

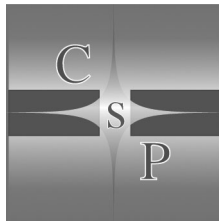
# Byron in London



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Edited by

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## PREFACE

Many of the papers in this book were given at a conference on *Byron and London* organised by the Newstead Byron Society and the Midland Romantic Seminar at Nottingham Trent University on April 29th 2006.

I should like to thank Maureen Crisp, Keri Davies, John Goodridge, Ken Purslow, and everyone else who assisted in making the day a success.

P.C.

## ABBREVIATIONS

To economize on space in the notes, the following abbreviations are used for the books referred to. See the Bibliography for further information.

- BB: *Byron's Bulldog, The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron*, ed. Peter W. Graham, Ohio 1984.
- BLJ: *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols, John Murray, 1973-94.
- Coleridge: *The Works of Lord Byron: A New, Revised and Enlarged Edition with illustrations. Poetry*, ed. E.H. Coleridge, seven vols, John Murray, 1898-1904.
- CHP: Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.
- CMP: *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991.
- CPW: *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980-93.
- DJ: Byron, *Don Juan*.
- HVSV: *His Very Self and Voice: Collected Conversations of Lord Byron* edited with an introduction and notes by Ernest J. Lovell (New York: MacMillan, 1954).
- JMA / NLS: John Murray Archive / National Library of Scotland.
- LJM: *The Letters of John Murray to Lord Byron*, ed. Andrew Nicholson, Liverpool University Press, 2007.
- Marchand: Marchand, Leslie A., *Byron: A Biography*, 3 vols Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1957.
- RR: *The Romantics Reviewed*, ed. Donald H. Reiman, Garland, 1972.
- Vie: Teresa Guiccioli, *Lord Byron's Life in Italy*, trans. Rees, ed. Cochran, AUP (Delaware), 2005.



Byron's habitation at 8 St James's Street (see pp.89-99). (Photograph by Peter Cochran)

# BYRON'S LONDON REVISITED

JOHN CLUBBE

The cultural production of the Romantic period in England cannot be adequately understood in the absence of detailed attention to the metropolis from which it gained motion, structure, and orientation.

—James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin<sup>1</sup>

I am a Citizen of the World – content where I am now – but able to find a country elsewhere.

—Byron<sup>2</sup>

The essay before you has had a long gestation. In the early 80s when I was compiling a lengthy bibliographical review of scholarship on Byron for a volume on the major Romantic poets issued by the Modern Language Association I could find no study that evaluated Byron's response to London.<sup>3</sup> Why this lacuna? During the autumn of 1988 I was prompted on two accounts to revisit this question. At the time I was teaching a graduate seminar at the University of Kentucky on "Literature and the Urban Experience." Focusing on literary responses to London 1700-1850, I chose writers in whose works the city had come to vibrant life. I began with Dryden and Pope and ended with *Bleak House*, taking in along the way Swift, Johnson, Boswell, Blake, and Wordsworth. Almost as an afterthought I included Byron. Although I knew well that Byron had lived most of his life in England and Italy in cities and vaguely regarded him as the most urbane of the major Romantic poets, except for admiring his several descriptions of Venice and the stanzas on London in *Don Juan* I had never thought deeply

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**1:** *Romantic Metropolis. The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840*, ed. Chandler and Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2005), p.33. I happily thank Joan Blythe and Bernard Beatty for their thoughtful comments on this essay.

**2:** BLJ IX 78. Dec. 12, 1821. Byron writes thus from Pisa, reiterating a claim made in 1807. In this instance he echoes Coriolanus who, scorning Rome, looked to "a world elsewhere." "Elsewhere," this essay argues, was invariably a city.

**3:** *The English Romantic Poets. A Review of Research and Criticism*, ed. Frank Jordan (New York: Modern Language Association, 1985), pp.465-592.

about his responses to the city *per se*.

Just what was his attitude toward urban life in general and London in particular? The question at the time was of particular interest to me since I was then in the process of completing a wide-ranging study of Cincinnati's architecture and history.<sup>4</sup> Writing such a book had required knowledge of disciplines outside my usual areas of expertise and forced me to rethink my responses to urban life as depicted in literature. I thus encouraged the class to consider Byron's comments about London from multiple perspectives and in unfamiliar ways. Our deliberations led eventually to my writing a few years later a brief essay, "Byron's London," for another MLA-sponsored publication, this time a teaching guide to Byron. Not intended to be comprehensive, the essay but sketched a subject whose complexity I was just beginning to fathom.<sup>5</sup> My puzzlement about the lack of scholarly treatment of the urban Byron was all the greater then than in 1985 since I now had a growing conviction that the subject was important not only for students of Byron and British Romanticism but also for historians of the early-nineteenth century city.

Therefore when offered the opportunity to engage again with Byron and London I leapt at the chance. Reconsidering what I had written, I was struck by how much I had left unsaid and how what was once, except for passing comments in biographies, a virtually untouched subject, is now one addressed by a variety of scholarly perspectives, several of which are represented in the present volume by papers given at a 2006 conference on "Byron's London."

While traces of my earlier investigations along with their pedagogic origins no doubt remain in the present version, I have reshaped and greatly expanded what I originally wrote in order to achieve a broader and, I hope, a more nuanced overview of a rich and inexhaustible subject. Byron's lifelong and complex involvement with the city he chose to live in during his early maturity is a story that will continue to unfold.

In approaching Byron's London twenty years ago, I had pondered the urban responses of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, Hunt and Hazlitt, as well as other contemporaries like Benjamin Robert Haydon, all of whom had much to say about the metropolis. Of the essayists, Lamb expressed the purest love for London (and felt its absence most keenly when away), Hazlitt feasted in words upon the city's energy, Hunt relished a long involvement with Victorian as well as Romantic London, and, London, as every reader of the *Confessions* knows, haunted the young De Quincey. In

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4: *Cincinnati Observed: Architecture and History* (Columbus: Ohio State U P, 1992).

5: Published in *Approaches to Teaching Byron's Poetry*, ed. Frederick W. Shilstone (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1991), pp.152-7.

preparing for the seminar in 1988, I had dug out a number of studies that took up eighteenth-century and Victorian attitudes toward the city but, a few stray essays on Blake and Wordsworth aside, I found almost none that investigated the responses of the other Romantics.<sup>6</sup> The traditional scholarly view has the poets of the period antagonistic to London, antagonistic also (or at best indifferent) to urban values.

And Byron? Does he, so often an exception to generalizations about Romanticism, constitute an exception here as well? Was his attitude toward London, as one commentator (Lindsay Stainton) claims, like that of the other Romantic poets, "at best equivocal, at worse hostile."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps not. After all, Byron at Harrow and Cambridge relished his excursions into London and as an adult chose to live in the city. Might his writings reveal, if not a wholehearted commitment to urban civilization, at least a qualified acceptance of that version of it he found in London? Byron was born in the late Georgian city; as an adult he experienced a London on the brink of its extraordinary nineteenth-century growth. He wrote about London while he lived in it. He wrote even more about it after he had left the city in 1816 for what turned out to be lifelong exile. Byron once described Napoleon's being as "antithetically mixt"<sup>8</sup>. The description is no less apt for his own being, for it encapsulates his response to a London both passionately loved and (at times) thoroughly disliked. As with his response to Napoleon, he never fully made up his mind. The city could frustrate and exhaust him, yet it nourished his creativity and provided him with opportunities he found nowhere else.

Though London-born, Byron spent most of his childhood in Aberdeen. When he inherited Newstead Abbey at age ten, he moved with his mother southward. Only after he entered Harrow did London begin to exert a hold on him. "You tell me you are tired of London," he writes, age sixteen, somewhat

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**6:** The bibliography on London in literature is vast. Many studies offer useful perspectives on Byron's city. For an earlier London than Byron's, see Michael Gassenmeier's *Londondichtung als Politik. Texte und Contexte von der Restauration bis zum Ende der Walpole Ära* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1989). For the period after Byron, see William B. Thesing, *The London Muse. Victorian Poetic Responses to the City* (Athens, Ga.: U of Georgia P, 1982). Two recent studies of turn-of the century London in literature are Petra Pointner, *A Prelude to Modernism. Studies on the Urban and Erotic Poetry of Arthur Symons* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2004) and *Ford Madox Ford and the City*, ed. Sara Haslam (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005). A book that has just come to my attention is Jennifer Davis Michael, *Blake and the City* (Cranbury, N.J.: Bucknell U P, 2007).

**7:** Stainton, in *London – World City 1800-1840*, ed. Celina Fox (New Haven and London: Yale U P, 1992), p.477.

**8:** CHP III st.36. CPW II 89.

patronizingly to his half-sister Augusta. “I am rather surprised to hear that for I thought the Gaieties of the Metropolis were particularly pleasing to *young Ladies*. – For my part I detest it”. He protests, perhaps too much, finding “the smoke and the noise particularly unpleasant”.<sup>9</sup> Such distaste will become a recurrent theme. Yet London offered him plays to enjoy, young Roscius and George Frederick Cooke to admire, operas to attend, and nearness to varieties of sin. Not long after matriculating at Cambridge, he informed his sister he intended to take “up my Residence in the metropolis”.<sup>10</sup> And he did.<sup>11</sup> Once a resident, Byron became more aware of London’s uncontrolled growth and the urban poverty that afflicted many: “Our giant Capital, whose squares are spread, / Where Rustics earned, and now many beg their bread.”<sup>12</sup> Elimination of farms and displacement of villagers had been going on for decades and was not a new theme in literature. But for the young Byron, eager to embrace all experience as his province, cultural opportunities outweighed the appalling misery he saw around him. He revelled in the metropolis’s variety and richness.

Napoleon’s continental hegemony hampered English *milords* in their European explorations. It did not deter Byron in 1809 from launching himself on a circuitous version of the Grand Tour. Paradoxically, Byron’s travel experiences broadened his awareness of London as well as of the world elsewhere. His first stop was Lisbon. From afar, the city dazzled; close up, he discovered “dingy denizens . . . rear’d in dirt”.<sup>13</sup> Their poverty appalled him, the physical city even more. Early nineteenth-century London also stank, but Lisbon’s urban smells aroused his Muse. Travelling south-east across war-torn Spain, Byron arrived at “proud” Seville, where the levity of urban life mildly shocked him. The city, caught up in frivolity, was “unconscious of the coming doom,” i.e., the Napoleonic juggernaut Byron thought would soon engulf it.<sup>14</sup> Moving on, he attended a Sunday bullfight at Puerta Santa Maria,

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**9:** BLJ I 47. April 2, 1804. Byron echoes Johnson here, “No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford” (Boswell, *Life of Johnson* 20 Sept. 1777).

**10:** BLJ I 67, 85. April 25 and December 25, 1805.

**11:** By January 1809, his last year at Trinity, Byron asked Hanson to pay out 40 guineas for an opera subscription (BLJ I 185). One work he saw was *I Villegiatori Rezzani* sung by Catalani and Naldi, whose appearance and costumes he took it upon himself to satirize in *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers* (BLJ I 195; *English Bards*, ll.608-31. CPW I 248-9).

**12:** *Hints from Horace*, ll.301-2. CPW I 300. For London’s rapid growth at this time see the early chapters of Donald J. Olsen’s seminal *The Growth of Victorian London* (London: Batsford, 1976).

**13:** CHP I sts.16-17. CPW II 16-17.

**14:** CHP I st.46.

across the bay from Cádiz. The experience prompted him to recall the very different Sundays of his youth:

London! right well thou know'st the day of prayer:  
 Then thy spruce citizen, wash'd artizan,  
 And smug apprentice gulp their weekly air;  
 The coach of Hackney, whiskey, one-horse chair,  
 And humblest gig through sundry suburbs whirl,  
 To Hampstead, Brentford, Harrow make repair;  
 Till the tir'd jade the wheel forgets to hurl,  
 Provoking envious gibe from each pedestrian Churl.<sup>15</sup>

But in Spain the intense Mediterranean summer sun shining on the white houses of "Fair Cadiz" blinded him to the city's dirt.<sup>16</sup> "The most delightful town I ever beheld," he observed, "very different from our English cities in every respect except cleanliness (and it is as clean as London) but still beautiful and full of the finest women in Spain".<sup>17</sup> As in contemporaneous accounts by Chateaubriand of his travels, the presence, or availability, of alluring women would become a frequent *topos* in Byron's accounts of cities.

From Cadiz to Gibraltar to Cagliari in Sardinia to Girgenti in Sicily to Malta to Albania: there Byron visited Janina, Ali Pasha's capital (now in western Greece), then crossed to Athens. Two months in Constantinople followed, after which he returned to Athens. His extended stay there allowed him time to mull over the nature of cities. Contrasting classical grandeur with modern decay in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he wondered why great civilizations decline.<sup>18</sup> It was a paradox often pondered. "We can all feel, or imagine," he commented in a rhetorically florid note to the poem, "the regret with which the ruins of cities, once the capitals of empires are beheld; the reflections suggested by such objects are too trite to require recapitulation. But never did the littleness of man, and the vanity of his very best virtues, of patriotism to exalt, and of valour to defend his country, appear more conspicuous in the record of what Athens was, and the certainty of what she now is".<sup>19</sup> Foreign travel heightened Byron's understanding of, even sympathy for, London ways. Back in England he wondered whether to excise his satiric stanzas about the city's Sabbath regulations, but in the end kept them.<sup>20</sup>

**15:** CHP I st.69. CPW II 34.

**16:** CPW II st.35.

**17:** BLJ I 220. August 11, 1809.

**18:** CHP II st.2 ff.

**19:** CPW II 189.

**20:** BLJ II 75; CHP I, sts.69-70.

During 1812-16 Byron lived in London at several West End addresses, all within a few blocks of his new publisher, John Murray, now located at 50 Albemarle Street.<sup>21</sup> The success of *Childe Harold* opened doors. Melbourne House and Holland House, the mansions of the great Whig families, welcomed him. At intervals Byron left London for visits to country houses and spas, but he always came back. London was where he spent most of his time and where he felt most at home. At his fingertips lay the advantages of concentrated urban resources. Byron relished the diversity of London's people, the opportunities for social and intellectual discourse, the parties and the balls and the clubs, the nearness of Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

But it was not all fun. He sensed a serious side to urban life. Sometimes he wondered whether cities corrupt those who inhabit them – and if so, how? In *The Bride of Abydos*, of November 1813, Byron observes, “in time deceit may come / When cities cage us in a social home”.<sup>22</sup> Was London, then, a kind of zoo in which its “caged” inhabitants learned deceit? Byron leaves the question unanswered. London life certainly did get to him at times. “I hate civilization” he exclaims at one point.<sup>23</sup> The directness of the outburst stuns us. Soon afterwards he expresses joy at leaving the city.<sup>24</sup> Six weeks later he muses to Thomas Moore about literary coteries: “I have no passion for circles, and have long regretted that I ever gave way to what is called a town life; – which of all the lives I ever saw ... seems to me to leave the least for the past and future”.<sup>25</sup> What does Byron mean by this? *Carpe diem*? – forget the past and don't think about the future. That London's urban life is to be savored in the present because in memory and anticipation it is superficial and transient? Sometimes it appears so.

Byron repeatedly and carefully weighed the pros and cons of urban living. Not long after expressing to Moore his regrets about “town life,” he exchanged several letters with James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, in which he waxed eloquent over London's advantages. “The first time all the poets of the age meet – it must be London,” Byron told Hogg, probably the least urban in his interests and being of all Byron's literary contemporaries; “glorious

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**21:** Byron, in Roy Porter's fine phrase, was “Mayfair man incarnate” (*London. A Social History*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U P, 1995, p.109). See Frances Wilson's superb evocation of Mayfair in *The Courtesan's Revenge. Harriette Wilson, the Woman who Blackmailed the King* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), chap. 1.

**22:** *The Bride of Abydos* ll.436-7. CPW III 137.

**23:** BLJ IV 22. January 8, 1814.

**24:** BLJ IV 36. January 22.

**25:** BLJ IV 77. March 3, 1814.

London is the place after all".<sup>26</sup> What do we make of such abrupt reversals? Hatred for civilization, then joy upon leaving London – and now the city is “the place after all”! Such apparent inconsistency he justifies to Moore thus: “he [Hogg], and half of these Scotch and Lake troubadours are spoilt by living in little circles and petty societies. London and the world is the only place to take the conceit out of a man – in the milling phrase”.<sup>27</sup> London, in short, was where the writer received the necessary tempering to become a real poet.

Consistency for Byron is rarely a virtue, but does he not, amidst the contradictions apparent and real, favor the city overall? Was not London where the action was? – at least the literary and political action. Poetry by “Scotch and Lake Troubadours” could not but lack human breadth and variety. In London Byron avoided a duel and became reconciled with Moore; was asked to join exclusive clubs and to participate in the life of the *ton*; came to know the leading dandies, not least the great Brummell; took up, in three eloquent speeches, current political issues in the House of Lords where he charmed the Holland House Whigs; became involved with the Melbournes and entangled with Caroline Lamb; met in John Murray's upstairs office Walter Scott, thereby initiating a lasting, deeply meaningful friendship; escorted home, himself only slightly less inebriated, a tipsy Sheridan; savored the lively London street scene at all hours and in all seasons; served on the Drury Lane Committee that decided which new plays to perform; learned boxing from “Gentleman” Jackson and fencing from Henry Angelo; and, most pertinent of all perhaps, had the possibility of retiring to his rooms whenever he pleased. A London life also permitted the solitude he relished, and in that solitude he was stirred to creation. Overnight he had emerged the brightest star in Murray's firmament of authors. Against his publisher's “Senate” of advisors – Moore, Sheridan, William Gifford, Samuel Rogers – he tested his literary ideals, cherished the practical advice he received, and delighted to have the poems that poured forth from him expertly vetted. These men valued him as he them. For one so fully engaged in London's multifaceted energies, how could Byron not have felt liberated, intoxicated even, by the city?

That he did fueled his frequent celebration of London's benefits. In opposition to the Lake Poets and their preference for isolated rural literary groups, London fostered cosmopolitan perspectives. City life was diverse, varied, mind-expanding; a country existence, provincial, intellectually incestuous. Writers needed the city, needed to measure themselves in a larger

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26: BLJ IV 86. March 24, 1814.

27: BLJ IV 152. August 3, 1814. “Milling phrase”: slang for “fighting, pugilistic” (OED).

arena, one in which their literary energies could flourish, one where they could broaden their range of experience, grow and develop as interpreters of humankind. Byron responded most to individuals whom he considered men (and women) of the world. London, a world unto itself, overflowed with such people. Without knowledge of or entrance into this world, a writer could not communicate adequately on social subjects. London might have fewer historic associations than the Athens he had lived in (or the Venice and Rome he would experience later), but while in it he could live life to the fullest.

Byron formed his opinion of London, as of other cities, chiefly from personal observation and intensive experience. But he also knew the city from books. One he owned was James Malcolm's *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London during the Eighteenth Century ...* (1808).<sup>28</sup> Its pages would have reinforced Byron's exhilaration in the company of Lady Melbourne and Sheridan and Rogers, ageing survivors of an earlier London in whose personages, customs, and ways he never ceased to delight. Reading about cities in faraway lands also brought him pleasure. America's vast open spaces, whether crossed by Lewis and Clark's path-breaking expedition or colonized by Daniel Boone or settled by Utopian colonists or reported on by intrepid British travelers, intrigued him always, but his interest in the New World also extended to its cities, none of which he would ever see. When Byron thrilled to the thought of being read on the banks of the fabled Ohio, he probably had in mind readers in Louisville and Cincinnati. A book he particularly relished was "Diedrich Knickerbocker's," that is, Washington Irving's *History of New York* (1809). The future historian George Bancroft, visiting England in 1815, recalled that Byron "spoke particularly of W. Irving whose Knickerbocker he seemed very fond of".<sup>29</sup> New York was by then the largest metropolis in the New World, smaller than London but in population as cosmopolitan. Irving's satirical thrust and ironic portrayal of the New World's chief urban scene evidently enchanted Byron.

In 1816 Byron told Hogg, eager to experience the metropolis for himself, that London was "a dammed place – to be sure – but the only one in the world – (at least in the English world) for fun – though I have seen parts of the Globe that I like better – still upon the whole it is the completest either to help one in feeling oneself alive – or forgetting that one is so".<sup>30</sup> Byron here anticipates the positive attitude many male writers had toward Victorian London. He implies, as Henry James came to believe, that London was "a

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**28:** Sale Catalogue of Byron's Library, 1816, item no. 185, cited from CMP 238. The Catalogue entry has "John" for "James" and abbreviates the title.

**29:** M. A. De Wolfe Howe, *The Life and Letters of George Bancroft*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908) I p.148.

**30:** BLJ V 38. March 1.

*man's city (not a woman's)*".<sup>31</sup>

If the choice had been his, Byron would never have lived elsewhere. But the collapse of his marriage accompanied by rumors swirling about town regarding his relationship with his half-sister Augusta decided him in April 1816 to leave for the Continent. The exile proved permanent. Soon he would write in *Childe Harold's* third canto: "High mountains are a feeling, but the hum / Of human cities torture".<sup>32</sup> Self-evident truth or rhetorical flourish? The lines encapsulate what seems the usual Romantic attitude toward the rapidly growing, ever more complex city that was London. Other passages in Byron might also support such a view. But how well does this mood of disgust reflect Byron's deepest, most abiding response to the city he had so reluctantly jettisoned? However temporarily disillusioned with life in the metropolis, was he not still an urban lover, one who professed to scorn those who rhapsodized over natural beauties.

Many of the canto's ecstatic descriptions of nature's wonders seem written after all in reaction to the London left behind. Other poems of this period go further, projecting a terrifyingly bleak vision of the city. In *A Fragment* Byron evoked the *Angst* of urban solitude and isolation. "Or do they in their silent cities dwell", he asks, "each in his incommunicative cell"?<sup>33</sup> The question recalls the disillusioned perspective suggested in *The Bride of Abydos* and anticipates that in Herman Melville's haunting tale of urban anomie, *Bartleby the Scrivener*. In *Darkness* Byron envisioned the sun "extinguish'd" and "cities . . . consumed" by fires the terrified inhabitants set for warmth. Only two individuals remain, sworn enemies, of the "enormous city"'s once vast population.<sup>34</sup> Surely London, as Europe's largest metropolis, is meant. Capping the summer's distaste for urban life is a passage in *Manfred* in which the First Destiny, hovering over the inhabitants of the sleeping city, envisages a "black plague" from which, unsuccored by the living, "tens of thousands shall perish".<sup>35</sup> The lines may recall the London clothed by the dawn in Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," but Byron's still sleeping city, instead of awakening to dynamic

**31:** James, *Letters from the Palazzo Barbaro*, ed. Rosella Mamoli Zorzi (London: Pushkin P, 1998), p.82. Bernard Beatty has pointed out to me that Venice has a female muse figure (Laura), that for Athens we have outraged Minerva, and that even masculine Rome is represented as weeping Niobe. But for London – female for Pope and Dryden as "Augusta" – there is no corresponding female figure, only tarts and marriage hoppers.

**32:** CHP III st.72. CPW II 103.

**33:** CPW IV 30.

**34:** CPW IV 40, 41, 42.

**35:** *Manfred*, II iii 40. CPW IV 79.

urban life, experiences “this work of a night – / This wreck of a realm”.<sup>36</sup>

After the turbulent summer in Switzerland, Byron settled, early in November, in Venice. He gradually perceived London more favorably. From Venice he continued to tease Moore about his predilection for London life: “you had always a lingering after London, and I don’t wonder at it. I liked it as well as any body, myself, now and then”.<sup>37</sup> But countering this nostalgia was his passionate dislike of the political situation in England, particularly the government’s oppression of its populace and suppression of dissent. Not far behind was his distaste for its food and its beer, and, always, the weather. Still, by 1820 London was all Byron cared to remember of England. In a letter to Kinnaid he claims to have “lost all local feeling for England without having acquired any local attachment for any other spot, except in the occasional admiration of fine landscapes – & goodly cities. – It is now turned of four years since I left it”.<sup>38</sup> “It” is the “goodly” city, the London Byron no longer felt a need to distance himself from.

He even hatched a plan to bring Moore and himself together – in London. Writing to his old friend on Christmas Day 1820, he proposed with Moore’s help “to set up jointly a newspaper, a weekly of sorts.” But for it to succeed, he told his often impecunious friend, “you must live in London, I would make that not difficult to you”.<sup>39</sup> Nothing came of the idea, but it indicates Byron’s instinctively thinking of London as a base for intellectual discourse and enterprise, or at least as the place where such things happen.

With Moore he had long engaged in intermittent dialogue about urban life in general and London in particular. Moore, who lived quietly in his Devonshire cottage, made occasional forays into London where he and Byron spent memorable hours together. Byron liked to twit Moore about his fondness for metropolitan pleasures and the acclaim society accorded his singing. “You have been too much leavened with London to keep long out of it”, he commented in an 1814 letter.<sup>40</sup> After the poet’s death Moore undertook Byron’s biography, and in it he wrote candidly and perceptively about Byron’s relationship to the capital. What began as an isolated existence gradually expanded to a full immersion in city life:

His time in London passed equally unmarked either by mental cultivation or refined amusement. Having no resources in private society, from his total want of friends and connexions, he was left to live loosely about town

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**36:** *Manfred*, II iii 51-2. CPW IV 79.

**37:** BLJ V 201. March 31, 1817.

**38:** BLJ VII 86. April 30, 1820.

**39:** BLJ VII 254.

**40:** BLJ IV 329. November 4.

among the loungers in coffee-houses; and to those who remember what his two favourite haunts, Limmer's and Stevens's, were at that period, it is needless to say that, whatever else may have been the merits of these establishments, they were any thing but fit schools for the formation of poetic character.

But however incompatible such a life must have been with these habits of contemplation, by which, and which only, the faculties he had already displayed could be ripened, or those that were still latent could be unfolded, yet, in another point of view, the time, now apparently squandered by him, was, in after-days, turned most invaluable to account. By thus initiating him into a knowledge of the varieties of human character, by giving him an insight into the details of society, in their least artificial form, in short, by mixing him up, thus early, with the world, its businesses and pleasures, his London life contributed its share in forming that wonderful combination, which his mind afterwards exhibited, of the imaginative and the practical – the heroic and the humorous – of the keenest and most dissecting views of real life, with the grandest and most spiritualized conceptions of ideal grandeur.<sup>41</sup>

London, in short, enabled Byron to become the poet we know.

Even before embarking on his first European sojourn, Byron announced himself in a personal letter as “a Citizen of the World”.<sup>42</sup> Such a statement, if known publicly, would have startled many of his patriotic contemporaries, as no doubt did the quotation from *Le Cosmopolite* that, several years later, prefaced *Childe Harold's* first two cantos. Five years in Italy led Byron to reiterate his claim that he was “a Citizen of the World”.<sup>43</sup> His cosmopolitan outlook, his European perspective, was at this time unusual. The English “look on foreigners in general with contempt,” remarked the French traveler, César de Saussure, “and think nothing is as well done elsewhere as in their own country”.<sup>44</sup> But “a Citizen of the World” was another order of being: a citizen free from nationalist bias, a man of the Enlightenment, a modern man, a man observant, open to all the world had to offer. This is what Schiller meant when, five years before the French Revolution began, he too had proclaimed himself a “citizen of the world”.<sup>45</sup> Such an assertion, for Byron as

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41: Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of his Life*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1830) I pp.252-3.

42: BLJ I 112. March 1807.

43: BLJ IX 78. Dec. 12, 1821.

44: Cited from Rosemary Bechler, “Lord Byron's Grand Tour,” in *Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830*, ed. Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (New Haven and London: Yale U P, 1996), p.41.

45: Friedrich Heer, *Europe, Mother of Revolutions* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1972), p.38.

for Schiller, was a declaration of freedom. It spoke of a belief in the family of man, for independence of judgment irrespective of national borders and prejudices. A “Citizen of the World” was perforce an urban man.<sup>46</sup>

In Italy Byron measured London against the Italian cities he lived in, particularly its two eternal verities, Venice and Rome. Byron arrived in Venice in November 1816, and it became the Italian city he resided in longest. Canto IV of *Childe Harold* offers up a palimpsest of history. Byron recounts the city’s decline from “sea Cybele,” once (after the East) “the greenest island” of his imagination, to dissolute “Sea-Sodom”.<sup>47</sup> Evidence of the city’s decadence appealed to Byron, if not to everyone.<sup>48</sup> Venice’s allure for him became almost as multifaceted as buoyant London’s. In response to a query from Wedderburn Webster about living costs in Venice, Byron pointed out that despite a lack of gaiety, a certain monotony, and silent streets, he found much to like:

... to me who have always been always passionate for Venice – and delight in the dialect & naivete of the people – and the romance of it’s old history & institutions & appearance all it’s disadvantages are more than compensated by the sight of a single Gondola – The view of the Rialto – of the piazza – & the Chant of Tasso (thou less frequent than of old) are to me worth all the cities on earth – save Rome & Athens.<sup>49</sup>

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**46:** Notwithstanding his enlightenment universalism, Bernard Beatty has reminded me, Byron is also a modern man, one for whom the city is associated less with identification than with anonymity, one for whom urban life is a sign of emancipation from belonging anywhere. Byron, be it also admitted, can also display a fiercely nationalistic side.

**47:** CHP IV st.2; BLJ V 129, VI 262, and *Marino Faliero* V iii 99.

**48:** One who did not like Venice was Thomas Moore. Visiting Byron, he thought the famed Piazza San Marco made “a most barbaric appearance” (*The Journal of Thomas Moore*, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, 6 vols., Newark: U of Delaware P, 1983-91,1 p.225). Venice also disappointed Rousseau. The Napoleonic wars had caused disruption in the city and reduced it to acute poverty. When Byron lived in it, its reputation had reached its nadir. Its decline served him as a generic emblem for the passing of empires. On Byron’s fondness for decline, see the astute discussion in the Byron chapter of Tony Tanner’s *Venice Desired* (1992).

**49:** BLJ VI 66. September 8, 1818. Venice is the city most closely associated with Byron in the popular imagination. It has had a long literary tradition in several languages, and many books on the city take up Byron’s residency. When Napoleon captured Venice in 1797, he ended its long-held independence, and only in the mid-nineteenth-century did it come to full literary life. On Byron’s nearly three-year stay, see John Julius Norwich’s chapter in *Paradise of Cities. Venice in the 19th Century* (2003). John Pemble’s *Venice Rediscovered* (1995) sets Venice

In London Byron could be solitary whenever he wished, for days at a time, accountable to no one. No less than solitude, the city permitted anonymity, and anonymity also constituted part of Venice's allure. In Byron's day the city was far from being the tourist mecca it has since become. Few English disturbed him there. Nor were opportunities for amorous dalliance wanting.<sup>50</sup>

Rome, which Byron visited in the spring of 1817, reinforced lessons taught by Venice. Even more, it was the city of the soul to which urban orphans of the heart turn.<sup>51</sup> We are all its citizens. Both cities in their rise and fall exemplified historical process. Disillusioned by the failure of the French Revolution and, even more, of Napoleon to effect lasting change, Byron lamented the restoration of the *ancien régime*: "History, with all her volumes vast, / Hath but one page".<sup>52</sup> Not all Italian cities evoked the personal ties and historical associations Byron felt in Venice and Rome. Of Genoa, Venice's longtime rival, he said later, "I have no intention of residing in the City – nor indeed would do so if they would make me a present of it". He preferred "a quiet Country residence not very far from the sea" – which he found.<sup>53</sup>

Byron's late satires indicate that as he settled into Italian life he kept London in mind. *Beppo* criticized London for lacking European urbanity. "Bating Covent Garden," comments the narrator, "I can hit on / No place that's called 'Piazza' in Great Britain".<sup>54</sup> A piazza is an outdoor place, both open and protected, for people to meet, talk and idle, and perhaps do business. Venice and Rome had piazzas, as did all Italian cities, but London

within the last two hundred years of European intellectual history, particularly the period 1870-1918. Byron, as Pemble demonstrates, was a figure of interest to Ruskin, whose Venice like Turner's was "chiefly created for us by Byron," and James, who recalled his presence in *The Aspern Papers* (1888). Celeste Langan's essay "Venice" in *Romantic Metropolis* focuses on Byron's finances and has disappointingly little to say about the particularities of his Venetian life. Best of all is Tanner's *Venice Desired*, a study of Venice in the European literary imagination. Oddly, almost all the authors associated with Venice are not Venetian – Goldoni and Casanova being partial exceptions – and mostly not Italian.

**50:** Byron often associated cities with vice, particularly anonymous sex, not just "Sea-Sodom" Venice, but also, among others, Seville, Cádiz, and "decent London," the last recalled in *Don Juan* as a "mighty Babylon" whose streets are filled by "several score / Of those pedestrian Paphians who abound / ... when the daylight's o'er" (DJ XI sts.23 and 30. CPW V 472, 474).

**51:** CHP IV st.78. CPW II 150.

**52:** CHP IV st.108. CPW II 160.

**53:** BLJ IX 183. July 19, 1822. Bernard Beatty reminds me that although Genoa is the only city Byron does not at all mythologize, it is where he writes some of his greatest poetry – including the later cantos of *Don Juan*, set in part in London.

**54:** *Beppo* st.5. CPW IV 130.

has only imperfect Covent Garden. Against the “smoky cauldron” of London’s often impenetrable atmosphere Byron sets clear Italian skies and a beautiful Venetian sunset.<sup>55</sup> Laura’s ill-dressed Venetian friends look “vulgar, dowdyish, and suburban”.<sup>56</sup> The last adjective he intends to be no more a compliment than the two that precede it. *The Vision of Judgment* (1822) focuses on London’s distinguishing climatic feature: “The fogs of London; through which, dimly beacon’d, / The weathercocks are gilt, some thrice a year, / If that the summer is not too severe”.<sup>57</sup> Smog – fog, coal soot, and cold in combination – would plague London winters for another century-and-a-half.<sup>58</sup>

Byron’s deeply embedded consciousness of London surfaces repeatedly in *Don Juan* (1819-1824). Numerous passages consider the broad nature of urban civilization. These include the stanzas in Canto I in which the Byronic narrator assesses the nature and benefits of “progress”,<sup>59</sup> the Daniel Boone passage in canto VIII pitting city against country,<sup>60</sup> finally in the English cantos Juan’s and the narrator’s divergent responses to London and London life.

Byron’s attitude toward London in *Don Juan* is linked to his attitude toward progress. In canto I he speculates about the origin and role of disease in society. If technology now permits the making of (indifferent) bread from potatoes, if galvanism can cause a corpse to twitch, what, asks Byron, can we expect next? “What wondrous new machines have late been spinning! / I said the small-pox has gone out of late; / Perhaps it may be follow’d by the great”.<sup>61</sup> Such not wholly ironic speculation inevitably leads to Malthus. If America’s population has increased too rapidly, maybe, like Europe’s, it needs thinning – “with war, or plague, or famine, any way, / So that civilization they may learn, / And which in ravage the

**55:** *Beppo* sts.43, 45. CPW IV 142, 143.

**56:** *Beppo* st.66. CPW IV 150. “Suburban” had a long history before Byron, but when in a letter he asked Murray to withdraw from an essay an attack on “the Suburban School” (BLJ VIII 166. August 4 1821) – a dig at Keats, now dead, but associated with Hampstead, then a village outside London – we may assume Byron intended something close to “having the inferior manners, the narrowness of view, etc., attributed to residents in suburbs” (OED) or, to recall his characterization of Laura’s friends, “vulgar, dowdyish.” The city’s the thing, then.

**57:** *The Vision of Judgment* st.55. CPW VI 329.

**58:** Lady Blessington, with whom Byron often spoke of London, perhaps recalled his disdain for the city’s superlative fogs when writing her *Idler in Italy*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1834) I p.179.

**59:** DJ I sts.130-3.

**60:** DJ VIII sts.60-8.

**61:** DJ I st.130.

more loathsome evil is, / Their real lues, or our pseudo-syphilis?"<sup>62</sup> "Pseudo-syphilis" refers, as McGann notes, to the "civilized European diseases of war, plague, and famine". About genuine progress, then, Byron remained skeptical.

In the Boone passage he ponders the possibilities of life lived far distant from Europe's urban centers. He contrasts civilization with Eden, town with country. Cities rise and fall but nature, Byron implies, goes on forever. Boone's sylvan arcadia exists in a timeless continuum, against which Byron sets the fragility of "Rome – Babylon – Tyre – Carthage – Nineveh".<sup>63</sup> Though Byron had not seen the ruined cities of antiquity, he had read about them a-plenty and he had visited Rome. Other cities central to Western civilization – Athens, Constantinople, Venice – he knew well. Byron could identify with Boone's recurring need to escape from the nagging problems of society or, more simply, to get away from the pressure of other human beings. But, perhaps thinking primarily of himself, he doubted Europeans could still live Boone's life. "The inconvenience of civilization," he concludes, "[i]s, that you neither can be pleased nor please".<sup>64</sup> That is the modern dilemma: whatever life we choose, urban or other, cannot satisfy totally. Byron shied away from committing himself flatly to either. Keeping both alternatives open had more appeal to him than endorsing either. New World simplicity cut off from yet the inheritor of Old World civilization – Byron teases us with the paradox. Only to conclude: "So much for Nature".<sup>65</sup> So much indeed!

In Canto X Juan arrives in London.<sup>66</sup> In 1816 Byron had gone from London, via Canterbury, to Dover, then across the Channel, through Belgium and up the Rhine. Juan reverses a segment of his creator's itinerary. In the summer of 1816 Byron had expressed displeasure with the London he had abandoned and hostility toward his countrymen and their priggish values. Six years later the hostility remained but time had

**62:** DJ I st.131.

**63:** DJ VIII st.60.

**64:** DJ VIII st.64. The contrast between town and country life never ceased to intrigue Byron, and to the Blessingtons he expressed his negative thoughts about the latter (*Lady Blessington's Conversations of Lord Byron*, ed. Ernest J. Lovell, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1969), pp.38 and 38n-39n, 192. For an excellent overview of the subject, see Ernest J. Lovell's *Byron: The Record of A Quest* (1949; Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966), chapter 3, "Town versus Country."

**65:** DJ VIII st.68.

**66:** W. G. Sebald, another immigrant to England, has the protagonist of his masterly *Austerlitz* follow Juan's route into London (New York: Random House, 2001), p.102.

tempered, even dissipated, his unhappiness about London. His protagonist, a young Spaniard, a Catholic who neither reads nor writes English, enters England buoyant, optimistic, naïve. Juan sees England, not with his own eyes, but through stereotypes provided by earlier visitors such as Voltaire, who had hymned England as a land of just laws, personal liberty, and parliamentary democracy – in short, a modern utopia. At sunset Juan reaches Shooter’s Hill overlooking London from the southeast:

A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping,  
 Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye  
 Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping  
 In sight, then lost amidst the forestry  
 Of masts: a wilderness of steeples peeping  
 On tiptoe through their sea-coal canopy:  
 A huge dun cupola, like a foolscap crown  
 On a fool’s head – and there is London Town.<sup>67</sup>

As in *Manfred*, the narrator ironically recalls Wordsworth’s depiction in the Westminster Bridge sonnet of the sleeping city clad in the silent dawn. But the author of *Don Juan* is an older, wiser Byron. Multiple perspectives are possible. They can even change before our eyes. Like Byron upon first seeing Lisbon from the ocean or imagining Venice from an “airy distance,” Juan finds the distant view of London enchanting. He perceives less with his eyes than with his imagination. Perception is a word that nicely bridges, on the one hand, a sensory alertness, and, on the other, a fullness of understanding. Juan perceives but does not yet understand: what delights him is what he assumes is London’s magic, not the grimy city of reality. Even the clouds of coal dust he finds “extremely wholesome”.<sup>68</sup>

Juan does not arrive in London without being tested. On Shooter’s Hill, within sight of the metropolis, four footpads assault him, and Juan, in defending himself, runs one through.<sup>69</sup> Only a few hours in the land of law and order and his English education has begun. However problematic an event for him, Juan’s approach to London releases Byron’s linguistic energies. Stanza 19, dazzling in its verbal exuberance, shows the poet reveling in contemporary slang, flash language, and cant words – “Who in a row like Tom could lead the van, / Booze in the ken, or at the spelken hustle?”<sup>70</sup> Byron can now write as he wishes. He has come home. The

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**67:** DJ X st.82. CPW V 462.

**68:** DJ X st.83.

**69:** DJ XI sts.10-16.

**70:** DJ XI sts.19.

worldly-wise narrator envisions London affectionately but without illusion. Realism anchors his epic vision. It demands a language commensurate with the poet's experience of the city's chaotic vitality.

The eleven stanzas that follow memorably evoke sound as well as sight to render the city's dynamic pulse: the roar of many voices, the clatter of mails, even the gentle lapping of the Thames itself.<sup>71</sup> Having his hero enter London at night allows Byron to tout the illuminated city. Though when Juan arrives early in the 1790s London was not yet lit with the gas lamps it was to receive in 1812, London at night was still an impressive sight.<sup>72</sup> As in Dover, Juan lands at an unnamed but overpriced hotel for foreigners – possibly Grillion's in Albemarle Street.<sup>73</sup> But Byron does not identify it, and in subsequent depictions of the London scene he coyly avoids specificity. Lord Henry's mansion, for example, stands in "Blank-Blank Square".<sup>74</sup> Enough that Byron has established the general setting and grounded Juan in a realistically introduced London. Readers may imagine the locales for themselves. Juan has now moved out of the world of romance into a world that his creator knew more intimately than any other. His situation somewhat parallels Byron's in 1812. Byron renders the tone and atmosphere of the Regency beau monde he remembered. Juan is changed but not corrupted by his experiences, as Byron was not corrupted by his; and in the poem we have London and English society teach Juan much about how life is lived.

As Anne Barton has pointed out, once in London the narrator adopts a new perspective. For most of *Don Juan* he is "genuinely interested in how his hero reacted to his surroundings and experiences provided him by the poem". By contrast, in London, Barton observes, "Juan's responses are so heavily overlaid by the narrator's own that it becomes virtually impossible to see this city (except in flashes) as an inquisitive foreigner actually might".<sup>75</sup> The narrator's intense involvement in the London cantos indicates how delighted Byron was to be back, if only in imagination, in the city of his growing-up. Almost inevitably, what the Byronic narrator remembers most in after years about London were the "fogs" (that is,

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71: DJ XI sts.21-31.

72: DJ XI st.22. Byron had alluded earlier to gas lighting, an event he remembered fondly (VII st.44). J. B. Priestley in *The Prince of Pleasure and his Regency* offers a lively account of the arrival of gas lamps in London in 1812 several decades after Juan's arrival (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1969), pp.92-7).

73: *Byron's Don Juan. A Variorum Edition*, ed. Truman Guy Steffan and Willis W. Pratt, 4 vols. (Austin and London: U of Texas P, 1957) IV p.222.

74: DJ XIII st.25.

75: Barton, *Byron Don Juan* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1992), pp.65, 66.

smog), the quiet Sundays, the ghastly climate (“The London winter ends in July”),<sup>76</sup> and particularly the gas lamps whose arrival in the city coincided with Byron’s, and which, by turning midnight into “London’s noon,” forever altered perceptions of the metropolis.<sup>77</sup> Recalling London in *Don Juan* as “that pleasant place”,<sup>78</sup> Byron exempted it from the general disesteem for things English that characterized his years abroad.

Despite yearnings to identify with nature that still occasionally overtook him, Byron remained essentially partisan to urban civilization and urban pleasures. In the country he suffered, as will Juan, from ennui. Urban existence, and the good talk and fun that came with it, was tonic for him and for his young protagonist. Babylon and Nineveh may have fallen, but Venice – and London – remain. In fact, London gets resurrected, not unfavorably, as a “mighty Babylon”.<sup>79</sup> The London of *Don Juan* is not simply the London of his youth recollected in tranquility but a London reshaped in his imagination by the Italian cities – Venice, Rome, Ravenna, Genoa – he had known. Only urban men and women, Byron concludes in the poem, have the social maturity to appreciate a life in nature: valuing nature is, after all, one of the lessons that a life in the city teaches. People who like to think and are socially inclined tend to gravitate to the city, however, preferably the city into which Juan ventures in Canto X. Byron, in sum, was an urban poet.<sup>80</sup>

London danced in Byron’s imagination much as Dublin did in Joyce’s or Paris in Proust’s. Though he never recreated the city in the detail they did, he recalled it often enough in letters and poems. No matter what city or urban phenomena Byron is talking about, his deep and unforgotten immersion in London’s urban milieu informs his discussion. This conscious awareness of urban life – in London primarily, but also in other

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**76:** DJ XIII st.43.

**77:** DJ XIII st.111.

**78:** DJ XII st.23.

**79:** DJ XI st.23.

**80:** In his critique of this essay Bernard Beatty objected to so sweeping a pronouncement, pointing out (rightly) that Byron set more cantos in Norman Abbey than in London and does not indulge in description of London even when Juan resides in the city. Beatty points out that Byron’s version of Norman Abbey is partisan because he never himself really played the part of a country landowner. He “could play a citizen better than a country gentleman, he didn’t hunt, he wasn’t a local squire or (as was Lord Henry) a magistrate” – yet once Juan arrives at Norman Abbey Byron can’t move the poem from it. True enough, but presumably Byron did not intend to end *Don Juan* at Norman Abbey. I stand by my main argument that cities stimulated, even intoxicated, Byron and that when not in one he usually felt lost.

cities – Venice, Rome, and Athens among others – is, like Byron's often subterranean fixation on Napoleon, virtually omnipresent. Seldom articulated at length or in detail, that life yet permeates his writing and his own "antithetically mixt" being. Byron's Venetian experience, Tony Tanner has argued persuasively, shaped the creation of *Beppo*, *Marino Faliero*, and *The Two Foscari*. London's influence was no less fundamental for *Don Juan*. The city's impact on Byron's imagination may be less visible and harder to trace than Venice's, but it is nonetheless there. Much in the poem stems, indirectly at least, from Byron's London time, both in its lived reality and as savored in recollection: not just in passages set in the city but in the poem's flow, its variety, its surprises. In its improvisational, seemingly unprogrammed progression we sense the essence, even the unpredictability, of urban life. Byron's pleasure in London and subsequently in other cities helped determine the attitude with which he faced the world, the friendships (even the enemies) he made, the notions he acquired about how to live life to the fullest, and, in ways we are only beginning to understand, the nature of his being and the directions his poetry took.

# LONDON'S GENDERED SPACES

PADMINI RAY MURRAY

Byron's representations of women throughout his poetic corpus are never uncomplicated – women are often idealised figures whose ideal quality is undercut by some betrayal or monstrosity that he continually designates as characteristics inherent to womanhood. His ambiguity also surfaces in his allusions to the British nation, as a consequence of his perception of the body politic as feminized. Though this idea is part of a poetic tradition that Byron is heir to and recognises, the ambiguity of these representations is precipitated by the anxiety attendant on his perception of himself as being “edged out”<sup>1</sup> of spaces, both metaphorical and literal, that were increasingly coming under what he was later to call “Petticoat influence”.<sup>2</sup> From the metaphorical space of the literary marketplace to the physical space of the Bluestocking salon, Byron felt under threat, from the dictates of female readers as well as his female competitors, and this influenced his poetics in manifold ways.

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The only specimen of Annabella Milbanke's handwriting that Byron had after his departure from England was the word “Household” written twice in an old account book, after having returned her letters and burnt the last

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**1:** I borrow the sense of Gaye Tuchman's (1989) term, though for a different context. Tuchman, Gaye with Nina Fortin, *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers, and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1989). Byron's statement: “no one should be a rhymer who could be anything better. And this is what annoys one, to see Scott and Moore, and Campbell and Rogers, who might have all been agents and leaders, now mere spectators” (BLJ III 217; diary entry, November 1813) seemingly contradicts itself, for the contemporaries he names are all “rhymers” – however, behind the derogatory term “rhymer” lies the spectre of literary professionalization, at which women were becoming particularly adept, and according to Byron threatened to relegate and reduce these masculine figures by their mere presence in the literary marketplace.

**2:** DJ XIV, 26, 1.

note he had received from her.<sup>3</sup> The persistent resonance of this word in Byron's life and works in his period of exile becomes evident in his original epigraph to *Don Juan: Domestica facta*, or "domestic facts." Hobhouse advised: "Do not have this motto" on the proofs, for he assumed that most of Byron's contemporary readers would be quick to identify the events of the poem with "Lord Byron's affairs".<sup>4</sup> However, the context of the quotation, "nor have those who have dared to abandon the path of the Greeks and celebrate our homeland's deeds deserve least honour",<sup>5</sup> widens the scope of the quotation, and as Peter Graham observes "[r]educing *domestica facta* to either private affairs or public events would ignore a dimension of *Don Juan*".<sup>6</sup> The former epigraph reiterates the "domestic" as both homeland and household, themes inextricably entwined in an epic poem. Herbert Tucker, in his article on the domestication of English poetry in the 1820s, observes that the "idealized, often dematerialized, imagination of home" begins to co-exist with the "concrete idea of a house as a home"<sup>7</sup> as well as a trend towards an indoors migration of poetry that was ironically portended by Byron's sending the wicked Don Juan home in 1823 to British soil, and choosing British topics for the action its final cantos.<sup>8</sup>

This preoccupation with home<sup>9</sup> manifests itself "in both ideological and material senses"<sup>10</sup> in *Don Juan*, one of its major themes being the influence of domestic activity in both the home and the nation.

Byron perceives space as strongly gendered: for example, his description of the Argyle Rooms in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: its conspicuous consumption characterises it as a wanton woman who

**3:** He said, he wished to take her word "without documents, which are the worldly resources of suspicious people" (BLJ IX 65; letter of November 17th 1821).

**4:** Graham, Peter. *Don Juan and Regency England*. Charlottesville (University Press of Virginia, 1990), p.15.

**5:** Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 1.286.

**6:** Graham, loc. cit.

**7:** Tucker, Herbert F. *House Arrest: The Domestication of English Poetry in the 1820s* (*New Literary History* 25, 1994), p.522.

**8:** *Ibid.*, p.525.

**9:** This preoccupation was remarked upon by an Italian traveller who recalled his visit to England in the 1820s that "comfort is in the mouth of every Englishman at every moment and that family took the place of continental society; even the English national song seemed to be 'Home Sweet Home'" (Davidoff, Leonore and Hall, Catherine. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. (London: Routledge, 1997, p.360).

**10:** Tucker, loc. cit.