plurality of romanticisms" (Lovejoy 236). We stand to gain the most as scholars by keeping the lines of communication between these romanticisms open and encourage mutual exchange, and I hope that this dissertation has made a contribution to that dialogue.



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