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The Notion of a Nation and Byron's Life and *Don Juan*

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Abstract
Byron as a global cultural phenomenon is a radical example of fluid nationality; yet not much research has been conducted to examine the relation between Byron's magnetic life and the notion of a nation. This article, drawing on the theories of nationalism, intends to put Byron's life path and his specific work *Don Juan* into the romantic background of English nationalism in order to prove that Byronic phenomenon embodies the ambiguities of British nationalism.

Key words: Nationalism; Byron; *Don Juan*; Cosmopolitan identity

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INTRODUCTION
Nationality is the paradox of Byron as both an English national and a Continental Romantic. For one thing, his status as an English nobleman is displaced by a fluid flow of nations; and his biography is a fine specimen of 'root-en-route' scenario. A brief survey of Byron's life is a circulation of nationalities. Being raised as an English aristocrat, and dying a Greek death, Byron spends ten years and two months of his thirty-seven-old life off the native shore, traveling across the Euro-Asian continents, reaching places as far apart as Lisbon and Constantinople. At the heart of Byron's aristocratic glory lies the unsettling fact that approximately one third of his life was spent off his native land. The very locus of his physical being is part of his nationality which might be observed in a fluid way.

For another, his repressed national ardor is replaced with his cosmopolitan outlook. In paying respect to his first pilgrimage (1809-1811) as part of his rite of passage, and in acknowledging its link with the formation of his cosmopolitan outlook, one is able to discern how his discontent with the national reality led to his involvement with the hot nationalism of Young European movement; and to note how his radical political commitment was rooted in his aristocratic ambition. If Byron's life is a connected narrative of geographical mobility, his English nationality is like a cultural Sphinx which he constantly seeks to avoid with resolution but can not escape with success. It is no exaggeration, therefore that his writing, as an integral part of his individual identity, bears witness to his struggle against and reconciliation with nationhood.

It is part of the ambiguities of nationalism that entail the contradictions surrounding Byron. As early as in December of 1809, Byron told his business agent John Hanson on his first round of Grand Tour that he intended to spend a year in Greece before going to Asia, and that he would never return to England if he could avoid it (p.17). Byron was not the earliest writer to express his aversion against native land but may be the first to magnify the sentiment by banishing himself from the British Isles. While the Dean of Westminster denied Byron the burial in the Abbey, 'this English aristocrat had become the favorite poet of all the most high-minded conspirators and socialists of Continental Europe for half a century' (Rutherford, 1970, p.15). As he well predicted by refusing to be sent back, Byron was rejected by the emerging bourgeois nation-state for his extreme pessimism and rebellion; yet he embodied the political or emancipatory hopefulness for national independence. Nationalism or nationality for Byron is at once the origin of honor

and glory and the source of contempt and ennui. The notion of nationhood begets, promotes and terminates his inner self on one hand; and gets repeatedly scorned, rejected and transcended by existential self on the other. If geographical mobility enables Byron to experience full possibilities of nationalism, one may wonder to what extent this notion prefigures his national subjectivity which informs and governs his career as a Romantic poet.

How can one relate this shifting trajectory to his writing path, and judge the impact of a parcel of nationality on individual passages? For the possible answer, the point which hinges the community notion of nation and individual life needs to be observed.

THE QUESTION OF BYRON'S NATIONALITY

Before discussing Byron's geographical mobility and its effect on his writing, I feel the need to account for why Byron shall be culturally reckoned as an English aristocrat. By naming her ten-year research project as *Britons*, Linda Colley expresses her concern over the separate history of the British Isles.

> The fact that English, Welsh and Scottish history have more often than not been taught and interpreted separately is of course politically and culturally significant. But it is equally significant that quarantining these societies from each other, and concentrating only on what is distinctive about their respective pasts, quickly results in distorted and shrunken history (2005, xii).

Colley's remarks shed light on the subtle challenge which requires the attention to differentiate the composite parts of the British identity. Britain is an ambiguous term. Britain and England have been used so interchangeably that one has ample reasons to require certain distinction. For one thing I consider Britain as a convenient term for the United Kingdom which incorporates England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The inclusive political entity 'was forged in the long period of actual and virtual war with France from 1707 until 1837' (McCrone, 2001, p.98). Welsh and Scottish and English were unified in face of the Catholic threat posed by France. For another, Britain is also an imperial joint venture which offered English, Scots, Irish and Welsh diverse historical possibilities. The invented British integration fostered a dual sense of cultural identity which refers to ethnical root and a position in the union. 'The marriage of convenience' between Scotland and England in 1707 in particular made 'dual nationality' 'a highly profitable reality' (Colley, 2005, p.162). Colley takes the example of George Gordon, 4th earl of Aberdeen (whose name and schooling bears strong resemblances to that of Byron) to illustrate how a Scottish aristocrat could gain access to the power center of British politics without relinquishing their traditional autonomy. To understand England's role in the empire enterprise one may be required to perceive Britain as 'protectors and promoters of Protestantism.' England tends to believe that they would assume an exclusive role in the global missionary cause; and such high self-regard would encourage the English to transcend the 'national self-interest' and covet a more lofty position in the mapping of world civilization (Kumar, 2003, p.46). The high self-perception is an essential part of cultural inheritance which defines enduring English features.

Such differentiation is necessary for Byron because he is a cultural mongrel. Born in London on 22 January 1788, Byron, led by his mother, moved to Aberdeen in 1791 and stayed there until 1798 when he inherited the Lord title. Though this part of his early life has been comparatively ignored, Byron partially belongs to Scotland. His attitude to Scotland is rather ambivalent. *The Curse of Minerva* contains "a long passage of anti-Scottish animus" which "portrays that 'bastard land' as a place of 'niggard earth', 'a land of meanness, sophistry and mist', the Scots 'Foul as their soil and frigid as their snows'"(Cheeke, 2003, p.24). Nevertheless 'Scotland for Byron, like Harrow and Newstead, would always represent a place of imaginative return' and shall be revisited spiritually through works like *Don Juan* (p. 37). However the very title *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* may easily convince us of Byron's preference about spiritual belonging. Many anecdotes can be enlisted to illustrate that Byron perceives himself or wishes himself to be perceived as an English peer.[1] Byron's whimsical attitude to Scotland becomes understandable if one takes into account the rivalry between Scotland and England and its implicit effect on cultural aspirations. For reasons roughly sketched above, Byron shall be revaluated in his repercussion with English nationality in various places.

THE TIMING OF ROMANTIC NATIONALISM

As both a poet and a celebrity, Byron embodies a historical magnetic field where the interaction of historical objects or currents works to generate a problem or a phenomenon; and the global dimensions of the problem, as manifest in contradictory judgments, may require efforts to account for the lack of critical consensus. 'Protean' is one of the adjectives most frequently used to 'explain the multiple and conflicting meanings of Byron phenomenon' and

[1] Despite his aloofness to ordinary English visitors when he traveled abroad, Byron was notoriously conscientious about the social etiquette appropriate to his English lordship. For instance, on his arrival in Malta, he and Hobhouse waited on shore in the expectation of a 'salute from the batteries'. He feels much flattered by Ali Pasha's observation of his small ears and hands by which Ali judges him to be an English aristocrat (p. 36, 17).

describe the heterogeneous nature of Byron (Hubbell). To a large extent, the protean nature of Byron and his writing stems from the heterogeneous nature of his age, an age to create the notion of nation and romanticize it.

The disturbing intricacies of nationalism may never exhaust the theoretical passion of political scientists. Given that Byronic controversy involves the interplay between nationalism as a political reality and individual subjectivity, Ernest Gellner's theory of high culture and Benedict Anderson's notion of nation as 'imagined community' shall be more pertinent to the current probe.

Ernest Gellner's view that nationalism functions as a secular religion and provides the necessary cultural cement for industrial society renders it possible to perceive nation as a historical category. According to Gellner human history evolves in three stages: a. the hunter-gatherer stage; b. the agro-literate stage; c. the industrial stage. The transition from the agro-literate stage into the industrial one makes nationalism a historical necessity since the gradual dismantling of rural community and the disintegration of feudal patriarchy leads to extensive urban dislocation and severe individual disorientation. As the industrialization deprives newly-arrived urban workers of anything but language and culture, it is only a matter of time to equip them with not only basic surviving skills but a whole body of common values and beliefs; hence the villages and tribal structures are replaced with a new sense of national solidarity. Gellner believes that 'nations can emerge when general social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities'(1983, p.55). High culture is defined as 'a literate, public culture inculcated through a mass standardized and academy-supervised education system, serviced by cultural specialists' (Smith, 1998, p.37). It is remarkable that with this concept Gellner locates an internal dynamism through which nationalism is disseminated and infused into subjectivity, creating a way of thinking, feeling and acting. On the personal level, 'in conditions of high social mobility', 'the culture in which one had been taught to communicate becomes the core of one's identity'; and 'modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land or a faith, whatever he may say, but to a culture' (Özkirmli, 2000, p.132& 134).

Behind Byronic mobility and aesthetic career stands a historical context of Romanticism, a period of radical transition corresponding to what Gellner terms from agrarian society to urban industrial construct. This was an unprecedented age when economic growth, political unrest and cultural conflicts converged to press for a historical and moral imperative. Despite the charge of functionalism against Gellner, his A-is-what-A-can-do approach does demystify the spiritual sacredness of nationalism and foreground it as an organizing paradigm of modernity. Nationalism paves the way for modernization with the consolidation of primitive totems and traditional values, heroic past and common prospects. With Gellner's formula it is not difficult to perceive Romanticism as a critical juncture and a historical transition from a fixed rural hierarchy to more dynamic industrial structure.

To situate British Romanticism in the scenario of national formation requires a retrospective look into English society in the eighteenth century. From the Glorious Revolution (1688) onwards, England had undergone a relatively stable period of economic development; market-oriented agricultural system gave further impetus to the industrialization. The deepening and expansion of industrialized economy led to the rise of bourgeois class as a middle stratum of social hierarchy. The other side of the picture was that an increasing number of rural workers were forced to join the proletariat underclass. As orthodox religion did not live up to the task to appease the threat posed by extreme polarization, it is inevitable that inner conflicts and possibilities conspire to create a balanced cultural dynamism and an open system of social mobility. It functions to allocate the economic resources, to regulate the social flow and above all to provide the cultural kernel with which every member can identify him/herself. The ever increasing tendency of industrial dehumanization forces the individual consciousness to face up the menacing existential fragmentation for which the gardening of culture may offer some nourishment or condolence. The explosion which French Revolution ignites not only affirms the intensity of psychological desire but also accelerates the maturity of British national culture.

The Fall of Bastille on July 14, 1789 announced the break with *ancien régime* and the turbulence in its wake triggers the most profound crisis—a crisis of representation and legitimization—on the threshold of modernity. Geopolitical struggle precipitates and fosters the national consciousness.

> Hostility between France and Britain led to a protracted period of war between the two countries beginning in 1793 and only concluding with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815… But the wars between the two countries also, in the long run, fostered British trade and the British economy. The wars in addition, in a rather more elusive way, prompted the British to adjust, or perhaps to reinforce, their sense of their national identity (Peck & Coyle, 2002, p.153).

It can be imagined how the emergence of national identity can be shaped by a host of internal and external factors and how one tends to define itself against its opponent. The inclusion and affirmation of One and the exclusion and negation of Other not only find their way to literary production but also contribute to the making of a national self. On the English part the French tremor kindled public awareness and passion over its political, cultural and moral destiny. By uttering modern anxiety those intelligentsias initiated and partook in the circulation of national consciousness. The special challenge which a

literary scholar has to take in face of the heterogeneous mixture of literary documents is reflected by the inability to bracket them under an umbrella title. From the perspective of cultural dynamics, however, it is not so difficult to perceive that the extremely divergent voices compete to win the upper hand of a public crusade launched to deal with the trauma of revolutionary terror. From Edmund Burke to Mary Wollstonecraft, from William Blake to S.T. Coleridge, from Felicia Hemans to Lord Byron, there emerges a shared arena where common issues are allowed to be explored and public consensus is expected to be reached. To sum up, Ernest Gellner's formula of high culture enables one to step on the periphery of cultural turmoil from the late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century and to have a sense of transition into a modern nation state. What I wish to highlight is that British Romanticism as a historical category bears witness to the process in which the metropolitan Britain learns to redefine its status on the geopolitical mapping of Europe; and its self-conception of nationhood in diverse forms becomes transmitted to, diffused through and absorbed by the individual subjectivity.

If Gellner works on a microcosmic level to specify the moment when nationalism becomes a cultural imperative for industrial society and how Romantic mapping becomes the actual distribution channel from top to masses, or vice versa, it is Benedict Anderson who is acute enough to discern the material conditions and psychological norms that underpin the nation as a cultural artifact.

By replacing 'nation' with a 'community', Anderson actually draws a 'coming-of-age' scenario for the nurturing of national consciousness.

> Nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural system that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being (p. 145).

Two examples of such cultural systems are the religious community and the dynastic realm. They came into decline due to the overseas exploration and the gradual decay of Latin as imperial language. The disintegration of medieval Western Europe leads to not only the emergence of local communities but also the change of time conception. The rapid development of print capitalism is conducive to the formation of 'homogeneous empty time' central to the rite of nation imagining; moreover, it establishes an invisible link between mass reading ceremony and community consciousness.

The observation about print language and newspaper constitutes Anderson's most ingenious contribution to nationalist thinking. The mass consumption of newspapers can be likened to a mass ceremony, a ceremony performed in silent privacy (p. 147). The daily replication of this ceremony fosters the national awareness and strengthens the mutual confidence in national identity. With the illustration of newspaper reading, Anderson proceeds to expound how these print-languages laid the basis for national consciousness. First, they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Second, print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language which helped to build the image of antiquity. Thirdly print-capitalism created language-of-power of a kind different from the earlier administrative vernacular (p. 148). In a word, as an advanced system of production, print capitalism provides fundamental material conditions on which 'a profound thinking-together of ideology and material practice' depends (Carey-Webb, 1998, p.9).

ROMANTIC NARRATIVE OF A NATION

While Gellner is engaged in discovering the functional aspects of nationalism, Anderson exposes the cultural and psychological prerequisites for national subjectivity. Both concur in acknowledging the predominant role of culture in creating public sphere and informing the national character. The genesis of the common consensus, as the integral part of capitalism logic, is directly responsible for the shaping of self-identity, voices of which shall be uttered, heard and recorded in the narrative of a nation. The charm and grandeur of British Romanticism is, historically as well as aesthetically, expressed by individual obsession with the myth of nation and the profundity of its power. Romantic writings as a whole represent a collective endeavor to negotiate individual subjectivity with the disturbing historicity. Each writer, whatever sex, party, rank or faith, strives to make the individual stance public, hence consciously or unconsciously participating in patterning the nation.

In both historical and literary categories, British Romanticism has long been associated with the fountain of nationalist thinking and the assertion of national longing. Judging by Gellner's timing of social evolution, Britain has more or less completed the transition from rural society to industrial society by 1780s and by the nineteenth century it was firmly established as an industrial nation with growing imperial ambition. The growth of the modern system of publishing in the eighteenth century forced the individual writer to be conscious of the changing nature of the reading public (Bygrave, 1996, p.81). As Raymond Williams points out in *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*, 'From the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century there had been growing up a large new middle-class reading public, the rise in which corresponds very closely with the rise to influence and power of the same class' (1958, p.50). The maturity of print industry, accompanied with the increase of mass literacy makes an English community imaginable, whether it is a shared marketplace or a forum of communication. In Anderson's terms, the style in which

a community is imaginable in English context differs from that of Germany and France simply because they are situated in different stages. To conclude, "if the rapidly increasing 'reading public' offered the Romantic artist a vision of influence on a grand scale, it also offered a vision of society as a community of readers, all influenced by the same work, all defining themselves in terms of the same set of influences. This vision of a society of readers is close to what we would nowadays call *culture*" (Bygrave, 1996, p.82).

The spiritual bond which romantic writings venture to build and sustain depends much on the literary renovations of the age. This is explored by Timothy Brennan in the article 'The National Longing Form'. He believes that

> In Europe and the United States, for the most part, the triumphant literary depiction of nationalism is Romantic. It is part of an earlier period when the forming of nation was a European concern, and before the experience of colonialism, world war, and fascism had soured people on what Edward Said has called nationalism's 'heroic narratives' (from *Nation and Narration.* In Bhabha (Ed.), 1990, p.44).

If it symbolizes the age of innocence for European nationalist thinking, Romanticism preserves much of the sweet happy memory of early nationhood. Much in line with Anderson's argument, Brennan traces the analogous progression between specific forms of imaginative literature and the rise of nationalism which corresponds to the Romantic period. The notable example is a novel. As a literary genre, a novel generates, spreads and perpetuates an aesthetic, a cognitive and even an ideological pattern by which self-identity locates an anchorage-point in the national mapping. Brennan quotes Anderson who claims the novel depicts

> The movement of a solitary hero, through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside. The picaresque of *tour d'horizon*—hospitals, prisons, remote villages, monasteries, Indians, Negroes—is nonetheless not a *tour du monde*. The horizon is clearly bounded (p. 50).

Given its imaginative vision on temporal and spatial terms, the novel is likely to replace the epic as the literary ritual of national imagining. The epic adopts 'a reverent point of view of a descendent' whereas the novel 'directed itself to an open-ended present', evoking sacred tradition to create a people (p. 50). The formal difference of an epic and a novel tends to be mingled. The endeavor in this direction shall be pursued when it comes to the discussion of *Don Juan* as 'verse novel'.

From a sociological point of view a novel resembles the newspaper in that both are 'most important instruments in fully developed capitalism' (p. 55) and promises much possibility that every literary member may utilize to participate, to create and to influence the public sphere. The most delicate of the brain, the most select touch of the eye and the most remote corner of the hearing are firmly controlled or even mercilessly monitored by the literary apparatus. The French Revolution projects up a prominent historical contingency whose immediate impact and aftershock have been handled, depicted and diffused by literature as one form of human agency. In response to the call of external historicity a writer seizes the initiative to determine what factual details, material aspects and artistic module should be matched with the choice of subject matters.

Literature begins to be branded by geographical locality and acquires the national legitimacy which allows individual subjectivity to be gazed at, to be tracked down and to be sympathized with. Individualistic probe in the West is inextricably linked with the desperate cry for nationhood. If self-identification refers to the growing awareness of self in terms of gender, social status and race, Romantic writings testify to how the awakening of Self in Western tradition is closely associated with the dawning of national consciousness. The individuality and national roots converge in the most creative and organic form of human activity—literature to invent, subvert and constantly refashion national allegory. Though an allegory may be born out of the psychological distancing or reversal of 'other' (as the way Western Nationalism is defined), it should not be confined to the postcolonial discussion of the colonizer/colonized opposition; but be checked in retrospective light of early nation-forming century. In the case of British national psyche, for instance, the imperial grandeur of Spain in the sixteenth century is surely a maritime model which Great Britain covets to imitate; but French events epitomize all radical elements which Britons reject -- excessive love of theory and vulnerability to agitation. Like a prism, romantic writing reflects and produces the nuance of national self-imaging.

To be brief, the emergence of national consciousness is 'thickly' embedded in the British Romanticism as a historical contextualization of subjectivity. From the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, the industrial expansion and political insurgency accelerated the maturing of national consciousness accompanied with the formation of marketplace and the expansion of general readership. Situated in such context Romanticism represents the utterance of collective endeavor to reconcile individual subjectivity with historical imperative of nationalism. The trend manifests itself in the change of certain literary conventions which in turn reshape psychological mechanic of national imagining. British Romantic writing as a whole, being more than a passive documentation of historicity, intervenes to transform the canopy and peculiarity of national thinking; hence it reaffirms the dignity of personal initiative and the value of individual autonomy. It is on such belief that my critical interest in Lord Byron rests; and my current investigation into *Don Juan* also moves in that direction.

DON JUAN AND NATIONAL MAPPING

As a major epic which succeeds Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and precedes Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1850), Byron's *Don Juan* (1818-1824), while presenting a charming transcontinental panorama at the turn of the nineteenth century, does not sustain sufficient critical attention as the narrative of nationalism in its various senses. I choose to concentrate on *Don Juan* as the main research subject not simply because it is one of Byron's chief works sustaining the poet's fame but also because it exemplifies an organic process in which the individual reconciliation with national identity, either in an embracing form or by any resistant gesture, has been enacted and explored. *Don Juan* offers a vantage point to perceive the physical and imaginative boundary of national mapping.

In the first place, the very act of *Don Juan*'s composition and its ensuing circulation illustrate how literary creation may evolve into an imaginary paradigm of expatriate existence. The fact that *Don Juan* had been written intermittently in Italy from 1818 to 1823 accentuates the indeterminacy of locality and its implication on a drifting soul. Byron as 'an isolated being on the earth' is destined to be an eternal foreigner wherever he goes, which leads to his poignant and sarcastic sentiments towards national roots (p. 9). With no hope whatsoever nor even the slightest desire to return to England, it is safe to assume that community imagining, to borrow Anderson's term though not in strict sense, becomes not only part of his daily essentials but also his ritual of the spiritual sustenance. In this light the significance of literary writing is three-fold; 1) to alleviate the pressure imposed by exile; 2) to maintain the physical contact with British reading public; 3) to secure some material resources to support his Greek political engagement.

Byron's expatriate existence, as a shifting atlas in which *Don Juan* is located, forces the wandering poet to dedicate a memorial elegy to lost isles and a buried self; yet the relation between exile and Byron's poetical utterance has not captured sufficient critical attention. The exile as an extreme form of displacement, while destabilizing his bond with family, friends and native language, also endows Byron with more literary spontaneity and sensibility to defend himself from the danger of uprooting. In this sense the British Isles constitute, in Byron's performance of border-crossing, a point of departure only being frequented by his literary nostalgia. Literary composition mediates the tension between the exiled self and the earlier memory of nationhood. Timothy Brennan argues,

> Exile and nationalism are conflicting poles of feeling that correspond to more traditional aesthetic conflicts: artistic iconoclasm and communal assent, the unique vision and the collective truth. In fact, many words in the exile family divide themselves between an archaic or literary sense and a modern political one: for example, banishment vs. deportation; émigré vs. immigrant; wanderer vs. refugee; exodus vs. flight. The division between exile and nationalism, therefore, presents itself as not only between individual and group, but between loser and winner, between a mood of rejection and a mood of celebration. Literarily, the division is suggested by the tension between lyric and epic, tragedy and comedy, monologue and dialogue, confession and proclamation (1990, p.61).

Although it is often employed in the postcolonial study now, the dualism between exile and nationalism has long been a tradition beginning from Homer, extending to Dante and Voltaire in Western literature. Georg Morris Cohen Brandes believes it is French Revolution and subsequent warfare that plunge different peoples onto exile and force them to be familiar with each other and then bring about the literary grandeur of the nineteenth century (1904, p.10-20). Lord Byron, by imposing himself on exile half-willingly, is only creating his version of an allegory of a floating island, mirroring the national narrative in his own gesture. The very formation of nation is not unaccompanied with the repression of selfhood since:

> The writer proclaims his identity with a country whose artificiality and exclusiveness have driven him into a kind of exile—a simultaneous recognition of nationhood and an alienation from it (p. 63).

In this regard, *Don Juan*, like a banished son of modern Britain, should be approached against the overall framework of national history; and its relevance to today's readers lies partly on his endeavor to preserve the integrated self under the fragmenting impact of modernity of which nationalism is one sentimental façade. It should also be remembered that Byron's post-1816 experience is not typical of expatriate existence, being complicated by his active intervention in public life. For instance the publication and reception history of *Don Juan* in Britain manifests how Byron manipulates his personal myth once more to construct the collective memory. This is one of the ambiguities surrounding Byronic myth, which the present author attempts to unveil.

In the second place, if it is inspired by Muse on exile, *Don Juan* is historically informed and enriched by British travel writing which develops into prominence in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. That *Don Juan* can be perceived as an assemblage of travelogues testifies to the process in which Britain steps up its overseas exploration in its search for national identity. Though claiming to have no writing plan, Byron actually devises an international scenario for the Spanish dandy—from Spain to Oriental waters, onto Imperial Empire, Russia and then back to England. The travel scenario constitutes the central narrative pattern, attaching each episodic part with distinctive local labels. Byronic mobility first reveals its physical aspect in such geographical sequence, which tends to lead readers into mixing the poet's actual

pilgrimage with the hero's fancied journey. Both typify, transmit and remold the prototype to map the nationhood. It is partly in the capacity of travelogue that *Don Juan* acquires its formalistic charm and allows the private recollection to converge with public experience.

That the trajectory that Don Juan is exposed into reaches the vast expanse of Continental Europe and Ottoman Empire establishes Byron as the descendent of travel writing tradition flourishing in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Byron's overseas experience reaffirms the relevance of the claim. The vogue of Grand Tour in pre-revolutionary era initiates a process of identifying geographical, ethnical and national difference. For early modern English travelers the national pastime is a grand tour to continental Europe, Ireland and the Ottoman Empire. The cultural criterion and psychological implications underlying the choice of these popular destinations are fully elaborated by Anna Suranyi in her book *The Genius of the English Nation*. Suranyi argues that for early travelers the most important criteria for their assessment of a community was civility and barbarism. It is through the observation of different governments that England began to emulate Turkish imperial governance, to conceive its national strategy in the arena of European geopolitical power struggle and to seek potential prey such as Ireland for subjugation (2008, p.15-53). After finishing Canto V, Byron confesses to have a certain design for the hero.

> I meant to take him on a tour of Europe with a proper mixture of siege, battle and adventure. I meant to have made him a *Cavaliere Servante* in Italy, a cause for divorce in England and a sentimental Werther-faced man in Germany, so as to show the different ridicules of the societies in each of these countries, and to have displayed him gradually *gaté* and *blasé* as he grew older, which is natural. (Scott-Kilvert, 1984, p.62)

As it turns out otherwise, the alteration of the original idea rather coincides with popular zeal for more exotic glamour. It is doubtful that Byron adjusts much of the plan to the public taste of marketplace in order to give his 'epic ambition' a modern edge. Byron may also envisage the poem to be a novelistic rite of passage which promises Don Juan a natural adulthood by the end of line.

However his attempt to reform the character is not fully accomplished because Don Juan remains to be a pallid character who coordinates the constant digression and regulates the narrative flow. By encompassing a wide variety of observation related with local specialties, social conventions, eco-curiosities and even gender differences Byron unconsciously gears his writing to meet the public gaze into the exotic spectacle.

Following the tradition of travelogue writing, Byron actually reiterates the pattern that exotic travel makes part of everyday reality and an accessible dream which is to reaffirm the national difference and promote the patriotic pride. Suranyi discovers that the rich collection of travel accounts at least fulfills two functions: 1) the constant supply of information could satisfy public curiosity for the rest of the world; and 2) in an elusive way writing about difference helps to articulate national identity or unique religious destiny and shape imaginary boundary (p. 23). Emerging primarily in the late sixteenth century, travel writing in the eighteenth century

> began to change significantly, with works focusing upon personal growth, enlightened sensibilities and romantic aspirations… which reveals much more about the first attempts of English writers to come to terms with their role in Europe and the world' (p. 24).

It is in the paradigm of difference that *Don Juan* is framed to build a 'structure of international political identities' (p. 36) and to develop an ideological rhetoric. 'The discourse of difference developed in these narratives proved to be eminently suitable for expressing English proto-nationalism and justifying future colonial encounters in the early modern era' (p. 19).

The concept of the unified British empire, through the channel of popular travel writing, penetrates into the mainstream mentality; and consequently, 'the English thought of Britain as the foundation of an empire, and were attempting to mold themselves into potent conquerors' (p. 17). As a matter of fact, the modes of governance, civil system, gender role and hygienic level have been carefully observed and evaluated to judge whether a country or a nation is civilized or barbarous. No wonder the imperial scope of Ottoman and Spain draws the admiring yet anxious look from Britons. Spain of the sixteenth century boasts of the most expansive empire with the frontiers from the Philistines to Africa, from Italy to Peru, holding up the first 'modern' imperial model for the neighboring countries. Turkish incomparable sphere of influence agitated British anxiety for empire on one hand and on the other its drastically different aspects in social manner challenged British discrimination from civil to barbarous. In the seventeenth century Britain was still cautious of Turkish potential rivalry as it recognizes Ottoman Empire as a more sophisticated and civilized entity; but this is admitted with much reluctance which stems from Turkish tyrannical style of administration and its menacing manners and conduct.

> To the English, continental European countries as well as the English themselves were primarily civil…but discourses above civility and its opposite of barbarism had a particular affinity to descriptions of Turkey and Ireland. Writers derided the Irish as barbaric, but generally regarded the Turks as civil (p. 55).

As civility is the cultural core of national identity, English conception of it is never fixed; and what Suranyi fails to account for inconsistency or contradictory manifestation of civility principle is the hidden operation of power logic and the instrumentality of imperialism. Behind the shifting label of civility lies its conscious gaze onto the intricacy of government and imperial control. In this light Byron's choice of Spanish dandy and

his Ottoman disguise may be an instance of accidental artifice; but is also a fancy informed by the popular notion of national peculiarities. In the Dudu episode, the cross-dressing of Don Juan reveals his being subject of gaze of his informed imperial mentality. The British gender-nation paradigm underlying the episode and its connection with the change of British imperial status shall be pursued in subsequent chapters.

The textural details of *Don Juan* further illustrate how the work draws from contemporary practice of travel writing. For example many of the details of Canto III are inspired by Richard Tully's *Narrative of a Ten Years' Residence at Triopoli in Africa* which was published in 1816. Among many others, prominent sources include Claudius James Rich's *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* (1815) and *Second Memoir* …(1818), and Aubry de la Motraye's V*oyages en Europe, Asie & Africa*…(1727). As British imperial ambition was gradually achieved in many parts of Asia, its nosy search has also delved into the scope of Africa and even of South America in Byron's time. Another legend about the native people in southern Argentina is that natives were of gigantic height (McGann, 1986, Notes). What remains the same is the gaze of curiosity, stimulating the exploration and fostering their sense of superiority as a civilized nation. Clues of exotic marvel in *Don Juan* suggest that Byron is under the sway of imperial ideology despite his open defiance against British status quo.

The recent increasing attention to the relation between exotic East and British Romanticism helps to expose its problematic nature as imperial ideology. As a literary canon, British Romantic writing creates and circulates the cultural stereotype and justifies the colonial dominion as a 'civilizing' mission. *Don Juan* shows that Byron is not exempt from the belief that British people are chosen by God to accomplish their unique destiny in the world. Replicating the pattern of travel writing, *Don Juan* also builds its connection with the discourse of national identity.

Last but not the least, though in the lineage of travel account *Don Juan* breaks the genre limit and juxtaposes domestic description with travel narrative of 'Other' land, positioning himself in a pendulum swinging from native land to foreign soil. By digressing regularly from the central story, Byron superimposes the national agenda over the international scenario, domestic controversy over the foreign matters in *Don Juan*. These commentaries, from the ridicule of mundane family life to the contempt for intellectual ladies, from the scorn for political and scientific apparatuses to the post-revolutionary disillusion, respond to the top agendas of political, social and cultural arena of Regency England. All these contrive to establish *Don Juan*'s irrevocable relation with the problematic nationalism. The textual details distilled from his reading, personal experience and social observation comply with Byron's social commitment as an English aristocrat. What emerges from the final canto is a more sober-minded man, who though helplessly disillusioned yet by the allure of 'Other' land, manages to find the way back to native land. England casts a shadow of national heritage over the wandering soul haunted by the blurring prospect of national destiny.

The unique position which *Don Juan* occupies in Byron's poetic career stems from its being retrospective of earlier writing and key events in life. Given its autobiographical nature, *Don Juan* permits us certain measure of stability with which it is easier to perceive Byron's chameleon nature. First, biographical evidences show that *Don Juan* was composed along with Byron's *Memoirs*. Jerome McGann reminds that

> Byron began *Don Juan* at the same time that he started to write his famous (later destroyed) *Memoirs*—indeed, that his first references to both of these works appear in successive sentences in the same letter to Murray of 10 July 1818 (p. 667).

It is questionable whether *Don Juan* can be the surrogate of lost *Memoirs* even if they were composed almost simultaneously. With further notes, McGann inclines to hint that *Don Juan* can replace *Memoirs* to convey a sense of certitude to the conflicting and disparate narrative elements.

> Like *Beppo* and the *Memoirs*, but unlike the letters, *Don Juan* was written for publication, and was thus more formally conceived than his private correspondence…Furthermore, and most important, the *Memoirs* were a highly personal and explicitly partisan collection of 'Memoranda' of the most important things'). In the end Byron said 'You will find many opinions—some in which Byron recounted various events of his life ('I have left out all my loves…and many other fun—with a detailed account of my marriage &its consequences (p. 668).

Byron's confessions about *Memoirs* sound equally intriguing since many mysteries of his adolescence and domestic life are accounted with fun rather with sincerity, supplying more opinions than facts, requiring the discriminating attention on the part of readers. The case being such, *Don Juan* may be accepted as the sole extant record, enabling us to peer into the mischief of his masquerades. *Don Juan* is an extension of his early verses, such as the *Childe Harold Pilgrimage*; and a mature attempt of rhyme scheme '*ottava rima*' experimented earlier in *Beppo*. In many ways the work signals Byron's artistic consummation of poetic utterance and literary techniques. I want to argue that, only in *Don Juan* is one more likely to acquire a more complete understanding and a more organic image of Byronic transformation.

Following the cultural emphases of theories of nationalism, I intend to explore how the dynamics of nationalism and its paradoxical workings contribute to Byron as a cultural phenomenon. On an attempt to resist the fragmentizing tendency typical of much of today academic methodology, I examine the implicit operation of national identity and individual struggle in *Don Juan*, not without the wish to regain an organic picture of the explicit historical stage.

Much of the critical effort on Byron aims at altering

the under-valued position of Byron and fitting him into a traditional understanding of Romantic period. Some critics have noted Byron's 'non-cooperation' with critical community lies in his defiance against prevailing poetic principle of Romanticism (Stabler, 1998, p.8). To address the perceived discrepancy between Byron's enduring popularity and its 'its relative absence from critical culture' requires the retrospective into the reception of *Don Juan* in shifting temporal and spatial contexts, into the exploration of the disturbing facets of the tension of modern nation (Algee-Hewitt, 2007, p.1).

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