

Don juan is a  
digressive satire



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BUSTER**

“ Don Juan” is a digressive satire aimed at mocking the traditional characteristics of literary Romanticism and is atypical of Byron’s earlier poetry. The structure of the poem’s stanzas is written in eight-line iambic pentameter, where the final two lines form a couplet and are often used to deliver a comedic punch line. At times the language is idiomatic and Byron often employs slang, which contradicts the traditional formality of Romantic poetry and further defines the poem’s satirical nature.

The poem’s most striking feature, however, is that Byron employs his stream of consciousness throughout the poem, interjecting his cynical sense of humor upon the reader. “ Don Juan”, as depicted by Lord Byron is not a character of permanent values; he is an individual of permanent interests to whom self-aggrandizement is a cardinal virtue. A poet is the master-feeler and he can not avoid the effects of two elements in his writing.

Firstly, the period to which he belongs; secondly the conditions of the society and the ‘ standard of life’ and the ‘ standard of living’ of people, as it prevailed at a given time. The simplicity and innocence of rural life, beauty, and nature, fascinate the poet. His emotional chords respond quickly and he finds it difficult to tolerate or accept the abuses of society, against which he hits back in his own style, with sharp witticisms. He knows pen is mightier than the sword, and he uses his latent literary genius, to strike at the right time.

A poet like Byron had the capacity to worship the positive qualities and attack the negative tendencies of humanity in a disarming style. It is but strange how he could maintain and nurture the intimate feelings or romanticism, considering the tough stages that he went through in his real

life. The love-feeling remained intact in spite of the vicissitudes in his personal life. Is it one of the vagaries of Nature that The Romantic Era (1776-1830) and the Industrial Revolution happened at the same time!

Powerful and unexpected changes took place, drastic modifications occurred in the life of the common man during this period, the old values had to be shunted out, whether one liked that process or not, commercial angle replaced many unselfish virtues of human beings, and the poets of the era responded well to those changed circumstances. As described by Graham Hough about Lord Byron, ".....it is rather a picture of society-and Juan is there to show the way the natural man might live in. " To Byron, beauty is not renunciation; it is participation, what if an element of selfishness is involved in the process!

He is fascinated by the grandeur of richness and the beauty that encompasses it rather than the dullness of poverty-ridden virtues. He is not a tragic-type of a lover; he adores dynamic love, the variations in love, and considers the hurdles as jokes. Let us move away for a while from Lord Byron's ' Don Juan' to an allegory, to understand him better. ' The full moon is shining in the sky. It is a full moon day. Seeing the beauty of the moon, a tempest rises in the ocean beneath. The ocean, in an effort to reach the moon, sends the roaring waves (love thoughts) one after another.

But alas! Can the waves reach the moon howsoever big they may be? Can the moon ever come down to the Earth (the reciprocal feelings) whatever be the intensity of the wish? '—in such a situation, Byron would still believe in the fructification of the love, by taking the help of twinkling stars in the sky. He is thoroughly convinced about the human fascination with external

beauty and he is vocal about its open exhibition, like the ocean and the moon. They enjoy the struggle and won't mind others witnessing and experiencing the beauty of the struggle.

Byron's poems are deeply affected by thoughts of recollection of his own past, poor and not glorious, and his subsequent accomplishments, that took him to great heights and material welfare. He is candid and open about the virtues of wealth and the status-gains involved in the process. Enjoy them, he declares a jovial mood through his poems. He is not willing to keep morality on a high pedestal. Just as trials and tribulations are part of life, so are comforts and luxuries, and status. Why a human being should shy away from them? Byron doesn't believe in the bifacial strategies and a show-off as for morality.

" Lord Byron reflects most of the characteristics of the Romantic Era such as the focus on emotions over reason, human nature and nature. He uses many historical references and poetic devices to emphasize the themes. The themes of human shallowness and artificial focus on wealth and beauty are conveyed through comparisons with nature and each other. The unexplored realm of human feelings that directly affect humans' actions is displayed through the multiple deeds of the characters. " (Lord Byron's.... ) Lord Byron is at the height of his satire and attacks the foundations of the society through his potshots at the institution of marriage.

" As a Romantic, Lord Byron talks extensively about love and human nature. The poem greatly exposes loveless marriages and the mirage of expectations in the society of marriage being the ultimate nest of eternal love. According to Andrew Sanders, the recognized literature critique, "  
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Juan's adventures and misadventures, and the narrator's worldly-wise commentary on them, served to debunk a series of received ideas and perceptions ranging from the fidelity in love..." The perception of love and misunderstanding of feelings is evident in this excerpt: " The love and marriage rarely combine, Although they both are born in the same clime; Marriage from love, like vinegar from wine - A sad, sour, sober beverage - by the time.

It sharpened from its high celestial flavor Down to a very homely household savor. " (Lord Byron, Canto III, 5, lines 35- 41) Compare this to the traditional mindset of the people as for the institution of marriage. '.. Marriage of two individuals means to flow together harmoniously. Two distinct individuals, two different personalities, born, bred and brought up in two different sets of circumstances, try to come together from the day of marriage, to find a common identity, a common goal, and to be precise, a common all!'

Byron moved from one woman to another, poor or rich, married or unmarried, like a monkey that would jump easily from one branch of a tree to another. He would forget the earlier relationship easily and had no psychological problems about the termination of the earlier intimate bond. Considering the time to which he belonged the satire of Byron is too strong to accept even by the yardsticks of beliefs of the 21st century. The literary dagger used by him is too sharp. It wounds, hurts, and sometimes kills, without actually killing! (The human values) " And finally, the thing Juan is best known for: both Byron and Juan seemed irresistible to women. Byron had numerous affairs with women from all walks of life, from ordinary

housewives to rich countesses. Juan scored even better: not even sultanas or the Czarina could escape his spell. ” (Don Juan.... )

Love, platonic love, and carnal love were one and the same for Don Juan. He changed his ‘ loves’ as Nature would change the seasons. He lived the life of a butterfly that goes from flower to flower to enjoy the beauty of hues and to suck honey. ‘ If the flowers won’t mind, why the butterfly should mind?’ seems to be the question of Lord Byron. Don Juan did not believe in deep planning about his future life. He lived life as it came and thought of crossing the bridge when he arrived at that spot. He did condemn the society for its fixed values but seemed to pity the people, and how they were caught in the cob-web of procedures, customs, traditions, and thought very sincerely about their love-life. How they stretched extra to make the love-life work, fearing the backlash and criticism from the moral guardians of the society. Personally, he scoffed at them by his writings and actions!