

## Chapter I

### Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the background of the study, which includes my personal reasons why I choose to analyse Romantic poetry, the poet, Lord Byron, and his poem, Don Juan, and the particular idea of criticism as the topic of my thesis. Further, I give my statement of the problems and also the purpose, the importance, the scope and limitation, the methodology and the organisation of my study.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

English poetry has passed some important ages, and one of them is the age of Romanticism initiated by the appearance of Lyrical Ballads of William Wordsworth and Samuel

**Taylor** Coleridge in 1798 (Legouis 276). I am interested in Romanticism because as an important literary movement, it brought new subject matter to poetry. According to Shipley, “Romantic subject matter includes scenes and culture of non-classic land, the Middle Ages, the national past; the exotic, local **color**, nature (especially in its wilder moods) as an immediate personal experience; Christianity and transcendentalism; the supernatural; night, death, ruins, graves, the macabre, the Satanic; dreams and the subconscious” (352). All of these characteristics of Romantic subject matter were new and served as a reaction to the conventional subject matter of poetry, which emphasised on reason and logic rather than the individual characteristics. This new subject matter has influenced English poetry tremendously until now. As a new wave in poetry, Romanticism received its resistance at first, but finally it gained triumph over people’s attention.

Another characteristic of Romanticism that draws my attention is the rebellious spirit of this literary movement that supports freedom. Speaking about freedom as the prominent characteristic in Romanticism, I find the second-generation Romanticists were more rebellious in showing freedom compared to the first generation ones (Legouis **276**). Basically, the first and the second-generation poets are similar in their revolutionary ideas in their poems, but they are different in their political views. The first generation poets, among others are Wordsworth and Coleridge, who previously showed their attention in revolution in 1789, finally turned their back from the revolutionary movement in 1815 in England because they thought that the revolution is too overwhelming (Legouis 276). Whereas, the second-generation poets, who came to manhood in 1815, were inspired by the revolution and took freedom as their main interest (276). Their poems showed more freedom from rules **or** government compared to those of the first-generation

poets' later works. This is the reason why I choose to analyse a particular work of the second-generation Romanticists.

Lord Byron (1788-1824) is one of the second-generation Romanticists was one of few famous poets in Europe among the Romantic poets (Legouis 283). How famous Lord Byron as a poet was shown through his works that were read all over Europe during his time (Grebanier 400). This indicates that his writings were already acknowledged internationally. As an inspiration to authors, his writings gave effects to literature in European countries, such as: France, Germany, Italy, and Russia. Many European writers, who were inspired by his vigorous spirit reflected in his works, adopted his style of writing (400).

I also choose Byron due to his benevolent personality, which is shown by defending the right of the oppressed. Though he sat in the House of Lords, he bravely made his first speech defending the right of the were-about-to-be-jobless weavers in **1812** (Grebanier **407**). Next, he aided the Italians against their Austrian oppressors (407). Then finally, he dedicated his later life to help the Greeks in achieving their independence (407). He gave fund and effort and finally his life to the Greeks, neither because of money nor fame but because of his concern for the Greeks' independence. Therefore the Greeks considered him as one of their greatest national heroes (414). Since then, his bravery makes him an inspiration for other patriots in Europe.

Moreover, his fame as a poet is marked with his incredible talent as showed by his genius in writing. He wrote five remarkable narrative poems during one-year length of time between **1813** to 1814. Further, one of those five narrative poems, The Corsair (**1814**), was sold 10.000 copies in one single day (Lawrence 80). This success impressed Sir Walter **Scott**, one of Famous Romantic poets and made him give up writing narrative poems ever since (Grebanier 407). It was a remarkable accomplishment and a great success as well for the 25-year-old poet. **His**

brilliance in writing was always able to draw the attention of the society. He was also never dull in writing. **He** was able to "use the happy accident, to seize upon an invigorating idea, to exploit a situation, to admire, to love, to condemn, to ridicule; in other words, to make the most of life" (Watson 297). Not only these qualities of Byron that caught people's attention to read his works, but **also** because of his "many lovely lyrics, which are unpretentious, romantic, and often full of sweet pathos" (Grebanier 415). Many of Byron's lyrics seen in his works are simple and are able to move the readers' heart. He presented this ability into his works so skilfully that made people, including me, linger to read his works.

Byron was not only famous for his poetic talent and his heroism, but also for his unique characteristic of his works, in which he presents his individuality. This characteristic turns out to be a benefit in analysing his work as well as understanding him. Byron was the most glamorous of the Romantic poets (Watson 260) and he was the one to know fame in his lifetime (Legouis 285). He was a man with huge enjoyment of life. He joined in politics, did kinds of sports: swimming, boxing, fencing, cricket, pistol shot, in spite of his lameness, and loved travelling (Watson 260). His glamorous life was filled with parties and women, since many beautiful women pursued this strikingly handsome young man (260). While enjoying his life, Byron saw the underlying rottenness of English society, that is its lack of sympathy, littleness of spirit, and poverty of imagination (262). In Don Juan, he called the high life in England as "dreary void" (XIV. 79.1). His sensitiveness of life due to his lameness moulded him into a character with extreme pride. He was proud and arrogant and seemed sure that everything he did was right and he had low opinion of most men, despite the fact that his benevolent personality showed by defending the rights of the oppressed. Moreover, he was a Lord, therefore, he had a right to sit in the House of Lords, and this was the source of his pride too. ~~Me~~ got lots of women's attention,

as he was handsome and rich. Apparently, he enjoyed his life and did not want **to be** tied to one woman only. The fact is that he tried to get married but failed **to be** faithful to his wife and his marriage ended up in divorce. The description **of** Byron's life here is reflected in the life of Byron's heroes. Grebanier describes Byron's heroes as "Men disgusted with civilised society and satiated with pleasure, who live with extreme pride which wilfully suppress all their tender feelings, though in their heart is pure love **for** a gentle woman; deeper yet lies festering a **sorrow** which they disdain ever to reveal. . . ." (Grebanier406). The fact that the heroes of his poems are the reflection of him **is** very striking and this encourages me to choose him and his work Don Juan as the topic of my study.

I also choose him because he is a master in satire. He showed his mastery in satire in **his** work English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (1808). This work served as a sufficient answer to the questioning critics upon his ability in poetry and also served as an attack against the critics, poets, and authors whom he disliked (Grebanier402). The result was that he succeeded in attaining the critics' recognition through this work. The other satires are Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, which made him famous overnight, and Don Juan (1819-1824). Byron presented Don Juan as a satire of the situation of the society at that time. Unlike the other satiric poems, Don Juan **is** more successful in presenting Byron's criticism towards the frailty of human life, and this factor makes Don Juan become the finest example of satire.

Hence, I choose Don Juan for some reasons. Firstly, Don Juan is Byron's masterpiece. In Don Juan, he managed to bring together the qualities of his genius (Watson 412). Don Juan is written in **16** completed cantos, which consist of approximately 100 stanzas, and **it** is written mostly in *ottava rima* or 8-line-stanza. *Ottava rima* or 8-line-stanza was favoured by Italian writers in writing mock heroic poems and this style of writing was adopted by Byron as he wrote

Don Juan as a mock heroic poem. Moreover, it is astonishing that Don Juan does not contain even a single dull page (412). It is written in a conversational style added with Byron's capability in presenting his ideas in Don Juan wittily and amusingly.

Next, Don Juan is the most Romantic of all Romantic poems. It is really a fine example of Romantic poems of which idea is the wildest and freest and sits most loosely to the idea of poetry while still being poetry (Watson 286). What Watson means here is that as a work of art in Romantic Age, Don Juan involves scenes and culture of non-classic lands, the exotic, local colour, nature in its wilder moods, as an immediate personal experience, the supernatural, night, death, ruins, dreams and the subconscious as its subject matter. Further, Don Juan also proclaims freedom from rules and convention as its expression, emphasises spontaneity and tends to reverie, vagueness, synaesthesia, an overlapping of the functions of the arts. Added with the structure of a picaresque novel, which is not a common structure of a poem, Don Juan represents the breath of Romanticism completely that stresses on the freedom from rules.

Byron is known as a **poet** who inserts his individuality in **most of** his poem's heroes. In Don Juan, the main character, Don Juan, is a truly Byronic hero (Grebanier 412). Therefore I choose Don Juan among his other works because Byron put most of his aspects of life, namely his ideas, his thoughts, his criticisms, his experiences, and his emotions in Don Juan. **Things** happened to Don Juan is described clearly by Byron as similarly as things happened to him. Don Juan is a life story of the main character, Don Juan, **who** is an well-educated person. **However**, because Don Juan has a relationship with a married woman, he leaves his homeland, Spain. Since then, he travels throughout Europe from Spain to Greece, Russia, and finally arrives at England. Don Juan is described as a man who is related with pleasure. During his journey, he always has a love relationship with a woman, and also joins war. In England, he spends his

nightlife mostly **at** parties accompanied with many women, and **he** becomes their object of affection. Similarly, Byron **whose** divorce was considered as an improper deed at that time left his homeland, England. Since then, he travelled throughout Europe until his death. Byron became the object of women's affection in England and anywhere during his journey. Byron reveals himself and his thoughts in Don Juan. Therefore, I choose Byron's Don Juan as Don Juan is a truly Byronic Hero.

Don Juan, as a work of satire, criticises European civilisation in general, and criticises many aspects in life, mostly in education, in marriage, and in war (Boyd vi). Byron's criticisms **in** those aspects of life rises as the consequence of his scepticism upon the motivations and the ways people try to reach their goals. Scepticism for **Byron** was **only** the cause for all the greater moral indignation at the crimes and follies of human beings (Boyd 140). **As** Watson said that scepticism in Don Juan appeared on the surface (286), Byron reflected his scepticism through his criticisms in Don Juan, **from** which the readers may get his ameliorative idea about education, marriage, and war. Thus, I find it interesting to discuss the poet's criticism in this narrative poem.

Byron's criticisms in Don Juan is found in the aspects of education, marriage, and war. Education is a crucial aspect in one's life and the society considered education is important. People have certain goals **in** education and they are motivated to reach the goals. In Don Juan, Byron describes the goal of Don Juan's education is to make him **a** high moral man, but the outcome is ironical as Don Juan commits adultery with Donna Julia, a married woman. By showing an ironic outcome of a promising goal, **Byron** actually criticises education here. This draws me to analyse the motivations and the ways of the characters to get the goal in education in this poem.

Another aspect of life discussed in my analysis is matrimony or marriage. Marriage is a social institution that serves as the initiation of building a family which is the smallest part of society. A marriage itself is a union between two different people into one, so it needs right motivations as the foundation to attain a successful marriage as the goal. Yet, the marriages between Donna Inez and Don Jose and between Donna Julia and Don Alfonso in Don Juan are unsuccessful ones. This arouses my curiosity to analyse their motivations and their way to reach their goal that show Byron's criticism.

The third aspect of life discussed in this thesis is war. For ages, war has always been a part of human life, and thus, also a part of society. There are many reasons that justify the existence of war, among others are to defend freedom, nation, justice, or certain ideologies. Based on such reasons, any war is meant to make the world a better place where people can enjoy freedom, and most of all justice, within a solid nation. The discrepancy between the goal of the characters in this poem in having war and the outcomes of war shows Byron's criticism. Therefore, I am interested to study deeper the motivations and the ways the characters in trying to reach their goals in war.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problems

This long poem is used by Byron to criticise the society of England. Through this poem, Byron reveals criticisms in some aspects of life, namely in education, in marriage, and in war. Some characters in Don Juan have goals in those three aspects of life. However, the outcomes or the realisations of their goals are unexpectedly disappointing. Thus, I am curious to find out what motivations that encourage the characters to have such the goals in education, marriage,



and war are and what ways the characters use to reach **their** goals are. Then, I wonder how the motivations and the ways reveal Byron's criticisms in Don Juan

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

in this poem, Byron criticises the society of England in three aspects of life, namely in education, marriage, and war. Through my analysis, I want to show the motivations of the related characters in education, marriage, and war and the ways they take to reach their goals. Further, I also want to show how the motivations and the ways reveal Byron's criticism in Don Juan.

### 1.4 Importance of the Study

Through my analysis, I want the readers, particularly the students of English Department, to put more interest in discussing Romantic poets and their **works**, especially Byron and his works. I hope the readers appreciate Byron for his constructive criticism showed in many of his **works**.

Moreover, by studying one's motivations and the way one tries to reach his/her goal in Don Juan, I hope the readers become aware that the motivations and the ways to reach **the goal** are very crucial in life, especially in the aspects of education, marriage, and war. Byron criticises whether the motivations are **good** or not and whether the *ways* to reach the goals are justifiable or not. In line with this, the readers may learn that good motivation and justifiable ways are important to attain the desirable outcome.

### 1.5 Scope and Limitation

In this thesis, the scope of the analysis is Byron's criticism in canto I, II (stanza 1 to stanza 3) and canto VII, VIII, and IX in Don Juan, as seen through the prominent characters: Don Juan, Donna Inez, Don Jose, Donna Julia, Don Alfonso, Catherine and the soldiers. I limit my analysis in three aspects of life, namely education, marriage, and war.

### 1.6 Methodology

I do the library research to collect information and data to support my analysis. I use the long poem entitled Don Juan as the main source, taken from Byron: Poetical Works, 1970 edition, edited by Frederick Page and published by Oxford University Press in New York, 1970. As the secondary source, I collect some critics' opinions towards Byron and Don Juan from the university library.

In order to analyse this literary work I use some literary devices, namely characterisation as the main tool to analyse the motivations and the ways to reach the goals of the characters in education, marriage, and war that lead to Byron's criticism. I also use some other literary devices, such as diction, personification, symbolism, metaphor, simile, irony, epigram, litotes, allusion, and imagery to help me understand the poem and help me find out Byron's criticism.

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### 1.7 Organisation of the Study

I will divide this thesis into four chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction, which includes the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose, the importance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methods used, and the organisation of the study. The

following chapter will be about the review of related literature used in analysing my study, which includes theory of characterisation, and related literary devices. Chapter III is the analysis of the characters' motivations, the ways to reach the goals and Byron's criticism in education, marriage, and war. The last chapter is the conclusion of my analysis; followed by appendixes: the biography of Lord Byron and the summary of Don Juan.