

George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824)



- descended from two aristocratic clans with colourful backgrounds
- became a Lord at age 10; attended Harrow and Cambridge
- suffered from a malformed foot, a source of much embarrassment
- became a fashionable celebrity, involved in various sex scandals
- model for the “Byronic hero,” a prevailing Romantic archetype
- assisted in the Greek war for independence (NAEL D630-34)



(audio: stanzas 1, 8, 9, 10, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 54, 55, 56, 60, 62)



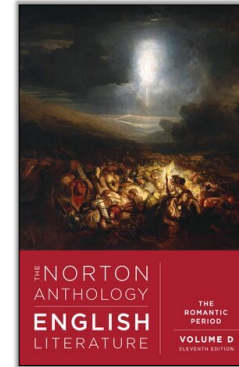
Byron, *Don Juan* (1819-1824)

Don Juan in Music and Literature

- 1630: Gabriel Téllez (Tirso da Molina), *El burlador de Sevilla*
- 1665: Molière, *Le Festin de pierre*
- 1676: Thomas Shadwell, *The Libertine*
- 1736: Carlo Goldoni, *Don Giovanni Tenorio o sia il Dissoluto*
- 1786: W. A. Mozart, *Don Giovanni*
- 1824: Lord Byron, *Don Juan*
- 1830: Alexander Pushkin, *The Stone Guest*
- 1872: Robert Browning, *Fifine at the Fair*
- 1903: George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*
- 1958: Henri de Montherlant, *Don Juan*

- pronounced *Don Joo'-un*
- published in instalments from 1819 until Byron's death in 1824
- meant to be read rapidly, to reflect its improvisational method of composition
- longest satirical poem in English, consisting of some 2,000 stanzas
- satirizes the archetypal Spanish libertine, traditionally a man of enormous sexual energy but in Byron's poem depicted as a naïf (NAEL D690-91)

Byronic hero



- a mysterious and gloomy figure, superior in his passions to the common run of humanity, whom he regards with disdain
- tortured by an enormous, unnamed guilt that drives him towards an inevitable doom
- exerts a powerful, erotic attraction upon other characters
- depicted in Byron's *Childe Harold* (1816) and *Manfred* (1817)
- model for Heathcliff in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) (NAEL D631, Baldick 47)

Byron, *Don Juan* (1819-1824)

cantos

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. seduced by Julia; sent abroad | 9. in the Russian court |
| 2. captured by pirates into slavery | 10. sent from Russia to England |
| 3. taken to Turkish harem | 11. in the English court |
| 4. further exploits in harem | 12. safeguards daughter Leila |
| 5. affair with Turkish Sultana | 13. party with Amundevilles |
| 6. escape from harem to Europe | 14. English country life, fox hunt |
| 7. romantic intrigues in Europe | 15. Lady Adeline advises marriage |
| 8. goes to war in Europe | 16. interacts with a ghost |
| | 17. unfinished diversion |

canto

stanza

- a group of verse lines forming a section or subdivision of a poem
- shares the same structure of all or some of the other sections of that same poem (e.g., metre, rhyme scheme, etc.) (Baldick 340-41)
- Italian for “song”
- a subdivision of an epic poem or other narrative poem
- may be further subdivided into *stanzas* or other smaller units
- equivalent to a *chapter* in a prose work (Baldick 52)

ottava rima

x / x / x / x / x /
 a She sat and sewed that hath done me the wrong
 x / x / x / x / x /
 b Whereof I plain and have done many a day,
 x / x / x / x / x /
 a And whilst she heard my plaint in piteous song
 / x / x / x / x / x /
 b Wished my heart the sampler as it lay.
 x / / x / x / x /
 a The blind master I have served so long,
 / x x / x / x / x /
 b Grudging to hear that he did hear her say,
 / x / / x / x / x /
 c Made her own weapon do her finger bleed
 x / x / x / x / x /
 c To feel if pricking were so good indeed.
 Sir Thomas Wyatt, “Epigram XLI” (1542)

- Italian for “eighth rhyme”
- a verse stanza consisting of eight lines in iambic pentameter rhyming **abababcc**
- usually used in narrative verse, but occasionally in lyric poems
- first used by Italian poet Boccaccio in 14thC, perfected by Ariosto in 16thC, introduced to English by Wyatt in 16thC
- used most often by Romantics Byron, Keats, and Shelley, and later by Yeats (Baldick 261-62)

epic vs mock epic

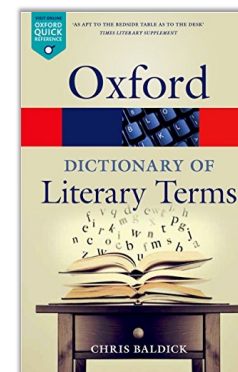
mock epic

- a poem employing the lofty style and the conventions of epic poetry to describe a trivial or undignified series of events
- a kind of satire that mocks its subject by treating it in an inappropriately grandiose way
- often include epic conventions such as invocations, battles, supernatural machinery, etc.
- most famous example in English is Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* (Baldick 229)

epic

- a long narrative poem celebrating the great deeds of legendary heroes, in a grand ceremonious style
- the godlike hero performs superhuman exploits in marvellous battles or voyages, saving nations or the world
- “secondary” epics (e.g., Milton’s *Paradise Lost*) are based on “primary” epics of Virgil (*The Aeneid*) and Homer (*The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*) (Baldick 119)

picaresque



- from the Spanish *pícaro*, meaning “rogue” or “scoundrel”
- traditionally, a work with a *picaresque* as its hero, a quick-witted servant of several masters
- recounts their escapades in first-person with an episodic structure
- can now refer to a loosely structured sequence of episodes recounting a hero’s long journey
- mostly in prose, but Byron’s *Don Juan* is a poetic example (Baldick 277-78)

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