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# "I Unsex'd My Dress": Lord Byron's Seduction of Gender in "The Corsair", "Lara", and "Don Juan"

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The University of Southern Mississippi

“I UNSEX’D MY DRESS”: LORD BYRON’S SEDUCTION OF GENDER IN *THE*

*CORSAIR, LARA, AND DON JUAN*

by

Alexis Spiceland Lee

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2010

## ABSTRACT

### “I UNSEX’D MY DRESS”: LORD BYRON’S SEDUCTION OF GENDER IN *THE CORSAIR, LARA, AND DON JUAN*

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The goal of this project is to posit a theory of how Byron’s texts, specifically through the development of his hero, construct gender and sexuality as styles of seduction that resist easy classification by binary systems. I propose that Byron’s works characterize gender through ironic performances of seduction that, because they reveal that binary structures lack a stable core, dissolve systemic differentiation and thus fatally complicate any attempt to force the individual into rigid categories of gender or sexual identity. Byron’s works deploy seduction as a tactic of ironic representation of both gender and sexual practice that is necessarily multiplicitous and diffuse. Byron develops his hero throughout his canon through the hero’s interaction with himself and with others whom the hero is reflected by and in turn reflects. The texts *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *Don Juan* have been chosen as they contain representative examples of the Byronic Hero figure as well as illustrate major developments in the hero’s progress toward a vision of gender and sexual orientation free of recuperation by social and cultural systems of proscription.

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A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
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December 2010

## DEDICATION

For my mother, this albatross.

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## CHAPTER I

## BYRON'S IRONIC HERO

The goal of this project is to posit a theory of how Byron's texts, specifically through the development of his hero, construct gender and sexuality as styles of seduction that resist the colonizing of the individual by ideological systems. I propose that Byron's works characterize gender through ironic performances of seduction that, because they reveal that binary structures lack a stable core, dissolve systemic differentiation and thus fatally complicate any attempt to force the individual into rigid categories of gender or sexual identity. With profound debt to the theories of Jean Baurillard's seduction, Judith Butler's gender performativity, Gilles Deleuze's irony and sadomasochism, as well as the contemporary critical debates surrounding libertinage and bisexuality, I argue that Byron's works deploy seduction as a tactic of ironic representation of both gender and sexual practice that is necessarily multiplicitous and diffuse. Byron develops his hero throughout his canon through the hero's interaction with himself and with others whom the hero is reflected by and in turn reflects. Analysis of Byron's entire canon is beyond the scope of this project, so the texts *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *Don Juan* have been chosen as they contain representative examples of the Byronic Hero figure as well as illustrate major developments in the hero's progress toward a vision of gender and sexual orientation free of recuperation by social and cultural systems of proscription. In *The Corsair* and *Lara*, the Byronic Hero encounters the female version of himself. These poems emphasize the centrality of Humean sympathy between the genders as a means of destabilizing the absolutism of the gender binary. Conrad and Lara, the protagonists of

these poems, are revealed to be the same character, and the hero's female counterpart in *The Corsair*, Gulnare, is revealed in *Lara* to be Gulnare in male drag. Byron combines the tropes of drag and the traditional tragic heterosexual love story ironically to call attention to the similarity of these characters' genders and to underscore the slippage between subject and object positions and sexed bodies in a traditional heterosexual seduction. Finally, in *Don Juan*, Byron's hero seduces globally. Don Juan, the famous libertine seducer of women, becomes himself both the seducer and the seduced. Through deployment of drag, libertine seduction, and Byronic mobility, the libertine masculine body is revealed to be completely fragmented, and his gender and sexual identity diffuse. In each text, Byron's constructions of his hero's identity splinter and proliferate, revealing that there is no stable core at the center of gender, sexuality, or even the sexed body.

This project takes as its study the works of George Gordon, Lord Byron, one of the most canonical of all canonical writers. In doing so, I attempt to follow the example of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick by undertaking an exploration of gender and sexuality constructions within the oeuvre of a central but pivotal figure of early nineteenth century literature and culture in an attempt to foreground a theory of gender and sexuality both in the past and in the present, and to suggest possible application for future studies. Byron's status and centrality as a poet and as a cultural icon afford those who study his works an opportunity rarely available to scholars: with Byron, one has one's finger directly on the pulse of both the everyday and the avant-garde, of the rebel and the aristocrat. There was little of early nineteenth-century life to which Byron was not privy, either directly

through his own lived experience or indirectly through his readings, correspondence, and acquaintance.

However, although Byron himself is a compelling and seductive figure, I have chosen to distinguish Byron from his hero. Since the nineteenth century, the customary approach to the study of the Byronic Hero has been to equate the character with his poet. In few other writers would such an approach still be practicable, relying as it does on the biographical fallacy; perhaps only Jane Austen's texts still huddle in the long shadow of their creator's persona to this degree. Gentle Jane and the Wicked Lord often seem to invade the criticism devoted to their texts and skew the focus from the work to the writer. However, here I have chosen to redirect focus back to Byron's texts for the simple reason that few analyses of Byron's hero can resist the temptation to associate him with Byron himself. Byron is a 19th century practitioner working within an 18th century ironic, and often satiric, persona. Byron's play with personae often begs the reader to equate *them* with the authoritative *Him*, the poet. However, one must remember that Byron's "Byrons" are constructed much like Jonathan Swift's narrator in "A Modest Proposal" and Browning's confessional murderers in "My Last Duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover" -- the ironic brilliance of the text obscures the identity of the narrator. After all, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, like the proverbial cat, must have had nine lives if her husband's speakers can be equated with the man himself.

Byron's texts and his heroes seduce readers even after two hundred years because of their exquisite irony; Lars Ellestrom writes, "[i]f the written discourse is 'a kind of image' of the written speech, it is certainly not only a distorted image, but an image with

its own, original life” (31). In Byron’s case, Ellestrom’s “written speech” can be equated with popular discourse on the Byronic Hero, one which has long cherished the notion that Byron’s poems are ultimately autobiographical. However, the lives of Byron’s poems can and, at some point, must inevitably be separated from the life of their poet. I believe that one reason Byron’s works have been so totally associated with Byron himself is their irony, which destabilizes signification. Without the figure of Lord Byron to “set” the meaning, a consistent reading of his poetry is virtually impossible. However, I argue for a reading of Byron’s canon that embraces the multiplicity of the work without concern for consistency. Despite the prevalence of Derridean theory, many readings of Byron demonstrate a reticence to apply the full force of Derrida’s deconstruction to the one poet whose works most demand such an approach. Ellestrom writes,

[t]he words of Plato arguing that a written text “always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself,” imply a concept of meaning that is far too authoritative for my personal taste. I interpret Plato’s words as stating the law of the Father: there is right, and there is wrong, and only the divine *I* knows how and why. (33)

Following Ellestrom, I argue that Byron’s poems are far from defenseless, and that in order to fully explore their implications, one must divorce them from the divine *I* of Byron the author. The poems have, as Ellestrom remarks, their “own, original life” (31), independent of Byron’s biography, and irony is their life force. Reading Byron (here and at other times in my study to be understood as the poet’s body of work, as in, “This summer I’m going to read all of Byron”) through a deconstructionist position that

embraces contradiction and multiplicity, or, following Jean Baudrillard, through seduction, a play between and among gendered positions, requires that one engage with the ironies of the texts. Byron's irony seduces because it does not determine; it does not pin down.

Thus, the seductive quality of the Byronic Hero lies in the character's ironic performances of masculinity discoverable within the texts themselves, rather than in the biography of the poet. Byron's use of irony undermines a biographical reading because it destabilizes the centrality of a male subjectivity so frequently attributed to both the Romantics, and to Byron particularly, in the works of Jerome McGann, among others. The authority of the poet is found in his withdrawal from the text itself and results in an "objectivity of the created text" (Ellestrom 35). Since romantic irony is not resolved by an authoritative author, the irony within the text is freed from authorial intent. This independence is what many of Byron's critics have not found in Byron's works, and particularly in his creation of his heroes. If one reads Byron's characterizations of his heroes *as they appear in the texts themselves*, as characters freed from the burden of expressing their creator's personae, then one can approach the Byronic Hero in ways heretofore not treated substantively in Byron scholarship. In other words, one can read the Byronic Hero as a literary character type of considerable complexity, ambiguity, and influence, rather than as an "expression" of Byron's "true" identity. In fact, this separation of character from poet emphasizes the necessity of analyzing Byron's heroes individually in addition to analyzing them as a series of iterations of a character type that

has been regarded too often as static and one-dimensional by critics from T. S. Eliot to Atara Stein.

In the development of the Byronic Hero, Byron characterizes his heroes in ways that challenge gender normativity and that highlight the individual struggle for subjectivity in the face of cultural forces, even if this freedom to define (or to perform) oneself in opposition to one's culture is complicated or even impossible. What Byron does in the development of his male and female heroes is work through contradictions that arise from such an attempt. Thus, the Byronic Hero is not merely a mannequin upon which Byron can hang versions of himself; rather, his continuing engagement with this character type suggests that his experimentation with differing modes and styles of masculinity is part of an exploration of gender as it is figured in his culture, as well as part of a larger philosophical debate on gender, love, and sexual liberty.

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy position the beginning of the modern crisis of the subject during the time of the Romantic poets, and conclude that the impossibility of the subject position is the chief preoccupation of Romanticism (qtd. in Strathman 30).

Strathman argues that the Romantics engage this struggle through the form of the literary fragment, and, following Blanchot, claims that

the exigency of the fragmentary work turns freedom onto an empty ground outside the kingdom of being, where relation tries to take hold but finally cannot. This exigency is a relation without relation; a relation of infinity without a fixed subject or object over which power might gain hold; it

robs the very idea of freedom of its liberal comfort, and exposes it to what within it remains to be thought. (31)

This lack of a stable relationship between the positions of subject and object should be seen not as a reversal, as Blanchot notes, but as a relationship among subject and object positions, one in which power is decentered. Strathman recalls Blanchot here to give ground to his argument that the poetic fragment is the central form for Romantic poets because it challenges fixed, complete structures in both poetry and culture. Strathman's readings of Blanchot and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy offer a suggestive path for exploring the relationship of Byron's fragmentary style in his longer poetic works, whether "finished" or not, and his construction of gender. Byron's fragmentary structure, like Schlegel's Romantic fragments, complicates a reading of gender based on binary opposites and their reversal. In my reading, the fragment can be understood as a poetic form corresponding to Baudrillardian seduction. Schlegel's irony of the fragment destabilizes subject and object positions as absolutes, shifting rather than reversing the two. With these positions in flux, the customary identification of masculine with subject/feminine with object found so frequently in critical readings of Romantic poetry cannot hold. Byron's use of this type of ironic play between subject and object positions can be found not only in *Don Juan* but throughout his longer works like the Turkish Tales and *Manfred*. Byron's irony is thus not exclusively comic, but operates as a strategy of seduction that destabilizes gender and sexual identity.

Baudrillard's seduction, linked as it is to Schlegel's irony and to Blanchot's fragmentary imperative, can therefore be read as operating throughout Byron's canon as a

strategy of gender representation, one which represents something that does not exist. By constructing gender in his works through biological images identical to both genders, Byron moves beyond concepts like the masquerade and the carnivalesque, both performances of gender transgression within socially proscribed limits, to a more radical proposal -- the rejection of a gendered system dependent on any culturally defined norm. Through his fragments, transgressions of closed poetic structure play among and within the carefully crafted rhymes of the heroic couplet or ottava rima. Byron (en)genders a strategy of representation that suggests a fundamental breakdown of what Elfenbein calls “the generalized vocabulary of the naked heart” (33), not only in *Don Juan*, as Elfenbein rightly claims, but throughout his canon. Like Elfenbein, I see Byron’s *Turkish Tales* problematizing “the language of the naked heart . . . as the vehicle of absolute truth about the psyche” (41). The fragmentary structures of Byron’s *The Corsair* and *Lara*, seemingly closed yet ultimately open-ended forms, reflect and construct their protagonists’ identities as lacking a stable duality. Gulnare and Conrad are not a dyad, but neither are they the same self. Elfenbein suggests that Gulnare is for Conrad a “second self,” and he argues that Astarte in *Manfred* “represents the collapse into a single character of the competing possibilities of desire based on likeness and difference, which *The Corsair* had embodied in two different characters” (36). I suggest that this collapse of Humean sympathy and difference is less about establishing selfhood or subjectivity, or a sense of stable identities bound together in one figure or in a pair of figures, but that Byron’s construction of gender posits multiplicity as an alternative to either. The



multiplicity of seduction encompasses such binaries as sympathy and difference, and allows for gender and sexuality outside, inside, and among cultural norms.

Throughout this project I refer to Byron's protagonists as Byronic Heroes, a term that has been often used in critical studies, but frequently not given extensive definition. Stanzas 17, 18, and 19 of Byron's poem *Lara* offer a description of Lord Lara and are frequently cited as an illustration of the attributes of the Byronic Hero. In fact, in Jerome McGann's edition of *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, these stanzas are the only representation of the poem, which suggests their primacy as the definition of the Byronic Hero "in a nutshell," and, following McGann's example in *Byron and Romanticism*, I include stanza 19 in its entirety:

19

With all that chilling mystery of mien,  
 And seeming gladness to remain unseen;  
 He had (if 'twere not nature's boon) an art  
 Of fixing memory on another's heart:  
 It was not love perchance — nor hate — nor aught  
 That words can image to express the thought;  
 But they who saw him did not see in vain,  
 And once beheld, would ask of him again:  
 And those to whom he spake remembered well,  
 And on the words, however light, would dwell:  
 None knew, nor how, nor why, but he entwined

Himself perforce around the hearer's mind;  
 There he was stamp'd, in liking, or in hate,  
 If greeted once; however brief the date  
 That friendship, pity, or aversion knew,  
 Still there within the inmost thought he grew.  
 You could not penetrate his soul, but found,  
 Despite your wonder, to your own he wound;  
 His presence haunted still; and from the breast  
 He forced an all unwilling interest;  
 Vain was the struggle in that mental net,  
 His spirit seemed to dare you to forget! (Byron, *Lara* 17-19).

As this stanza suggests, the Byronic Hero can be identified by his charismatic ability to enthrall his audience, his sense of mystery, his blend of apparent opposites, especially of desirability and revulsion, his colossal pride, his aloofness, and his fundamental difference from common humanity, whether for good or ill. The Byronic Hero is an eternal outsider, but one who benefits from his social status; he is usually of high rank, although not exclusively aristocratic.

Emma Peacocke, in her 2010 article “‘A novel word in my vocabulary’: Laughter and the Evolution of the Byronic Model into *Don Juan*,” quotes from the above passage from *Lara* to define the Byronic Hero, noting, “[e]arly in his career, Byron influentially equated heroism, victimhood, and alterity. The Byronic hero is profoundly Other to those around him” (para. 2). In *Byron and Romanticism*, Jerome McGann claims, “To instill in

the reader a dislocated and melancholy intelligence is the primary function of the Byronic hero . . . All Byronic heroes are almost hypnotically fascinating” (25). As his example, McGann quotes *Lara*’s stanza 19 in its entirety. “Indeed,” McGann writes, “the Byronic hero illustrates in his life what the reader, meeting him, discovers in himself. They ‘prove nothing’; rather, they raise questions” (25). Andrew Rutherford’s *Byron: A Critical Study* notes that Byron’s protagonists develop from the early “Childe Harold, the blase Cain-like Wanderer, . . . a projection of the author’s moods of melancholy, loneliness, boredom, and disillusion” (31) to the more powerful “new protagonists” who “retain these qualities, though they have little of his ennui, which is replaced by fiery courage and tumultuous passion” (38). These new protagonists, Conrad and Lara among them, are, to Rutherford, true Byronic Heroes. Rutherford dismisses Childe Harold as “a character, or as a set of attitudes, not as a hero of a story” (33), in favor of the more complex Byronic heroes “Conrad, Lara, and the rest” (39). Rutherford’s study notes the constituent elements of the Byronic Hero type as a complex set of allusions, “literary, biographical, and psychological” (39) from Byron’s reading of Scott, Radcliffe, Godwin, and Schiller, Byron’s own ancestors, his sexual experience, his travels and extensive acquaintance among Levantine warriors, most significantly Ali Pasha, to his own status as an “outsider” (39). Peter Thorslev offers a thorough analysis of the predecessors of the Byronic Hero in his *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes*, a book-length study of Byron’s heroic type. Thorslev notes that the Byronic Hero offers “a rebellion which asserted the independence of the individual and the primacy of his values not only in the face of society, but even in the face of ‘God’” (172). Atara Stein’s 2004 *The Byronic*

*Hero in Film, Fiction, and Television* offers an exploration of Byron's hero in his present incarnations. Stein writes, "With his superior capabilities, the Byronic hero, whether in his nineteenth-century or contemporary incarnation, provides his audience with a satisfying vicarious experience of power *and* empowerment, autonomy, mastery, and defiance of oppressive authority" (1-2).

Thus in part, the Byronic Hero's heroism appears to proceed from his resistance to colonization by external sources. The Byronic Hero's struggle against his milieu seems to be the struggle against definition by social and cultural systems. In his 2001 text *Byron: The Erotic Liberal*, Jonathan David Gross notes the effect of Byronic Heroes like Childe Harold, "a man as satiated in worldly pleasure as Valmont himself" (35); "[s]o appealing were his literary characters that Byron gave a dangerous cachet to the political views his heroes espoused" (35). These political views were the politics of liberalism, which Gross notes were heavily influenced by the already out-of-date code of aristocratic libertinism. Byron's ironic deployment of the authoritative eighteenth century libertine code of personal and sexual license in the creation of his heroes is germane to my project as I intend to explore the ways Byron's hero "does" gender, to borrow Judith Butler's term, as a key element of his "power *and* empowerment" (Stein 1).

Through Byron's works, and particularly his constructions of gender and sexuality, one can discover what might be termed the marginalized centrality of these issues, and can glimpse the oneness of this perceived duality. In Byron's time, sexuality was gender, and, I argue, is still gender today. What one did, or who one did, determined what we today have come to call one's "identity." "Bisexuality" has sometimes been the

term used to describe the unity of sexual practice and gender, and has the advantage of referring to the performative nature of sex, but it is perhaps time to reconsider this term, or at least its applicability to performances of gender and orientation. Throughout his works, Byron's constructions of gender and sex interrogate the relationships between subject and object, active and passive, individual and collective. Byron's heroes, both male and female, are characterized by what Helene Cixous calls "'the *other bisexuality*,' the 'location within oneself of the presence of both sexes,' that gives 'permission' to multiple desires" (qtd. in Garber 183). While I borrow Cixous's term, it must be understood within Byron's works as performative rather than essentialist. Byron's emphasis within his texts on the ironic quality of performance to challenge or subvert what it constitutes problematizes any idea of there being a "location within" a stable self; it is precisely the instability of identities which is underscored in his descriptions of his heroes. This project posits that the play between gender and sexuality, as found in Byron's work and beyond, can best be described by Jean Baudrillard's term "seduction." In my reading, seduction is the site where what we consider gender combines with sexuality in simultaneous performances of both, which encompasses and destabilizes binary conceptions of both sex and gender. In this way, seduction in Byron's work is ultimately bisexual, in the sense that the Byronic Hero's sexuality is fluid and multiple, even though these seductions take place in a seemingly heterosexual dynamic.

Baudrillard's seduction is challenging to define, as he deliberately plays with the meaning of the term. At its most basic, seduction to Baudrillard is that which plays in and among structures. Baudrillard's seduction is linked to classic libertine seduction, yet

emphasizes the element of play, sexual, gendered, and linguistic, as a tactic for not merely subverting systems but rendering them irrelevant. Mike Gane's reading of Baudrillard offers some clarification of the term. Gane writes:

[Baudrillard] says "seduction is not just a sexual strategy and it's not one-sided. Both sides are deeply involved and the stakes are high" and he stresses: "It's a very physical game and one of equality". Now this is consistent with his emphasis on the nature of seduction as a play of challenge and response, and of reversibility of position, of metamorphosis of role, even of being. (63)

While Gane emphasizes seduction as a technique of reversibility, I believe seduction can also multiply, in the sense that in Baudrillard's seduction, the subject and object gendered positions can be seen to proliferate infinitely. Baudrillard's definition of seduction establishes seduction as a strategy in which distinctions break down; the boundaries that supposedly exist in a seduction do not, in fact, exist:

Is it to seduce, or to be seduced, that is seductive? But to be seduced is the best way to seduce. It is an endless refrain. There is no active or passive mode in seduction, no subject or object, no interior or exterior: seduction plays on both sides, and there is no frontier separating them. One cannot seduce others, if one has not oneself been seduced. (qtd. in Haslett 278)

In Baudrillard's theory, seduction both contains and contradicts the binary -- seduction is that which destabilizes binary constructions of gender, identity, and power. These constructions, to Baudrillard, are ultimately revealed to be illusions of the dominant

culture and in their service. If these “truths” are acknowledged to be constructed, then their authority to define and to differentiate cannot be maintained as absolute. In her analysis of seduction in Byron’s works, Moyra Haslett claims, “Baudrillard’s vision is a utopian one, in which seduction would eradicate binary oppositions, would eradicate opposition itself. In his account, seduction is not that which opposes but that which seduces production; not the opposition between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ . . . but that which is outside such categorization” (278). To Baudrillard, the construction of the systems of dominant culture is both perceptible and self-evident. Foucault’s focus on power and Freud’s focus on desire, to Baudrillard, exemplify this constructedness, since in each case, one is left to question what pre-exists these structures. Baudrillard claims that what is discoverable “behind” such structures is seduction. Baudrillard writes that seduction “is stronger than sexuality, with which it must never be confused. It is not something internal to sexuality, though this is what it is generally reduced to” (*Seduction* 47). In Baudrillard’s theory, seduction contrasts sharply with both desire and sexuality, which, according to Baudrillard, are “debased” forms, “entangle[d] with production and power” (*Seduction* 47). Baudrillard argues that Freud and Foucault got it wrong, that desire and power are in the service of patriarchal production, and that no one stops to question the circular reasoning of the claims Freud makes for desire and Foucault makes for power. Baudrillard argues that one must “wager on simulation and take the signs from behind -- signs that, when taken at face value and in good faith, always lead to the reality and evidence of power. Just as they lead to the reality and evidence of sex and production. It is this positivism that must not be taken at face value” (*Seduction* 48-49).

“Tak[ing] the signs from behind” (Baudrillard, *Seduction* 49), I argue, is what Byron does in his ironic construction of gender. As such, his heroes from Childe Harold to Don Juan come from behind the signs of gender, and their poet never takes anything “at face value and in good faith” (Baudrillard, *Seduction* 49).

In order to explore how Baudrillard’s seduction intersects with Byron’s heroes, I have chosen to approach gender performatively, using the theory of gender performance defined by Judith Butler in her 1990 work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In this groundbreaking text, Butler seeks “to counter those views that made presumptions about the limits and propriety of gender and restricted the meaning of gender to received notions of masculinity and femininity” (vii). Butler argues that gender “proves to be performative--that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (33). According to Butler,

[G]ender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. . . . There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results. (33)



Butler's theory of gender as performance, of gender constituted by a shifting series of performances that have come to stand for what we identify as gender, informs my argument that the Byronic Hero's gender is constituted through performances of gender that call into question early nineteenth century assumptions about "the" masculine and "the" feminine held by a majority culture. Byron's texts do not rely upon a binary, essentialist structure of gender in which men "are" this and women "are" that because each group has a "clearly defined" biological sex and a corresponding stable, pre-existing, singular role in society. Butler also claims that sex is a practice in which traditional gender roles can break down and fail to signify coherent normative gender.

Butler notes that

[t]he idea that sexual practice has the power to destabilize gender emerged from my reading of Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women" and sought to establish that normative sexuality fortifies normative gender. Briefly, one is a woman, according to this framework, to the extent that one functions as one within the dominant heterosexual frame and to call the frame into question is perhaps to lose something of one's own place in gender . . . . I sought to understand some of the terror and anxiety that some people suffer in "becoming gay," the fear of losing one's place in gender or of not knowing who one will be if one sleeps with someone of the ostensibly "same" gender. This constitutes a certain crisis in ontology experienced at the level of both sexuality and language. (xi)

Here, Butler outlines her thinking as she wrote *Gender Trouble*, and I believe that her formulation of the relationship between sex, or, as she terms it, sexual practice, and gender role assumptions is of exceptional value, especially considered in light of Baudrillard's theory of seduction, to Byron scholars as Byron's construction of his heroes' gender suggests that his heroes lie outside of "the dominant heterosexual frame" (Butler xi), and that they have "lost [their] . . . place in gender" because they engage in a sexualized relationship with "someone of the ostensibly 'same' gender" (Butler xi), that person being the female Byronic Hero, the character with whom the male Byronic Hero is frequently paired in a seductive situation. Butler's formulations of sex as sexual practice and gender performances thus correlate with Byron's ironic play with sexuality, gender, and even biological sex to destabilize individual identity through the dynamic of (ostensibly heterosexual) seduction.

Byron's irony in his characterization of his heroes can be understood as a particular form of humor, or as Gilles Deleuze's "superior irony." Claire Colebrook argues that "humour," in Deleuze's reading a superior and ironic way of "doing" irony, "can reverse or pervert logic, disrupt moral categories or dissolve the body into parts without any governing intention" (134). Reading Byron's depictions of the sexed body through Deleuze's understanding of humor allows one to read the body as a construction which can be broken into parts rather than regarded as a monolithic entity. Humor, or Deleuzian irony, like Baudrillardian seduction, "dissolves" not only logical, moral, and biological systems, but any authority any system claims for itself. Colebrook writes:

Any system is the effect of multiple and differentiating forces that create relations. Deleuze's irony insists on multiplicity. Instead of there being a unity, Idea or "One" that is belied by the chaotic or undifferentiated nature of life, Deleuze insists that life itself in all its infinite variety produces Ideas -- singular differences -- which our languages and systems can only begin to grasp: "Instead of the enormous opposition between the one and the many, there is only the variety of multiplicity." (Colebrook 130)

Reading Byron through Butler's theory of performativity, Gilles Deleuze's concept of superior irony, and Baudrillard's theory of seduction enables a discussion of gender, sexual orientation, and power as "*strateg[ies] of appearance*" (Baudrillard, *Seduction* 8), while playing among ideas of the body and its physical, social, and cultural constructions. Byron's poems often posit the existence of a sexed body, but do not acknowledge that body as an absolute which pre-exists gendered sexual performances. Reading Byron's libertine texts through the theories of these critics challenges an interpretation of Byron's construction of gender and sex roles as essentialist and anatomical.

I argue that in Byron's construction of the gendered body the "feminine" masculine is not identical to the "feminine" feminine; instead, the play among genders suggests a wider definition of what is considered "masculine" and "feminine." Deleuze's elaboration of gender roles in his work "Coldness and Cruelty" suggests to me that reading gender in the manner that Deleuze does in separating a supposed binary like sadomasochism, one can begin to explore the significance of each "side" of the binary in ways that complicate and challenge their established meanings. The binary unit, when

divided and examined as a whole rather than as parts of a whole, can be understood as reflecting and multiplying the binary unit. Deleuze writes, “The woman torturer of masochism cannot be sadistic precisely because she is *in* the masochistic situation, she is an integral part of it. . . . She belongs in the masochistic world . . . because her ‘sadism’ is of a kind never found in the sadist; it is as it were the double or the reflection of masochism” (41). Similarly, performances of femininity within masculine gender are not identical to feminine performances within feminine gender; these performances are reflections that depend upon, and are read in, particular seductive situations which acknowledge the fragmented body. If one understands the feminine performed within the masculine as a performance of a style of masculinity, one comes closer to comprehending that gender and its attendant elements are seemingly infinite reflections of the feminine possible within performances of masculinity, and vice versa. Ironically, Byron’s construction of the correspondence between biological sexes and gender roles is most tenuous when readers might expect it to be most clearly exemplified, in scenes of seduction. For example, in *Don Juan*, Juan performs multiple genders in his masquerade as a woman. Although he is dressed as a woman, the reader is aware that Juan is sexed male; he deploys his outward performance of femininity as a technique of masculine seduction. Therefore, Juan is not exclusively gendered or sexed male in this seduction, but neither is he gendered or sexed exclusively female. It is the multiplicity of these gendered performances, of these reflections of “male” and “female,” that destabilizes any either/or construction of his sex, his sexuality, or his gender. Juan’s performances of gender are instead constructed here as reflections or styles of masculinity that function as

a tactic of bisexual seduction. The proliferation of genders performed by Juan's ambiguously sexed body within the context of seduction of an entire harem, the inhabitants of which enact a traditionally masculine sexual aggression, spawns infinite reflections of masculine sexual performance. These reflections suggest that Juan's orientation in this scene can be read as bisexual because each participant in the ostensibly heterosexual seduction performs both masculine and feminine roles within sexed bodies, which complicates the binary of heterosexuality.

When one examines Byron's texts, one can see that gender is constituted performatively through attributes ascribed equally to both sexes. Byron's construction of his heroes, his male and female protagonists, deploys traditionally gendered language markers ironically to constitute the genders of both sexes, not just the "appropriate" sex, suggesting that gender is fluid, unstable, and lacks authority to proscribe the behavior of the individual, whether sexually or socially. Because Byron's multigendered protagonists are also his heroes, his construction of the Byronic Hero's identity as one that resists binary classification suggests that heroism in Byron's canon is constituted by resistance to social normativity.

To develop my interpretation of how Byron "does" gender in his canon, I have divided this project into three chapters. In Chapter II, I attempt to formulate a theoretical approach through which Byron's complex treatment of gender, sexuality, and the sexed body can be articulated. In this chapter, I explore how the theories of Baudrillard's seduction, Butler's gender performance, Deleuze's irony and his analysis of sadism and masochism, and both new and historical formulations of libertinage and bisexuality

intersect in ways that illuminate Byron's construction of gender. Chapter III offers a reading of *The Corsair* and its sequel *Lara* that explores the ways Byron portrays the relationship between his male hero and his female counterpart as mutual reflections that infinitely proliferate gender and sex roles and complicate identification of subject and object positions as well as destabilize the sexed body. In Chapter IV, I read Byron's *Don Juan* through the lens of Baudrillard's seduction as Byron's fullest articulation of the instability and proliferation of genders and sexual identities. I see Byron's Don Juan as the ultimate Byronic Hero, despite traditional readings of the Byronic Hero that exclude Juan from classification as a Byronic Hero, because in Juan, Byron's openly satiric mode and deployment of irony allow for a virtually unrestrained exploration of the instability and diffuse quality of gender and sexuality through the seductions of his hero and his narrator. The conclusion to my project follows the Byronic Hero into the nineteenth century and briefly explores what I see as a split in his character into two major figures -- the Byronic Dandy and the Satanic Byronic Hero. The first Byronic subspecies, the Byronic Dandy, arises from the figures of Sardanapulus and Don Juan, while the second is the progeny of Byron's Manfred and Cain. I see in these two versions of the Byronic Hero the same type of gender and sexual play, and hope to be able to study these Byronic sons more closely at a later date.

## CHAPTER II

## BYRONIC BISEXUAL SEDUCTION: A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO BYRON'S

## HERO

What has become central in this project is an attempt to explore a theory of gender that embraces seduction as a strategy of gendered self-sovereignty, which has grown out of engagement with the texts of Byron, Jean Baudrillard, Judith Butler, and Gilles Deleuze. Many of the examples from Byron's texts in this chapter come from the poet's *Don Juan*, as the overall approach I have taken to the Byronic Hero's gender and sexuality grew out of extended engagement with the ways Byron "does" gender in that poem. In addition, most of the critical texts I engage with here take *Don Juan* as their focus because that text can be and has often been viewed as Byron's masterpiece, as the achievement toward which Byron's entire oeuvre had been building. For this reason, Byron's greatest satire is often used as an exemplum for his treatment of key issues throughout his canon.

## Seductions

Byron is one of the greatest poets of seduction. In his biographies, his letters, and in the effect he had in the ballrooms of the ton, Byron never failed to seduce his spectators. However, what is often missing from analyses of the Byronic Hero, arguably Byron's greatest seduction, is attention to this hero's ability to seduce. In Peter Thorslev's analysis of the Byronic Hero and his literary prototypes, one precursor is missing -- The Libertine, the aristocratic seducer whose persona draws us, irresistibly, into his tale and onto his side. This omission problematizes Thorslev's study because it

fails to acknowledge the seductive appeal of Byronism, which helps account for the profound influence of the Byronic Hero from his original appearance in the early nineteenth century to his progeny in the twenty-first. From Childe Harold to Johnny Depp's performance as Captain Jack Sparrow in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise, the Byronic Hero seduces his audience with performances of masculinity that continuously construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct both themselves and the masculinities of the cultures in which Byron's hero appears. To envision a Byronic Hero without attention to the ways seduction is deployed in his characterization as a challenge to traditional Regency gender roles is to see only a small part of the significance of this influential hero. Byron's canon features many iterations of his hero, all of which both respond to and develop those who precede it. From Childe Harold to Don Juan, Byron's heroes change, with certain attributes of the character type arising from and adding to the overall concept of the Byronic Hero. Within the different settings and plots of each work, a new Byronic Hero emerges to question the type's previous incarnations and to expand upon them, ultimately constructing a character type whose masculinity destabilizes that of his culture by seducing it.

The Byronic Hero's style of seduction is not necessarily, or even primarily, concerned with sexuality. It is not the seduction of a master rakehell, tainted with a cannibalistic Machiavellianism that devours its "prey." The seductions deployed by the Byronic Hero are oblique, subtle, and diffuse. Their power arises from the hero's individuality, from a subjectivity that acknowledges its own position as an object, which invites the seduced to seduce. It is this mythic subjectivity, one already that of the object,



that seduces the Byronic Hero's audience. The Byronic subject's willingness to yield his status, paired with the suggestion that he has already done so, draws us in, not fatally, as Mario Praz claims, but provocatively. The Byronic Hero tempts because he is himself tempted. He does not shame; he exists beyond shame. He seduces, but his seduction does not depend upon a merely physical capitulation.

Nor does his seduction depend upon a biographical reading that equates the Byronic Hero with Byron himself. Since his initial reception, the Byronic Hero has been understood as Byron's alter-ego, a thinly veiled erotic and ironic promise of the poet made text for the eyes of the reader. So compelling is this illusion of intimacy that many modern readers, well-familiar with the biographical fallacy, cannot resist its appeal. Walter Perrie writes, "Byron was driven by the desperation of his emotional needs not just to poetry and risky situations . . . but into the creation of the Byronic myth" (153). J. Drummond Bone finds that "The Byron of *Childe Harold* III picks up the theme of exile in a much more self-conscious way than his earlier narrator, scarcely surprisingly given his own exile" (173). Tom Scott claims that, "The mask of Harold is more and more dropped as the poem progresses (and it does progress, ending with Byron having discovered his own voice and proper subject: his own experience)" (26). In "The Hero as Lover: Byron and Women," Jenni Calder is preoccupied with questions about Byron's relationship with women and focuses her attention primarily on the latter half of her article's title as a means of illuminating the first half. Calder asks, "What is Byron's status as a heroic figure, and how can we assess the hero as lover? . . . In his writing he created characters who were simultaneously intensely involved and aloof, and this

suggests a need to protect himself” (119). This association appears to be one of the great “givens” within Byron criticism, but equating Byron with his heroes ultimately tells us little about the texts themselves. Yes, Byron’s personality does tempt a reader into the rather thrilling practice of reading Byron’s work as autobiography, and offers his readers an undeniably seductive invitation to do so, but what also seduces Byron’s readers, or at least this reader, are the seemingly infinite possibilities for interpretation, the delicious satisfaction of exploring the rich multiplicity of Byron’s works, and the cypher of his hero.

While many insightful studies of Byron exist, few deal in depth with the Byronic Hero without regard to his creator, and those that do typically dismiss the Byronic Hero as a one-trick pony unworthy of serious attention. Byron’s heroes change over time in wildly divergent ways, and the narrators and heroes of the poems, both so often unproblematically identified as Byron, usually clash dramatically. In *Childe Harold*, critics like Jerome McGann and J. Drummond Bone note the radical break in both voice and tone between the beginning and later cantos. The initial cantos focus on Childe Harold, while later cantos disregard the hero and the voice of the narrator assumes command of the poem. However, both Harold and the narrator have been regarded as the embodiment of Byron. Which, then, is the “true” Byron? *Don Juan* presents a similar “problem” -- is the narrator Byron? Is Juan Byron? Rather than playing “Where’s Waldo?” with Byron’s texts, I have chosen to set this issue aside in favor of reading the texts separately from Byron’s biography and analyzing Byron’s heroes accordingly. Reading the Byronic Hero on a continuum requires that one divorce oneself from the

artificial split in critical reception between Byron's earlier heroes like Childe Harold and his later heroes like Don Juan. The purpose of this division is ostensibly to address Byron's early work as part of a "sentimental" project, while offering an explanation for his later satirical mode (Elfenbein 39). As noted by Jerome McGann and Andrew Elfenbein, throughout *Don Juan* Byron's narrator ridicules both the Byronic Heroes' earlier incarnations and his readers' insistence on reading his heroes as Byron; the narrator "can't find any [brave men] in the present age / Fit for my poem (*that is, for my new one*); / So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan" (1.5, italics mine):

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There's only one slight difference between

Me and my epic brethren gone before,

And here the advantage is my own, I ween

(Not that I have not several merits more,

But this will more peculiarly be seen).

They so embellish that 'tis quite a bore

Their labyrinth of fables to thread through,

Whereas this story's actually true. (Byron, *Don Juan* 1.202)

In this passage the narrator satirizes the practice of reading Byron's works as biography, as "truth;" he suggests this account of "Byron" is the true one, even though most readers regard Don Juan as a mere protagonist and comic "victim" of the narrator, and he is the hero least likely to be associated with Byron the poet. In *Fragment 108*, Schlegel writes, "Everything should be in jest and everything should be in earnest, everything true-

heartedly open, and everything deeply dissimulated” (qtd. in Ellestrom 19). Schlegel’s romantic irony thus provides a ground for Byron’s ironic treatment of his heroes.

Byron’s poetry can and should always be regarded as ironic; his heroes are characterized both “in jest” and “in earnest,” and this ironic treatment underlies the characterization of all Byron’s heroes, not just Don Juan. Insistence on a division of the earlier work from the latter denies poems like *Childe Harold* the possibility of irony, and poems like *Don Juan* the possibility of sentiment. But if one reads Byron’s works through the perspective of Schlegel’s romantic irony, and I argue, that of Gilles Deleuze, then one must embrace multiplicity, must understand that both sentiment and irony can, and do, coexist throughout Byron’s oeuvre. If there is no absolute truth, as the narrator of *Don Juan* implies, and if systems cannot hold as totalities, then there is bound to be contradiction. According to Elfenbein, “the rhetorical source of the equation between Byron and his heroes lay in the manipulation of a universalizing language that eroticized a psyche undetermined by social constraints. . . . *Don Juan* largely jettisons this language” (40).

While the narrator of *Don Juan* certainly satirizes the sentimentalized language and conventions of Byron’s earlier heroes like Childe Harold, he also deploys them strategically to underscore the similarities between Byron’s earlier heroes and his own -- Don Juan. For example, in the scene in Canto 2 when Juan reads Donna Julia’s letter on board the ship that takes him away from Spain, Juan’s elevated rhetoric of the lover of sensibility falls prey to the demands of his seasick body:

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“And oh, if e’er I should forget, I swear --

But that's impossible, and cannot be.  
 Sooner shall this blue ocean melt to air,  
 Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea  
 Than I resign thine image, oh my fair!  
 Or think of anything excepting thee.  
 A mind diseased no remedy can physic."  
 (Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew seasick.)

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"Sooner shall heaven kiss earth" (here he fell sicker) --  
 "Oh Julia, what is every other woe?  
 (For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor,  
 Pedro, Battista, help me down below.)  
 Julia, my love (you rascal, Pedro, quicker),  
 Oh Julia (this curst vessel pitches so),  
 Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!"  
 (Here he grew inarticulate with retching.) (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.19-20)

This ironic play of old and new versions of gendered heroism within *Don Juan* does not reject prior versions of the Byronic Hero; it reveals the Byronic Hero as a figure of Romantic irony.

Baudrillard's seduction posits a radical counter to any system which claims for itself an absolute authority to define and characterize signs. In this way, it is compatible

with Judith Butler's performativity, which has also been criticized as apolitical and even possibly afeminist. Butler responds to these charges in the following passage:

Some people would say that we need a ground from which to act. We need a shared collective ground for collective action. I think we need to pursue the moments of degrounding, when we're standing in two different places at once; or we don't know exactly where we're standing; or when we've produced an aesthetic practice that shakes the ground. That's where resistance to recuperation happens. It's like a breaking through to a new set of paradigms. (Osborne and Segal)

Butler's emphasis on the idea of degrounding, here implied to be moments of instability within identification and definition, as a means to resist recuperation of theories and practices that disrupt and destabilize the very systems they challenge, suggests a way to read Baudrillard's seduction, and in my study, Byron's construction of gender through seduction, as a strategy of resistance to the recuperation of socially constructed gendered norms.

Baudrillard's seduction runs counter to ideological formations found in many feminist analyses of gender, many of which echo the structures of gender and power that are the legacy of the Victorians. According to Baudrillard,

[Feminists] are ashamed of seduction, as implying an artificial presentation of the body, or a life of vassalage and prostitution. They do not understand that seduction represents mastery over the symbolic universe, while power represents only mastery of the real universe. The

sovereignty of seduction is incommensurable with the possession of political or sexual power. (*Seduction* 8)

This analysis of seduction enables a different kind of feminism, one that is not based on victimization, the female body, female Freudian desire, or any “always already” theory of limitation. Instead, Baudrillard speaks of a feminism in which seduction is understood as a style of feminine sovereignty. This is not to say that feminine equals female. The feminine, to Baudrillard, is that which acknowledges and plays with artifice and thus does not invest structures like desire and sex with authority, structures which Baudrillard associates with the theories of Freud and Foucault respectively. Baudrillard likens seduction to Derridean ideas of deconstruction, as seduction is his term for what he sees as playing among totalizing structures, whether texts or ideologies. Baudrillard does not believe that a feminist ideology can be effectively based within such structures. To paraphrase Audre Lorde’s claim, one cannot use the master’s tools to dismantle his house. “The feminine is not what opposes the masculine but what seduces the masculine” (Baudrillard, *Seduction* 7). As such, seduction dissolves all binary opposition; within seduction, these systems of classification become irrelevant. Such systems, Baudrillard argues, contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction, as contradiction and qualification can always be found within them. Opposing these structures gives them authority, Baudrillard argues, and dooms any feminism built upon them to the status of a mere replication of that structure in a different form. One moves from a male patriarchy to a female patriarchy. Instead, a feminism built upon seduction cannot be easily recuperated by ideological systems because it does not play by their

rules; “in order to find a realm beyond economic value (which is in fact the only revolutionary perspective), then the mirror of production in which all Western metaphysics is reflected, must be broken” (Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* 47).

Baudrillard posits seduction as an alternative, revolutionary strategy to defining the self by the mirror of production, but acknowledges that many readers are uncomfortable with the notion of manipulation as a tool of feminism and thus understand seduction, which is often conflated with a totalizing sexual objectification, as a reproduction of female repression in another guise. It is true that Baudrillard’s own examples of seduction are deliberately provocative and problematic, such as his now infamous comment that the desert is so beautiful that the only way to honor it properly is to sacrifice a woman, but his theory is not exclusively represented by or limited to these examples.

Baudrillard’s seduction is not necessarily sexual, and sex is only one of many possible types of play. Baudrillard’s theory can be deployed by gender critics as a tactic of challenge if one assumes a seductive stance; not seductive in the sense of using sexuality to gain control, but as an awareness of the constructedness of inequality within patriarchal systems, and its deployment as a tactic of social control, as well as an awareness of one’s own potential for self-sovereignty through both subjective and objective performances within seduction. Butler’s performativity helps to illuminate Baudrillard’s theory of seduction by refuting the misconception that subjectivity and objectivity are essential to either sex. “Butler . . . understand[s] gendered subjectivity ‘as a history of identifications, parts of which can be brought into play in given contexts and



which . . . do not always point back to an internal coherence of any kind” (qtd. in Klages 119).

In Moyra Haslett’s otherwise insightful study, *Don Juan and the Don Juan Legend* is undermined by her reliance upon an essentialized reading of gender in Byron’s poem in an otherwise constructionist argument. Haslett devotes a substantial section of her book to analysis of the historical contexts of Byron’s *Don Juan*, particularly its reception by its original audience. Haslett warns female readers of the danger to feminism posited by Byron’s satire. Her wariness exemplifies a significant problem with many feminist readings of Byron: the tendency to adopt a defensive and overly literal stance towards a poet whose correspondence, poems, and published conversations indicate an ambivalence towards not only women, but towards every other possible social group or topic of conversation. Haslett employs Jane Miller’s feminist approach outlined in *Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture*, which Haslett notes is “critical, suspicious, and sceptical, and thus is similar to the reading of Byron’s contemporaries” (16). Haslett applauds this approach as it foregrounds her argument that Byron’s *Don Juan* must be read within the context of the larger Don Juan legend, and helps her account for the disparity between some contemporary and modern receptions of the character of Don Juan.

However, adopting Jane Miller’s “suspicious and sceptical” stance toward the poem situates a feminist reader in an awkward sexist double-bind, which Miller herself sees as problematic: “Murderer, bandit, burglar he may be, but to see through his seductions, to deny him ourselves, is to spoil the fun -- his fun, our fun, and the complicity of the won-over audience” (qtd. in Haslett 16-17). While this project does not

deny the need to read Byron's work critically and with attention to its cultural context, it is unwise, at least to this reader, to see Byron as presenting a single, dogmatic position on any issue. "To spoil the fun" of reading *Don Juan* through adoption of a critical position which denies it the potential of multiplicity is to undermine the poem's power as a satire, to deny the possibility that Byron is treating his libertine subject ironically, and to attribute to the poem a simplistic agenda which its poet would reject as cant. Reading *Don Juan* through the lens of gender performance allows one to approach Byron's treatment of gender critically while not relegating a feminist reader and/or a female reader (to Haslett an identical figure) to a repressive, sexist position by which he or she is trapped into reading the poem in a particular way because of his or her gender, which is exactly the type of sexism for which Haslett condemns both Byron and Regency Britain.

Moreover, although Haslett uses Baudrillard's theory of seduction as a basis for her treatment of gender in Byron's works, her study seems to reject its implications. Haslett notes that Baudrillard's seduction does not support attribution of blame for the active partner in a seduction, as both parties alternate between active and passive roles within a seduction; however, Haslett's analysis suggests that assigning blame is somehow required by a feminist approach and that Baudrillard's refusal to do so is antifeminist. However, if one follows through with the full implications of Baudrillard's theory, one may read Baudrillard's seduction as a challenge to a feminism arising from Foucauldian and Freudian systems rather than a challenge to all possible feminisms. Haslett claims that Baudrillard's development of his argument by using Kierkegaard's "The Seducer's Diary" as an example "fall[s] back on an implicit causality which is consistently

gendered -- that of the woman's always already present seduction" (285). However, Baudrillard's characterization of seduction as feminine does not imply that it is an exclusively female strategy. Instead, seduction plays with(in) and among the possibilities inherent yet disguised in a gendered binary system, which, Baudrillard insists, one cannot escape by operating within the established parameters of psychology and institutional power, by destabilizing what has been defined as "feminine" and what has been defined as "masculine" within these systems. By pairing the male Byronic Hero with a female Byronic Hero, not merely a female love interest, in scenes of seduction, Byron highlights the simultaneity of active and passive roles in seductive play.

While much of Baudrillard's rhetoric may appear antifeminist, his theory of seduction actually posits new possibilities for feminism independent of Foucault and Freud, whose theories, Baudrillard suggests, represent structures which doom feminism to failure. This failure, in Baudrillard's view, takes the form of a switch from male patriarchy to female patriarchy with no possibility of a revolutionary form of gender theory that refuses to acknowledge the, to Baudrillard, fraudulent nature of patriarchal claims to authority. Many of these feminisms limit women to circumscribed definitions based on essentialism. Baudrillard's seduction allows for both performativity and the body, like Byron's and thus, as he himself stresses, suggests a feminism that does not place women in an essentialist position; "*seduction alone is radically opposed to anatomy as destiny*" (*Seduction* 10). If there is no essential gender behind its expressions, as Butler argues, then one can read Baudrillard's theory of seduction, even his claim that seduction is the strength of the feminine (*Seduction* 7), from a perspective of gender

performance and multiplicity. Baudrillard's characterization of seduction as a tool of the feminine does not necessarily negate the gender performative quality of seduction, as Baudrillard attributes it to the feminine, not to the female or to women exclusively. Instead, Baudrillard's seduction splinters such classifications; he clearly states that during seduction, binary categories like interior and exterior, active and passive, and subject and object are not merely destabilized, but that they do not exist.

Baudrillard's seduction, then, relies upon and is constituted by the play of irony, which subverts and disrupts the authority of absolutist systems. As Anne Mellor writes of romantic irony:

Not all romantic works present a confident movement from innocence to experience to a higher innocence, that circuitous journey which leads the protagonist spiraling upward to a more self-aware and therefore more meaningful communion with the divine. To the contrary, many central romantic works exhibit a structure that is deliberately open-ended and inconclusive. (Mellor 5-6)

Mellor's analysis suggests that romantic irony participates in a recreation of forms, structures, and symbols; "these new fictions and self-concepts bear with them the seeds of their own destruction. . . . The resultant artistic mode that alone can properly be called romantic irony must therefore be a form or structure that simultaneously creates and de-creates itself" (Mellor 5). In other words, practitioners of romantic irony create new symbolic systems, but these systems are not meant to be regarded as absolutes. Byron, and later Baudrillard, through their use of writing tactics like fragmentation, reflection,

and irony, engage seduction as a strategy of representation that dissolves binary systems. There are no binaries in seduction; as with Butler's performativity, binaries are impossible.

#### Active and Passive Libertinage

For many readers, *Don Juan's* treatment of gender is complicated by its subject, the career of the libertine Don Juan. By choosing this subject, Byron invokes in his readers all the associations of libertinage found not only in the Don Juan legend, but also in the figure of the Sadean rake. The figure of the Libertine has traditionally been read as a rabid misogynist, the embodiment of an oppressive, exclusively male sexual privilege. Nancy K. Miller, author of *French Dressing*, raises the possibility of opening up libertine novels of the eighteenth century to the practice of performance theory:

We could possibly try . . . interpreting the role of gender in these novels as performance, following a Judith Butler line, with the notion of gender as construction and as repetition, and in that sense, although I'm personally resistant to the idea, playing with roles. It's because roles are so rigid that people in fact *are* playing with them. And playing with them is a way of showing that it's a game, that identity is a game, and that there could be something liberating about that. About understanding that we are in a system in which we aren't inherently or essentially bound to a certain unfolding, and that there could be movement back and forth, without closure. (27)

Although Miller is resistant to the idea of approaching libertine texts performatively, her statement suggests a potentially profitable critical approach towards theorizing the interplay of gender and sexuality in texts that take libertinage as their subject, like *Don Juan*, or are products of writers regarded as libertines, such as Byron -- Judith Butler's theory of gender performance. Butler's concept of gender, that gender is constructed by and through the repetition of performances that a given culture sees as "expressions" of a pre-gendered entity, challenges any reading of gender posited as an uncomplicated expression of an essential, biological sex. Applying Butler's theory of performativity to libertine texts curtails interpretation of such works through an essentialist lens which would posit "the Libertine" as exclusively male or as exclusively masculine.

Performativity allows the possibility of libertine seduction to be read as a "game" which challenges rigid systems of gender identity, and which posits libertinage as an "open" strategy which counters totalizing, absolutist systems of gender and sexuality such as that found in Sade.

In addition, Baudrillard's seduction counters Miller's analysis of play in libertinage:

The assumption is always that there's a kind of play involved in libertinage. Most definitions of libertinage refer to the playful pursuit of pleasure. But the pursuit also includes the exercise of power, and the free exercise of power. So I would combine the terms play, pleasure, and power, and another *p*, performance. . . . The question then becomes what

meaning or value one would assign to those terms. At that point, I would have to talk in terms of gender. In other words, ask the questions: whose freedom? whose pleasure? whose performance? whose power? (17).

Miller's questions demand answers that incorporate a studied consideration of the role gender plays in any theoretical construct of libertinage. If one assumes that play is a constituent element of libertinage, then one must account for the nature of that play. Miller insists that what most discussions of libertine sexuality gloss is the unequal access to power in libertine seduction, and she goes on to argue that this disparity in gendered power severely problematizes any consideration of libertinage as a liberating force. However, as Baudrillard writes,

We must say that power seduces, but not in the vulgar sense of a complicit form of desire on the part of those who are dominated -- this comes down to basing it in the desire of others, which is really going overboard in taking people for idiots -- no, power seduces by that reversibility which haunts it, and upon which a minimal symbolic cycle is set up. (*Forget Foucault* 43-4)

While this study does not mean to suggest that Byron's construction of Juan's libertinage in *Don Juan* unproblematically offers a vision of sexual freedom for both sexes, I do acknowledge that the emphasis on the performative qualities of gender in the poem differentiates Byron's Juan from his libertine literary precursors. Byron's treatment of gender utilizes play and performance in the situation of seduction, not as mere

expressions of masculine privilege, but as tactics that destabilize the essentialist assumptions implicit in both masculine and feminine gender norms. Haslett writes, “The subversive potential of . . . *Don Juan* . . . collapses under, as indeed it returns to, the conventional asymmetry of the sexes” (288). However, by emphasizing the performative aspects of gender in *Don Juan*, I argue that the poem does not digress pointlessly on the possibility of an unstable gender binary to merely reinforce, unaltered and unquestioned, traditional gender asymmetry. This cultural norm, with its attendant imbalance of power, is considered in *Don Juan* to be limiting to both men and women, and does not characterize libertinage as a freedom unqualified by social and cultural consequences for either sex.

To counter Haslett’s argument that *Don Juan* recuperates a rigidly gendered system, one must differentiate the terms “libertinism” and “libertinage.” According to Catherine Cusset, libertinage is best described as an “eighteenth-century literary and artistic phenomenon,” one that indicates “a way of living and of thinking that evoked sexual freedom, seduction, and frivolity” (1-2). Critics like Miller and Haslett emphasize the real world consequences for women of libertine sexuality to suggest that reading libertine texts as emancipating is to flaunt one’s unconscious misogyny and social naivete. As Cusset notes, “[f]rom this perspective, libertinage represents a structure of control, a ‘system’ that is doomed to fail because it ignores the reality of desire. If liberty is emphasized in the word ‘libertine,’ it is with the consequent judgment that such liberty is impossible or incompatible with human reality and public order” (11). Cusset’s view of libertinage as a literary or artistic construct opens up the possibility of reading libertine



texts as aesthetic texts “that interact with the reader and are themselves strategies of seduction” (12), rather than patriarchal systems of gender control. Further, “[o]ne calls this movement ‘libertinage’ and not ‘libertinism,’ Dubost argues, precisely because it is a discourse, a writing strategy, and not a system” (Cusset 12).

Byron’s libertine strategy is not gendered specifically masculine. As Elfenbein notes, “Byron’s women in *Don Juan* generally conform to Pope’s maxim, ‘Every woman is at heart a rake’” (42). This characterization of women as libertines, while likely misogynistic coming from Pope, may be read in Byron’s work as coming nearest to the crux of the matter of gender. If Byron’s men in *Don Juan*, most notably its narrator and its hero, are rakes, and its women are rakes, then how can one claim, as Elfenbein does, that the poem ultimately reinforces the limitations placed on both sexes through socially constructed gender roles of either poet’s century? To do so is to read Byron as Pope’s plagiarist, not as his literary descendant. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes in her analysis of Shakespeare’s sonnets, “What can be said is that the speaker . . . can, for one reason or another, afford to be relaxed and urbane (in what may not have been intended to be a public text) on the subject of sexual interchangeability of males and females” (35). While Sedgwick qualifies this statement with the claim that Shakespeare’s sonnets may not have been intended for perusal by the general public, no such claim can be made about Byron’s poems. Byron’s heroes and their texts were obviously written for publication, and one can argue that in the vast majority of his private correspondence, if one examines his letters and journals, Byron seems to be writing for a larger, public, audience. What becomes clear, then, is that Byron’s narrators appear “relaxed and

urbane,” or libertine, enough to acknowledge in their commentaries on the Byronic Heroes’ exploits that gender and sex roles are not the monoliths some readers may believe or may wish them to be, and they do so without hesitation and even with a certain glee at disconcerting the canting masses (especially in *Don Juan*) which they and their poet hold in contempt. Byron’s narrators demonstrate that while a rising middle class readership might believe itself to be “shocked” by the license the Byronic libertine exhibits in his or her performances of seduction, the aristocratic poet, his narrators, and his heroes feel free to offend.

If read as seduction, gender operates within and through the masculine style of the libertine as a multiplicity of performances that need not be viewed within a binary formulation of either/or gendered behaviors. The privilege afforded to the libertine, the locus of his or her license, is that of performing subjectivity through a wider variety of socially tolerated reflections than those condoned by a later Victorian bourgeoisie; the libertine claims the liberty of taking liberties with(in) a normatively gendered representation of sexuality. If *Don Juan* is read as a character whose multigendered performances seduce on a grand scale, then his poem implies that he assumes the privilege of performing differing styles of masculinity in any possible situation, no matter how absurd or threatening. That the poem constructs these performances as strategies of seduction suggests that genders are seemingly infinitely reflected and re-reflected within a seductive context, and that performances of the feminine, like drag, possessing feminine biological characteristics, and displays of emotion, reflected within a performance of the masculine, the feminine reflection can be understood as enabling

heterosexual sexual conquest, as can be seen in Juan's seduction of Gulbeyaz. However, one may argue that "conquest" is a misleading term in a discussion of Juan's sexual history. The women Juan seduces are also active participants in the seduction. While Juan is usually regarded as a hapless "victim" of the sexual appetites of these women, his performance as seducer constitutes his character throughout the poem. In this way, Byron's heroes can be read as a revision of the literary tradition of libertinage, especially that outlined in Sade's *the 120 Days of Sodom*. While Juan's performances of libertinage may differ from those of the eighteenth-century rakehells found in the works of Sade and Richardson, and it certainly does, he shares with them the luxury of a much larger "mirror."

However, this "mirroring" must not be understood as a simplistic reversal of gendered roles like active and passive. On first acquaintance, Byron's Don Juan may not appear to exhibit the qualities of the Libertine, as he is often characterized as passive by both the poem and by its critics. Thorslev and T. S. Eliot among many associate Juan's lack of heroism with sexual "passivity," deploying this epithet as a euphemism for homosexuality despite the poem's characterization of Juan as a "Don Juan," an accomplished seducer of women. Because of Byron's ironic depiction of the character's sexual passivity, his Juan does not appear to fit easily within an eighteenth-century libertine mold. Libertinism is linked in the minds of many readers with Richardson's Lovelace, with Laclos's Valmont, and perhaps most notoriously, with Sade's libertines. These practitioners of Libertinism are characterized as sexually dominant and manipulative in their texts, and suggest that to some readers libertinism and heroism are

mutually exclusive. Thorslev, for example, omits the Libertine from his classification of Byronic prototypes, preferring to assign Fielding's Tom Jones to the category of The Child of Nature, whose exuberant virility is associated with that of the Libertine.

Thorslev writes:

it is easy to see that Tom Jones, the most famous hero of the century, is also a Child of Nature . . . most characteristic is his naivete and natural goodness of heart, as contrasted with the greed, hypocrisy, and snobbery of the social world in which he moves. . . . his sensibility never overcomes his natural good spirits or aggressive temperament. . . . in his own day he became notorious for the fact that . . . his sexual appetite remains unimpaired. (31)

Thorslev compares Byron's Juan to Tom Jones, whose primary difference from the Libertine as Thorslev and others construct it is his relative innocence and goodness combined with a social naivete. As Thorslev notes, Juan shares Jones's innocence, as well as his "natural good spirits" and "aggressive temperament" (31). As noted above, sexual appetite itself does not preclude Jones, or Juan, from heroism; it is lack of sincerity and sensibility which distinguishes the Sadean libertine from the Child of Nature. However, Richardson's Lovelace exhibits qualities of sensibility, as does Austen's Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*; one may then assume that for Byron's contemporary readers, sensibility is not incompatible with rakishness. In many libertine texts, sensibility is crucial to seduction, the primary strategy of any libertine worthy of the appellation.

What matters, in Byron's works, is motivation. According to Catherine Cusset,

There are two kinds of libertinage. The first . . . is a "surprise" of the senses, or what Crebillon calls "the moment": a point in time when circumstances suddenly make you oblivious to any other reality but physical pleasure. The second form of libertinage . . . involves control over one's own instincts and feelings along with the manipulation of others. These two forms of libertinage -- "passive" and "active" -- are not mutually exclusive. (2)

In *Don Juan*, Byron characterizes Juan's libertinage as the first type, dependent on Crebillon's "the moment." Thomas Kavanagh describes "the moment" as "a new sense of existence within a present freed from the weight of past and future" (qtd. in Cusset 2). Juan's tendency to belatedly remember his prior lovers illustrates this point. Cusset also notes that libertine writers applied the term in the context of eroticism (2). Juan's libertinage is certainly "of the moment," and his seductions are more overtly erotic than those of the second type of libertinage found in the texts of previous Byronic Heroes like Manfred. Juan's type of libertinage is not that of Sade's libertines, for whom premeditated manipulation and control of both victim and reader are the primary impetus for the sex act, or even that of prior Byronic Heroes, whose original libertine acts are, the reader is encouraged to assume, of the moment and whose subsequent self-torture manipulates the reader into admiring the heroes' self-imposed penances and their self-mastery in the face of passionate guilt. No -- Don Juan is not that type of libertine. His libertinage is indeed "passive," to give Thorslev and Eliot their due. But it is exactly the

first type of libertinage -- passive, of-the-moment libertinage -- that corresponds to seduction. For Baudrillard, control cannot exist within a true seduction. Seduction depends on willing surrender to “the moment,” not on active manipulation and victimization. Juan’s “passive” libertinage, therefore, does not render him “powerless”; ironically, his passivity, so denounced by critics, is what gives his seductions power.

Byron’s heroes up to the creation of Don Juan participate in both passive and active forms of libertinage. Characterization of the earlier Byronic Heroes like Conrad and Lara depends upon establishing the hero’s mysterious libertine past, his secret “sin” which is implied to be the active seduction of a woman the hero idolizes. The reader is encouraged to sympathize with this version of the Byronic Hero because he or she does not witness the seduction itself. Instead, the reader follows the hero in his self-imposed exile after the fact and is encouraged to marvel at the iron will of the hero, who clearly feels deeply behind his stoic exterior. In this way, the reader is manipulated by the poet, the narrator(s), and the hero into an active seductive situation in which he or she willingly capitulates even though he or she is aware of the manipulation. However, this successful seductive dynamic is altered in the case of *Don Juan*; for perhaps the first time in Byron’s canon, the reader is forced to infer an active seduction from the outset, given the title of the poem. Ironically, Juan engages only in the passive form of seduction throughout the text. In taking as his “new hero for a new age” the libertine Don Juan, Byron refuses to hide behind the distance from the libertine act made possible in his earlier treatments of the Byronic Hero, and through the career of his Juan, Byron is able to reject his own evasive brand of cant and move into a frank exploration of the conflict between

individual liberty and normative cultural demands. It is my contention that Byron's continuing process of revising his hero suggests a profound preoccupation with the Byronic Hero's ability to signify a liberatory sexual and gender politics for the individual.

Byron appears to have been aware that his success as a writer was dependent on his heroes' ability to seduce rather than dominate his female, as well as his male, readership, as his correspondence with William Murray illustrates. In response to Murray's request that Byron return to his successful approach in *The Corsair* and Murray's fear of the consequences of "such seductive poetry," Byron wrote, "the reading or non-reading a book -- will never keep down a single petticoat" (qtd. in Haslett 226, 229). Byron seemed aware that his role as a poet depended on a certain degree of libertinage. The poet must seduce, and his heroes must seduce. To be both heroic and Byronic, the Byronic Hero's role as libertine must be emphasized, but his promiscuity must be tempered by distance or circumstance to allow the seduction to continue without victimization of the heroine or the reader. Byron's choice to qualify Don Juan's culpability as a wanton rake by characterizing his abandonment of his ostensible "victims" as necessitated by circumstances "beyond his control," as Laclos's Valmont deceptively claims, rather than as his cruel rejection of them enables the reader to view the Byronic Hero sympathetically, and thus even more seductive in his own sort of "victimization." Thus Byron's poem itself engages in a masquerade, an active manipulation of gendered appearances and expectations by which Byron can "have it both ways."

For Haslett, however, literary seduction is proof of misogyny as well as a writing and reading tactic. Throughout, Haslett's study of the Don Juan archetype waffles uneasily between two perspectives of Byron's Don Juan: first, that in the poem Byron's treatment of gender breaks radically with that of his contemporaries, and second, that feminist readers must vigilantly defend against being seduced by the poem, which she reminds the reader "represents a masculinist ideology" (271). This insistence, inspired by the positive reactions of readers like Mary Shelley to the character of Byron's Juan and coupled with Haslett's own oft-repeated conviction that in the poem Byron is mounting a defense of Don Juan as a rake, undermines her otherwise excellent study. Haslett's claim that "sexual predation" and "capitulation for the reader" are the "ultimate conquest for Byron's text" (213) suggests that if one is a feminist, one must launch an impassioned defense against the poem, even though she acknowledges that such a defensive position, for Byron's female contemporaries as well as for modern feminist (to Haslett, "always already" female) readers, is no defense at all. According to Haslett, female readers of *Don Juan* are "always already" compromised, as "[t]here can be no initial innocence because the very involvement within the [seduction] represents some form of desire, just as the act of reading *Don Juan* presumes, as its effects, the contamination of interpretation" (284). Thus, for Haslett, if one is female, reading *Don Juan* is an act of rape; acknowledging one understands it indicates that one has contracted the literary equivalent of syphilis. "The issue of rape polarizes the attributions of responsibility which are implicit within many considerations of seduction (excluding Baudrillard's) and foregrounds what is at stake for a feminist politics" (Haslett 283).



Furthermore, as Haslett acknowledges, the act of reading is itself a site of seduction, and while many female readers had to read the poem secretly, from the sheer number of sales of the poem, it seems likely that at least someone read *Don Juan* openly, or that “closeted” readings of the poem were “required” for readers of both sexes. So-called closeted readings of Byron’s works were often deemed necessary because of their association with Byron’s own libertine reputation, and often implicated the reader in a seductive situation, as Haslett claims. Male readers were not necessarily limited to such closeted reading, as the many reviews and condemnations of the poem indicate. However, outed reading of Byron’s poem seemed to require some sort of specious moralistic agenda, as his critics’ reactions suggest. As mentioned above, Byron’s alleged “ire” toward his female readership seems less a complaint that women were reading his works than irritation at the bourgeois moral crusade hypocritically launched against his works in the name of feminine virtue by his male reviewers, and at the social codes which required women to read in secret, or to pretend ignorance of his subject matter and his double meanings. Byron writes, ““of all my works D[on] Juan is the most popular -- and sells doubly in proportion -- especially amongst the women who send for it the more it is abused”” (qtd. in Haslett 227). Byron’s own extensive acquaintance with Regency female intelligentsia must have provided him with the knowledge that women did understand his poems, but were culturally proscribed to the unsavory position of feigning ignorance of their themes. One reader, Miss Jane Waldie, wrote to Murray asking, “Why will Lord Byron write what we may not read?” (qtd. in Haslett, 202). Waldie’s complaint indicates not that she found Byron distasteful, but that women’s reading is so policed by

society that “coming out” as a female reader of Byron is forbidden (Haslett 202). This study sees Byron’s grousing against women in *Don Juan* more as a reaction against moralizing bourgeois cant and institutionalized gender hypocrisy than against women forced by social mores into a performance of ignorance of its themes. Thus it can be argued that Byron’s use of irony, double meanings, and dirty jokes in *Don Juan*, even in his infamous attacks on “the Blues,” functions as a critique of the societal codes of behavior that perpetuate repressive cant under the guise of a defense of female purity. That this institutionalized sexism is maintained at the expense of individual freedom for both men and women seems particularly noxious to Byron, and it is unlikely that his *Don Juan* would allow gender hypocrisy to pass by without criticism.

Byron’s strategy of writing sex is therefore closer to Baudrillard’s than to that of traditional libertine texts. Tim Fulford notes the similarity between the role of the poet and the role of the seducer, citing as examples, of all possible choices, Byron and Coleridge. Fulford claims that Byron is similar to Coleridge “in his analysis of English social display as a sublimation of sexual desire” (151). Where Byron differs from Coleridge is in the emphasis the latter places upon marriage and procreative sex. For Coleridge, “The need for an ideal completeness of self with Other, if not satisfied by love, is expressed in lust (coupling)” (Fulford 151). The “proper” method of experiencing this union of self and Other is “love, marriage, and sexual union for procreation” (Fulford 151). Fulford goes on to describe Coleridge’s lack of fulfillment in his marriage, and regards his writing as a surrogate for this frustrated desire (151). In this, Fulford suggests, “the writer is closer to the libertine than Coleridge cares to admit,

for neither can satisfy desire within the proper institution of marriage. The writer, however, redefines such desire as a masculinity of self-displacement rather than promiscuity” (151). As has been made abundantly clear in the works of legions of critics, Byron did not share Coleridge’s valuation of sex outside of marriage as “a perversion of real human needs,” as Fulford puts it (151). In Byron’s works, marriage itself is another form of institutionalized control of individual liberty. Therefore, his heroes engage in seductions outside of the bonds of marriage, which functions as a form of social production and ideological propagation.

Although Byron’s liberatory libertinage is complicated by his characterization of his hero as aristocratic, his challenge to early nineteenth-century gender and sex roles opens up potential avenues for reconsidering the ways Romantic texts engage these formulations. In his study of Sir Walter Scott’s *Redgauntlet*, Rick Incorvati writes, “very little has been said in sexuality studies to suggest that the practice of historicizing sexuality has a pedigree extending back to the Romantic period” (para. 3). Byron’s deployment of libertine sexuality as a trope of individual sexual liberty suggests such a practice, as the bisexuality of the libertine figure demands exploration of the ways not only gender but the related binary of sexual orientation is challenged by Byron’s heroes.

#### Clothes (Un)make the Man: The Byronic Hero in Drag

In “Their She Condition,” Susan Wolfson discusses the significance of cross-dressing in *Don Juan*. In her analysis of Juan’s feminine dress in the slave market and of the masculine language used by Byron to describe women like Gulbeyaz and Catherine the Great, Wolfson claims, “These transfers allow Byron to inscribe a language of

cultural contradiction and personal self-division in which what has been habitually denied to one sex gets projected in terms of the other” (593). While this analysis offers insight into the cross-dressing in *Don Juan* as form of physical and linguistic drag, I argue that Byron’s poem deploys drag as only one layer of its politically relevant performances of gender and sex. The cultural contradiction Wolfson describes, however, was perhaps not as contradictory to Byron’s original audience as it may appear to later readers of the poem. As Wolfson points out, Lady Caroline Lamb, a lover of Byron’s and one of the possible inspirations for female-to-male cross-dressing in Byron’s works like *Lara* and *Don Juan*, not only appeared as Don Juan at a society ball, according to Byron’s letters, but deployed masculine drag as a method of gaining access to Byron’s bedchamber during the course of their affair. In *The Female Thermometer*, Terry Castle notes the significance of masquerade as a challenge to cultural norms in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century:

For the masquerade indeed provided the eighteenth century with a novel imagery of sexual possibility. Its manifold displacements and enigmas. . . register[ed] for the first time that ironic resistance to the purely instinctual which has increasingly come to characterize the erotic life of the West since the eighteenth century. In particular, in its stylized assault on gender boundaries, the masquerade played an interesting part in the creation of the modern “polymorphous” subject—perverse by definition, sexually ambidextrous, and potentially unlimited in the range of its desires. (84)

Thus, drag allows for the subversion of gender identity within a culturally condoned spectacle. Many critics, Georges Bataille among them, argue that spectacles, in this case, of multigender, are often deployed by cultures to allow for transgression of a cultural norm while ultimately containing that transgression within cultural boundaries. As Byron's poem suggests, masquerade subverts because it undermines *binary* constructions of male/female, masculine/feminine, and transgression/cultural norm. When Juan is dressed as a harem woman and Gulnare is dressed as Kaled, for example, they are not "changing" gender, i.e., exchanging one stable gender role (male) for its other (female), or vice versa, but are simultaneously performing both male and female genders. This suggests that gender is continually displaced through masquerade, and that there is no clearly defined other against which to "define" one's gender.

Castle continues, "Especially in London, the manipulation of appearances was both a private strategy and a social institution" (83). For Lamb, dressing as a male page was a tactic to gain greater mobility. The word is used here not only to connote the freedom of movement made possible by cross-dressing as a man, but also to indicate mobility in its Byronic sense -- as a performance of changeability, as a multiplicity of gendered performances within a context of seduction. Castle claims that "disguise provided a much-desired emotional access to new sensual and ethical realms" (83), and this statement underscores the significance of cross-dressing to both men and women of Byron's time; masquerade allows for the transgression of gender and sexual norms within a culturally condoned situation. Drag, in Baudrillard's terms, seduces social normativity

through performances of gender and sex roles. This gendered play implies that gender's associated binaries are also multiplied among and constructed through the most visible signs of biological sex and its associated gender system -- the adoption of gender-specific clothing.

It is through the cultural institution of drag that early nineteenth century society most flagrantly challenged its own gendered system. Drag's performativity, its ironic deployment of clothing and accessories assigned to individuals by the dominant culture as a means of marking one at first glance as biologically either/or, positions itself within and plays among dominant cultural discourses on gender, sex, and sexual orientation in ways that dissolve the system itself. According to Marjorie Garber, "bisexuality is a category that undoes the the notion of category itself" (242). Drag is a lie, but it is a lie that reveals the deception inherent within "the truth" of gender and sexuality. Drag does not reverse; it multiplies. The spectacle of Lady Caroline Lamb dressed as Don Juan, attended like a queen by devils sent to deliver her/him to Hell, does not merely reflect Byron, but shatters such a mirroring into a prismatic proliferation of possible significations. Lamb dressed as Juan can be read as Lamb reflecting Byron, Lamb reflecting Juan, Juan reflecting Byron, each of these reflections mirroring the traditional Don Juan, Lamb as man, Byron as woman, both as Juan, both as libertines, both as devils, and both as Byronic Heroes. Additionally, the literary works of both Lamb and Byron would suggest further identifications to her contemporary spectators -- *Glenarvon* mirrors Byron as well as Lamb in Byronic drag; *Lara* reflects Lamb as well as Byron in "Caro" drag. The simple adoption of Don Juan costume at a fashionable masquerade ball held by

the upper echelon of British society posits an interrogation of the gendered norms of this same social structure. Who is Lady Caroline Lamb here? Can such a figure be singular?

Significantly, Don Juan is the Byronic Hero Lamb performs. Lamb's choice of Juan drag is timely, yes; the first cantos of Byron's poem had just been published, and perhaps more importantly, reviewed by the literary journals of the day. Jerome Christensen notes in his analysis of a review of *Don Juan* in the *British Critic*, "According to the reviewer *Don Juan* has not only sensation but subversion in mind . . . . Diabolically practical, it teaches seduction (dress as you like, but whatever you do, don't present yourself in that gross form that carries with it its own shame!) by being unerringly seductive" (222). To "dress as you like" is here, as in the quotation below from the *Universal Spectator*, likened to subversive sexual and gendered play. "In every country, Decency requires that the Sexes should be differenc'd by *Dress*, in order to prevent Multitudes of Irregularities which otherwise would continually be occasion'd" claimed one writer in the *Universal Spectator* in 1728 (qtd. in Castle 83). Lamb's masquerade as Byron's Don Juan suggests, amongst its many prismatic implications, that sexes cannot ultimately be "differenc'd" by dress; this failure of the signifier to signify seduces signification. Dressing as she likes likens Lamb to the libertinage of the Byronic Hero while simultaneously hinting at this figure's multiple genders, and, by association, with its "irregular," and one supposes "indecent" sexuality. As Byron's former lover whose cross-dressing was an open secret shared by members of the social elite, Lamb here "embodies" Byronic bisexuality to her contemporary and modern audiences.

In *Borderlines: The Shiftings of Gender in British Romanticism*, Wolfson conjures the old cliché, “Clothes make the man” (196), to sum up her analysis of the seraglio scene in *Don Juan*. For Wolfson, “Juan’s conquest of the East is a conquest of drag” (196). Throughout her study, Wolfson adopts this position because in her reading of gender in Byron’s canon, “Byron devises renewed expressions of male power” (192). However, Wolfson’s claim tells only part of the story. Like other critical readings of Byron’s constructions of gender, Wolfson subscribes to a dialectical position in which any performance of gender is and must be ultimately recuperated by a system of opposites. Gender performativity, in Wolfson’s reading, is understood as a reversal of gender roles, one which, no matter how nuanced the analysis, replicates the gendered binary of masculine or male and feminine or female. For, although Wolfson appears to reject gender essentialism, her Freud is showing; “as the only phallus in the harem, he gains a world of sexual opportunity” (196). While Wolfson’s study addresses Juan’s gendered performativity and gives Byron himself credit for a radical personal ethics of gender, she consigns Byron’s gender politics in *Don Juan* to the pseudo-political dung heap of farce, comparing his episodes of cross-dressing to those in the film *Tootsie*. Applying Elaine Showalter’s analysis of drag in the film to Byron’s deployment of the trope in *Don Juan*, Wolfson writes, “‘feminist’ speeches’ by a man in drag . . . ‘are less a response to the oppression of women than an instinctive situational male reaction to being treated like a woman’” (193). She continues, Byron “diffuse[s] political import into cliché or farce” (Wolfson 193). However, these claims present several problems. First, Byron’s Don Juan is not Dustin Hoffman’s character in *Tootsie*; each inhabits a



different milieu. Second, both Showalter and Wolfson appear to assume that the adoption of drag by a man is always either farcical or misogynistic or both. Third, the farcical elements of Juan's drag performance can still be read as part of a political critique of gender roles. Finally, exactly who is making "feminist speeches?" Juan? The narrator? Byron? The text makes no pretense of Juan's resistance to his feminine dress. The narrator does not describe himself as cross-dressing during his relation of this episode. Wolfson appears to fall prey to the tendency to conflate Byron, his narrators, and his heroes. Such a fusion is common when reading Byron, but can have unintended repercussions in an assessment of the role of cross-dressing within the poet's texts. Reading drag through an essentialist lens which posits this act when performed by a man as an uncomplicated role reversal severely limits the possibility of reading cross-dressing as anything other than a cheap laugh at a man in a dress. For Deleuze, "humour is the art of the surfaces and of the doubles, of nomad singularities and of the always displaced aleatory point" (qtd. in Colebrook 133-34). While Wolfson regards Don Juan's performance as just such a form of "low" comedy, the poem's own structure and characterizations, especially in light of the explorations of gender roles in Byron's earlier works, cannot be so easily dismissed. Byron's reader does get some good laughs, but of a more Deleuzian variety. Elfenbein calls Byron's construction of gendered eroticism an "oddity" (43), and like many readers, struggles to come to terms with the contradictions, side-stepping, and layers of irony discoverable in Byron's gendered portrayals of his heroes. As a result, Elfenbein, like Haslett, understands Byron's constructions of gender as role-reversals which recuperate his society's gendered norms. As Elfenbein's and

Wolfson's readings of Byronic mobility suggest, acts like drag, performances that announce themselves as such, can be more easily recuperated by dominant cultural systems of identity politics. Byron's works resist such a recuperation in that his texts do not rely exclusively on "immediately legible" performances. Byron uses drag, but also deploys mobility as a less observable tactic of seduction in the Baudrillardian sense, which, like Garber's understanding of bisexuality, "confounds the very category of identity" through its "multiple, fluid identifications" (495, 513).

#### Having It Both Ways: Bisexuality

There is clearly much at stake politically for queer theorists to claim canonical writers like Shakespeare, Byron, and Wilde as part of a homosexual or proto-homosexual historical narrative. Following Garber, I acknowledge the complexity of classifying such writers as straight, gay, or bi, and regard the efforts of queer theorists in their groundbreaking analyses of pre-Victorian sexualities as essential to the development of my own understanding. However, in this study I intend to offer a reading of Byron's wildly influential heroic type through a bisexual lens. This approach to Byron follows the methodologies of queer and gender theorists while allowing for a re-evaluation of the ways Byron's construction of gender and sexuality in the creation and evolution of the Byronic Hero explores the possibility of envisioning a liberatory individual sexual politics within a normative social structure. I believe that Byron's complicated development of his hero demonstrates the Herculean nature of this challenge to the accepted gender and sex roles of his day, and also perhaps of the inevitability of its "failure" to be regarded as such, at least in his century's immediate future.

The difficulty of theorizing early nineteenth century gender and sexual orientation within the postmodern parameters of our critical vocabulary renders analysis of pre-Victorian genders and sexualities particularly vexed. The works of French critics like Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean Baudrillard, as well as those of Anglo-American critics like Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, reject traditional binary conceptions of gender and sexuality and have complicated these issues and the language used to analyze them. However, applying these theoretical constructs retroactively exposes those who would do so to accusations of anachronism or ignorance. Foucault's domination of the field of nineteenth century sexual discourses, especially those related to sexual identity, has often resigned critics operating in the field of early nineteenth-century sexuality to terminology that may not accurately describe their insights into the operations of sexuality and sexual identities within the Regency period. However, new ways of envisioning pre-Victorian sexuality are being developed by a generation of scholars who locate the origins of modern sexual discourses earlier than Foucault's estimation.

Rick Inorvati's study of Sir Walter Scott's Darsie Latimer in *Redgauntlet* offers a well-reasoned strategy for reading sexualities "retroactively." Inorvati believes critics can have it both ways -- that one can write of period sexualities in modern terms while still situating texts within their historical, social, and cultural contexts. Inorvati situates his analysis of Scott's characterization of Latimer as a homosexual within a larger historical moment in which, Inorvati claims, the sentiment of sensibility inspired a reconsideration of human relationships, and in which instances of same-sex intimacy,

such as the example of the Ladies of Llangollen, were increasingly visible (para. 25).

Incorvati argues:

Indeed, it may be that we should see Victorian sexologists not so much as creating the homosexual species as marrying the already extant types of the sodomite and the homosexual. The consequence of bringing these types together is that it renders the presence or absence of the sexual act a far more negligible consideration than it had been during the early nineteenth century. . . . Grander speculations aside, this reading of *Redgauntlet* may still go some way in redressing the oft-noted marginality of the Romantic period in the history of sexuality as it is typically written. The emergent historicism so thoroughly present in Scott's novel rather dramatically marks the proliferation of assumptions that continue to shape our understanding of sexuality . . . Scott's unusual novel also invites us to reconsider the upsurge in the 1820s of texts concerning effeminacy, including Byron's *Sardanapalus* (1821), Hazlitt's "On Effeminacy of Character" (1822), and James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). It is clear that these writers were attempting to delineate a type of character markedly different from the eighteenth-century fop, but the precise nature of this Romantic-era effeminacy and its possible bearing on later nineteenth-century formulations of sexual orientation require further investigation. (paras. 30, 31)

Incorvati's analysis offers a historicized consideration of sexualities existing, if not classified, in the early nineteenth century. These sexualities, he argues, were not only characterized in literature, but were also visible in the wider cultural moment, as my example of Caroline Lamb in *Don Juan* drag indicates. Incorvati's study suggests further exploration of early nineteenth century sexualities as a means of informing our understanding of later formations of sexual orientation and sexual identities, particularly, in my project, bisexuality.

Although Incorvati's argument focuses on proto-homosexuality, his methodology suggests possible applications to other sexual identities not codified until the late Victorian period. Bisexuality, although not scientifically classified until late nineteenth-century sexologists like Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Wilhelm Fliess, and Sigmund Freud attempted to define the term, had long been described, if not named as such, in philosophical, mythological, literary, and historical texts. From the story of Tiresias found in Hesiod, Ovid, and Sophocles and Aristophanes's tale in Plato's *Symposium* of the divided bodies of the first human beings to the appropriation of the latter in John Cameron Mitchell's 2001 cult film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, variations on what has come to be termed "bisexuality" have proliferated in all Western societies and in all historical periods. While what, specifically, bisexuality *is*, and even if it actually exists, is still an active and heavily politicized debate, it is harder to deny that individuals throughout history have found themselves sexually attracted to, and in relationships with, partners of both same and opposite sexes simultaneously or during different periods of their lives. Unfortunately, bisexuality has been given little critical attention. Perhaps

because of its fluidity, its often serial practice, the cultural norms of the milieu in which bisexuals have lived, and the political agendas of individual critics and theoretical schools, bisexuality has often been subsumed in discourses that privilege hetero- and homosexual analyses, and the historicity of its application as a critical term has been delineated by Foucault's position on the historical development of sexual discourses.

Marjorie Garber's analysis of Shakespeare in *Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* acknowledges the conflict inherent in discussion of pre-Victorian bisexual identities, but her analysis posits a counter to, while still acknowledging, Foucault's position. Garber writes, "Words like homosexual and heterosexual, . . . are anachronistic when used to describe sixteenth-century relationships. Not only the terms, but the implications of exclusivity or preference are, strictly speaking, inappropriate for the period" (510). However, Garber notes that "seldom does the word 'bisexual' appear in current analyses of Shakespeare's sonnets, and this, I think, has less to do with fidelity to the cultural and historical circumstances of their composition than it does with the role the sonnets have come to play in today's discourse of gay sexuality" (511). She continues,

The sonnets are seen to make visible patterns of "male homosexual discourse," . . . One of the strongest modern readings of the sonnets is one that elects to use them "to illustrate, in a simplified because synchronic and ahistorical form . . . some of the patterns traced by male homosocial desire" in a way that will frame more extended discussions of male-male relations in later fiction. (Garber 511)

Garber's analysis offers a reasonable justification for an (a)historical reading of pre-Victorian discourses on sexuality. Her claim that critical reluctance to ahistorical analysis is sometimes motivated by a critical and political agenda rather than historical rigor is entirely plausible, and suggests that such readings, conducted with a sensitivity to and foregrounding of the anachronistic nature and implications of such an approach, can claim a value in postmodern analyses of historical sexualities such as bisexuality.

In *Bisexual Spaces*, Clare Hemmings traces the history of defining bisexuality, and addresses its problematics for theory. Hemmings acknowledges as problematic "the formation of a bisexual sexual and gendered subject . . . where the subject has mastered both heterosexual and homosexual forms of desire and identification as two separate languages" (25) because bisexuality lacks the consistency of sexual object choice required by Freudian formulations of sexual identity; however, Hemmings's argument, like mine, rejects the premises of Freudian analysis in favor of a destabilization of subject and object positions and coherent identities, whether gender or sexual. Hemmings's metaphor of bilingualism strikes me as an apt one when applied to an examination of Byron's sexual politics. As Hemmings claims, "[b]isexual meaning . . . is generated precisely through the slippage among sexed bodies, genders, and sexualities, both historically and in the present: its role in facilitating, maintaining or challenging heterosexist oppositions is as much a question of gender as it is of sexuality" (39). Byron constructs gender through just such "slippages" at a time in which the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are undergoing transition. The possibilities of such instability suggest that in Byron's works, desire is figured as bisexual. In *A History of Bisexuality*,

Steven Angelides argues that “bisexuality encompassed the very opposition of sameness/difference necessary for the articulation of a homogenous (hu)man identity erected around distinctions of race, sex/gender, and sexuality. The coherence, or self-sameness, of the entity of the (hu)man was thereby structurally predicated on a repudiation of a difference internal to itself: that is, bisexuality” (48). Byron’s construction of gender and sexuality challenges just this sort of identity formation and dissolves the rigid structure of subject and object underlying cultural normativity. Rather than reverse or invert gender roles and identities, Byron’s poems radicalize gender categories. Havelock Ellis, unsure of exactly what to do about bisexuality as a possible identity, concludes, “In any case bisexuality merges imperceptibly into simple inversion” (qtd. in Angelides 1). Byron’s representations of gender confound expectation exactly because they do not ultimately rely upon a systemic duality of gender and sex categories. Byron instead rejects the entire foundation of bourgeois culturally normative identities in favor of the play among identities found in seduction.

Like Baudrillard’s theory of seduction, Gilles Deleuze’s study of sadomasochism in his work “Coldness and Cruelty” challenges the validity of totalizing systems, in this work, of the authority of Freud’s sadomasochistic entity. Deleuze argues that Freud got it wrong with his concept of a sadomasochistic unit composed of an active, sadistic partner coupled with a passive, masochistic partner, both sharing a mutual desire, and instead insists on a split of this entity into separate and, for the most part, mutually exclusive entities that both conform to and simultaneously defy traditional binary classification. By examining masochism divorced from sadism, Deleuze refines understanding of sadism



and of masochism and encourages more complex and nuanced interpretation of each. Deleuze's study suggests that sadism and masochism operate not as a simple contrary, but as independent yet reflective entities which destabilize the totalizing authority of Freud's theory of desire. As Baudrillard suggests with his theory of seduction, understanding desire as a binary in which one is either this or that, and therefore desires this or that, posits an assumption that identities and social and ideological systems can be classified and understood as an associative network of doubles. A "double" does not hold, as Deleuze himself suggests in his analysis of Freud's dualistic construction of a sadomasochistic entity; the sadistic and the masochistic as a single yet contrary expression of active and passive roles begins to break down when considered as a monolithic construction of an individual sexual union. For Deleuze, sadism and masochism are separate entities that operate within differing contexts, or following Baudrillard, different seductions:

The sadist and the masochist might well be enacting separate dramas, each complete in itself, with different sets of characters and no possibility of communication between them, either from inside or outside. Only the normal "communicate" – more or less. In the sphere of perversions, it is a mistake to confuse the formations, the concrete and specific manifestations, with an abstract "grid," as though a common libidinal substance flowed now into one form, now into another. We are told that some individuals experienced pleasure both in inflicting pain and in suffering it. We are told furthermore that the person who enjoys inflicting

pain experiences in his innermost being the link that exists between the pleasure and the pain. But the question is whether these “facts” are not mere abstractions, whether the pleasure-pain link is being abstracted from the concrete formal conditions in which it arises. (45)

Deleuze’s argument severs the perceived link between the sadistic and the masochistic in order to fully comprehend the nature of each as possibly analogous but ultimately separate formations. Deleuze’s refusal to understand formations as participating in an “either/or” reversal in which one “thing” exists in one form and then flows into another that indicates that the first no longer “has” the “thing,” and vice versa is critical to my analysis of gender in Byron’s canon in that one does not “have” masculinity while another “has” femininity and then an exchange of genders occurs. Moreover, while Deleuze describes sadism and masochism as “perversions,” acknowledging the social taboos attached to these styles of sexuality, the constituting roles of each have frequently been transposed onto what Deleuze calls “normal,” or normative, sexualities and are applicable to both normative and non-normative gender and sex role performances.

Following Deleuze, I argue that classifying participants in a normative two-person heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual act into a heterosexist, dualistic associative chain in which masculine = subject = “top” = active = sadist and feminine = object = “bottom” = passive = masochist, in the sense that all seductions operate within an ideological structure that iterates these normative binaries, is not practicable in a reading of Byron’s works. This rigid systematic association of the normative roles attributed to masculine and feminine within a situation of seduction as they have traditionally been understood

(and applied indiscriminately to homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual seductive contexts) is just such an abstraction of “fact,” and is one that carries within it cultural assumptions that are destabilized in Byron’s works.

Like Deleuze and Baudrillard, Judith Butler’s formulation of gender and sexual identities challenges culturally normative roles. Butler, in her refutation of Monique Wittig’s “radical disjunction between straight and gay” that to Butler “replicates the kind of disjunctive binarism that [Wittig] herself characterizes as the divisive philosophical gesture of the straight mind,” argues that

the radical disjunction posited by Wittig between heterosexuality and homosexuality is simply not true . . . there are structures of psychic homosexuality within heterosexual relations, and structures of psychic heterosexuality within gay and lesbian sexuality and relationships. Further, there are other power/discourse centers that construct and structure both gay and straight sexuality; heterosexuality is not the only compulsory display of power that that informs sexuality. (155)

While Butler rightly observes that heterosexuality and homosexuality share structures which are mutually informing and that participate in discourses of power, her analysis appears, like Wittig’s, to participate in a replication of a hetero-/homo- binary structure of sexuality that excludes the possibility of performances of bisexuality inherent in Butler’s own theory of performed identities. Butler goes on to argue that heterosexuality, instead of being a coherent norm, is itself an impossible ideal that one cannot embody without qualification (155). Her claims raise the possibility that the Byronic Hero’s sexual

orientation is constituted through gendered performances because she acknowledges that “ideal” heterosexuality and “ideal” homosexuality do not exist, and that identities claiming to “be” “heterosexual” and “homosexual” or “male” and “female” are in fact constituted by performances that constantly interrogate the normative binary definitions of sexual orientation and gender. These performances are socially and culturally systematized as ideals of “normal” gender and sexual behaviors. These performances, as well as how they are perceived by a given group, are not the monoliths they are perceived to be, and serve to destabilize that which they seek to “express;” performativity thus allows for a multiplicity of sexual and gender “styles.”

Butler’s example of the use of the pronoun “she” by gay men further elucidates this point:

This very gay appropriation of the feminine works to multiply possible sites of application of the term, to reveal the arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified, and to destabilize and mobilize the sign. Is this a colonizing “appropriation” of the feminine? My sense is no. That accusation assumes that the feminine belongs to women, an assumption surely suspect. (156)

Butler’s analysis suggests a strategy similar to Baudrillard’s seduction for reading the feminine as something other than that which applies to women exclusively, especially in the assignment of “mismatching” gendered pronouns and in instances of cross-dressing in Byron’s *Baba* and *Don Juan*. For example, *Baba* refers to *Juan* as both “sir” and “lady” in the same sentence. Clearly, the feminine can be and has been historically associated

within the gay community with performances of homosexual masculinity; however, although Butler's theory argues that there is no identity behind performances of gender or sexuality, the example given above still seems to replicate a hetero-/homo- binary division of sexual orientation. Following Butler's overall argument and not this particular example, I argue that the feminine can also signify that which is associated with multiple masculinities, and is not limited to or exclusively associated with either heterosexuality or homosexuality. This usage complicates and expands the ways both gender and sexual orientation are perceived in the Byronic Hero. Regardless of how one "reads" the Byronic Hero's sexual orientation -- gay, straight, or Other(s) -- the possibility of reading him as bisexual must be considered.

Therefore, I argue that Byron's *Don Juan* constructs mobility as a performance of Baudrillardian seduction that, like Caroline Lamb's adoption of Don Juan drag, dissolves the links of a normative, associative binary chain which forges false equations among genders, sexual orientations, and biological sexes. Byron's heroes cannot easily be recuperated by such a system, and his hero resists any reading predicated on a system of reversals or simple doubles. Elfenbein's dismissal of Juan's significance within his own text cuts close to the core assumption made by many of Byron's critics, and which has problematized analyses of Juan's character since the publication of his poem; "[a]lthough some critics persist in seeing Juan as a complex character . . . Juan matters very little except as an occasion to generate a kaleidoscopic variety of incidents" (41). I do "persist" in reading Juan's character as a complex one; Juan's complexity lies in his multigendered, multisexed, and bisexual, or "kaleidoscopic," performances of libertine

seduction which suggest that any reading of this character based upon a reversal of signifiers or a doubling of signs which Byron's text does not support either fails to account for or recuperates the poem's irony, which in my reading is absolutely critical to any understanding of the poet's construction of a (bi)sexual politics of individual liberty.

CHAPTER III  
 SEDUCTIVE SYMPATHY AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN BYRON'S *THE*  
*CORSAIR* AND *LARA*

In Byron's Turkish Tales, the Byronic Hero often meets his match in the figure of what has been termed "the Byronic Heroine." This woman, usually "foreign," is frequently regarded in criticism as either the "double" of the Byronic Hero or his Other. In either reading, this female figure is marginalized and exclusively defined through the assumed titanic "subjectivity" of the Byronic Hero. Andrew Elfenbein rightly notes that "the universality of Byron's rhetoric of subjectivity posed challenges for creating plots supposedly about particular individuals" (21). Elfenbein goes on to state that in the Turkish Tales, Byron "solves" this problem, and creates a multitude of new ones, by pairing the Byronic Hero with a Byronic Heroine (21). For Elfenbein, this doubling is problematic because it destabilizes the Byronic Hero's individuality, which Elfenbein reads as fundamentally masculine. He writes, "if a woman could possess a subjectivity that was no different from a man's then she could be a Byronic hero just as well as he. Any differences between men and women would become the superficial effects of culture, not the basic ones of nature" (21). According to Elfenbein, this "would rob the male Byronic hero of his supposedly unique soul. Byron's fame depended on creating heroes who represented one man only, Byron" (21). For a woman to display the subjectivity of the Byronic Hero "in the same poem would weaken the power of the Byronic hero to represent the 'real' Byron" (Elfenbein 21). Even though Elfenbein acknowledges that Byron's works themselves contain the possibility of the breakdown of

binary gender roles and of the tyranny of an exclusively male subjectivity, he ultimately reads Byron's poems as recuperating a masculinist Enlightenment ideology.

However, the threat posed to the subjectivity of the Byronic Hero by the inclusion of women in the poems is predicated on Elfenbein's assumptions that Byron's heroes are embodiments of his subjectivity and that Byronic heroism is gender-specific. I argue, however, that Byron's treatment of the Byronic Hero's "uniqueness" is not necessarily negated by the introduction of a female character who shares the hero's subjectivity. If Byron introduces female characters into his texts that challenge the authority of the Byronic Hero as absolute subject, then clearly the question becomes how do the "superficial effects of culture" (gender) interact with the "basic ones of nature" (sex) in Byron's depictions of his brand of heroism?

As noted above, Elfenbein insists on the subjectivity of the Byronic Hero because he supposedly represents Byron's poetic and masculine authority. However, Elfenbein's focus on the issue of women as the chief locus of the threat to the hero's subjectivity suggests a reliance upon gender assumptions not necessarily found in the poems. Byron's heroes are often paired with female characters whose characterizations reflect those of the heroes, and I argue, vice versa. These women, sometimes dubbed "Byronic Heroines," should be termed instead Byronic Heroes, as they and the male heroes function as reflections of each other in the Deleuzean sense. Each performs subject and object roles within the seductive situation. Byron's texts appear to participate in the Humean view of subjectivity, with which Elfenbein struggles to reconcile Byronic subjectivity; "If subjectivity is truly universal, then genuine otherness does not exist. Desire can be based



only on identification” (22). This identification between a male and female pair of Byronic Heroes is frequently problematic, but appears to rely upon a Humean subjectivity that negates a stable sense of otherness. Hume’s theory of sympathy does not rely upon the same conceptions of gender as does a later emergent middle class, and, I suggest, can be said to encompass difference.

Elfenbein claims that women are usually punished in Byron’s canon for adopting “male” subjectivity, and “the more a female character asserts her right to [subjectivity], the more passive and conventionally feminine a male character becomes” (22). Instead of reading this tendency in Byron’s work as a possibility that Byron used his Turkish Tales to work through or to critique these two competing ideologies, Elfenbein suggests that “an emphasis on difference always cancels out one on similarity, usually at the cost of the woman’s disappearance or death” (22). However, the apposition of the male Byronic Hero with his female counterpart does not “cancel out” difference or similarity, but instead engages the two in a seductive situation which frequently leads to the deaths of both, not just the female of the species. Instead, the deaths of the male and female Byronic Heroes in the Turkish Tales suggest the incompatibility of Humean sympathy in gender and sexuality with a growing cultural insistence on a more absolutist gender difference in Byron’s Britain.

However, Byronic subjectivity does not necessarily preclude otherness.

Baudrillard notes that the

invention of difference coincides with the invention of a new image of woman, and thus a change of sexual paradigm. That change, on the

threshold of modernity, at the turn of the nineteenth century, was the production by male hysteria of an imagining of woman in her place of stolen femininity. . . . it was to some extent the femininity of man which was projected into the woman, shaping her as an ideal figure in his likeness. The point was no longer, as in the courtly and aristocratic figure of seduction, to conquer woman, to seduce or be seduced by her, but to produce her as realized utopia. . . . The staging of this ideal was the work of Romantic Eros: woman as projective resurrection of the selfsame, a twin-like, almost incestuous figure -- an artefact doomed from that point on to amorous confusion, that is to a pathos of the ideal resemblance between beings and sexes. The sexual difference, the concept of sexual difference which was established in the same movement, was merely a variant of the incestuous form. In that concept, man and woman were no longer anything but the mirroring [*mirage*] of each other. They were separated and different only the better to become the -- often indifferent -- mirrors of each other. The whole machinery of eroticism was turned on its head, since the erotic attraction which formerly emanated from strangeness and otherness now shifted over to emanate from similarity and likeness. (Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime* 116)

In this passage, Baudrillard dates the paradigm shift in gender construction from the beginning of the nineteenth century -- contemporary with Byron. His construction of gender hearkens back to a libertine form of gender representation which both recalls the

past and (de)constructs the future. As one sees so often in Byron, his treatment of gender here speaks of a moment of cultural flux in which slippage among and between identities can be glimpsed. Baudrillard notes that this shift in concepts of gender runs concurrent with the rise of the bourgeoisie, with which Byron felt himself to be in opposition. In Byron's texts one can find the attraction of difference in apposition with the lure of likeness. While Baudrillard uses the image of the mirror as a symbol of a pernicious "twinning," I use the image to suggest an infinite proliferation of reflections which I see as compatible with Baudrillard's theory of seduction as that which encompasses that which it appears to oppose. Thus, in Byron's *Turkish Tales*, one can find both lust and love, both difference and sympathy, in his attempts to represent gendered subjectivity in a culture which was undergoing a radical shift in its vision of gender and sexual roles.

One can perhaps most easily perceive this shift in *The Corsair*, as this text presents its reader with two women who appear to embody the positions Baudrillard mentions -- Medora, the feminine ideal of woman-as-utopia, and Gulnare, the figure of feminine otherness. However, these two women are characterized in ways that conflate, confuse, and destabilize Baudrillard's classification. In *The Corsair*, Conrad is married to Medora, whose devotion and later death establish her as an "angel of the house" prototype. In many analyses Medora represents the ideal Regency woman. Her suicide might support Elfenbein's claim that most women in Byron's *Turkish Tales* ultimately die, but Medora's power is the power of the bourgeois domestic paragon and arises from a multigendered patriarchal performance, thus, she is not presented in the poem as a figure with whom Conrad can forge a sense of identification, but instead is the feminine

face of bourgeois patriarchy, and his Other. Her self-sacrifice, “required” of her role as devoted wife abandoned by her husband, is revealed in the poem to be both precipitate and manipulative. She dies, not because she “usurps” a masculine-gendered power, but because she abuses the role of devoted wife. However, she cannot be dismissed as a simple construction of a predatory lamia figure. Medora’s feminine performance is culturally proscribed and her performance of manipulative “wifery” is constructed in the poem as the darker side of the bourgeois feminine ideal. Medora, the poem implies, enacts the role her culture demands of her; she is doing what she “should” do as a devoted wife, yet she is ultimately constructed in the poem as manipulative and anti-seductive. Her performance of wifely devotion is suffocating, and like Haidee’s in *Don Juan*, colonizing:

wilt thou ne’er,  
 My Conrad! learn the joys of peace to share?  
 Sure thou hast more than wealth, and many a home  
 As bright as this invites us not to roam:  
 Thou know’st it is not peril that I fear,  
 I only tremble when thou art not here;  
 Then not for mine, but that far dearer life,  
 Which flies from love and languishes for strife-- (Byron, *The Corsair*  
 1.14)

Her performance of this role, however, alienates her husband from the domestic sphere; he “flies from love” and thus from her, and pits the roles of husband and wife

antagonistically in what McGann calls “the cycle of sex war” (*Fiery Dust* 296). Conrad perceives Medora’s evangelical domesticity and trembling beauty as a cultural ideal of womanhood which he should appreciate, but also as a tameness against which he can define his wild masculinity. That Conrad’s guilt arises from Medora’s death is suggestive, as it implies that Conrad is ambivalent about his own desire to flee the domestication he associates with Medora, and can only truly mourn her when this threat to his liberty is removed. Conrad “escapes” Medora’s tower, in which he is as imprisoned as in Seyd’s. He can only love her when he is free of her control; “She—his Medora—did she mark the prow? / Ah! never loved he half so much as now! / . . . Again he mans himself and turns away” (Byron, *The Corsair* 1.17). Conrad “mans” himself, or adopts an authoritative performance of masculinity which allows him to maintain his subjectivity and individual freedom, only when “off the leash.” His belief that he must free himself from the emasculating embrace of a wife suggests that this cultural ideal of gender opposition is unsatisfactory, even though Conrad himself does not confront this until he meets Gulnare.

Conrad loves Medora most during his frequent absences; in this case, absence really does make his heart fonder, as distance allows him to deceive himself that his wife is his own ideal of femininity rather than his society’s. Conrad’s love for Medora is thus built upon self-deception. His passion for his wife can only be sustained through distance from her physical presence and from her luxurious empire. The comforts of home, to the *Corsair*, offer no comfort; “And this thy comfort—that, when next we meet, / Security shall make repose more sweet” (Byron, *The Corsair* 1.14). For Conrad, comfort,

security, and repose are bittersweet at best. Like Gulnare's, Conrad's passion and sexuality have been fettered, and are "owned" by the provider of domestic comfort and are thus subject to his or her imperial desire. In Canto 1, Conrad leaves *in medias res*, at the moment when, ostensibly, he should be engaged in farewell sex with his beloved and worshipped wife:

"One kiss—one more—another—Oh! Adieu!"

She rose—she sprung—she clung to his embrace,

Till his heart heaved beneath her hidden face:

He dared not raise to his that deep-blue eye,

Which downcast drooped in tearless agony.

Her long fair hair lay floating o'er his arms,

In all the wildness of dishevelled charms;

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Again—again—that form he madly pressed,

Which mutely clasped, imploringly caressed!

And tottering to the couch his bride he bore,

One moment gazed—as if to gaze no more;

Felt that for him Earth held but her alone,

Kissed her cold forehead—turned—is Conrad gone? (Byron, *The Corsair*

1.14)

Here, it is Medora who initiates the sexual encounter. This fact undermines critical claims that Don Juan is the only Byronic Hero who is passively seduced by a female

aggressor. It is perhaps his relegation to passive sexual objectivity that inspires Conrad's flight. The paragon of womanhood, desperate to delay her husband's defection, uses sex in an attempt to keep him with her. This irony is often overlooked by readers who invest Medora and Haidee with an idealized femininity that cannot be sustained. Like Catherine the Great, Medora uses sex to satisfy her desire; however, Medora's desire is not sexual passion but instead a desire to curtail Conrad's liberty. Medora's "charms" fail to charm in this context. Which woman can then be branded, as McGann brands Catherine, a "whore?" Byron's construction of sexuality in *The Corsair*, as in other texts, turns cultural ideals and gender norms against themselves; his ironic characterization of sexual desire as a tactic of institutional power and control of individual liberty severely problematizes a desire based on a totalizing difference between the sexes.

However, I do not accept the position that Medora's threat to Conrad's masculinity therefore means that all women represent such a threat to Byronic subjectivity. Medora is constructed as a figure of nineteenth-century bourgeois femininity, not as all nineteenth-century femininity, as Medora's is contrasted with the femininity that Gulnare represents, which I argue does not threaten Conrad with a castrated masculinity despite and possibly because of the fact that she holds the knife in this text. Instead, Gulnare performs multiple genders, and her relationship with Conrad is posited by the text as a counter to a relationship based upon absolute difference. Conrad cannot feel a Humean sense of sympathy with Medora, but does with Gulnare. Gulnare does not represent an emasculating threat simply because she is a woman. Instead, Gulnare is constructed as Conrad's equal; she is also tamed by domesticity and performs

a masculine role to escape definition by a domestic position that curtails her freedom and subjectivity as certainly as Conrad's subjectivity is curtailed by the domestic, imperialistic masculinity Medora represents. In *The Corsair*, it is the colonization implicit in marriage which imprisons, and is represented as much by Medora as by Seyd.

As Gulnare makes clear, her battlefield is the bedroom. Her enslavement has been sexual and her existence has been circumscribed by Seyd and her culture to the domestic. Gulnare's characterization of the tyranny of institutional desire prefigures Don Juan's manifesto of individual sexual liberty. The Sultana's imperial "'Christian, canst thou love?'" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.116) paraphrases Seyd's gambit:

I felt—I feel—Love dwells with—with the free.

I am a slave, a favoured slave at best,

To share his splendour, and seem very blest!

Oft must my soul the question undergo,

Of—"Dost thou love?" and burn to answer, "No!" (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.14)

Gulnare's response indicates that for her, love cannot exist within slavery. Like Don Juan, she feels "Love dwells with--with the free" (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.14). That Byron places Gulnare's words into the mouth of a male protagonist later in his canon suggests the basic similarity between male and female ideals of love.

Before they meet, Gulnare and Conrad perform socially normative gender roles; Conrad enacts the masculine role of a pirate abandoning his wife for adventure and subjectivity, while Gulnare, trapped in her feminine role as desired other, passively



accepts her fate. When Conrad offers Gulnare a view of masculinity not dependent upon tyranny, she is seduced by his performance of masculine tenderness and acknowledgment that he regards as “a Woman’s right” (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.7). It is significant that the awakening of both these characters is inspired by exposure to a different culture with unfamiliar gender norms. Gulnare and Conrad gain insight and perspective from this encounter which is characterized in the poem as seductive. Unfamiliarity usually indicates a divisive otherness; here, it seduces. This seduction destabilizes culturally constructed gender norms, undermines subconscious assumptions about gender that each has internalized against his or her personal judgment, and inspires Gulnare and Conrad to consider fresh possibilities for gender and sexual interaction within marriage. Through seduction, equality, mutual respect, and sexual passion become feasible within marriage.

Gulnare’s interaction with Conrad posits an alternative to institutional marriage -- a marriage based on sympathy. Gulnare, an odalisque who suffers imprisonment in the harem of Seyd, “The Haram queen—but still the slave of Seyd!” (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.5), meets her oppression with a spirit that echoes that of Conrad; she is not a passive victim of domestic imperialism and fights for her liberation from marital enslavement and for Conrad’s. Her decision to adopt an active role to fight against sexual tyranny is inspired by Conrad’s heroic act of freeing the women from the burning harem, which she compares with Seyd’s violent disregard:

The Pacha wooed as if he deemed the slave  
 Must seem delighted with the heart he gave;  
 The Corsair vowed protection, soothed affright,

As if his homage were a Woman's right.

"The wish is wrong—nay, worse for female—vain:

Yet much I long to view that Chief again;

If but to thank for, what my fear forgot,

The life—my loving Lord remembered not!" (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.7)

As Gulnare's ruminations above indicate, Conrad's example acts as a catalyst for her own self-emancipation. Gulnare is not "saved" by Conrad; she is inspired by his type of masculinity to free herself from her bonds. Conrad's masculinity is here figured by Gulnare as one that acknowledges "a Woman's right" to a subject position; Conrad's behavior suggests to her that a woman is not simply an object which passively receives his passion, but a subject worthy of homage, not for her beauty, but for her "life."

Conrad's wooing, which Gulnare associates at this stage with vows of protection and consideration of a woman's emotional response to masculine acts of war and violence, acknowledges "The life--my loving Lord remembered not!" (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.7).

That Gulnare considers her wish to "thank" Conrad to be "wrong--nay worse for a female--vain" is based in her longing "to view that Chief again," to usurp the masculine position of a gazing subject which she associates with Seyd's masculine privilege, if only, she states, to thank him (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.7). In this passage, Gulnare is introduced to the possibility for such an exchange of gendered positions by the mere presence of Conrad, the outsider and cultural unknown. To Gulnare, he is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate upon which she projects her own fantasies of possibility and desire. The *Corsair* thus functions as an object which Gulnare can construct as a mirror of both Seyd's gendered

performance and her own. This initial cultural difference, Conrad's alternative masculine performance, begins as a colonizing view adopted by Gulnare but as the poem progresses, Conrad's "otherness" is revealed to be also "sameness." Through increased contact with Conrad, Gulnare develops not only her own subjectivity, but also acknowledges Conrad's. This development within the poem is critical to its construction of gender and passion. Desire, here based on perception of absolute difference, is revealed as illusory; passion can only exist through the realization of both difference and similarity. Thus, the poem ultimately constructs an absolutist gender difference as divisive and acknowledges gender proliferation as the basis of passion.

Gulnare's passion for Conrad, however, suggests an alternative -- sympathy through identification with one's "other." Like Conrad, she is valiant in "battle," and her war takes place within its own context, the domestic space that reduces Conrad to flight. Conrad is powerless in Seyd's tower, a domestic space, while Gulnare performs the alternate roles of jailor and liberator. However, unlike Medora, Gulnare proves her relegation to the domestic is forced upon her by social convention; "I rush through peril which she would not dare" (Byron, *The Corsair* 3.8). Gulnare persuasively argues her case to Conrad, not from a desire to manipulate, but to fully state her own value to both Conrad and herself.

Her performance of active and passive gendered roles, emphasized in her conversation with an imprisoned Conrad, further engages the pair in seductive apposition. Her pride is equal to Conrad's and like him, she backs up her words with acts. Gulnare proves she can command a crew of men, and this leadership identifies her with Conrad,

whose authority as a pirate lord had formerly been absolute; “‘Do this’— tis done: / ‘Now form and follow me!’ . . . And all obey and few inquire his will” (Byron, *The Corsair* 1.2). Gulnare’s authoritative performance as pirate captain confuses her crew, who nevertheless obey her commands; “They whisper round, and gaze upon Gulnare; / *And her, at once above—beneath her sex, / Whom blood appalled not, their regards perplex*” (Byron, *The Corsair* 3.16, italics mine). The language of these lines reflects that found in the description of Lara, often quoted in definitions of the Byronic Hero:

So much *he soared beyond, or sunk beneath,*  
*The men with whom he felt condemned to breathe,*  
 And longed by good or ill to separate  
 Himself from all who shared his mortal state. (Byron, *Lara* 1.18, italics  
 mine)

Lara’s masculine performance of subjectivity echoes that of Gulnare; when she slays Seyd and assumes command of Conrad’s ship, she is “at once above—beneath her sex” (Byron, *The Corsair* 3.16). Lara “soar[s] beyond, or s[inks] beneath” his sex as well, and this is the characteristic which most clearly constitutes his heroism (Byron, *Lara* 1.18). That Gulnare shares this attribute complicates any identification of Byron’s heroic type with a socially normative construction of masculinity and cannot easily be recuperated as such.

Significantly, Gulnare’s murder of Seyd, although offensive to Conrad, echoes his own battle with the Pacha. Conrad bemoans Gulnare’s violent act, as it was not committed by a man in battle:

That spot of blood, that light but guilty streak,  
 Had banished all the beauty from her cheek!  
 Blood he had viewed—could view unmoved—but then  
 It flowed in combat, or was shed by men! (Byron, *The Corsair* 3.10)

Conrad may construct Gulnare's beauty as compromised in these lines, but she acquires a sublimity that is gendered masculine by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Later in the canto, however, Conrad appears to reconcile Gulnare's "feminine" beauty with her "masculine" sublimity. In the following passage, Conrad regards Gulnare as his savior, paradoxically in language that alludes to Milton's Satan:

17

But—it was done: he knew, whate'er her guilt,  
 For him that poniard smote, that blood was spilt;  
 And he was free!—and she for him had given  
 Her all on earth, and more than all in heaven!  
 And now he turned him to that dark-eyed slave  
 Whose brow was bowed beneath the glance he gave,  
 \* \* \* \* \*

He took that hand—it trembled—now too late—  
 So soft in love—so wildly nerved in hate;  
 He clasped that hand—it trembled—and his own  
 Had lost its firmness, and his voice its tone.

18

“Gulnare!”—but she replied not—“dear Gulnare!” (Byron, *The Corsair* 3.17-18)

Here, Byron uses the language of the Miltonic, masculine sublime which marks Gulnare as heroic and a reflection of Conrad, whose “soul was changed, before his deeds had driven / Him forth to war with Man and forfeit Heaven” (Byron, *The Corsair* 1.11), while also depicting her hand, a central motif in the representation of both Conrad and Gulnare in the poem, as “soft” and yet “wildly nerved,” which reflects Conrad’s masculine performance as “Lone, wild, and strange” (Byron, *The Corsair* 1.11). Conrad’s seduction by his recognition of Gulnare’s multigendered performance evokes his passion, which is articulated through his own performance of multiple gender. Their hands, joined, respond identically. Conrad’s “red hand’s wild gesture” (Byron, *The Corsair* 2.8) is likened to the spot of blood on Gulnare’s face: “Her hurrying hand had left—‘twas but a spot— / Its hue was all he saw, and scarce withstood— / Oh! slight but certain pledge of crime—‘tis Blood!” (Byron, *The Corsair* 3.9). Byron’s use of the images of hand, eye, and blood to describe both Gulnare and Conrad posits the two as figures who share Humean identification and sympathy. This pair’s gender is likened by biological signs rather than by more traditional performances of gender like the adoption of drag. Conrad and Gulnare’s gendered performances strike most to the heart of Butler’s theory of gender. Rather than (mis)reading gender performance as a theatrical staging, a practice Butler indicates is problematic in many critics’ applications of performativity, Byron’s characterization strikes more deeply and suggests that even biological sex is profoundly

unstable within his characterization of his male and female heroes. These physical attributes, especially the eye, traditionally help define the Byronic Hero's masculinity, but here are associated with both Conrad and Gulnare.

Following such a reading, one may find oneself incredulous that Conrad spurns Gulnare at the poem's end. Gulnare simply disappears, presumably abandoned on the shore as Conrad rushes to Medora's tower. It is possible that Conrad's refusal to acknowledge Gulnare as his true mate is an ironic condemnation of the traditional gendered roles that are somewhat recuperated by Conrad at the poem's end, but, I argue, are not recuperated by Byron's text. Conrad's inability to embrace Gulnare's multiplicity, to allow himself to be fully seduced by a figure whom he mirrors, to submit to a shared objectivity, can be read as a failure of sympathy and of seduction brought about by his recuperation of cultural normativity. Conrad's embrace of his former role perhaps accounts for the continued development of the characters' relationship in *Lara*. Whether intended as a sequel to *The Corsair* or not, *Lara*'s characters are constructed as responses to those in the earlier poem. The sympathetic relationship between Conrad, now Lord Lara, and Kaled, Gulnare in men's clothing, is constructed as one which the two heroes must conceal difference behind the veneer of a homosocial bond.

The reflections of gender performances in Byron's poems suggest that for Byron, sexual difference both is and is not seductive. Elfenbein describes two competing ideologies within Byron's poems; the first relies upon a fundamental difference between men and women that enables heterosexual desire. The second is based in David Hume's theory of the universality of human nature, which "transcended codes like gender" and

which grounds sexual desire in “what eighteenth-century writers called ‘sympathy,’ since there was no essential difference between male and female souls” (Elfenbein 22). Nor, I argue, is there an “essential difference” between male and female bodies in *The Corsair* and *Lara*. Rather, the seductive situation which results in the apposition of Conrad and Gulnare points to Byron’s efforts during this period to construct gender and sexuality in ways that resist easy classification. The term “situation,” as Christensen notes, “was . . . a prominent term in the aesthetic jargon of the early nineteenth century, where it referred to the conventional gesture that had come to express not simply ‘one man’s passions in serial order’ . . . but *the ‘simultaneous relationship of several figures’*” (223-24, italics mine). The seductive situation is, as Christensen writes of the historical meaning of “situation,” “a kind of key for the translation of representational and affective codes among the discourses of . . . prose and verse narrative” (224). The situations of seduction in Byron’s *Turkish Tales*, with their deployment of gendered situations of cross-dressing, masquerade, and sexual role-playing, function as just this sort of “key” to reading gender representation. For example, in *Lara*, Kaled the page is characterized through multiple outward signs of gender:

Of higher birth he seem’d, and better days,  
 Nor mark of vulgar toil that hand betrays,  
 So femininely white it might bespeak  
 Another sex, when match’d with that smooth cheek,  
 But for his garb, and something in his gaze,  
 More wild and high than woman’s eye betrays;



A latent fierceness that far more became  
 His fiery climate than his tender frame:  
 True, in his words it broke not from his breast,  
 But from his aspect might be more than guess'd. (Byron, *Lara* 27)

Kaled is later revealed to be Gulnare, the odalisque, but even in this early description, the gender of this figure corresponds neither to masculinity nor to femininity. Kaled's hand is "femininely white," but it only "*might bespeak /Another sex*" (Byron, *Lara* 27; italics mine). Although feminine, Kaled's hand, even when teamed with consideration of the hairless cheek, does not classify him/her as female, but as "Another sex," one ostensibly neither female nor male. The apposition of "femininely" with "Another sex" alone challenges a stable identification of Kaled's gender. Kaled's cross-dressing as a male page posits a counter to constructing his/her gender as feminine, as does "something in his gaze," "a fierceness" of "his aspect." That this "fierceness" is attributed to Kaled's "fiery climate" allows the (presumably Western) reader to "overlook" these gendered "clues," as gender multiplicity is here figured in Orientalist drag, but Kaled's "fierceness," that "something" in his/her performance of gender, which I argue is the ironic play of a sexed body performing multiple genders, seduces its spectators, who can do no more than "guess" according to "his aspect." The seductive situation, the "key" to reading gender in Byron's works, is constructed through the apposition of gendered appearances, which, Byron's poem suggests, *is* gender. Kaled both is and is not what he/she appears to be; gender is constituted by appearances. It is only after Lara dies that Kaled "becomes" Gulnare; the seduction is over. However, Gulnare's "fierceness" of

“aspect,” the “something” in her “gaze, / More wild and high than woman’s eye betrays” (Byron, *Lara* 27), cannot be cast off like a new set of clothing; it is this irresolvable conflict between appearance and “reality” that Byron’s poems constantly iterate that complicates any attempt to identify a “true” gender, or even a “true” sex.

Upon Lara’s death, Kaled is exposed as a woman rather than the male page Lara’s men have believed her to be:

Than that /he/ lov’d! Oh! never yet beneath  
 The breast of man such trusty love may breathe!  
 That trying moment hath at once reveal’d  
 The secret long and yet but half conceal’d;  
 In baring to revive that lifeless breast,  
 Its grief seem’d ended, but the sex confess’d;  
 And life return’d, and Kaled felt no shame —  
 What now to her was Womanhood or Fame? (Byron, *Lara* 21)

At Lara’s death, Gulnare’s masquerade as Kaled is revealed, “the sex confess’d” that has been “but half conceal’d” (Byron, *Lara* 21) by her masculine clothing and her role as Lara’s right-hand “man.” This half-concealment reveals gender to be illusory; neither Lara’s men nor Byron’s reader has penetrated Kaled’s performances of masculine gender, although the text suggests her “disguise” is only a partial performance. Byron’s use of gendered pronouns exposes Kaled’s sex as female, yet the text characterizes her performances of gender as independent of her biological sex, and even suggests that “Womanhood,” (Byron, *Lara* 21) and, I argue, manhood, is irrelevant and trivial at the

very moment of its revelation. Thus, Byron's construction of Kaled's sexual identity dissolves into anti-climax. The narrator's "What now to her was Womanhood . . .?" (Byron, *Lara* 21) rhetorically denies the reader the opportunity to invest Kaled's biological sex with significance. It is Kaled's love for Lara that is stressed, not whether she is biologically male or female. The reader infers from the poem's tone that it would be in "bad taste," and certainly counter to the expectations of Byron's (sentimental) reader, to focus on Kaled's body when she is clearly consumed by grief for her lover. Here, as in many of Byron's later works, the poem appropriates reader expectations and deploys them as a tool of seduction that gains the reader's sympathy while challenging his or her assumptions about gender. The reader is confronted with both the hero's tragic death and the silent grief of Gulnare at the exact moment when her sex is revealed. The reader is therefore manipulated into a position in which his or her socially normative expectations of gender clash dramatically with his or her understanding of how a reader is expected to respond to literary tragedy. As with so many of Byron's poems, the final stanzas of *Lara* challenge the reader to examine his or her own assumptions. By holding up a gendered mirror to his audience, Byron ironically pits his reader's sensibility against his or her culturally normative perceptions of gender roles.

Jerome Christensen notes the complexity of Byronic identity in his discussion of apposition in Byron's *Don Juan*. The *OED* defines "apposition," Christensen writes, as "the putting of distinct things side by side in close proximity" (218). According to Christensen,

The *OED*'s definition captures the mutual implication, even contamination, of proximity and contact . . . that is the most salient feature of the *Juan* effect -- a kind of differential linkage between things that likens them by eroding their insular identities, brings them together without producing a new unity or fabricating a synthetic identity. (218-19)

This erosion of differentiated identities and their simultaneous association has implications for this study as it allows one to understand Byron's constructions of gender within his texts as a dissolution of difference, but one not invested in forming new identities, whether central or marginal. In the *Turkish Tales*, Byron's use of apposition in the context of seduction "likens" the masculine and the feminine, but does not unify them. Instead, the poems play with apposition as a tactic of seduction, "the tactical, then, as the zone of intimacy, danger, and mistake" (Christensen 219). This gender apposition makes possible a reading of gender in Byron's texts not as a simple reversal of gender roles like "passive" and "active," which, as Haslett claims, "becomes an inflammatory revision, a provocation," but as what Haslett argues is Byron's attempt in *Don Juan*, "a manifesto of libertarianism for both sexes" (287). If one reads Byron's gender apposition in his works as a tactic of seduction, then one can read his constructions of gender as advocating a form of subjectivity open to both genders, as constructions which do not simply reverse gender roles, and which cannot be easily recuperated.

In Byron's texts, sexuality seems most relevant as a form of pleasure between individuals, a means to connect with another in a Humean sympathy. Byron's emphasis on identification through sexuality throughout his canon suggests that perhaps the only

ways of enacting sympathy are through seduction and physical intimacy. As Georges Bataille writes, “discontinuity is never absolute; with sexuality particularly a sense of the existence of others beyond the self-feeling suggests a possible continuity as opposed to the original discontinuity” of the individual (102). Thus, Byron’s texts treat sex as a strategy of human connection corrupted by moralistic canting and authoritarian cultural systems of definition.

## CHAPTER IV

“CONFUSION OF THE SORTS AND SEXES”: *DON JUAN* DRAGGED OUT

In Byron's canon, libertinage undergoes a radical shift from its previous incarnations. As will be demonstrated below, Byron revises the traditional libertine trope of seduction throughout his poetry. Moving from an eighteenth-century version of libertine seduction into a nineteenth-century Romantic reworking of the aristocratic libertine lends the Byronic Hero the literary and cultural authority of his predecessors' masculinity. In constituting the qualities of his heroes through this well-established literary type, Byron reworks figures of traditional masculinity such as eighteenth-century libertine "heroes" in ways that subtly undermine British middle class binary divisions of gender. Developing and altering his hero over time, Byron responds to the rapid proliferation of a bourgeois gender ideology; the Byronic Hero's characterization destabilizes his culture's gender and sexual norms, often while seeming to adopt them. It is my contention that Byron's ultimate challenge to his culture's mores is most clearly articulated in his last and to many, least legitimate hero, Don Juan. While most of Byron's critics deny Juan the status of Byronic Hero, I see Don Juan as Byron's satirical masterpiece -- one that challenges totalizing social structures like gender, sexuality, and power through the traditional aristocratic antecedent of the Libertine, as well as through the ironic characterization of the hero and his adventures within the "masculine" genre of satire -- and one that is perhaps the fullest (in)articulation of his ethos of individual liberty.

In *Arbitrary Power: Romanticism, Language, Politics*, William Keach notes that the heroic couplet favored by Byron in *The Corsair* “check[s] -- and give[s a] contrasting point to -- the poem’s appeal to a restless, rebellious energy” (52). Byron’s choice of poetic genre, “the good old and now neglected heroic couplet” (qtd. in Keach 51), refers back to the Augustan authority of Pope; yet, as Keach claims, this form pairs with the “anti-authoritarian and anarchic” Byronic Hero (52). Keach contrasts Byron’s use of traditional genre with Keats’s experimental couplets in order to explore the intricate and often contradictory relationships between politics and poetic form. While Keach’s study follows a more Marxist/Foucauldian program than my project, which arises from an engagement with the theories of Jean Baudrillard, Keach’s attention to the contradictions inherent in Byron’s choice of traditional, authoritative poetic forms as vehicles for his radical heroes helps establish groundwork for my claim that Byron’s ironic deployment of traditional poetics lends literary authority to his revolutionary thematics of gender and sexuality. Keach writes tellingly of Byron’s engagement with identity politics in his construction of *Don Juan*’s narrator. While Keach deals with political and class identities, his analysis is also suggestive for a reading of gender in the poem. Keach writes, “As part of the narrator’s performative self-representation, . . . [t]he voice of the narrator contains and is partly defined by voices that are his own and not his own, ironically alienated voicings of a social identity and class position by which he is entitled but also marginalized” (xi). If, as Keach suggests, Byron’s narrator both “contains and is partly defined by voices that are his own and not his own,” then the narrator is placed in multiple gendered identities and positions “by which he is entitled but also

marginalized” (xi). By “voicing” the cast of characters in *Don Juan*, including, significantly, not only reports of what both male and female characters said, but, from his position of omniscience, what Lady Adeline, for example, thinks and feels, then the gender of the narrator must be multiplicitous. If this is so, then narration itself becomes a strategy of seduction in which the narrator, historically regarded as the “masculine” subject position or “voice of Byron,” is himself ambiguously gendered and (dis)embodied.

Byron’s most obvious and perhaps most seductive trope for constructing gender, sex, and (bi)sexuality is that of drag. Byron uses cross-dressing throughout his canon to characterize his male and female Byronic Heroes. Cross-dressing is linked in many of his works to Byronic mobility, a complex commingling of subjectivity, objectivity, performativity, and “a general skepticism about following any established system of belief” (Elfenbein 44). Susan Wolfson notes that mobility is “loyal to no sex,” while Elfenbein claims that mobility is best understood as a tactic of representing masculine subjectivity, demonstrated most forcibly in *Don Juan* by its narrator. However, Elfenbein himself notes that “[a]nalyzing how gender affects the narrator’s stance is tricky” in *Don Juan* (44). In either case, Byronic mobility can be read as a forerunner of the postmodern theories of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, and Jean Baudrillard. Byron’s “pre-postmodern” concept of mobility is perhaps best explained by its characterization in the poem itself in Canto 16. Lady Adeline, wife of Lord Henry, is described by the narrator as she enacts class and gender roles during dinner:



But Adeline was occupied by fame  
 This day, and watching, witching, condescending  
 To the consumers of fish, fowl and game,  
 And dignity with courtesy so blending,

\* \* \* \* \*

96

Though this was most expedient on the whole  
 And usual, Juan, when he cast a glance  
 On Adeline while playing her grand role,  
 Which she went through as though it were a dance  
 (Betraying only now and then her soul  
 By a look scarce perceptibly askance  
 Of weariness or scorn), began to feel  
 Some doubt how much of Adeline was real,

97

So well she acted all and every part  
 By turns with that vivacious versatility  
 Which many people take for want of heart.  
 They err; 'tis merely what is called mobility,  
 A thing of temperament and not of art,  
 Though seeming so from its supposed facility,  
 And false though true, for surely they're sincerest

Who are strongly acted on by what is nearest.

98

This makes your actors, artists, and romancers,

Heroes sometimes (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.95-98)

Despite Elfenbein's attribution of mobility primarily to the narrator of the poem, the narrator applies the term to Lady Adeline within the context of her behavior as a hostess of "consumers" who are socially expedient, but clearly, in her estimation, tedious.

Adeline's mobility is here characterized as a type of aristocratic performance of heroism that enables her to move within society without internalizing its values and expectations.

Byronic mobility is thus linked to an ironic manipulation of appearances. Adeline's mobility is a strategy of surface representation, one that can be associated with

Baudrillard's seduction and with Butler's drag. Adeline's performance of aristocratic "ladyship" is clearly constructed in the poem as an act which is "false though true."

Juan's concern with Adeline's "realness" coupled with the narrator's clarification suggests that there is no "real," essential Adeline. There is no stable core of identity, no "reality." Byronic mobility is like Baudrillard's seduction and Judith Butler's drag; it is a tactic of performance, and one that the narrator ultimately constructs as heroic.

Adeline's performativity, the narrator notes, is "A thing of temperament and not of art, / Though seeming so from its supposed facility, / And false though true" (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.95-98). Byron's characterization of mobility as "of temperament and not of art" and "false though true" clearly establishes it as a form of Butler's gender performance, particularly, one of drag, even though no cross-dressing is involved. I argue

that Byron's mobility can be understood as a theoretical precursor to Butlerian drag, and that Byron, like Butler, strives to distinguish mobility from "art," or conscious construction of one's image. "The problem with drag," according to Butler,

is that I offered it as an example of performativity, but it has been taken up as the paradigm for performativity. One ought always to be wary of one's examples. . . . I don't think that drag is a paradigm for the subversion of gender. I don't think that if we were all more dragged out gender life would become more expansive and less restrictive. There are restrictions in drag. (Osborne and Segal)

To Butler, drag has been problematized by its (mis)use as a template for how to (un)do gender. Drag is only one style of performance; Byronic mobility is another. In both cases, attempts have been made to contain these performative strategies within a system of division. Wolfson suggests that while mobility is not exclusively gendered male in Byron's *Don Juan*, Byron's use of drag in the poem is a farce that takes potshots at women's oppression. Wolfson's assessment participates in a reading of sexual orientation and gender that does not postulate an alternative to a dualistic system of representation, and as such cannot theorize orientations and genders that do not participate in recuperation by a dominant sociopolitical system. For Elfenbein and Wolfson,

differences between men and women in the poem are never more pronounced than when they seem to be transgressed. . . . If *Don Juan* repeatedly exploits and draws attention to the constructedness of gender roles, it does not challenge their validity. It recognizes that certain

stereotypes are arbitrarily enforced, especially at the expense of women, but does not argue that they therefore should be removed. (qtd. in Elfenbein 42)

As support for this argument, Elfenbein addresses one of Byron's recurring images, the volcano. In Canto 13, the narrator begins to compare Lady Adeline's internal passions to a volcano, which is a common metaphor in Byron's previous characterization of his heroes, but rejects the image in favor of the symbol of a bottle of champagne:

36

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

37

I'll have another figure in a trice.  
 What say you to bottle of champagne,  
 Frozen into a very vinous ice,  
 Which leaves few drops of that immortal rain.  
 Yet in the very centre, past all price,

About a liquid glassful will remain,  
 And this is stronger than the strongest grape  
 Could e'er express in its expanded shape.

38

'Tis the whole spirit brought to a quintessence,  
 And thus the chilliest aspects may concentrate

A hidden nectar under a cold presence. (Byron, *Don Juan* 13.36-38)

Byron's narrator rejects the image of the volcano, according to Elfenbein, not because he is satirizing prior "tired" characterizations of the Byronic Hero, but because it had formerly represented the Byronic Hero's masculine passion and identity (43). Elfenbein goes on to claim that "it would be inappropriate to use the same figure that described a masculine subjectivity to describe a feminine one" (43). However, Byron's *Don Juan* is not terribly concerned with what is "appropriate" to the construction of masculine subjectivity in the earlier poems, as the narrator's characterization of the volcano as a "commonplace" and "tired" metaphor implies, and Byron is more concerned in this passage with exploring an element of Byronism, mobility, that had not been emphasized in prior heroes like Childe Harold. This passage can also be read as a satire of the language of Byronic subjectivity prior to *Don Juan* that the poet here chooses to approach ironically. While Elfenbein acknowledges this possibility, he reads the champagne bottle as an inferior symbol of subjectivity because it is an image of "culture rather than nature" (43), of femininity rather than masculinity. The champagne bottle, however, is as

undoubtedly phallic as a volcano, and is much more likely to be found in an English dining room.

“Suitability! *Suitability!* SUITABILITY!” (Wolfe 12). This mantra from Elsie de Wolfe, the famous early twentieth-century interior designer, emerges as a rallying cry from her 1913 book *The House in Good Taste*. While Wolfe’s demand that one suit oneself and one’s situation when choosing items to furnish one’s home may seem out of place in an analysis of Byron’s *Don Juan*, I maintain that Wolfe’s insistence on one’s appearance of suitability to one’s external environment, and vice versa, is a crucial element of Byron’s theory of mobility. As the above example from Canto 13 demonstrates, a champagne bottle is not as sublime as a volcano, but it carries many of the same associations while remaining infinitely more appropriate to Juan’s social environment in this canto than Vesuvius, and allows for Elfenbein’s insistence that Byron is concerned with “appropriateness.” It is exactly this notion of suitability that Byron’s mobility addresses, and it is an integral element of Byron’s development of his hero as a creature of society. Prior Byronic Heroes had banished themselves from their larger social and cultural milieus because of their incompatibility with social normativity. Like many of Byron’s readers who might empathize with the desire to live as a self-exile or expatriate but lack the resources to do so, Don Juan is set the task of reconciling himself and his performances of an ethical code of aristocratic libertine license to his social milieus. Byron’s narrator situates his hero within various settings, all of which represent elements of Regency England. Juan must then, as a gentleman and the hero of the piece, demonstrate his suitability to the cultures in which he moves. If, as Elfenbein claims,

former critics of the poem have read Juan as a complex character because of his supposed moral development throughout the poem, I argue that Juan's odyssey is instead to refine his social armor or remain vulnerable to social proscription. While the narrator's attitude in the poem toward Juan's quest for greater mobility is ambivalent, he suggests it is necessary if one is to preserve one's own individual liberty within the ideological demands of one's culture. Like the mock-heroic "arming of the hero" scene in Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" in which Belinda "arms" herself to face the "battles" of the London drawing room, Juan must arm himself by cultivating an outward image appropriate to his situation.

According to Gilles Deleuze, "[h]umour beyond irony, or . . . superior irony . . . is the art of surfaces, the art of thinking the noises, sensations, affects and sensible singularities from which bodies are composed, bodies that can then have relations: 'Humour is the art of the surface, which is opposed to the old irony, the art of depths and heights'" (qtd. in Colebrook 130). Deleuze's irony is thus similar to Baudrillard's seduction in my reading; Byron's "superior irony" is a form of seduction. Superior irony plays among surfaces, constituting what one deems identity and even constitutes the body through a proliferation of effects. The body in Byron is fragmented, constructed through its effects like the look in a character's eye, or, common in the Turkish Tales, a disembodied "breast." Even if characters like Conrad and Gulnare are not literally dressed in drag, they share common attributes -- the eye, the hand, and blood -- that question not only gender but biological sex. While the Turkish Tales do not contain much humour in the traditional sense, *Don Juan* certainly does. In Canto 6, Juan becomes

Juanna, has sex with an entire harem while dressed as a woman, and “gender still [is] epicene, at least / In outward show” (Byron, *Don Juan* 6.58). In the next canto, the narrator emphasizes the performative nature of identity, and its superior irony:

When we know what all are, we must bewail us,

But ne’ertheless I hope it is no crime

To laugh at all things, for I wish to know

What after all are all things – but a show? (Byron, *Don Juan* 7.2)

The narrator here tropes gender identity as a “show,” a masquerade, and one that is carried out in drag. Judith Butler claims that “the loss of the sense of ‘the normal’ . . . can be its own occasion for laughter, especially when ‘the normal,’ ‘the original’ is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one can embody. In this sense, laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived” (139). The narrator’s laughter at self-perception, at the performative quality of “all things,” suggests just the sort of awareness of which Butler writes. Ultimately, it is the narrator of *Don Juan* who interprets the significance of Juan’s gender performance. It is the narrator who establishes Juan’s cross-dressing episode as a subversion of both masculine and feminine gender identities. While Juan may be an unwilling participant in this performance, as he remarks that he is not “in a masquerading mood” (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.73), the narrator ridicules not Juan’s drag performance, but Juan’s ignorance of the power this masquerade gives him, as a man, to pass as a woman among women and simultaneously gain sexual access to a sultan’s harem.



Juan's adoption of drag varies throughout the poem, as Juan is, to use Butler's phrase, "dragged out" in virtually every scene in which he appears. Deleuze's superior irony, fully at play in these scenes, contains elements of humor. Like a hero of the mock-heroic genre, Juan's outward displays are often comical, but "underneath" or perhaps "through" the dresses, uniforms, and nightshirts, his performances of subjectivity/objectivity with(in) the garments chosen for him throughout the poem actually construct his identity. Juan's being dressed by Baba as an odalisque in the harem is possibly the most famous example of drag in the poem, and the one most likely to be "reversed."

Here, Juan adopts both exterior and interior characteristics of the concubine:

73

Baba eyed Juan, and said, "Be so good  
As dress yourself--" and pointed out a suit  
In which a Princess with great pleasure would  
Array her limbs; but Juan standing mute,  
As not being in a masquerading mood,  
Gave it a slight kick with his christian foot;  
And when the old negro told him to "Get ready,"  
Replied, "Old gentleman, I'm not a lady."

74

"What you may be, I neither know nor care,"  
Said Baba;

\* \* \* \* \*

75

“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.

76

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?” -- thus, after a short pause,  
 Sigh’d Juan, muttering also some slight oaths,  
 “What the devil shall I do with all this gauze?”  
 Thus he profanely term’d the finest lace  
 Which e’er set off a marriage-morning face.

77

And then he swore; and, sighing, on he slipp’d  
 A pair of trousers of flesh-colour’d silk,  
 Next with a virgin zone he was equipp’d,  
 Which girt a slight chemise as white as milk;  
 But tugging on his petticoat he tripp’d,

\*\*\*\*\*

78

And yet at last he managed to get through  
 His toilet, though no doubt a little backward:  
 The negro Baba help'd a little too,  
 When some untoward part of raiment stuck hard;  
 And, wrestling both his arms into a gown,  
 He paused and took a survey up and down.

\*\*\*\*\*

80

And now being femininely all array'd,  
 With some small aid from scissors, paint, and tweezers,  
 He look'd in almost all respects a maid,  
 And Baba smilingly exclaim'd "You see, sirs,  
 A perfect transformation here display'd;  
 And now, then, you must come along with me, sirs,  
 That is -- the Lady:"

\*\*\*\*\*

82

"You fool! I tell you no one means you harm."  
 "So much the better," Juan said, "for them;  
 Else they shall feel the weight of this my arm,  
 Which is not quite so light as you may deem.  
 I yield thus far; but soon will break the charm

If any take me for that which I seem:  
 So that I trust for every body's sake,  
 That this disguise may lead to no mistake."

\* \* \* \* \*

84

Keep your good name; though Eve herself once fell."  
 "Nay," quoth the maid, "the Sultan's self shan't carry me,  
 Unless his highness promises to marry me." (Byron, *Don Juan* 5. 73-84)

In this long passage, Juan's gender is extremely unstable; gender and sex roles proliferate almost infinitely. Juan is forced to adopt feminine gender by Baba the eunuch. He undergoes a symbolic "rape" in which he is "victimized" by Baba, a eunuch, who is constructed in the poem as lacking both sexual and political authority. Ironically, this "rape" is "a little backward;" Baba demands that Juan clothe himself and violates Juan's body by "stroking / The things down." However, at some point Juan appears to become a willing "victim," as Baba's inappropriate "stroking" becomes assistance "when some untoward part of raiment [sticks] hard." The pun on the erection is clear here, even though Juan is now the possessor of a "virgin zone." By the time the dressing is complete, Baba appears likened to an artist perfecting his masterpiece and Juan "yield[s]" to the female drag to such an extent that he appropriates the modesty of a "maid" bartering her virginity for marriage; "'Nay,' quoth the maid, 'the Sultan's self shan't carry me, / Unless his highness promises to marry me'" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5. 84). Juan's statement, attributed at this point to "the maid," underscores his performance as one of

biological sex; his trousers are the color of skin, so by assuming female drag, Juan “puts on” the “flesh” of a woman.

Significantly, Juan’s adoption of a “virgin zone” as part of his masquerade as a woman may reference a comment on the sexual behavior of the Spartans in Plutarch’s “The Life of Lycurgus.” In this account, Plutarch describes the customs attending the wedding night of a Spartan couple:

After this, she who superintended the wedding comes and clips the hair of the bride close round her head, dresses her up in man’s clothes, and leaves her upon a mattress in the dark; afterwards comes the bridegroom, in his everyday clothes, sober and composed, as having supped at the common table, and, entering privately into the room where the bride lies, unties her virgin zone, and takes her to himself; and, after staying some time together, he returns composedly to his own apartment, to sleep as usual with the other young men. (251)

Plutarch’s description of a Spartan wedding night contains many parallels with the Harem scene in *Don Juan*. The “she” who prepares the bride’s hair and dresses her in men’s clothing directly corresponds to the preparations made by Baba prior to Juan’s admission to the Sultana. The reference to Juan’s being “equipp’d” with a virgin zone, or equipped with a symbol of female genitalia, goes beyond the inversion of the Spartan wedding night suggested in the treatment of Baba’s role; in Byron’s poem, this is a double inversion, a series of reflections, but one that does not simply return Juan to a state of unquestioned masculinity. Nor does this example of “Greek love” indicate a strictly

hetero- or homosexual act. As William C. Carroll writes in an analysis of the hymen in Shakespeare's plays, "Virginity is here reduced to one of the performing 'arts', constituted by nothing more than a set of manipulable signs" (28). The "zone" is a belt or girdle worn around the hips that is usually tied with a knot which represents the intact hymen. Carroll notes that Queen Elizabeth I was painted wearing a "virgin zone" to signify her purity and that "the maidenhead of England is now safe from the Spanish attack" (26). Carroll's study suggests that the "reality" of the body, in this case, of the hymen, is itself constructed through outward signs like clothing; the body, female or male, is subverted by being revealed as performatively constituted. As Byron's narrator notes in Canto 3, "the true Hymen (the first's but a screen)" (Byron, *Don Juan* 3.25). Therefore, when Don Juan is dressed as a woman, he is not only a man in drag; he is performing biological sex as well as gender. (Bi)ological sex is thus constructed as (bi)sexual throughout Byron's canon in numerous examples of sexual activity during episodes of cross-dressing. Juan is later described as a "new-bought virgin" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.156) by the narrator, and when Juan meets the Sultan, his majesty says to Gulbeyaz; "I see you've bought another girl; 'tis pity / That a mere christian should be half so pretty" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.155). The Sultan "sees" that Juan is a woman so it must be so. This play between sign, signifier, and signified suggests that what appears to be both is and is not. Juan both is and is not a woman enacting feminine gender. It is the reader's privileged position that he or she is aware of the irony of the scene, what *seems* both is and is not what *is*. This irony, following both Deleuze's and Garber's definitions, is bisexual.

Reading the Byronic Hero's sexual orientation as anything other than Other(s) is to oversimplify the character and limit its significance. The majority of critical analyses of the Byronic Hero read the hero as either straight or gay, or straight and gay (a reversal), or as in the case of Sardanapalus and Don Juan, as gay masquerading as straight masquerading as gay, similar to Julie Andrews's performance of multigender in *Victor/Victoria*. Bisexuality is rarely mentioned in Byron scholarship. If a third option is proposed, the "Other" choice is usually "eunuch," or "neuter," as exemplified by Baba, the eunuch in *Don Juan*. However, Byron's attitude towards asexuality is overwhelmingly negative, as the example of Baba reveals. For Byron, asexuality is likened to castration, not only of the eunuch, but threatens those with whom he interacts. Baba threatens Juan with both circumcision and with castration; "'Twould greatly tend to better their condition, / If they would condescend to circumcision'" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.69). When Juan later objects to being dressed as a woman, Baba responds by both emphasizing his own power to command and by threatening Juan with castration; "'Incense me, and I call / Those who will leave you of no sex at all'" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.75). Significantly, Byron's construction of castration does not participate in a proto-Freudian feminization of the castrated, but is configured as asexual, "no sex at all," and as a lack of ability to perform sexually. Therefore, Baba's dressing of Juan in women's clothing might also be read as a symbolic castration, especially as Baba is "stroking /The things down" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.75) when he makes this threat. However, this drag episode does not simply reverse Juan's gender; he does not "become" feminine, but instead establishes Juan's drag as a performance of multigender in which castration

symbolizes the “neutering” of Juan’s multiple gender(s). In Byron, castration is then a neutralizing act which is constituted by the impossibility of sexual performance, represented as a lack of any sex organ, not just the penis, as Juan is also wearing a signifier of the hymen. What may be most interesting in this characterization of Baba is that his “sexlessness” and impotent authority echo the language used to critique the physical and governmental corruption of Byron’s political enemies in *Don Juan*.

In *Romanticism and Masculinity*, Tim Fulford claims that both Byron and Coleridge “were ascribing the disunity of post-war England to *a lack of proper manliness*” (149-50, italics mine). Fulford goes on to discuss Byron’s denunciation of Castlereagh as an intellectual and physical eunuch, and the poet’s scathing critique of Lord Henry Amundeville. “Byron suggests that Lord Amundeville is the perfect minister in the English government because, ironically, he has so banished his sexuality to a scarcely existent marriage that in politics he is personally impotent” (Fulford 150). It is important to note that when Byron attacks these political figures, and when he ridicules Robert Southey as “dry Bob,” he uses the language of sexual impotence and neuter gender rather than that of homosexuality or feminine gender. As borne out in the literary and cultural tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the most damning way of insulting a man was to describe him as feminine and/or homosexual, a tactic which, significantly, Byron does not use here. As Fulford goes on to claim, “A ‘dry bob’ was slang for orgasm without ejaculation. As a term for Bob Southey it shows his writing to be an expression of his inadequate masculinity -- an impotent personality worshipping a government which epitomises the frustration of human energy” (152). That Fulford uses



the term “human energy” rather than “masculine energy” suggests that Byron’s primary objection to this type of governmental corruption was not that it necessarily lacked a proper masculinity, but a proper sexuality. For Byron, the language of true ridicule, the only charge severe enough to properly characterize his political enemies, is not that of femininity, of libertinism, or of Greek love, but that of impotence, a lack of performative gender and sexuality. Byron’s language of political attack suggests that his contempt is for those who perform neither genders nor any variations of the sex act. Therefore, if a “third” option is posited as an alternative to masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, and/or active/passive, then for Byron that third option is emphatically not neuter. I contend that Byron’s third option is bisexuality, which contains within itself virtually infinite performances of gender and of sexuality.

Despite the tendency within Byron scholarship to focus on the seraglio episode when theorizing drag within the poem, the later episode which takes place within the gothic confines of the Norman Abbey engages formations of drag which complement those of the former. The spectre of Fitz-Fulke in her disguise as the sable Friar, situated within the context of Juan’s seduction of and by this figure, suggests the complexity of gendered interplay between cross-dressing and the act of seduction. This scene places equal emphasis on the humor of Byron’s superior irony, an irony derived from an interplay of surfaces, through the mobilizing tactic of drag, yet in this case, drag is performed by a woman. This example, in my view, challenges Wolfson’s interpretation of drag as gender reversal within *Don Juan* by employing a “reversal” of its own. In this episode, Fitz-Fulke’s adoption of ecclesiastical masculine drag parallels Juan’s adoption

of feminine drag in the harem and deploys cross-dressing as an ironic strategy of biologically “heterosexual” seduction. However, I argue that in Byron’s works, drag is ultimately a bisexual performance, one demonstrated here in the play of gender signifiers that have no stable referent.

In Canto 16, Juan awaits the appearance of the spectral Friar in a state of anticipation, and significantly, undress; “The night was as before: he was undrest, / Saving his night gown, which is an undress;” (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.111). As Byron’s narrator makes clear, Juan’s nightgown, while a traditional item of masculine clothing, is nevertheless an (un)dress, and thus indicates a type of cross-dressing. The emphasis here on “undress” echoes Juan’s adoption of feminine dress in the harem; the prefix “un” in the phrase “unsex’d my dress” (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.75) suggests a linguistic and multigendered slippage between “sexes.” Byron’s use of “undress” indicates dress as a marker of both male and female gender, as the term “undress” is defined in the text explicitly as a (masculine) nightgown and implicitly as both a (female) dress and, in Juan’s case, a state of male nudity. This conflation establishes Juan as performing multiple genders simultaneously, as the next line describes Juan as “Completely ‘sans culotte,’ and without vest;” (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.111). Interestingly, the term “sans culotte” literally means “without pants,” but here the term evokes a sexual/political double meaning. “Sans culottes” is a derogatory term for French revolutionaries, and in Canto 16 describes Juan’s lack of trousers. This lack of pants, an humorous play of a surface signifier of maleness paired with a reference to French revolutionaries, suggests a relationship between bi- or multisexual performance of seduction (Juan has clearly

prepared himself for his ghostly encounter) and revolutionary resistance to tyranny; here, the tyranny of normative gender. In stanza 119, the appearance of Fitz-Fulke in the Friar's costume occasions the seduction, as Juan becomes "heated" (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.119), and "arose, advanced . . . eager now the truth to pierce," (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.111). The language used in this stanza describes Juan in terms of the masculine hero and penetrating lover, while also emphasizing the threat of the "ghost," who "stopped, menaced, then retired, until / He reached the ancient wall, then stood stone still" (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.119). The pronoun "he" used in these lines refers to Fitz-Fulke, acknowledging the Duchess in masquerade as a masculine figure even in the face of Juan's enacting a masculine sexual role in the seduction. In stanza 116, Byron's narrator claims, "A single shade's sufficient to entrance a / Hero" (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.116). Here, the narrator characterizes heroism as the ability to be seduced, to adopt an object position in the seductive act, and does so through Deleuzean humor. Far from demonstrating an investment in recuperating masculine sexual power, the narrator's superior irony subverts the structure by positing the object as a power position.

In stanza 121, Byron again employs pronouns to conflate gender roles; "The ghost had a remarkably sweet breath. / A straggling curl showed he had been fair-haired;" (Byron, *Don Juan* 16.121). In the next canto, when Juan and Fitz-Fulke arrive at breakfast, the narrator underscores the instability of gender made possible by the masquerade; "Which best is to encounter -- Ghost, or none, / 'Twere difficult to say -- but Juan looked / As if he had combated with more than one," (Byron, *Don Juan* 17.14). Byron's choice of the terms "ghost" and "none" suggests a doubling of genders, as the

ghostly Friar is gendered masculine, while the word “none” reflects a feminine double entendre: “none” as in “nothing,” a Shakespearean reference to “vagina,” and “none” as “nun,” the alternate spelling used by Chaucer and a paired gender allusion with “friar.” Again, a parallel may be found between this and the harem episodes; there, Juan is named by Baba as a “christian nun” in his performance of feminine drag. Paired, these references conflate gender and sex roles. The narrator’s musing whether it is better to “encounter” a friar or a nun, he finds, is “difficult to say,” which suggests that during an act of seduction, multiple genders are enacted and cannot be easily divided into a stable masculine equals male, feminine equals female binary, and additionally implies that there is no imperative, and is perhaps impossible, to judge between “two” supposed choices. Is Juan the nun, or is Fitz-Fulke? As Jerome Christensen notes,

the phrase ‘Fitz-Fulke’ *describes* a certain ‘full, voluptuous, but *not* *o’ergrown* bulk,’ while it coincidentally *prescribes* a form of sexual behavior that deviates from a sexuality properly placed. Spoken out on an English tongue the Norman “Fitz-Fulke!” sounds as the Saxon shibboleth “Fist-fuck!” -- an imperative that tangibly deviates from normative heterosexuality. (342)

Although Christensen notes the significance of the name “Fitz-Fulke,” it is unclear why he claims that the reference to fist fucking is “coincidental.” It is, in fact, highly unlikely to be coincidental; Christensen notes not only in this passage but throughout this work that references to homosexuality and to so-called deviations “from normative

heterosexuality” are coded throughout the poem. Furthermore, Christensen goes on to note that

“Fist-fuck!” invites the decipherment of the more lurid Gothic motifs in terms of the kind of pictorial homoerotic code familiarized by the eponymous Monk Lewis: it is not a woman but a “he,” with a “straggling curl,” a “red lip,” and pearly teeth, who appears under the moonlight. Circumstanced by those adjectives and pronouns, the object of “the Sex” seems same-sexual; and the creaking hinge threatens to swing Juan into an under- or nether world that is as much Beckfordian as Dantean: the dark backward and abyss of the body. Entranced by that open hole through which no articulate speech comes (*to fist* can mean to break wind, according to the *OED*), Juan is poised on the threshold of an object choice that would pitch him into a dark and hopeless future. (342)

Clearly, Christensen implies that Juan’s sexuality is here constructed as homosexual; the references to Beckford, to Juan’s open mouth as a symbolic anus, and to the “nether” world and the “dark backward” abyss of the body support Christensen’s reading, and exemplify Byron’s use of Deleuzian irony in these scenes of cross-dressing. “In humour, the self appears less as an organised agent or organising subject and more as a collection of incongruous body parts” (Colebrook 135). However, the figure whose masculine “parts” connote these multigendered and ultimately bisexual constructions is a woman, the Duchess Fitz-Fulke. Though Christensen is right in noting the construction of the Duchess is gendered in male terms which imply that the seduction is homosexual, her

masculinity is performed by a female figure, which characterizes the seductive situation for both Fitz-Fulke and Juan as both multigendered and bi- or multisexual. Like Deleuze's reflections, Byron's constructions of gender in this scene go beyond the either/or of Wolfson's and Elfenbein's analyses to a more complex, less stable construction of gender and sexual orientation, which Christensen moves toward later in his study:

Moreover, this admonition to a hands-on form of sexuality is not gender-specific in the giver or the receiver (does not, in fact, indicate that there is a difference between giver and receiver, since the act of fist-fucking could very well be masturbatory). It answers the confusion of sorts and sexes, but without appeal to justice or to normative rigor. (343)

The "sorts and sexes" Christensen references appear in Canto 11; "I find no spot where man can rest eye on, / Without confusion of the sorts and sexes, / Of being" (Byron, *Don Juan* 11.21-23). Here, the narrator's double negative suggests the ubiquity of gendered performances, of the "confusion" of normative genders, rather than a replication through reversal. This episode's "confusion" of "sorts and sexes" encourages a reading of seductive play among genders as bisexual, not as hetero- or homo-normative. However, as mentioned in my previous analysis of masturbatory language as a form of political attack in Byron, the connotation of fist fucking is unlikely to be masturbatory here; the mobility of identities in this episode is made possible through the interaction between sexual partners during an active libertine seduction and functions as a strategy of performing individual license within a gendered social system.

In an analysis of Don Juan's gender, it must be understood that Juan's performances of the feminine, in his adoption of drag and his sexual passivity, are not a reflection of the feminine in the sense of holding a mirror up to "nature," but are performances of styles of a feminine masculinity which itself functions as part of a performative strategy of libertine sexual license in a context of seduction. Juan performs feminine gender, but because his performance of the feminine takes place within a seduction in which he also performs masculine gender, and because the reader is aware of these performances as such through the narrator's use of humor, his masculinity reflects a style of feminine gender performed within the context of and in concert with a masculine gender performance and is therefore a performance of a style of libertine masculine (bi)sexual power. Thus, it is possible for Juan to perform or enact feminine gender and female sex while simultaneously performing masculine gender and male sex. Through the strategy of seduction, the reader is aware of the performance as a play on and with gender, but Byron's ironic mode denies his reader a "straight" laugh at a man in drag. The humor of the scenes is gained at the expense of Byron's reader, who is reminded that ultimately everything is but a show.

Further tangling the gender identifications of Juan and the women with whom he engages is the supposed binary within the seductive situation of the passive and the active. Reading these roles as indicators of gender in which passive equals feminine and active equals masculine in a dualistic construction of gendered sexuality, and one too often applied indiscriminately to heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual seductive contexts, has contributed to an oversimplification of gender identities which Byron's

canon complicates, multiplies, and destabilizes. If Juan's "passivity" genders him "female," as Peter Thorslev's construction suggests, then his female partners are gendered "male" in an either-or construction of gender in seduction that ultimately *Don Juan* does not support. Both Juan and the Sultana Gulbeyaz in Canto 5, for example, are described as simultaneously passive and active participants in the seductive situation. At the outset of the scene between Juan and Gulbeyaz in her bedchamber, both are locked in a battle of wills; each is invested with (or believes himself or herself to be invested with) masculine sovereign power. Gulbeyaz's opening parry is a demand -- "Christian, canst thou love?" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.116). Juan's response is to "burst into tears" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.117). Juan's weeping, inspired by his recollection of Haidee, angers both the Sultana and Juan; "Juan, who for an instant had been moved / . . . Called back the stoic to his eyes, . . . he / Felt most indignant still at not being free" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.121). By crying, Juan uses the "weapon of women" to challenge the Sultana's absolute authority from his performative position as both a "woman" and a slave. In a declaration worthy of Spartacus, Juan articulates the manifesto of Byron's canon, "Love is for the free! / . . . Whate'er thy power, and great it seems to be, / . . . our hearts are still our own" (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.127). Gulbeyaz, mirroring Juan's response to her challenge to his masculine authority, considers having Juan executed, and then herself weeps. Even though the two do not consummate their physical desire, their gendered performances enact a seduction that undercuts the masculine sovereignty each believes he or she "has." Their roles are not fluid in the sense that the duo "exchange" active and passive roles, one becoming active as the other assumes a passive role, but each instead performs both active and



passive roles simultaneously, as suggested in Deleuze's analysis of the sadomasochistic entity. Gulbeyaz performs a masculine role as the Sultana, but her absolute authority is ultimately destabilized by her position as a wife of the Sultan. Juan performs a feminine role in female drag, but he is also gendered masculine and uses his masquerade as a tactic of male heterosexual seduction. In this way, the poem questions the normatively gendered binary of masculine equals active and feminine equals passive. Byron's conflation of the genders suggests that within the seductive context, gender is multiplied and constantly re-enacted, and thus cannot simply be described or understood as a rigid binary. Instead, the roles of "aggressor" and "victim" play in seduction. Although Deleuze often uses "double" as a synonym for "reflection," the term "double" may be understood as a simple binary structure, which, in my view, is very different from the meaning of the term "reflection." "Reflection" suggests an infinite proliferation, much as that which occurs when one places two mirrors together -- though one begins with two, a binary double, their apposition in a seductive situation spawns an infinite series of possible views.

Applying Deleuze's logic to the seeming binary of gender and its attendant assumptions allows engagement with Byron's complex formations of the masculine and the feminine, the subject and the object, the heterosexual, the homosexual, and the bisexual, the active and the passive, and the powerful and the powerless. By divorcing and reflecting genders, orientations, sexual roles, and power formations, all of which are reflected in and constituent of the gender binary, it becomes possible to tease out these threads in Byron's poetry for analysis. It is perhaps the reflective quality of gender

within Byron's scenes of seduction that most challenges modern readers, as many read these reflections as mere doubling, a reversal of gender roles that recuperates social norms. While Haslett acknowledges that Juan performs the role of the object, her reading of Don Juan's objectivity is also read through a Freudian lens that posits Juan's effeminacy as a childlike role while his female partners are read as mothers. For Haslett, seduction is an Oedipal scene in which Juan's femininity equals childishness and weakness and the roles of women like Haidee and Catharine are not even reversed, as their seductions of Juan are characterized as exclusively maternal and ultimately without agency. Haslett states that "[t]he radical nature of the consideration of seduction in . . . *Don Juan* . . . is thus undermined by [its] use of sexual-political conventions" (287). This might be the case if one reads Byron through Freud or through Foucault, but Baudrillard's seduction does not support such a reading. Interestingly, Haslett goes on to claim that, "[t]he effeminate Don Juan of Byron's poem, as an illustration of Baudrillard's theory of seduction, might support the avoidance of essentialism: it is his beauty which seduces the heroines, he literalizes the pleasures and powers of being a sexual object" (284-85). This admission suggests the relevance of Baudrillard's seduction theory to a reading of Byron's gendered play; Byron's construction of sexual pleasure in *Don Juan* suggests that subjectivity is not exclusively gendered masculine in his works. As Haslett notes, the language used to describe the beauty of female characters like Haidee applies equally to Juan. In canto II, Juan is described as "a withered lily, . . . As fair a thing as e'er was formed of clay" (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.110). In contrast, Haidee is described as "a lovely tree" growing to womanhood (Byron, *Don Juan*

2.128). Juan's beauty is just as "feminine" as Haidee's, if less phallic. Similarly, both Juan and Haidee are mutually seduced. When Haidee finds Juan on the beach, she revives him by stroking him and wringing the water from his hair. Haidee's "rescue" of Don Juan is characterized as a physical seduction, and her sensual caressing of Juan's body prompts desire in both parties; Haidee "watched with eagerness each throb that drew / A sigh from his heaved bosom—and hers too" (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.114).

Although Juan is only semi-conscious, Haidee's innocent exploration is not constructed in the poem as a forced encounter. While Haidee's gaze may objectify Juan, their identical response suggests that there is a play in this seduction between subjectivity and objectivity that multiplies these positions.

The "pleasures and powers" (Haslett 285) of the sexual object within a seduction is emphasized in *Don Juan* by the poem's conflation of military heroic action with sexual conquest. However, the term "conquest" should be understood as a battle between well-matched opponents, as Byron's ironic use of the term "combat" implies, rather than as an indication of gender inequality within seduction. If gender is infinitely reflected in seduction, then the military language used to describe sexual acts indicates the possibility of reading sexual activity as a performance of Byronic heroism for both male and female participants. Critical to this reading is Baudrillard's claim that seduction "operat[es] according to rules which are similar to those of martial arts -- view the opponent from the side, never attack him/her from the front, in fact, never 'attack'" (Haslett 276).

According to Christensen, "The hero of satire pays for his access of power with his death" (311). This claim, when applied to Don Juan, paradoxically underscores the

nature of Juan's heroism within the poem; because Juan's power is oblique, the power of the passive "object" of seduction, he does not actively pursue sexual power, but as Baudrillard's concept of the power of the seductive object suggests, he gains seductive power from his objectivity which is as powerful as that of the female subjectivity in his seductions. "Seduction is therefore outside of the laws which would determine responsibility, since the line which would separate seducer from seduced, 'active' perpetrator from 'passive' victim, is indecipherable" (Haslett 279). Juan is not, then, a typical hero of satire; he does not die, except in the Shakespearean sense of sexual orgasm as a "little death." His power is that of the object, but is also that of the subject. He does not "pay for his access of power with his death" (Christensen 311) because his power is not the patriarchal power of a dominating, imperialistic masculinity. Instead, his many "little deaths" are paradoxically life affirming, as Haidee's pregnancy suggests.

However, Haidee's pregnancy presents a challenge to the reader; how can one read *Don Juan's* construction of gender roles as liberatory when Haidee seemingly pays for her seduction and for transgression of gender norms with her death, and with the death of her unborn child? Although Haidee and Juan enact similar performances of multiple genders, their attitudes toward this seduction grow more disparate. As has been noted above, in the early stages of their seduction, both share subject and object roles. Haidee and Juan both appropriate the "masculine" gaze:

And Juan gazed [at Haidee] as one who is awoke

By a distant organ, doubting if he be

Not yet a dreamer, till the spell is broke

By the watchman or some such reality. (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.152)

This reality comes quickly, and in the anti-seductive form of authoritarian control.

Significantly, as Juan and Haidee continue their seduction, Haidee's growing (un)certainly of her right to possess Juan leads to her attempt to assert dominance over him, and leads to her own destruction:

Juan seemed  
 To her, as 'twere, the kind of being sent,  
 Of whom these two years she had nightly dreamed,  
 A something to be loved, a creature meant  
 To be her happiness, and whom she deemed  
 To render happy. . . . (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.172)

Haidee's developing sense that Juan exists "To be her happiness" (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.172) changes the seductive dynamic of her relationship with Juan from a seduction in which the roles of subject and object are performed simultaneously and as multiple reflections into a system of desire in which one partner assumes the authority to control the other. Juan becomes Other, a "kind of being," a "something to be loved," a "creature" she "deem[s] / To render happy" (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.172). The language used to describe Haidee's logic dehumanizes Juan and denies his subjectivity. He becomes *some thing* who "seem[s] to her" "sent" as an embodiment of her sexual fantasies (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.172). Juan, then, could be anyone as long as he belongs to her. The poem characterizes Haidee's adoption of a totalizing subjectivity as colonizing, and importantly, as based on a profound insecurity; "But then the thought of parting made her

quake. / He was her own, her ocean-treasure, cast / Like a rich wreck, her first love and her last” (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.173). The irony of the last half-line suggests both Haidee’s desire that Juan be with her forever in the sense of her first, last, and only lover, and also that Juan will be her last love, foreshadowing the fatality of her conviction that she owns Juan.

Haidee’s desire to possess Juan exposes the problem with a reading of the Byronic Hero and his mate as mere doubles; “Happiness was born a twin” (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.172). Here, the image of the lovers as twins characterizes them as a double. Each is not a reflection of the other in which there is no Otherness; instead, Haidee’s construction posits a duality, a binary in which each individual ceases to exist as an individual and thus replicates a culturally normative, two-person, two-gendered unit. In *Don Juan*, such a relationship constitutes a marriage, which is regarded within the poem as a cultural institution which represses the individual. As the narrator claims, “love and marriage rarely can combine, / . . . There’s doubtless something in domestic doings, / Which forms in fact true love’s antithesis” (Byron, *Don Juan* 3.5, 8). This “something,” as the passage below indicates, is the desire to possess the Other which ultimately constructs difference. The language used by the narrator suggests self-deception, a “seeming” that the reader must read ironically:

13

They saw not in themselves aught to condemn;

Each was the other’s mirror, and but read

Joy sparkling in their dark eyes like a gem,

And knew such brightness was but the reflection  
Of their exchanging glances of affection.

16

For theirs were buoyant spirits, never bound  
By the mere senses. And that which destroys  
Most love, possession, unto them appeared  
A thing which each endearment more endeared. (Byron, *Don Juan*  
4.13,16)

In stanzas 190-192, Juan suggests he and Haidee take a walk, as the poem notes that Juan has been virtually imprisoned by Haidee in the cave. From this point, the “lovers” are described exclusively by third-person plural pronouns, “they,” “them,” and “their.” Formerly, the poem usually referred to each by name; this change in signifier reflects their new “identity” as a unit, a couple. As the couple travel, Childe Harold-like, through an idealized landscape and make love, the narrator digresses on the necessity of drunkenness and the price one pays for overindulgence, an ironic commentary on the intoxication of both desire and power, of the Freudian system and the Foucauldian. This consummation of their sexual desire renders them “married”:

190

Haidee spoke not of scruples, asked no vows  
Nor offered any;

\*\*\*\*\*

And, never having dreamt of falsehood, she

Had not one word to say of constancy.

191

She loved, and was beloved, she adored  
 And she was worshipped after nature's fashion.  
 Their intense souls, into each other poured,  
 If souls could die, had perished in that passion,  
 But by degrees their senses were restored,  
 Again to be o'ercome, again to dash on.  
 And, beating against *his* bosom, Haidee's heart  
 Felt as if never more to beat apart.

192

Alas, they were so young, so beautiful,  
 So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour  
 Was that in which the heart is always full,  
 And, having o'er itself no further power,  
 Prompts deeds eternity cannot annul,  
 But pays off moments in an endless shower  
 Of hell-fire, all prepared for people giving  
 Pleasure or pain to one another living. (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.190-92)

According to Jerome McGann, "Haidee and Juan's relationship fuses the spiritual and fleshly aspects of love perfectly" (*Fiery Dust* 297). McGann makes this claim in his analysis of Byron's desire to break "the cycle of sex war" (*Fiery Dust* 296) in order to



construct sex as positive and, as I argue, liberatory. For McGann, and for many other critics, Juan and Haidee represent an Edenic construction of ideal love, one that stands in sharp contrast, in McGann's study, to Juan's encounter with the warlike "whore," Catherine the Great (*FD* 297). Catherine is condemned by McGann because she "uses sex and therefore makes it an equivocal value" (*FD* 297). Catherine's "sex problems," attributed to "greed and frustration," "are the real causes of evil conflicts" (*FD* 296-297). However, a reading of the passages above from *Don Juan* suggests to this reader that Byron's narrator acknowledges some trouble in paradise. While the last stanza does characterize physical passion as a strategy of seduction, the narrator's construction of this relationship as a marriage, especially given the examples above in which Haidee desires to own Juan as a material possession, severely problematizes a reading of the couple's sexual encounter as a prelapsarian love ideal. I argue that Haidee's hunger to possess Juan is a form of greed encouraged by socially sanctioned conceptions of love as the possession of a desired Other, and is motivated by a frustration born from fear of losing her "ocean-treasure" (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.173). Therefore, the narrator's gorgeous description of the power of physical passion to obliterate identity, difference, and otherness of much of human experience is tainted by its association with the institution of marriage.

When her father Lambro leaves the island, Haidee has her first taste of freedom:

Free as a married woman, or such other

Female, as where she likes may freely pass,

\* \* \* \* \*

The freest she that ever gazed on glass.

I speak of Christian lands in this comparison,

Where wives, at least, are seldom kept in garrison. (Byron, *Don Juan*  
2.175)

The narrator compares Haidee's freedom, which paradoxically enables her to adopt her father's role of absolute ruler of the island, with that of a married Christian (and thus likely Western) woman whose "freedom" is here characterized as a form of personal vanity, "The freest she that ever gazed on glass" (Byron, *Don Juan* 2.175). While the image of the mirror is used here, this is not a mirror in Deleuze's sense; this mirror reflects not a proliferation of gender performances that destabilize identity, but a mere image of Narcissus who seduces only himself. This mirror is not characterized by Byron as an image of self-sovereignty, but as an illusion of personal freedom enabled by a narrow focus on a self which does not acknowledge its own imprisonment. The "freedom" of married women in the West is here problematic; married women in Byron's culture did not have personal freedom. While Byron's aristocratic society would sometimes turn a blind eye to the adultery of married women who had done their "duty" to their husbands by providing heirs, ultimately such women were regarded by law as the property of their husbands. Any freedom these women possessed was largely illusory. Haidee's "freedom," therefore, is just such a self-deception. While Lambro is away, Haidee may believe she rules the island, but as the poem points out, her subjects invest Juan with this authority.

These subjects are characterized as

## Gazelles and cats

And dwarfs and blacks and such like things, that gain

Their bread as ministers and favourites (that's

To say, by degradation), mingled there

As plentiful as in a court or fair. (Byron, *Don Juan* 3.68)

Here, Haidee's court is described as an echo of Lambro's absolute authority, and therefore, equally corrupt. "[D]warfs and blacks" are likened to "Gazelles and cats" as well as those "ministers and favourites" who gain politically from flattery (Byron, *Don Juan* 3.68). It is the corrupting desire to possess, to own, to enslave, that is the subtext for this episode. When Haidee attempts to possess Juan, she severs their relationship as "mirror images" or Deleuzean reflections in which there is no division between subject and object, active and passive, and instead mirrors her father, the figure of corruption and rulership; "Stern as her sire. . . . 'I knew / Your nature's firmness -- know your daughter's too'" (Byron, *Don Juan* 4.42). Haidee's performance of masculinity is not characterized by the text as the source of the perversion of love; it is her performance of tyranny that perverts. The narrator laments this change in Haidee and condemns society for her downfall: "They should have lived together deep in woods, / . . . They were / Unfit to mix in these thick solitudes / Called social, haunts of hate and vice and care" (Byron, *Don Juan* 4.28). The narrator suggests it is social normativity which drives humanity from gender equality, which in *Don Juan* is the basis of love and intimacy, to "solitudes" of "hate and vice and care" (Byron, *Don Juan* 4.28). These social vices are socially constructed and gendered, not essentialized in one particular sex in this poem. This

normative performance of gender is thus regarded in *Don Juan* as antithetical to both love and seduction, as it obliterates the Humean sympathy the lovers shared by commodifying one partner.

Byron's construction of gender rejects the concept of an individual as a "product," and of sexuality as a form of (re)production. According to Claire Colebrook, the episode of Juan on the slave block in Canto 5 "ironizes the objectifying gaze of an imperialism that would reduce human life to so much knowable and purchasable matter" (116).

26

Just now a black old neutral personage  
 Of the third sex stept up, and peering over  
 The captives, seem'd to mark their looks and age,  
 And capabilities, as to discover  
 If they were fitted for the purposed cage:  
 No lady e'er is ogled by a lover,  
 Horse by a blackleg, broadcloth by a tailor,  
 Fee by a counsel, felon by a jailor,

27

As is a slave by his intended bidder.  
 'Tis pleasant purchasing our fellow-creatures;  
 And all are to be sold, if you consider  
 Their passions, and are dext'rous; some by features  
 Are bought up, others by a warlike leader,

Some by a place -- as tend their years or natures;  
 The most by ready cash -- but all have prices,  
 From crowns to kicks, according to their vices.

28

The eunuch, having eyed them o'er with care,  
 Turn'd to the merchant, and begun to bid  
 First but for one, and after for the pair;  
 They haggled, wrangled, swore, too -- so they did!  
 As though they were in a mere Christian fair  
 Cheapening an ox, an ass, a lamb, or kid;  
 So that their bargain sounded like a battle  
 For this superior yoke of human cattle. (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.26-28)

\*\*\*\*\*

54

As the black eunuch enter'd with his brace  
 Of purchased Infidels, some raised their eyes  
 A moment without slackening from their pace;  
 But those who sate ne'er stirr'd in anywise:  
 One or two stared the captives in the face,  
 Just as one views a horse to guess his price;  
 Some nodded to the negro from their station,  
 But no one troubled him with conversation. (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.54)

Here, the narrator likens Juan and his fellow slaves to cattle, to be bought and sold according to the function each is best fit to serve. Baba and the other slave buyers view this human cargo with a commodifying eye likened to that of a lover sizing up a conquest. Significantly, Juan's experience in the slave market is gendered feminine. That the narrator underscores this similarity between Juan on the auction block and the experience of women being judged solely by appearance in society suggests the two situations are reflections of the same dehumanizing system of oppression. Byron's narrator refers to this objectification with an ironic comment that "'tis pleasant purchasing our fellow-creatures; / And all are to be sold, if you consider / Their passions, . . ." (Byron, *Don Juan* 5.27). Byron's narrator suggests that all of us fall prey to the desire to objectify Others. This practice is as likely to be found in the marriage market as in a slave market.

Dino Felluga writes that use-value contrasts with exchange-value in that the former is:

[t]he usefulness of a commodity vs. the exchange equivalent by which the commodity is compared to other objects on the market. Marx distinguishes between the use-value and the exchange value of the commodity. Use-value is inextricably tied to "the physical properties of the commodity" (126); that is, the material uses to which the object can actually be put, the human needs it fulfills. In the exchange of goods on the capitalist market, however, exchange-value dominates: two

commodities can be exchanged on the open market because they are always being compared to a third term that functions as their “universal equivalent,” a function that is eventually taken over by money. Exchange-value must always be distinguished from use-value, because “the exchange relation of commodities is characterized precisely by its abstraction from their use-values” (127). (Felluga, “Use-Value vs. Exchange-Value”)

One may not be able escape use-value and commodification, but Byron’s use of satire challenges the authority of this objectifying system to pass itself off as “truth,” and also questions his readers’ tendency to submit to such false authority with the Panglossian optimism of Juan’s English partner on the block. To Byron, everything is not for the best in the worst of all possible worlds.

Clearly, for Byron, the best of all possible worlds is not one in which human beings, no matter what gender or nationality, are regarded as products. On the slave block, Juan is commodified; he becomes an object whose subjectivity seems to be negated by his valuation as a sexual slave. As stated in Chapter I of this study, Byron’s characterization of subject and object echo the construction found in Hume’s theory of sympathy; one engages with another with whom he or she identifies, and in this identification the roles of subject and object become fluid and lack boundaries. When Juan is judged exclusively by his possible uses, which are of course sexual, his position of subjectivity appears to be obliterated by his situation. However, even in this context, Juan’s subjectivity coexists with his objectivity. The narrator focuses here on Juan’s

conversation with the Englishman in which the two engage in the polite pleasantries of introduction. Both “objects” assert their identities as individuals, and the narrator reports the same for the other potential slaves. Such small talk undermines the absolute objectivity of these human “cattle” and therefore the system of ownership which would characterize them as such. The narrator’s comparison of Juan in the slave market with women’s experiences in English society suggests that even within the marriage market that commodifies women as sexual laborers and future producers of heirs, there is recourse to a subjectivity that cannot ultimately be contained within socially constructed systems of use-value. For Byron, classifying and categorizing individuals according to their use value or their exchange value is both an abuse of traditional aristocratic authority and one adopted by a rising middle class heavily invested in commodity culture as a means of establishing its authority. Byron’s heroes are constructed outside of such valuations of use and exchange. The poet’s aristocratic hero clashes with such systems, often by assuming a personal sovereignty which attempts to place itself outside of commodification while still playing among and seducing its binaries.

One tactic of Byronic Hero’s libertine seduction of gender and power is its use of setting to challenge tyrannical structures. In addition to Nancy K. Miller’s gendered *p*’s of libertinage, “play, pleasure, and power, and another *p*, performance” (17), this study posits an additional one -- place. Throughout *Don Juan*, the seductive situation which allows the apposition of gender roles takes place in private, if not exclusively domestic, settings. While these private, intimate places would seem to be necessary to seduction, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, seduction is often enacted historically in social



settings, as the poetry of the Earl of Rochester attests. It is notable, however, that Juan's seductions, usually instigated by women, are enacted in intimate settings in which the gendered norms of society do not necessarily apply. These places are often hidden, secluded, and private. However, Haidee's grotto, Juan's bedchamber, and Gulbeyaz's enclave within the harem are all secluded places not outside of but *within* the societies ruled by Lambro, Lord Henry, and the Sultan. Thus, the place associated with seduction is located within the traditionally feminine sphere of the domestic as well as within the public sphere of masculine space and can be read as a contested space within both "feminine" and "masculine" spheres of influence. Catherine the Great's bedchamber, while a "feminine" space within the domestic sphere, is also simultaneously a "masculine" space of state power where the political fortunes of Russian subjects are determined. Catherine's bedchamber, then, echoes the bedchambers of other absolute monarchs like Louis XIV and Charles II who granted political favor on the basis of sexual performance; her negative characterization can thus be read less as a condemnation of Catherine as a woman, but as an absolute monarch whose sexuality enacts a form of tyranny. While Catherine's depiction is in no way gender-neutral, it is characterized performatively as multigendered and abusively aristocratic rather than exclusively misogynistic:

95

Had Catherine and the Sultan understood

Their own true interests, which kings rarely know,

Until 'tis taught by lessons rather rude,

There was a way to end their strife, although  
 Perhaps precarious, had they but thought good,  
 Without the aid of Prince or Plenipo:  
 She to dismiss her guards and he his harem,  
 And for their other matters, meet and share 'em.

96

But as it was, his Highness had to hold  
 His daily council upon ways and means,  
 How to encounter with this martial scold,  
 This modern Amazon and Queen of Queens;  
 And the perplexity could not be told  
 Of all the Pillars of the state, which leans  
 Sometimes a little heavy on the backs  
 Of those who cannot lay on a new tax. (Byron, *Don Juan* 6.95-96)

Here, both Catherine and the Sultan are characterized as absolute monarchs, each as tyrannical as the other. Both are encouraged to renounce their “harems,” with Catherine’s stable of soldiers as feminized here as the Sultan’s harem. Although Byron’s narrator does not seriously intend to suggest sex as a cure for war, as some critics suggest, his ironic suggestion places sex and war in apposition; the kind of sexuality used by both Catherine and the Sultan is tyrannical, and due to their desires, thousands will lose their liberties and their lives.

Through the settings of Juan's seductions, *Don Juan* suggests that gender is fluid, performed rather than essential, and lacks absolute power stratification. Situating the seductive scene within both domestic and public spheres suggests that gender multiplicity is performed not on the margins of society, but among mainstream social structures of power. Establishing this seductive place within these spheres reveals the lack of a stable, gendered power binary at the very heart of what is considered as a social absolute -- the division of gendered spheres. If the basis of gender division into appropriate social roles is revealed to have no stability, then the authority of the entire structure is called into question. Like Baudrillard, Byron's poem posits seduction as a means of social challenge. This analysis of Juan and the women of *Don Juan* destabilizes traditional roles of seducer and victim and also suggests that the participants in a seduction are to some degree social equals, or that the woman in the seduction "outranks" Juan. Byron's libertinage manifests through scenes of seduction which posit membership in a social elite: Donna Julia is a noblewoman, Haidee is a pirate princess, Gulbeyaz is a Sultana, Fitz-Fulke is a duchess, and Catherine the Great is *Catherine the Great*. As implied above, it is only their sex and the gender roles associated with women that undermine their sociopolitical status.

The place of libertinage, the site of seduction, is not then read as a site of absolute masculine power and authority, but questions the gendered hierarchy of power within socially determined roles. If a monarch can be influenced sexually by a foreign nobleman, then whose role is invested with power? If the (male) libertine is not the highest-ranking participant in the seductive act, then how can seduction be understood as

an expression of some innate, essentialist exercise of male aristocratic power?

Furthermore, if an absolute monarch is the woman in a heterosexual scene of seduction, and her partner is of a lower social class, then how can Juan's libertinage result in negative consequences for the woman? Most critical discussion of Juan's libertinage focuses on the consequences for Haidee, or on the consequences for Donna Julia, whose letter to Juan is often read by critics without irony, and therefore these critics often participate in a sentimental reading ridiculed by the poem itself. What these critics often ignore is that the Sultana, Catherine the Great, and Fitz-Fulke do not suffer negative consequences post-seduction. If one accepts Baudrillard's theory of seduction, the attribution of blame cannot be definitely assigned, and consequences are divorced from normative gender roles. Juan's seductions do have consequences, but these results are not predominantly negative for the women involved. It seems unlikely that the Sultana, Catherine, and Fitz-Fulke are new to the game of seduction. Catherine the Great is not Clarissa. In the example of Gulbeyaz, Baba's skill in choosing a male slave and in "concealing" Juan in harem drag seems less a tribute to his ingenuity than to his previous experience. Even the oft-evoked seduction of Donna Julia, usually read as having tragic consequences, is treated by the narrator ironically:

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,  
 Until too late for useful conversation;  
 The tears were gushing from her gentle eyes,  
 I wish indeed they had not had occasion,  
 But who, alas! can love, and then be wise?

Not that remorse did not oppose temptation;  
 A little still she strove, and much repented  
 And whispering “I will ne’er consent”—consented. (Byron, *Don Juan*  
 1.117)

Many readers interpret this stanza as a misogynistic depiction of ravishment; Donna Julia’s consent, many argue, is forced. In today’s understanding of sexual mores, no means no. However, if one reads these lines within the context of libertine texts of the period, especially those with “of-the-moment” seductive situations like *Sense and Sensibility*, Donna Julia’s waffling may be understood as a tactic of the rules of seduction. As acknowledged above, women often were required by social mores to feign innocence of sexuality. However, in this scene Julia is the married, experienced woman and Juan is the virgin. Julia’s position of “instructor” is emphasized throughout this episode, and the irony here is directed less against Julia than against the perceived necessity of maintaining the social niceties of normative gender roles even during passion. Julia’s “sighs” suggest her passion; her tears her awareness of her feminine social role. The narrator’s claim that he wishes Donna Julia did not have “occasion” to cry does not necessarily indicate that he wishes she had not been tempted to commit adultery, but may imply that he wishes she was not expected to perform a show of weakness to excuse yielding to Juan and her passion. Following Baudrillard, one can read this episode as another illustration of multigender that questions the roles of passive and active in seduction. Juan’s libertinage is performed in the context of a well-established rite of seduction; if he is a libertine, then so are many of his “victims.”

The true victim of active seduction in the poem is not Haidee or Donna Julia, but the pregnant peasant girl seduced by Lord Henry. Significantly, the only seduction characterized as abusive in the poem is Lord Henry's, not Juan's. Byron's narrator links Lord Henry's identity as the father of the girl's child to his rather qualified liberalism. The narrator implies that Lord Henry took advantage of the girl at a "charitable" event given by Lord Henry for his local vassalage, and thus characterizes Henry's "patronage" of the poor as a performance of his social and physical authority over them, and as a violation of the code of *noblesse oblige*. Lord Henry is further characterized as one who sits in judgment of those who he has led into "crime;" he demonstrates his liberalism by prosecuting poachers hunting his lands for food and the women he has seduced and impregnated. Against the example of Lord Henry, whose abusive aristocratic privilege links him to Sade's libertines, Juan's libertinage appears a positive attribute. Juan's seductions do not result in persecution. Lord Henry is judged as missing a critical attribute valued by women -- passion. Lord Henry has traded passion for power; "Your men of business are not apt to express / Much passion" (Byron, *Don Juan* 14.76). "And hence high life is oft a dreary void, / A rack of pleasures" (Byron, *Don Juan* 14.79). That Lord Henry takes his pleasures with those over whom he has complete authority to punish or reward rather than with women his equals or superiors, like Juan, characterizes such libertinism as an abuse of aristocratic license which is both anti-seductive and politically and ethically corrupt. As in the analysis of Haidee and of Medora in a previous chapter of this study, those who claim the tyrannical power of human ownership

are typically ravaged in Byron's canon. Since *Don Juan* is unfinished, readers do not know if Lord Henry suffers a similar fate.

“Remember that none but those whose courage is unquestionable, can venture to be effeminate. It was only in the field that the Lacedemonians were accustomed to use perfumes and curl their hair” (Bulwer-Lytton). As this quotation from Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* suggests, effeminacy and masculinity were often conflated in depictions of the military man during Byron's time, as well as in the histories he read voraciously as a child. As the example of the Spartans above and in Byron's quest for a new hero in the opening canto of *Don Juan* in which Byron's narrator acknowledges the popularity of military heroes like Napoleon and Wellington with female readers, the construction of gender and sexualities in the early nineteenth century was not as stable as it came to be later in the century. Men like Wellington became “eye candy” for a new generation of female readers whose gaze was just as colonizing as that of male readers transfixed by femmes fatales in the works of Coleridge and Keats. As Bulwer-Lytton suggests, it takes balls to “venture” into the “gender wars” perfumed and primped; and, as Byron's heroes demonstrate, such a bisexual performance actually constitutes them, whether one is sexed male or female.

## CHAPTER V

## DANDIES AND DEVILS OF THE HOUSE: BEYOND BYRON

In this study of the Byronic Hero as a figure of Byron's politics of gender and sexual liberation I have attempted to avoid the tendency to conflate the hero with his poet, as reliance upon Byron's biography further problematizes already problematic texts in ways that do not necessarily lead to new insights into the character. However, here I intend to deviate in part from this plan in order to discuss some final thoughts on the Byronic Hero later in the nineteenth century. Unlike Peter Thorslev, whose book on the Byronic Hero looks to the past for his origins, I wish to explore what I see as a split which occurs immediately after Byron's death in the evolutionary path of his hero into two separate subspecies; one is developed through the figure of Don Juan, the other through Manfred. These figures, once linked through Byron's re-envisioning of his heroic type, were developed in separate directions in post-Byron texts that engaged his hero to form new versions of heroism with distinct functions. The first, the Don Juan style hero, adopts the monikers of Pelham and Dorian Gray -- the Byronic Dandy. The second, modeled in the image of Manfred and Cain, is their descendant, the Satanic Byronic Hero, or as Mario Praz dubs him, the Byronic Fatal Man. Each Byronic style becomes primarily masculine and boasts few daughters who share the social mobility of Lady Adeline or the titanic passion of Gulnare. The nineteenth century's fascination with the Byronic Hero is characterized after Byron primarily in the male of the species. The Byronic Hero's challenge to social norms, however, continues unabashed in his sons, who, despite near-Herculean attempts to domesticate and polarize them according to a



bourgeois ideology, retain their multiplicity, their irony, their bisexuality, and their seductive quality.

Byron's radical position on gender and sexuality is ultimately a paradox because he is one of those rare figures whose ideas arise from a historical moment of flux in which his politics is defined not as outside or inside any particular affiliation, but from a Baudrillardian sense of the constructedness of all systems and ideologies. Baudrillard writes:

Unlike the discourse of the real which gambles on the fact of there being something rather than nothing, and aspires to be founded on the guarantee of an objective and decipherable world, radical thought, for its part, wagers on the illusion of the world. It aspires to the status of illusion, restoring the non-veracity of facts, the non-signification of the world, proposing the opposite hypothesis that there is nothing rather than something, and going in pursuit of that nothing which runs beneath the apparent continuity of meaning. (Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime* 97-98)

Byron actively pursues this lack of signification throughout his canon, but articulates it most fully through the fragmentary structure and glittering surfaces of *Don Juan*. The poem's deployment of drag as a primary metaphor for all social constructions, whether gender, sex, orientation, or class, does not lend itself to easy recuperation by dominant systems. If one takes *Don Juan* on its own terms, if one enters into the spirit of its fragmented and prismatic effects, then one is more likely to engage with the poem's

mobility which seduces all normativity. In an interview, Butler discusses the possibility of the recuperation of performativity's challenge to and by normative systems:

But I also think that subversive practices have to overwhelm the capacity to read, challenge conventions of reading, and demand new possibilities of reading. . . . The act posed a set of questions without giving you the tools to read off the answers. What I worry about are those acts that are more immediately legible. Those are the ones that I think are most readily recuperable. But the ones that challenge our practices of reading, that make us uncertain about how to read, or make us think that we have to renegotiate the way in which we read public signs, these seem really important to me. (Osborne and Segal)

My analysis of gender and sexuality in Byron's canon follows Butler's argument here. Byron's body of work -- contradictory, oppositional, yet ironically conciliatory -- is not "immediately legible." One can read Byron as one reads other poets, but one must be aware that what one finds in Byron's works is often what one expects to find, and in that way, the joke is on the reader. Andrew Elfenbein and Susuan Wolfson claim that Byron's works are ultimately colonizing; Byron's position as an aristocrat, a libertine, and a man all suggest that his works are heavily invested in "the" patriarchal system of his day. However, the radical critique found in his texts of the ideological premises behind the constructs of that system subvert its claim to an absolute authority. In my own engagement with Byron's texts, I, like Elfenbein, Wolfson, and all readers of Byron, bring certain subjective positions to the task, positions which likely reveal far more about

my own agenda than Byron's; the most vital, and one which seems well-suited to the sets of questions Byron's canon posits, is Jean Baudrillard's theory of seduction. Regarded as a bit of an oddity himself, Baudrillard approaches theory with a sort of intellectual sprezzatura; "The upshot of Baudrillard's analyses is to license a kind of intellectual dandyism" (Callinicos 147). Many might say that I have taken that license and run with it; however, Baudrillard's dandiacal pose, like that of Byron's heroes, is seductive. Unlike Nancy K. Miller and Moyra Haslett, I see no need to resist the seduction. Instead, I have attempted to engage with it fully, as I see Baudrillard's seduction as a valuable tactic to counter claims about Byron's works that do not seem to enter into the texts as much as build a defense against them. Baudrillard's seduction moves within and among the texts, as they themselves do within and among the ideologies of the growing bourgeoisie of Byron's age. The two writers seem to me to approach these discourses similarly, as both posit a sophisticated irony as a strategy of taking on these systems' pretensions to "truth." This irony, called "seduction" by Baudrillard and "mobility" by Byron, in my reading, makes absorption of Byron's canon back into such an ideological system if not impossible, then at least improbable. And, as Oscar Wilde quips, "one should always be a little improbable" (1245).

Wilde's maxim might seem flippant here, but, like Baudrillard, Wilde is a literary descendant of Byron, and one whose irony exhibits similar effects. If Wilde's protagonists never say what they mean, then Byron's narrators say too much, and in this distinction lies their writers' similarity; their irony may take disparate forms, but their

works share a sort of benevolent contempt for the canting social structures of their times.

Bracketing the nineteenth century, Byron and Wilde, like

Women, children, animals -- we must not be afraid of assimilations -- do not just have a subject-consciousness, they have a kind of objective ironic presentiment that the category into which they have been placed does not exist. Which allows them at any given moment to make use of a double strategy (Baudrillard, "Forget Baudrillard" 98).

This "double strategy" is their formidable command of irony, one which reveals the "truth" of the "lie" and its reverse, one which manipulates appearances and calls a reader's attention to its constructedness. Both Byron and Wilde characterize binary social categories as lies, and their works deploy an irony that destabilizes subject/object gender identities. In this way, their irony is that of the Dandy, a figure whose emergence and rise in the nineteenth century is both a throwback to an aristocratic Regency code that never really existed and a thoroughly modern reaction to the bourgeoisie by the bourgeois. The Dandy's ascendancy is the evolution of the Byronic Hero through its more subversive line of descent.

In an article for *Vanity Fair* in 1920, John Peale Bishop writes that the Regency Buck and the Dandy are not just "clothes-wearing m[en]" as Carlyle claims in *Sartor Resartus*:

If there were no further distinction between the buck and the dandy, they might safely be left to the limbo of forgotten fashion prints. But the difference between them is more than a mere matter of get-up, more than

the oiling or curling of the hair. There is between them the difference of their respective ages: one “the great morning of the rights of man”, the other, the weary and cynical decade that followed the Congress of Vienna. The buck represented an exuberant, even eccentric, play of the individual at a time when the world seemed about to begin anew; the dandy an elegant and inessential gesture in a world where ennui had followed disillusion, where the last hope of human liberty had disappeared into the realm of lyrical drama, presided over by Percy Bysshe Shelley, where Childe Harold had become Don Juan. Dandyism was a meaningless protest against a life without meaning, a life ordered by a Hanoverian king with a fairly correct English accent and a German queen who played her tragic role with the finesse of a befurbelowed hausfrau. (Bishop, para. 2)

Bishop’s analysis offers a cogent reading of the Dandy’s significance as a response to his or her times. Whereas the Regency Buck is constructed as an exuberant figure of the possibility of human liberty, the Dandy occupies an in-between space, a place where ironic distance mingles with social involvement, a place in which “gesture” constructs identity. Bishop’s distinction between the Regency Buck, or, as I characterize this figure, the Byronic Libertine, and the late-Regency Dandy underscores the rapidity of change during Byron’s lifetime; the Dandy gains ascendancy because it is ultimately a middle-class figure with aristocratic pretensions. Paradoxically, the Byronic Hero embodies both these figures.

While Byron admired the dandies, he ultimately did not construct himself in his letters as a member of Beau Brummell's coterie. Byron claimed he got along well with the dandies and enjoyed their company, but Byron characterizes himself, especially in his public persona and in his control of his image in paintings, alternately as a Romantic Buck, a Dandy, and as a keen and ironic deconstructionist. George Frazier's description of Byron's attention to his public image suggests that the performance of "Byron" was a carefully cultivated style of drag:

Indeed, next to the Beau himself, Byron must have been Brummell's most ardent admirer — a circumstance, by the way, that must seem a little incredible, for, as famous as he was, as handsome, as talented, as nobly-born, and as much a lion among the ladies, Byron, who achieved his own wind-blown "Byronic" look by putting his hair up in curlers at bedtime, spent sleepless nights tossing over his inability to tie a neckcloth with any of Brummell's surpassing skill. (para. 7)

Byron admitted sleeping in curlers; his writing, as it often does, both constructs his image as a Dandy and then undermines it by proudly or sheepishly confessing to its constructedness, much as he does in the creation of his hero. For Byron, mobility seems linked to Castiglione's sprezzatura, a performance of effortlessness which appears to be "natural," but is in fact an affectation. Sprezzatura is a quality valued by Byron's libertine forebears, and is also cultivated during his own lifetime by Beau Brummell and his harem of Dandies, including the Count d'Orsay and the Prince Regent. However,

Byron deconstructs this construction, and in turn constructs his own form of Dandyism, “Byronism.” According to Chateaubriand:

In 1822, the fashionable were obliged to present themselves, at first sight, as ill and unhappy; they had to possess something negligent about the person, long nails, a partial beard, not shaved, but allowed to grow a little, neglectfully, during their preoccupation with despair; locks of straggling hair; a profound gaze, sublime, errant and fatal; lips curled in contempt of the human species; the heart wearied, Byronic, filled with the disgust and mystery of existence. (para. 1)

Like “women,” as Baudrillard claims, the Byronic Dandy occupies an ironic gap in the social structure; he resists categorization. His manipulation of appearances, in particular his own appearance, functions like Don Juan’s performance of military masculinity -- as a form of male drag. The Dandy regards himself or herself (yes, I argue that women can be dandies; George Sand, Natalie Barney, Greta Garbo, and Marchesa Luisa Casati are widely regarded as female dandies), his or her body and identity, as a simultaneous aesthetic performance of subject and object roles, of multigender, and of an ironic sexuality which must be regarded as “bi.” The Byronic Dandy’s ironic position functions as a form of Baudrillardian seduction; he or she plays with appearances because the surface is the depth.

While Byron’s relationship to Dandyism is ambivalent, Byron famously remarked he would rather be Brummell than Napoleon (Bishop, para. 5). The veneer of effortlessness cultivated by the Dandy, together with the hours of meticulous grooming

required to adopt this attitude of sprezzatura, appealed to Byron, but his primary difference from the dandies was that he was an actual aristocrat, not a social climber. A related issue complicating Byron's identification with the dandies is that Byron, while sharing with Brummell wit and attention to dress, was not dispassionate. His involvement with his culture was inspired by his aristocratic code, similar to that of Don Juan -- although by this time outdated, he possessed a sense of *noblesse oblige*, of social responsibility, that he did not find in the dandies or in the primarily bourgeois Romantic poets with whom his name would be linked in posterity.

However, it is not the Byronic Hero's aristocratic libertinage that characterizes him or her today. For modern readers, the Byronic Hero loses much of his transgressive quality, and the figure is almost exclusively gendered and oriented as a straight(ened) male. Instead of the ironic play of the Byronic Hero as he appears in Byron, the figure is now watered down, his subversive elements seemingly "domesticated" through his adaptation in the more culturally dominant line of descent -- the Victorian triple-decker. This image of the Byronic Hero tamed is primarily a result of his adoption as a love-interest for the dominant heroine in the Victorian novel. Deborah Lutz names this hero the "dangerous lover," likely following Mario Praz's characterization of the Byronic Hero in *The Romantic Agony* as "The Byronic Fatal Man," a sort of male femme fatale. Here, Lutz discusses Mr. Rochester from *Jane Eyre* as the dangerous lover:

Yet they all desire, as Jane describes, to plumb the hero's abyssal subjectivity, to discern, understand, see, his vast mindscape. Jane looks into Rochester's face and eyes, . . . "Instead of wishing to shun, I longed



only to dare—to divine . . . the abyss” (213). The heroine, and especially the reader, is never able to fully know this abyss. But oddly, and this is one of the many irresolvable paradoxes of the dangerous lover, . . . Rochester, while represented as infinite, often [doesn’t] have much depth to plumb. Writing on Byron, Andrew Elfenbein argues that the seeming depth of these infinite Romantic subjectivities actually uncovers the possibility of exhausting these depths easily. Passions so deep that they are obscured and thus not representable could easily be read as lacking altogether. The dangerous lover has a “subjectivity perpetually at risk” (28), and his fragility is expressed by the need for a repetition of this character, in romance after romance. Romances need to, again and again, shore up a paradigm whose existence, always only on the surface, requires a continual reiteration. Any epistemology of the surface would have to include the dangerous lover. (15)

Lutz’s analysis stresses the surface quality of this version of the Byronic Hero, and notes that Elfenbein attributes the character’s elaboration in Byron’s canon to emptiness rather than to complexity. I argue that Byron’s manipulation of appearances, his engagement with seduction, does not merely iterate this character as a “paradigm,” which connotes the presence of a systematic representation, but challenges such totalizing structures. The Byronic Hero’s play between and among subject and object roles reveals that his subjectivity is “at risk,” but unlike Elfenbein and Lutz, I read this as an indication of the character’s complexity, not “fragility.” Byron’s “repetition” of his heroic type instead

indicates his strength as a vehicle for exploring gender multiplicity through a variety of “iterations.”

Praz’s characterization of the Byronic Hero, while less ironic than Byron’s, still retains his ability to transgress social normativity, but this reading of the figure emphasizes the elements of Satanic Byronism found in *Manfred* and *Cain* and inspired by Ann Radcliffe’s Schedoni from *The Italian* and Ambrosio from Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*. While this aspect of the Byronic Hero is richly complicated and still offers depths not yet exhausted by critical analysis, it is this construction of the Byronic Hero that has been the most recuperated by bourgeois social mores. Lutz notes that this elaboration of the Byronic Hero, in her term, the “dangerous lover,” is common in the modern romance genre, which is the primary focus of her study. Below, she notes the “taming” influence of the bildungsroman female hero on this species of the Byronic Hero:

In the regency romance much of the ability to see through society’s transparent materialism resides in the heroine; she is generally outside fashionable society and does not desire to be in it. A domestic traditionalist, the regency heroine must convert the hero into seeing fashion and even society itself as worthless. His reformation comes in the elevation of the couple over social ambitions. (20)

By positioning the female protagonist as a domestic paragon, novels like Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* seemingly create a paradox in the seduction between the female hero and the male dangerous lover, or Byronic Hero type. While the Byronic Hero character’s sexual desirability entices the female hero into a seduction, his rakishness, (constituted in my analysis by his performances of multigender, the very quality which distinguishes him

from his fellows,) must be expunged before he can become part of “the couple.” Poor Mr. Rochester. As a Byronic Hero who is constructed with both Libertine and Dandy qualities, he is fated to recuperation by the novel. Brontë’s Rochester is likely the most famous example of the Victorian desire to absorb the Byronic Hero into a domestic and bourgeois tyranny. To become a “proper” mate for the heroine, the Byronic Hero must be purged of his subversive challenge to middle-class morality and must be, in the case of Rochester, forced into a proper didacticism through a violent physical rupture, usually figured through the trope of castration. The novel’s ending, while often unsatisfying and judged to be contrived by many modern readers, punishes Rochester for his gendered play within the novel.

*Jane Eyre*’s Rochester, through multiple performances of both masculine and feminine Orientalist drag, attempts to fashion a masculinity that will allow him to finally become both Rochester, the representative aristocratic man, and Edward, a variation of the Byronic Fatal Man whose masculine identity depends less on one culturally determined concept of masculinity than on multiple interpretations of what makes a man masculine. According to Judith Butler, gender performance:

redescribe[s] those possibilities that *already* exist, but which exist within cultural domains designated as culturally unintelligible and impossible. If identities were no longer fixed . . . their present proliferation might then become articulable within the discourses that establish intelligible cultural life, confounding the very binarism of sex, and exposing its fundamental unnaturalness. (149)

Thus, for Butler, the possibility for subverting culturally determined constructions of gender is already inherent within binary systems, as has been established throughout my project. From the time Rochester is introduced, the character undermines the rigid definition of masculinity Jane has constructed from Orientalist reading, largely along an unquestioned traditional masculine-is-Other-than-feminine polarity. While Jane may in fact be one of the novel genre's first feminists, her protofeminism participates in the bourgeois binary system she herself wishes to escape. She seems unable to acknowledge that the dissatisfaction she feels with(in) cultural proscriptions of gender may be shared by men, especially by her dark, aristocratic employer.

In *The Animal Within: Masculinity and the Gothic*, Cyndy Hendershot argues:

[F]or Jane, Rochester is a fantasy lover whose sexual predecessors are Montoni, Schedoni, Melmoth, and Byron's heroes. Jane falls in love with Rochester because he conforms to a preconceived representation of the male lover and because, for her, he embodies desire itself. (166)

While Hendershot's assertion that *for Jane* Rochester is a representation of masculinity indebted to the Byronic and Gothic traditions seems valid, it is because *Jane* has previously invested the Orientalist images of these traditions with sexual desire that she is able to construct Rochester's identity as an embodiment of masculine sexuality. In other words, Rochester's identity does not conform to a Byronic type unless it is constructed as such, in this case, by the reader. Through Rochester, the novel attempts to envision an alternative masculinity through performances of Orientalist gendered identities. In the

charade scene, Rochester and Blanche Ingram enact a seemingly superfluous Oriental tableau to signify the word “well.” Owing to the shape of the room, the presence of a garden fountain, and an urn or bucket, the word “well” could easily have been enacted without Eastern dress, and it is the presence of these Oriental markers that seems to confuse interpretation of a simple scene. In the tableau, Rochester is dressed as a sultan: “Seated on the carpet, by the side of this basin, was seen Mr. Rochester, costumed with shawls, with a turban on his head. His dark eyes and swarth skin and Paynim features suited the costume exactly: he looked the very model of an eastern emir, an agent or a victim of the bowstring” (Bronte 262). Rochester’s choice of Orientalist drag, to Jane as spectator, constructs Rochester’s performance as Byronic. In this scene, he performs a masculine gender role in the guise of an emir, but the perception of his Eastern version of masculinity also, according to nineteenth-century constructions of Orientalism, allows for a reading by his audience, and Jane herself, of a feminized masculine, or multigendered, role. Traditional constructions of Orientalist tropes encourage a reading of any “Eastern” figure as simultaneously masculine and feminine. Thus, Rochester’s masquerade as a Sultan tropes his masculinity as a multigendered identity. Rochester’s performance as a sultan is also the performance of Mr. Rochester as a British aristocrat. Like Byron’s Juan, Rochester’s gender performances suggest that each role is a masquerade.

Cyndy Hendershot argues that “Rochester’s Easternization of himself relies upon an adoption of *true manliness* that he, like Jane, associates with the East” (184, italics mine). While Hendershot’s argument emphasizes the performative nature of gender

through Orientalist drag in *Jane Eyre*, it also suggests that an ultimate form of masculinity exists, and that gender performance is merely a mimetic activity. The nature of this “true” masculinity is never revealed in Hendershot’s analysis, but the association of the East with an ultimate masculine “truth” suggests an essentialist reading of drag. Hendershot also claims that “Rochester seems to take refuge in Eastern metaphors in order to preserve an image of wholeness that threatens to break down continually in his character” (184). The novel’s construction of Rochester’s gender, however, suggests that any notion of wholeness is illusory, and that this sort of character “breakdown” is what Rochester continuously performs in the novel. Immediately after Rochester deconstructs his masquerade as the gypsy woman right before Jane’s eyes, revealing the performance as such, Jane claims to have penetrated the disguise. When Jane says, “You did not act the character of a gipsy with me,” Rochester replies, “What character did I act? My own?” (Bronte 283). Although Jane seems unsure of the significance of the gypsy woman act, Rochester’s pointed questions suggest that his “character” is indeed that of the gypsy woman. His performance of an Oriental feminine “Other” in the context of seduction suggests that Rochester’s masculinity is also “but a show.” Rochester’s question thus interrogates any notion of a stable gendered identity, and because his seduction of Jane is emphasized in this scene, the text deploys gypsy drag as a tactic of performing (bi)sexual “identity.”

Jane’s reply to Rochester’s question about the nature of his character raises even more issues for interpretation; “No; some unaccountable one,” Jane says (Bronte 283).

Jane claims that Rochester did not act as a gypsy with her, and that her suspicions were aroused by her/his method of *expression*. Jane writes, “Something of masquerade I suspected. I knew gipsies and fortune-tellers did not express themselves as this seeming old woman had expressed herself” (Bronte 283). Rochester’s gender performance is indeed an “expression” which enacts a culturally “unaccountable” character. However, Rochester’s “character” is only unaccountable in a binary conception of gender as an either/or proposition. If one reads Rochester’s identity as performative, then his character can be understood as an alternative to traditional constructions of gender and its attendant implications of bisexual seduction.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that Rochester’s masquerade as the gypsy woman is not a masquerade as such, in Castle’s definition of the term, but transvestism. Constructing Rochester’s use of feminine dress as a transvestite act trivializes and medicalizes the performative significance of cross-dressing. In *Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar argue that:

[T]hough his puzzling transvestism, his attempt to impersonate a *female* gypsy, may be seen as a semi-conscious effort to reduce this sexual advantage his masculinity gives him (by putting on a woman’s clothes he puts on a woman’s weakness), both he and Jane obviously recognize the hollowness of such a ruse. (355)

Read as a transvestite act, Rochester’s gypsy woman performance would indeed be puzzling. By dressing as a gypsy woman, Rochester is not consciously “acting” gender

in the sense that his drag obscures some biological male advantage. Rochester does not seem to regard his masquerade as an expression of weakness, but as one of possibility. By performing masculine/feminine, East/West, insider/outsider, passive/active, subject/object identities, Bronte's text constructs Rochester as a character whose multiplicity seduces and dissolves social normativity. Gilbert and Gubar claim that Rochester and Jane both acknowledge the performance as "hollow," but it is difficult to see when this realization occurs in the novel. The text's suggestion that Rochester's character is both that of a marginalized woman and "his own" belies this interpretation. However, Gilbert and Gubar do acknowledge Rochester's performativity:

Rochester. . . understands that just as he can see beyond her everyday disguise as plain Jane the governess, she can see beyond his temporary disguise as a gypsy fortune-teller—or his daily disguise as Rochester the master of Thornfield. (Gilbert and Gubar 353)

While Gilbert and Gubar note the performativity of Rochester's gender roles, they suggest that the gypsy woman role is somehow less "authentic" than the Mr. Rochester drag. They seem to regard the female performance as a manipulative old-school libertine "trick," and claim that Rochester abandons the charade because of his respect for Jane as an individual (Gilbert and Gubar 353). The issue for Gilbert and Gubar, then, is one of sexual motive within the seduction. In some respects, they regard Rochester's performance as a tool of sexual conquest without irony, which he abandons out of respect for a sort of spiritual equality. This claim undermines Butler's theoretical construct of



identity as a performance, as it assumes that Rochester and Jane have conscious control over their multigendered performances. That Rochester deconstructs his gypsy performance in Jane's presence suggests that Rochester's performance deconstructs itself, reveals that one construction of his identity is as performed as another.

Why, then, is it necessary for Rochester's gender performance to be coded in Orientalist tropes? Could not Rochester have as effectively enacted his gender multiplicity as a Devonshire dairy maid or Mary, Queen of Scots? The answer, oversimplified, is no. The nineteenth-century discourse of Orientalism provides both Rochester and Jane a culturally extant set of metaphors for gender subversion, just as it informs Byron's works. Orientalism already contains within its discourses the possibility of "feminine" masculinity and "masculine" femininity as well as an infinitude of reflections of this structure, which should not be read as a simple inversion or reversal. Critics like Edward Said argue that these gender constructions were formulated by British Imperialist culture to emphasize the Otherness of the East, and thereby establish the East as the site of confusion and "unnaturalness" to justify colonial expansion and dominance. However, the British construct of Orientalism contains within it its own deconstruction, as do the constructs of gender, sex, and orientation.

In this reading of *Jane Eyre*, Rochester's primary significance in the novel may be as a representation of the danger to the individual inherent in culturally stifling binary constructions of identity. When Rochester appeals to Jane, whom the text constructs as his reflection much like Conrad is Gulnare's, to recognize his gender multiplicity and his

identity as not-Other to her in their seduction, she cannot acknowledge his status as not-Other because she believes her identity as an individual Christian woman is at risk. Unlike Rochester, she cannot allow for the possibility of multiplicity, and is invested in maintaining a Victorian master/slave dialectic in which she must dominate.

While Jane may not actively wish to “dominate” Rochester in the text, she constructs gender identity through traditional binaries and fears being subsumed in marriage, which, for her, must always be unequal. When Rochester proposes, he pleads with her to acknowledge the multiplicity of his identity by calling him by his first name, Edward, which is freed from markers of class status. “Jane, accept me quickly. Say, Edward – give me my name – Edward, I will marry you.” Jane replies, after some hesitation, “Then, sir, I will marry you” (Bronte 340). Jane’s refusal to “name” Rochester, that is, to accept his identity as multiplicitous, reestablishes a binary gender construction that attempts to recuperate Rochester. Jane’s “sir” serves to signify Rochester as Mr. Rochester, the master of Thornfield. Only after Rochester has seemingly been singularly gendered, sexed, and classed can Jane marry him. Rochester’s physical dependency on her after his literal trial by fire appears to satisfy Jane that Rochester’s multiplicity has been banished, that the Oriental “taint” has been purged, and that he will be finally oriented Straight Male by his role as husband and father.

However, the novel itself suggests that any stable construction of binary identity is illusory, and possibly even undesirable. Rochester and Jane may have recuperated a traditional gender binary, but despite Rochester’s role as patriarch, his metaphorically

“castrated” body suggests that he has been “feminized” in relation to Jane’s “masculinity.” Thus, if performativity is read as Baudrillardian seduction, no recuperation of a rigid binary structure is possible because a binary is impossible. Rochester is not merely a “dangerous lover,” a Byronic Hero domesticated, but a Byronic Hero doomed to a marriage with a woman who should be his Byronic reflection, but whose adherence to social normativity implicates her in domestic tyranny. Rochester’s Gulnare becomes his Medora. So much for “happily ever after.”

It is thus that the Byronic Hero is diluted into a more socially acceptable taste. However, the character still retains his mobility, his performative character which seduces even his staunchest enemy, the Victorian social code. The Byronic Hero cannot ultimately be recuperated by relegation to the domestic, as his development in the late nineteenth-century texts of Aestheticism demonstrate. The subversive strain of Byronism makes itself at home, so to speak, in the domestic sphere, which the hero alters to suit himself. Surrounded by snuffboxes, orchids, and overstuffed divans, the Byronic Hero, now the Byronic Dandy, holds court. Bishop writes:

To speak now of a Beau or a Blood, an Incroyable or a Dandy, is to evoke a smile. The man who first used starch for a neckcloth is dismissed with a sneer, while the man who invented the patent machine for taking out potato eyes is hailed as a benefactor of his country. Let who will erect statues to the useful citizens who create a demand for useless appliances, who discover a later and dryer form of breakfast food, who add 57 new

varieties of pickles to the already superfluous 57. I shall not subscribe. I shall save my pennies to buy a hand-carved snuff-box and, having bought it, remember between sneezes the men who regarded living as an art; possibly, since life seemed to them useless, as a fine art. (para.14)

The Byronic Hero not only lives on in the margins, in the liminal world of seducers, pirates, and vampires; his ghost haunts even the sterile laboratories of “useful” modern science. A 2006 study, “The Heterosexual Appeal of Socially Marginal Men,” finds that “projections of Byronic masculinity provide initial advantages in the securing of heterosexual liaisons” (Bogg and Ray). The article appears in the sociological journal entitled *Deviant Behavior*, which surely underscores the power of the Byronic Hero to challenge gender constructions and seduce his audience even today: “Subject comments on Byronic models uniquely included allusions to sexual and mysterious/rebellious attributes” (Bogg and Ray). Long may he reign.

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