

Original Paper

The Uncanny Aura of the Femme Fatale's Icon in Byron's

Don Juan

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“The strange is a temptation: to suffer it is to enjoy it.... Awareness of the strange, seduction of the strange, and horror of the strange go together. The strange is thus foreign, but a foreigner, which would also be, paradoxically, ourselves. *Unheimlich*, jokes Freud, equals *heimlich*, to the almost negation that is a product of repression. (Louis Vax, 1965)”.

Abstract

The femme fatale trope, the incarnation of the artistic ideal of the writer's creative imagination, is one of the most captivating female facades to haunt the Western literary tradition. Defined by her liminality, the femme fatale embraces an uncanny appearance that is terrifying but concurrently enthralling. Such oxymoronic combination defines her threatening and sublime representation which echoes Freud's phenomenon of the uncanny that Lord Byron incarnates through his portrayal of the fatal woman motif. As a dark Romantic poet, Byron perceived beauty in the bizarre, unrestrained attitude of the fatal woman's figure which shakes the rigid moral dimension of Victorian literature. What is intriguing about Byron's depiction of his fatal woman is the supernatural, eerie power of her erotic appeal which she adroitly deploys to consume and haunt her victim's imagination. Many researches tackled Byron's contribution to the Gothic lore such as the initiation of the male vampire theme; other areas that were of interest to scholars depicted Byron's homme fatal (the Byron seducer) trope. However, little critical attention pertaining to Byron's femme fatale motif has been paid, and since his delineation of the femme fatale remains ambivalent and incomplete, this untouched area deserves substantial attention. Although Byron did not initiate the fatal woman figure, it is feasible to study how he conceives this archetype and the extent to which he incorporates Freud's theory of the uncanny in his Gothic portrayal of two fatal females, Adeline and Catherine, in Don Juan.

Keywords

Freud's the uncanny, heimlich-heimisch, Lord Byron, Don Juan, femme fatale, Catherine the Great, Adeline Amundeville

1. Introduction

"The Uncanny", an essay written by Freud in 1919, influenced the criticism of Gothic. A psychological concept, the Freudian phenomenon of the uncanny has an artistic function in the way it designates how the uncomfortably acquainted is rendered comfortably bizarre or how the unfamiliar is brought to light and becomes familiar. Somehow equivocal, this concept is rendered more complicated as the uncanny becomes familiar and unfamiliar concurrently. The theme of the uncanny entails a strange combination of two contradictory feelings that are the result of fear and desire. Here is a sample of what Freud provides pertaining to the uncanny:

"that class of the frightening that leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (p. 220);

"whatever reminds us of ... [the] inner 'compulsion to repeat'" (p. 238);

"frightening element [that] can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*" (p. 241);

"something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*] ... [which] has undergone repression and then returned" (p. 245); and what "proceeds from something familiar which has been repressed" (p. 247).

Dark Romanticism and the uncanny fall under the scope of 19th century Gothic literature. Influencing our intellectual thinking, Freud's uncanny phenomenon invades our mental thoughts: whatever enlivens fear gives readers an uncanny apprehension. In this vein, a dark female Gothic, the femme fatale, perfectly fits in the dimension of the uncanny, and as Freud asserts, "We can collect all those properties of persons, things, sense-impressions, experiences and situations which arouse in us the feeling of uncanniness, and then infer the unknown nature of the uncanny from what all these examples have in common" (p. 220). Byron's portrait of the femme fatale in *Don Juan*, a Gothic fiction of dark Romanticism, bears several features of the uncanny woman.

The literary, psychological and social archetype of the femme fatale abounds in highbrow literature. This mysterious character originating in the Romantic era possesses deep roots in dark Romanticism and has been a dominant literary archetype and prominent image of femininity characterizing late-Victorian literature. What is unfamiliar or uncanny has a broad scope and could never be stable and is subsequently engagingly inscrutable. Possessing extensive literary variations, the fatal woman, similar to the Byronic hero, will always be considered an enigmatic figure since both figures do not have a static or unified personality but differ according to the unique nature of the writer's imagination. The diversity of social, moral and sexual transgressive behavior of the femme fatale makes her a significant literary character in masculine Gothic literature.

Perhaps the first Romantic model of the femme fatale in history is that of Cleopatra. In the occident, the fatal woman figure has always been considered a cultural myth. Initially introduced in Mario Praz's

The Romantic Agony as a celebrated nineteenth century character, the femme fatale, as Praz alleges, has no stable archetype. Praz describes her as a vampire and praying mantis, adding that she is compellingly both physically and sexually attractive, designating an incredibly threatening, destructive nature of her irresistible seduction in the sense that: "... sexual cannibalism is her monopoly" (p. 206). A Circe-like figure, the femme fatale seduces her lovers simply to exercise her supernatural powers over them for the aim of destruction. Since she is associated with the theme of death, devastation becomes innate in her nature. Generally speaking, such a literary type is attractive, sensual, mysterious, seductive and treacherous; it is no doubt an incarnation of both beauty and art. Since the fallen woman is an aesthetic symbol, it should elude moral scrutiny. Because she stands for manifold taboos of the 19th century posing a moral and social threat, she never escapes substantial scrutiny from society and readers.

2. Literature Review

In "La Femme est Naturelle, C'est-A-Dire Abominable: Gender, Liminality and Blurring the Boundaries in *Don Juan*," Shona Allanargues "That the vast majority of the women in *Don Juan* are to some extent sexual predators... and are not really femmes fatales at all.... Yet... there is something intrinsically liminal about these women" (pp. 174-175). Peter Thorslev, in *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes*, similarly emphasizes that female figures in Byron's oeuvre are not as dangerous as the femme fatale motif demonstrates, asserting that they are "sometimes spaniel-like, But never fatal" (p. 10). In other words, *Don Juan* female characters, Allan and Thorslev reckon, are not femmes fatales. As it will be viewed later, such underestimation of Byron's female characters is not true.

According to Virginia Allen, the femme fatale is:

....beautiful, erotic, seductive, destructive, exotic ... self-determined and independent. [She embodies] the theme of an indifferent and chilling remoteness from human feeling.... The femme fatale is less human. She is immortal, queen, goddess.... She is not only amorous and lovely, but indulges her sexuality without concern for her lover.... [She] does not conceive.... She was construed as the woman who controlled her own sexuality, who seduced men and drained them out of their "vital powers," in an exercise of eroticism. She... is the diametric opposite of the "good" woman. (p. 4)

All these traits, as will be demonstrated later, uncannily reverberate in the characters of Adeline and Catherine that Byron artfully confects in *Don Juan*.

The romance genre, along with the idealization of love, is revolutionized and subverted in *Don Juan*, an unfinished satirical and naturalistic epic written in ottava rima between 1818 and 1823 which falls under the scope of Gothic romance. This unfinished long poem is about a young, courageous Spanish roué who, thirsty for pleasurable experiences, undergoes several adventures in numerous societies inundated with corruption. This paper focuses on the rhetorical depiction of the uncanny portrayal of two literary femme fatales in *Don Juan*. The archetypal image of Byron's fatal woman will be analyzed through the lens of Freud's *the uncanny* in order to demonstrate her versatility, liminality, sexuality,

longevity and most saliently her uncanniness.

3. Catherine the Great

The Romantic British bard, Byron himself is a connoisseur of female characterization; his uncanny portrayal of the captivating fatality of a licentious universal femme fatale figure, who is in turn a connoisseur of a colliding erotic love, is worth examining. The overriding femme fatale stereotype, as detected by *Don Juan*'s readers, is that they are unpredictable, cruel, voluptuous sexual predators par excellence. Such an erotic portrayal is incarnated in Catherine the Great, "Russia's mighty empress" for whom Juan worked as a diplomat. Essentially, she is depicted as an intense hedonistic icon of a liberal, anti-sentimental femme fatale whose fiery desire suggests sexual indecency. The attributes of Juan, decent and inexperienced, make him unusually and psychologically fit to be her sacrificial victim.

No image makes a more profound impression on the inner psyche of Byron than the uncanniness of the female organ with its paradoxical nature, standing for both maternal fecundity and death drive. In this vein, the poet chooses provoking erotic imagery through his psychologized apostrophe to "this Cunt" as such accomplishing a piercing level of familiar intimacy. His provocative yet veiled inference to the mother's genitalia is achieved through his intentional, aesthetic euphemistic coining of "this Cant" (Canto 4) instead of the unspoken word "Cunt" and through his inserted diastole, the lengthening of the vowel "u". Beforehand, Byron is so insightful to indicate that this "[w]ould have provoked remarks" (Canto 4). The Gothic rhetoric behind apostrophizing the "Cant" when referring to the empress no doubt produces a robust, haunting effect on the poet and his readers and male characters, whose uncanny imagination is exaggeratedly triggered when the repressed familiar is unexpectedly disclosed. Strangely, the erotic "unspeakable" resounds in our psyche throughout the entire uncompleted poem.

To Douglas Kinnaid Byron admits: "I have written about a hundred stanzas of a third Canto—but it is damned modest—the outcry has frightened me—I had such projects for the Don—but the Cant is so much stronger than Cunt—nowadays" (qtd. in Marchand, Vol 6, No. 23). Altering the second vowel intensifies the profundity of the poet's expressions who admits that by doing so the uncanny effect has taken its toll on him. Through this process, Byron draws the readers' attention to the unprinted truth, dormant in the psyche, not to be uttered. If Oedipus' explicit answer to the riddle about the cycle of life was "man", Byron's undeclared/tacit answer to the riddle about the cause/origin of life with its cynical sexual entendres is ironically even more mannerly, illustrative and intellectual. Undeniably, he uncannily condenses women into one familiar organ: the "Cant/Cunt" becomes Byron's synecdoche of womankind. Byron's cathexis to the uncanny ramifications of the mother genital organ seems more like an obsession until he eventually "obey[s]" its call and succumbs to the mysterious and magical "[p]etticoat influence" since he reminds readers that from under the petticoat "... upon earth we are brought," for this reason he tends to "venerate a petticoat-/ A garment of mystical sublimity/.../ Which holds a treasure.../And more attracts by all it doth conceal." (Canto 14). Intentionally, he repeatedly alludes to the female organ to highlight the cultural obsession with the female body or the addiction to

sexuality and to decry sexual repression at the same time.

Whatever prompts the urge of repetition is in itself uncanny [*unheimlich*]. Freud observes that repetition is a dynamic feature of the uncanny which demonstrates itself as: “the constant recurrence of the same thing—the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations” (p. 234). He further elaborates on the uncanny effect of the mother’s pudendum which stands for the entry of the previous home. When the homely becomes unhomely or when the familiar becomes unappreciated, another uncanny effect is fashioned, with the prefix “un” standing for repression:

... there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning... and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: “this place is familiar to me, I’ve been here before”, we may interpret the place as being his mother’s genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix “un” [“un-”] is the token of repression. (p. 245)

Adopting the Freudian concept of suppression, Byron blames uncanny thoughts entirely on repression that triggers the uncomfortable familiar [*heimisch*] to become comfortably unfamiliar [*unheimlich*]. As such, Byron’s repetitive allusion to the female orifice and his usage of the cunt-centered pun provides his poem a Gothic, mysterious, uncanny aura expressed in his praise of the lewd empress whose “great (w)hole” promises an infinite array of delight in the hollow passageway to the “gate of life and death” (Canto 9). This is the inevitable powerful influence of the femme fatal exercising death and life on her victim-lover.

Angela Carter reflects this tragic Sadeian orgasm of the libertine thus: during the irreducible timelessness of the moment of orgasm, the hole in the world in which we fall..., but this state is as fearful as it is pleasurable and, besides, is lost as soon as it is attained. He has burst into the Utopia of desire, in which only the self exists.... the conquering hero comes. And ... he has been expelled from it, a fall like Lucifer’s, from heaven to hell. The annihilation of the self and the resurrection of the body, to die in pain and to painfully return from death, is the sacred drama of the Sadeian orgasm. (p. 150)

Likewise, Gavin Sourgen asserts: “As intimacy reaches its peak in the point of contact, it also summons its inevitable death, for desire is effectively killed upon consummation” (p. 104). In the same manner, Byron declares that when the gratifying ecstasy is attained, sinful lovers reach a dead-end: “Pleasure’s a sin, and sometimes sin’s a pleasure;/ ...But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure, The path is through perplexing ways, and when The goal is gain’d, we die, you know” (Canto 1).

It is desire and solely desire that consumes Juan. With a profound craving or desire, Juan uncomfortably approaches the desired object, this sterile “hole,” and a galling feeling of anxiety befalls him as the secretly hidden becomes exposed. Ironically, Juan becomes uncannily whole by embracing the “great (w)hole” (Canto 9) which is both the coveted “extimate object” and the origin of his desire. In the process, as he and Catherine become a whole body, the “hole” is not a menacing, desired object

anymore as its proximity ensures wholeness; hence, “the whole empress” (Canto 9) will become the double of her victim. A quotation by Joan Copjec is relevant here: “...when we are at some remove from...the extimate object...[it] appears as a lost part of ourselves, whose absence prevents us from becoming whole; it is then that it functions as the object-cause of our desire. But when our distance from it is reduced, it no longer appears as a partial object, but ... as a complete body, an almost exact double of our own...” (p. 35).

In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter further explicates that the de-sexed female orifice will stay hallow and meaningless unless the male fills its gap: “Woman is negative. Between her legs lies nothing but zero, the sign for nothing, that only becomes something when the male principle fills it with meaning” (p. 4). Likewise, Byron contemplates on how “the sex are always seeking” a perpetual search/venture for “something all-sufficient for the *heart*” and wonders “But how to fill up that same vacant part?” (Canto 14).

Strangely enough, as this uncanny entrance ensures life and wholesomeness, it also exacts demise due to the impossible reconciliation with the mother and excessive erotic consummation. What was intimate and familiar now becomes alien and menacing. In fact, the return of the repressed is extraordinarily terrifying: “the uncanny [*unheimlich*] is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfils this condition” (Freud, p. 245). Thus, the “Cant/Cunt’s” uncanny perception as a maternal penetrable symbol, standing for the passage back to the comfort zone of the womb, the longed-for repressed home, is the canal of the procreation-death cycle as it marks the commencement and termination of life’s journey.

Entirely engrossed in the viscous, self-defeating cycle of consummate lust, Juan embarks on devious adventures with the Russian empress. In her turn, the fatal woman exercises her uncanny power through her unlimited or uncontrolled libido which leads her hapless lover astray by arresting him in a state of reverie, tossing him in a timeless space of death and life, which is fearful and seductive.

Byron’s involuntary, uncanny repetition of the mother’s genitalia in reference to Catherine engenders unexplainable sensations; it is a pivotal point in her development as a femme fatale of double status, the good-terrible mother, portending death and rebirth. It is this particular universal trope of the uncanny and the existentialist irresistible “hole”/“whole,” the alluring light that entices and burns, that males, including Byron and Juan, want to explore despite the possibility of horrific obliteration. In this respect, Byron counsels that Juan “risk’d for Passion, /And Passion’s self must have a spice of frantic” (Canto 12). By sadistically teasing her admirer, the fatal woman Catherine denies Juan’s ultimate sexual gratification which spices up their liaison.

The Freudian uncanny is reiterated and encapsulated in Byron’s predominant mysterious symbol of the “Cant/Cunt” as is the “cause” of: “our exit and our entrance/...Some call thee “the worst cause of war”, but I/ Maintain thou art the *best*: for after all,/ From thee we come, to thee we go....” (Canto 9). This furtive symbol reflects the duality of Catherine’s nature, being the cause of war and peace/love:

“Catherine, who was the grand epitome/ of that great cause of war, or peace...” (Canto 9). Passionate and cruel, Catherine becomes the androgynous fatal, great mother, possessing femininity and masculinity. Such a paradox relishes the power of adulation and destruction. In other words, Byron implies that female sexuality is fatal or magically poisonous and the reason why males will perpetually “rise and fall” (Canto 11). Thus, Catherine’s “nondescript” hole (Canto 9), her swallowing vortex pushes all creation into a vicious cycle of valuational wars...this is what Catherine’s naturalistic lewdness and attitudinal inconsistency portend” (LaChance p. 153) and is what entices Juan into becoming a faithful servant. From this perceptive, the uncanny wholeness of such a hole produces the uncanny sensation that lures the alienated and lost Juan to nostalgically return to his mother’s loins, creating a powerful defamiliarized, nostalgic estrangement of the Freudian notion of the “old and long familiar.”

The uncanniness instigated by the male perception of the mother genitalia could also act as an effective female self-defense weapon: “What arouses horror in oneself will produce the same effect upon the enemy against whom one is seeking to defend oneself” (Freud, p. 274). In this vein, Catherine, the phallic mother, utilizes her unrestrained sexuality as a means to attain more prowess, establish her individuality and weaken the essence of masculinity or genuine male heroism allowing “the *femme fatale* [to] gain her power from her sexuality: this gives her the opportunity to subdue men, this making sexuality a major weapon in her personal relationships” (De Klerk, p. 44). Similarly, Catherine, an epithet of militant feminism, employs her orifices as a scheming instrument. Akin to bloodthirsty vampires, the *femme fatale* uses her metaphorically barren “Cant/Cunt” as lethal armament to sexually overwhelm Juan’s virility causing his eventual downfall. Also, by “drink[ing]” the “blood, the sea of slaughter” (Canto 8) of the defeated slain army, she symbolically reclaims the virginal blood spot formerly shed by masculinity. The image of a terroristic, dehumanized female entangled in danger is quite obvious here. Blood in this sense, no longer signifies conception and the sexual act becomes non-productive; Catherine is a phallic mother, whose life-blood produces an increasing number of corpses.

Due to her cruel inhumanity and unbridled femininity, Catherine has been identified with the uncanny and is “related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror...[and] what excites fear.... ‘[U]ncanny’ certain things... lie within the field of what is frightening” (Freud, p. 219). As a monstrous entity, she could also be considered an unstable liminal female character who steps on the uncanny line of demarcation hovering on the brim of humanity and monstrosity, becoming a woman-monster. Canto eight reflects an uncanny (re)appearance of a similar, horrible image displaying a diabolical prowess and instinctive/bestial nature for dead men (temptation of political power) and men lover (temptation of the flesh) and foregrounds her soullessness and inhumanness as regards politics and sex: “The kingly scourge, the lust of notoriety,/ The millions slain by soldiers for their ration,/ The scenes like Catherine’s boudoir at threescore,/ With Ismail’s storm to soften it the more.” These lines reveal the *femme fatale* as displaying the “bestial nature of human female” (Praz, p. 268). No doubt, this blurring

of the line between her humanity and bestiality is reminiscent of Freud's uncanny. The carnage scene reveals intense sexual perversion that is both transgressive and repulsive portraying Catherine as one who is sexually aroused and relishes in death. This is how she maintains her vital presence, prevailing through domination and sapping her victims' virility.

Byron's archetype of the dark seductresses characterized by an unnatural ravenous sexuality in a feminine vampiric body. This vampire seductress: "fills our imaginations as she embodies contradicting ideals of femininity, such as fragility, strength, beauty, and power. Engaging the symbolic connections of blood and female sexuality, this imagining of female hypersexualization occurs via the intersection of women's political power and sexuality and through renderings of both sexual desire and sexual violence" (Hobson & Anyiwo, 9). By manipulating her sexual appetite and political supremacy, the willful and domineering Catherine the Great displays her independence and exhibits her disparaging vampiric sexuality. She is in complete control of her male counterpart whom she freely manipulates in return for sexual gratification and predictably will be fatally dominated by her. In brief, she is rendered a vampire temptress par excellence who is surprisingly fragile at other times: "... the lamented Lanskoi, who was such/ A lover as had cost her many a tear," (Canto 9), but at the same time made phallic by leading the army, thus establishing dominion through conquest.

Typical of uncanny imagery that is never stable, another enigmatic depiction of Catherine is that of a deep, dangerous disordered whirlwind. As such, she echoes Shelley's contention of "the tempestuous loveliness of terror:"

What a strange thing is man! and what a stranger
Is woman! What a whirlwind is her head,
And what a whirlpool full of depth and danger
... she can change her
Mind like the wind: whatever she has said. (Canto 9)

Byron understood that a female, being fickle and whimsical in nature, with contradictory lustful tastes, the "Inconstancy of Woman" (Canto 3), makes her even more mysterious in her role as a fatal woman. For instance, as the unpredictable, self-centered Catherine was monitoring the news about her victorious Ismail conquest and "thirty thousand slain" (Canto 9) which shows her violence as a terrible mother-ruler, she instantly forgets the horrors of the battlefield, becomes impatient and restless, and so dominated by her powerful passion that she focuses her licentious attention on the charming young Juan "the most beauteous boy" who dispatched the news and now is at her disposal, lying "at her feet" as he will spark new passionate flames:

O Catherine! (for of all interjections,
To thee both *oh!* and *ah!* belong of right
In love and war) how odd are the connexions
Of human thoughts, which jostle in their flight!
Just now *yours* were cut out in different sections:

First Ismail's capture caught your fancy quite;
Next of new knights, the fresh and glorious batch;
 And *thirdly* he who brought you the despatch! (Canto 9)

Praz designates the femme fatale's image as a praying mantis and her consumed male victim as a passive, obscure youth "inferior either in condition or in physical exuberance to the woman" (p. 215). This description fits Juan's tempting prelapsarian innocence and suitably describes his relationship with the rapacious Empress whose "majesty... liked to gaze on youth" (Canto 9). Being a passive and manipulated character, he is no doubt the willing partner, a typical prey of predatory dominant women: "...He said/ Little, but to the purpose..." (Canto 9). Furthermore, Byron fashions love-sex images combining her power in battle and bed. As she contemplates on her former battles, Catherine "look'd on the match/ Between these nations as a main of cocks,/ Wherein she liked her own to stand like rocks" (Canto 9). Here is a veiled insinuation that depicts her as an appalling fatal female figure, a devil female autocrat, combining sexual, martial deviations with perversions, thus dehumanizing herself in the pursuit of unrestrained sexual joy. No doubt, the double nature of Catherine makes her an epitome of the good and evil, mother-lover/devil-ruler figure.

In Russia, ice becomes Eden: "Made ice seem paradise" (Canto 10), and Catherine is the Russian fallen Eve or Eve's descendent in this icy paradisaal haven. Juan, "[s]educed by... dangerous examples" (Canto 10), tastes the prohibited, sexual fruit of this earthly paradise, which triggers his downfall and accelerates his physical degradation and metaphorical death. Since he is continuously "swimming in the sentiment of joy" (Canto 8), overindulgence in sexual pleasure affects his health, so "Don Juan grew... a little dissipated;" (Canto 10).

Possessed by such a unique power, the empress attests to her individuality and independence, by not being subsumed by her momentary devotee. Since the older Catherine is like a mother figure to young Juan and as she is the mother of Russia, then she is the epitome of Eve, the mother of all humanity: "All, praised the empress's *maternal* love" (Canto 10). When the tempting empress and the tempted young man were entangled in a lustful relationship, Juan, drained by the power of temptation, gradually collapses and descends into the abyss of hell, making his way through the main entrance from which all humans were delivered. This sexual contact and the incestuous connection constitute the bulk of the Freudian scenario and cause the uncanny effect; the male lover has been there but does not recall when and how he experienced birth through his mother's organs. Reentering the old, long familiar cocoon is uncanny and "unhomely."

Going through the mother's private organ again, Juan is revisiting this "unhomely" familiar home. This allusion that Byron makes to "a former world," prefigures the Freudian uncanniness of a repressed previous home [Heim] that eventually leads Juan to the mythical dwelling place of the dead: the underworld: "When this world shall be *former*, underground/ Thrown topsy-turvy, twisted, crisp'd, and curl'd," (Canto 9). When the previous and "long familiar" that had long been repressed and eliminated from the mind suddenly returns to haunt our inner thoughts, the uncanny effect resurfaces. Entering the

“home” is “unhomely” as these previously repressed sexual desires, buried in one’s psyche, become lewd, frightening, prohibited and repellent, causing anxiety. After the separation from the mother, the repressed past threateningly returns and so does the uncanny forbidden reunion of Juan’s return voyage, a fatal, irreversible journey into the womb of hell and “‘hell’ is interpreted as an uncanny reversal of the mother’s womb and vagina” (Masschelein, p. 51). Therefore, engaging into immoderate, tabooed sexuality and dissipation with the Russia female monarch is compared to plunging into hell, resulting in Juan’s exhaustion, degeneration and sickness, leaving him spiritually and physically demoralized and enfeebled: “the hue/ Of health but flicker’d with a faint reflection/ Along his wasted cheek....” (Canto 10) In effect, it is Catherine’s apparently uncanny ability to feed off her victim’s energy with such an uninhabited, omnivorous appetite that gives Byron’s sexually dangerous femme fatale an aura of novelty and individuality. Indeed, Byron successfully produces the uncanny effects (those of destruction and annihilation) of the entanglement with the sexual drives of the fatal and the fated, and as Freud sarcastically notes: “Love is home-sickness” (p. 15).

A vivid salacious icon of an unpredictable predatory nymphomaniac, a self-centered female with uncontrollable erotic ambition, is the epitome of the consumptive Byronic femme fatale icon whose lover suffers from romantic despair to the point that the unfortunate, consumed, masochistic lover turns suicidal over his femme fatale and metaphorically and willingly dies of consumption. Taking the uncanny role as a dangerously queer, sexual, consumptive monster, Catherine drives Juan, a victim of sickness, to his sickbed. As a psychic sado-masochistic agent, she dangerously drains the life from Juan who becomes almost suicidal. As he attempts to willingly fuse with the devastating ideal of the femme fatale, he opens his own grave to accentuate his death. However, Catherine remains intact, indifferent and powerful. She also ironically incorporates the good mother archetype as: “Catherine was generous” (Canto 9). The liaison with the Russian empress also instigated Juan’s rebirth, as she truly loved him: “Love had made Catherine make each lover’s fortune,” (Canto 9).

Byron reiterates the same perception about the fatality of love and lust leading to sickness in the twelfth canto: “Love or lust makes man sick.” Immediately Catherine prefigures that his ailment is deadly, by cold-bloodedly diminishing him into “a condition/ Which augur’d of the dead”, (Canto 10), reechoing and foreshadowing Freud’s notion of the relationship between love and homesickness. This demonstrates that she is self-interested and heartless, unconcerned about her lover whom she has manipulated exceedingly well to satisfy her never ending sexual needs. Charged with cruelty and indifference, she reduces him into insignificance and incompetence to the extent that Juan, her nemesis, becomes a humiliated, morally degraded sexual object or commodity, hence symbolically and psychologically dead. It could be possible he could not adapt to Russia’s cold climate or most probably he was sexually possessed and consumed by Catherine, who “used her favourites too well” (Canto 9). Being very well consumed, “[Juan] was sick—no’t was not the word *sick* I meant—/ But he had seen so much love before” (Canto, p. 12). Accordingly, deep anxiety and heavy stress from this morally degrading and sexually draining relationship became an ordeal that psychologically and physically

enfeebled him.

Eccentrically, it seems Juan's erotic pilgrimage is nothing but a Freudian death wish! Could Juan be mysteriously suffering from a feeling of guiltiness? Flight, then, is his only salvation. It is time that the fallen Juan emancipates himself from the snare/dream of Catherine's maddening sexuality and sexual enslavement. Indeed, he was the slave to her sexuality and to the whims of her passion. Here comes the consummation of Juan's unfulfilled desire and the culmination of his sexual servitude that curiously kept serving an ungraspable, inaccessible, teasing other. Gavin Sourgen explains that: "desire is a galvanizing yet unreachable distance from the object of curiosity as it keeps circling around us, never attaching itself to a... graspable station... the self-defeatism of this ever forward-reaching enactment means that we are held captive by our very captivation in an impenetrable other which teases toward consummation" (p. 108).

However, losing her young paramour was not a great loss since she is self-determined to seek solace in time and in a score of playmates ready to take Juan's place: "But time, the comforter, will come at last;/ And four-and-twenty hours, and twice that number/ of candidates requesting to be placed", (Canto 10). At this point, Byron's femme fatale displays a masculine biological sexual appetite. A man-hunting empress is the best title conferred upon Catherine who is a typical sexual predator, recurrently replacing her paramours at all times ready for unlimited erotic adventures that will spark new passions, thus taking an active position in leading love affairs and freely selecting her victims are her genuine intentions. What Byron implies here is that not only men but also women act on their desires attempting to attain sexual gratification. Unfortunately, it is clear that she is toying with Juan's heart; however, the game is over now. This is indicative of the empress's variable/insatiable erotic appetite, her maddening desire for unlimited sensual pleasures.

Furthermore, the repetitive allusion to the "Cant/Cunt" imagery provides a genuine, sublime portrayal of the promiscuous fornications that a voluptuous femme fatale craves for, but this time with reference to fluids associated with the dampness of the mother's genital organ. Unmanliness is again and again generated by the re-emergence of a repressed and forgotten acquainted image that should have remained concealed. Uncanny sensations thus arise when Byron poeticizes and sexualizes Catherine, comparing her vulva to the "sea of life's dry land!" (Canto 9) or to an empty desert, impatiently awaiting to be replenished with meaning. Such an amusingly unorthodox comparison carries numerous contemplative and degenerate connotations, pertaining to aimless erotic passions, uncontrollable female seduction, unavoidable doom and the viciousness of human nature.

In praise of the wet "Cant" and the erotic magnetism employed by its uncanniness, Byron describes how males are fatally distracted by the erotic attraction to such a tempting body of water, so he pauses to contemplate on how "all souls are dipt/ In thy perennial fountain: how man *fell* I/ Know not..." (Canto 9). The expansion of the erotic allusion to the "Cant" in the form of the Gothic fountain metaphor insinuates at hypnotic sexuality and the internal splitting of this word to mean ritual, spiritual purification is in itself uncanny. Such an inviting fountain, along with its everlasting moisture, is a

metonymy of the female private organ; it evokes inquisitiveness to the point that dipped souls attain spiritual cleansing during the uncanny experience of baptism. Here the fatal woman audaciously savors an exhibited fulfilling sexuality although profane yet purifying, overtly displaying a transgressive thirst for unlimited pleasure and sexual abandon. The philosophical meaning here lies in the male's perpetual thirst for adventure, love and sex. In this baptismal experience, Juan hypnotically undergoes a dauntless pilgrimage to the eternal sexual fountain, attempting to be embraced by the "ocean of eternity" (Canto, p. 10) without paying heed to its hazards.

Drinking from the elixir of erotic love, man falls prey to the femme fatale's detrimental "Cant". Intensified, uncanny sensations are aroused by the repetitive allusions to the female vagina, which is a concealed/repressed part of the psyche. The frequent recurrence of the Freudian wish, the vagina fantasy, must have stimulated a sense of alarm to *Don Juan* readers. Byron wittingly portrays a tantalizing femme fatale whose yearning males urgently "beg" to experience "the joys of drinking" as they "[s]uck'd in the moisture, which like nectar stream'd;" every "drop" of such a nectarous drink, propelling unsuppressed sexual appetite, promises the "taste of heaven" (Canto 2). Byron makes Catherine seem like a supernatural, less human figure, transcending into an immortal goddess. The "rosy, ripe, and succulent" (Canto 9) femme fatale is a suitable description of such a monstrous sexual predator whose succubus motive is unlimited erotic bliss, starting or ending with "a touch/ Of sentiment" (Canto 9).

Except for her imperialistic tactics, Catherine is not as intellectual as the other fatal woman Adeline. However, both femmes fatales including their double Byron "are strongly acted on by what is nearest" (Canto 16). In this way they become omnisexual hedonistic beasts, seeking sexual practices ubiquitously as their utmost motivation is pursuing pleasure. Acting by who is nearest at this point, "Russia's royal harlot" (Canto 10), Catherine, is amazed at the beauty of young Juan with whom she experienced sensual, sublime love or "the love of sentiment" (Canto 9). In this respect, sex becomes the genuine outcome of "love, or lust" (Canto 9) [it seems that Byron does not differentiate between the two], and this natural process accompanied by the luxurious "rout" of the lovers' sensations is what gives true "joy" to Byron/Juan and his femme fatale:

Which make all bodies anxious to get out
Of their own sand-pits, to mix with a goddess, ...
How beautiful that moment! and how odd is
That fever which precedes the languid rout
Of our sensations! What a curious way. (Canto 9)

4. Adeline Amundeville

As expected, Juan escapes from the repressed familiar, involuntarily returning only to reenact a novel fatal encounter in which he is lost once again in the unfamiliar. He again becomes a self-alienated, tempting prey to the powerful, unbridled sexuality of the most fatal woman in *Don Juan*. It seems that

Juan is doomed and forever haunted by the uncanny as he repetitively appears with the wrong woman in the wrong place to “proceed with pleasure.../ Beloved and loving many” in order “[t]o love again, and be again undone” (Canto 1). Surprisingly, Juan still has the incentive to repeat another love escapade, to love and be loved, and eventually redestroyed by another caustic femme fatale.

Out of thirteen females in *Don Juan*, Juan is about to have the most perilous relationship with his hostess Adeline Amundeville, “The fair most fatal Juan ever met,” (Canto 13), the double of Catherine, another erratic woman of natural sentiments, possessing “that vivacious versatility” (Canto 16). Like Catherine, Lady Adeline is a strongly individuated character and a perfect model of the good and evil mother. In the fourteenth canto, Byron explicitly acknowledges that Adeline possesses a dual personality: “Of double nature, and thus doubly named.” Associated with the oxymoronic images of ice and fire (a snow capped volcano), Adeline’s dual nature, being fair/foul and hot/cold, maintains a two-fold unpredictable status of the “fair most fatal” femme fatale who looks “not indifferent” by appearing to be cold “beneath the snow,” while her instinctive, overflowing impulses, boiling with passion within, are ready for eruption: “As a volcano holds the lava more” (Canto 13). Expressed differently, this repressed feminine spirit is the embodiment of hellfire and rebellion since her dormant, intoxicating passion is ignited at the slightest spark: “So let the often-used volcano go/ Poor thing! How frequently, by me and others,/ It hath been stirr’d up till its smoke quite smothers” (Canto 13).

The variability/unattainability of such a fatal woman is repeated to emphasize her hypersexual nature that is typical of fatal females who remain sexually fluid even inside an icy bottle. This salacious metaphor is again reminiscent of Catherine’s and Adeline’s sexual orifice, prepared to quench a masculine pilgrimage’s thirst since its essence promises “immortal” droplets:

What say you to a bottle of champagne?

Frozen into a very vinous ice,

Which leaves few drops of that immortal rain,

Yet in the very centre, past all price,

About a liquid glassful will remain;

And this is stronger than the strongest grape

Could e’er express in its expanded shape: (Canto 13)

The clustering of recurrent sexually laden imagery alluding to Adeline produces an uncanny effect. Such a flowing, dynamic imagery of lava and wine possesses an erotic flavor of the distracting and drifting outlandish “whole spirit” of a femme fatale whose aromatic “hidden nectar” is the purest drink, as it contains an unmatched sexual essence: “T is the whole spirit brought to a quintessence;/... A hidden nectar under a cold presence” (Canto 13). This is another indication of Adeline’s dual/double nature; only through penetrating her cold existence, her warm passion overflows. This is a refined image of the vampiric femme fatale who drains her victim’s sexual energy but remains disguised in the suggestive figure of a voluptuous fatal woman with sexual cravings. Driven by a plethora of sexual yearnings which her male victims find irresistible, she tends to feed on her victim just as an insect

consumes nectar until the flower withers.

Adeline's dual nature, evoking the uncanny romantic impulses of the enthralling and appalling female, indicates that she is both a good and terrible mother. For instance, cunning and shrewd, her flexible character enables her to master the art of acting. After showing an interest in Juan, she pretends to have noble intentions: "Now when she once had ta'en an interest/ In any thing, however she might flatter/ Herself that her intentions were the best,/ Intense intentions are a dangerous matter:" (Canto 14). However, Byron divulges Adeline's uncanny subjective interior, warning that her concentrated intentions and thoughts are hazardous since actions are the best criteria for judging morality.

According to Diane Hoeveler, "the ambiguities and conflicts between female appearance and reality consistently characterize the femme fatale" (p. 196). In Freud's opinion, "We can also speak of a living person as uncanny, and we do so when we ascribe evil intentions to him" (p. 243). Accordingly, Adeline seems chaste as she does "with an air of innocence.../...ponder how to save [Juan's] soul" (Canto 15), but in reality, she is a hypocrite: "But Adeline determined Juan's wedding/ In her own mind, and that's enough for woman:" (Canto 15). In another instance, she elicits the sympathy of readers since she attempts futilely to spiritualize her emotions towards Juan: "Although she was not evil nor meant ill;/ But Destiny and Passion spread the net" (Canto 13), but Byron bluntly and bitterly accuses Englishwomen in general of immorality: "You are *not* a moral people, and you know it" (Canto 11).

Byron does the same with Adeline whose eyes are described as "malicious" (Canto 15) and whom he associates with a "lurking demon" (Canto 14) assuming the role of a femme fatale, responsively acting sexual towards Juan. Performing in a non-platonic, transgressive manner renders her a sexual predator: a femme fatale. An uncanny fact about the Byronic fatal women is that they are resourceful to the extent that they "are strongly acted on by what is near" (Canto 16). Like Catherine, Adeline's nearness to evil makes her corruptive and destructive. For this reason, in order to unleash her feelings, she hovers nearby Juan who stimulates in her a "whole interest intense" leading to "a fresh sensation" (Canto 15). Hence, she grows more compassionate towards Juan in an uncanny manner.

Charles Donelan describes this flexibility/fluidity as "the paradox of women's psychic mobility" in which women are seemingly attached to their male partner and simultaneously detached by giving rein to their imagination; these women uncannily reveal "their ability to conform their personalities to the needs and desires of those around them, while at the same time remaining emotionally and imaginatively detached by involving themselves in fantasy" (p. 11). This social and psychic mobility of Adeline's feelings is more evident in the following lines that reveal her manipulation and improvisation:

So well she acted all and every part

Which many people take for want of heart.

They err—'t is merely what is call'd mobility,

A thing of temperament and not of art,

Though seeming so, from its supposed facility;

And false—though true; for surely they're sincerest. (Canto 16)

Her dual nature thus arouses uncanny feelings in readers. On one hand, she is mesmerizingly charming, a good mother archetype described by Byron as “glorious as a diamond richly set” (Canto 15); her glamour is incorruptible and permanent as she “sparkled through three glowing winters” (Canto 14). Furthermore, she is a cultured and decent aristocrat: “To all she was polite without parade;” (Canto 13) with a noble descent: “Was high-born, wealthy by her father's will,” (Canto 13). Having a refined taste in literature, this lady is also praised for being a cultivated intellect: “For Adeline is half a poetess,” (Canto 16) as well as associated with a pure drink: “Adeline was of the purest vintage,” (Canto 15). On the other hand, her beauty is destructive and intoxicating; she is an immoral/evil mother since her pure drink will presently be “decanted” as Juan is about to savor such “unmingled essence of the grape;” (Canto 15). It is inferred from this overheated image that Adeline possesses powerful erotic yearnings that are more disparaging than that of Catherine. Byron's portrayal of such a unique, fatal character embodying corruption and loveliness concurrently provokes a novel appreciation of a sublime form of polluting and exquisite beauty, both contaminated and contaminating. Unfortunately, the aftermath of this immoral encounter revealing Adeline's surreptitious lustfulness “may undergo adulteration” (Canto 15). This is an ominous sign foreshadowing the downfall of Adeline and Juan: “O Death! thou dunnest of all duns! thou daily/ Knockest at doors, at first with modest tap,” (Canto 15).

An openly sexual character such as Adeline is a direct reference to the femme fatale who appears more libidinous than her lover. The intentional reiterated, uncanny tropes of fluidity continue to carry an air of mystery, indicating a flowing state streaming throughout the verses: “liquid words run on apace,” (Canto 14). These repeated fatal signs warn of impending, inevitable destruction, especially when the narrator admits: “And what I write I cast upon the stream,/ To swim or sink...” (Canto 14). The most obvious fatal metaphor in *Don Juan* is the one that compares Lady Adeline to a whole “brilliant ocean” (Canto 14), associating her with watery, boundless depths employed to allure victims to her arena and exert her destructive power over them. She becomes a sea nymph with super erotic power luring her mislead male victims. Associating the ubiquitous image of water to fatal females is uncommon; it seems that Byron intentionally did not imitate other Romantics who featured blood vampires in their poems, such as Coleridge's “Christabel”.

Similar to the blood motif, the water symbol is reminiscent of unruly desires and excessive female sexuality. As a femme fatale, she is uncannily associated with watery depths and described as an unpossessable “ocean woman” who requires cautious navigation. This alluring fatal female invites males to embrace and enjoy “cruising o'er” (Canto 13), progressively enticing them into fruitless erotic encounters since her dreary cant-ridden domain, although a concretized earthly paradise, is a crisis looming. An uncanny, menacing sign of her possessiveness and unattainability seems omnipotent, yet elusive. Furthermore, the laws of nature and female sexuality, like the ocean, can neither be dominated nor repressed. Once unbridled, the essence of Adeline's unfettered sexual passions, being obscure, can neither be contained by Juan nor by any other paramour. Byron uses the ocean metaphor to caution

readers against the horror of women's unrestrained sexuality. Adeline, dazzling but lethal, disguises her perils and hellishness. Whoever gets close to "Sweet Adeline" (Canto 13) with the "not exactly ascertain'd," (Canto 13) "wavering spirit" (Canto 14) is bound to be doomed, especially that Byron delineates her as a "Queen-Bee" (Canto 13).

Apparently, Byron connects the uncanny, scary amorous experience with the woman as symbolic of the ocean: while "cruising o'er the ocean woman," unfortunately "a voyage or vessel [might be] lost" (Canto 13). Moreover, the woman as ocean uncannily enchants males who are at the same time fearful of being engulfed by the ocean. This is an exaggerated metaphor of the engulfing mother-lover, submerged in an intense sexual act and erotic escapade, insinuating once again the uncanniness of the female genitals that allure males to revisit the former home or "Heimlich." Consequently, the amorous act appears so alarming that lovers are anxious to be swallowed up in the dankness of the femme fatale's genitalia which is an irresistible somatic grave.

Instead of experiencing rebirth by instinctively reuniting with the mother, the male lovers are doomed to initiate a carnal bonding with their former home. Endowed with special, sadistic powers of a bee queen and an oceanic woman, Adeline becomes an uncanny fallen woman, desired but dangerous. The image of Adeline's flawed "vacant" eyes and heart (Canto 14) is as dangerous as her "abyss of thought" (Canto 9) even "wise men [who] don't know much of navigation;" will "capsize" (Canto 9) right away and head towards hell, being swallowed by the fatal female. According to LaChance, Byron's "sublime and cunnentric language" helps him tailor "Adeline into his most menacing and magnetic figure of nihilism.... A siren of such disastrous charm, she might engulf Pyrrho himself in a tidal wave of doubt and hardly know the damage she had done" (pp. 160-161). The physical and intellectual charismatic nature of Adeline is menacing to the point that even philosophers are snared into this siren's deep abyss.

As their relationship further develops, the intimate, immoral exposure between Adeline and Juan is blurred and becomes even more thrilling: "It is not clear that Adeline and Juan/ Will fall; but if they do't will be their ruin," but Byron forewarns that a dangerous passion is fatal as it brings "man and woman to the brink/ Of ruin" (Canto 14). In another analogous destructive, apocalyptic image, Byron prefigures that the ruin of unethical passionate love is inevitable: "Its inner crash is like an earthquake's ruin" (Canto 14). Through this anticipatory image, Byron hints at the fact that the Spaniard and the English lady will fall in love and that the allure of female love is treacherous. Fate plays a role in Adeline's immoral sexual entanglements with Juan in the same way Venus and Mars are involved in infidelity. In order to foster the image of the femme fatale's enchanting destructiveness, Byron associates Adeline, the British Eve and "siren," to three renowned fallen femme fatales: Venus, Helen of Troy and Eve. Apparently, in the fifteenth canto, the attraction between the Spaniard and the Englishwoman, similar to that of Mars and Venus, is confirmed; thus, ruination and misadventure are determined. It is love that Adeline laments: "And as for love-O love!-We will proceed./ The Lady Adeline Amundeville," (Canto 15) who was once "right honourable;" yet she "ran a risk of growing

less so;" (Canto 15). The sexually promiscuous relationship between Juan and Adeline becomes defamatory after their infidelity is laid bare, and as Byron foreshadowed earlier, if they were to fall, they would be ruined. Therefore, the fatal woman stays unswervingly fatal to her lover, leaving him emotionally and psychologically scarred.

Freud further elucidates what triggers the uncanny effect: "an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality" (p. 244). Blurring the distinctive boundaries between the conscious and unconscious or reality and fantasy produces an uncanny effect since it creates an experience of uncertainty, apprehension, insecurity and eccentricity. Juan feels misguided and skeptical about Adeline's cabalistic enigma, especially in the way she performs as a socialite and as a respectable gentlewoman. As Juan "cast[s] a glance/ On Adeline while playing her grand role," (Canto 16) he has "[s]ome doubt how much of Adeline was *real*" (Canto 16) and hallucinates whether she is living or inanimate.

Furthermore, Freud declares that "one of the most successful devices for easily creating uncanny effects is to leave the reader in uncertainty whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton" (p. 227). This mental confusion is referred to by Freud as "intellectual uncertainty" (p. 233). In this respect, Adeline's uncanny nature bewilders Juan's intellectual uncertainty; this uncanny transparency scares him. Adeline is thus a delusive, wicked archetypal seductress located at the juncture of the uncanny/supernatural and the human. She is both real and unreal in Juan's imagination and no female was able to exercise such power over him as she does. However, what intensifies Juan's uncanny fear is Adeline's liminal, ambiguous nature which adds to the charm of her elusiveness and her ungraspable existence. Instinctively, Juan highlights her psychic reality slightly more than her physical existence, revealing the haunting effect of her inscrutably enigmatic nature upon his erotic thoughts. Operating as a typical femme fatale, Adeline persists in deluding and magnetizing her victim's fantasies thus leading him astray. On the physical level, the aftermath of the intimate act, that enticing fantasy, is a stolen ecstasy which consumes and destroys Juan. Eventually, Juan, the legendary seducer, is ultimately awakened into the reality of his scandal with the seductive and ungratifying Adeline.

5. The Byronic Femme Fatale Motif

The aesthetics of the Gothic, related to the mystical, uncanny, exotic and horrific, seem so remarkable to Byron that he blended romance with his Gothic imagination to refashion his own version of the fatal woman. The association of the femme fatale with the uncanny signifies an influential relationship between the real world and supernatural realm. Having a fragmented personality, being a demolisher of the other but preserver of herself, Byron's femme fatale is an incarnation of the clash between reality and unreality, between life and art. Throughout his treatment of the femme fatale, Byron demarcates a fatal Gothic character unable to be concretized through reason alone, unaccompanied by wild imagination. Although unromantic and unsentimental, Byron's fatal females are unable to exist without

the intrusion of the Gothic fancy.

The uncanny representations of both femme fatales understudy become the highlight of the Freudian uncanny phenomenon and the Gothic aesthetics in Byron's dark Romantic imagination. As a genuine Gothic villainess, the Byronic femme fatale is an uncanny fear-provoking entity, creating horror in her acquiescent victim due to her "love's capricious power" (Canto 2). That is why Byron exclaims "Alas! the love of women! it is known/ To be a lovely and a fearful thing;" (Canto 2). This uncanny entity inflicting "pleasure and pain" (Canto 4) is what constitutes her extraordinarily uniqueness. In another instance, Byron laments the destructive power of love, "O, Love! what is it in this world of ours/ Which makes it fatal to be loved?" (Canto 3).

Certainly, Byron has an unfettered tendency to declare the superiority of the fatal woman image through his delineation of her uncanny ability to shatter the life of Don Juan. The latter is the quintessential womanizer and patriarchal seducer, who fatefully becomes the seduced and the consumed. Ironically, such sadistic and dominating annihilation becomes a feminine privilege, shaking off male dominance and authority. Power relations here are paradoxically subverted and reversed. The stereotypical mysterious other, this scary uncanny woman who trespasses normative codes openly and intentionally breaks socio-cultural norms. She willfully becomes transgressive, alluring and dangerous, thus more frightening. Through their sexually oriented transgression, Catherine and Adeline are two appealing and terrifying liminal females: good/evil mothers. In effect, both prove to be foreboding and forbidding due to their liminality, making the reader and lover speculate about what to expect. They combine in their character what is recognized and trusted with what is hazardous; they can even be nurturing but in an erotic sense. Such a description fits the type of Byron's uncanny woman.

Successfully does Byron design an immortal archetype of his femme fatale as she will perpetually persist to flourish as a heimlich (canny or homey) and unheimlich (uncanny or unhomely) sexual icon because she is implanted in our imagination and cultural consciousness, frequently haunting our psyche to inflame its sexual imagination. Although an infertile great sinner, the Byronic fatal woman seems to be extraordinarily enduring. It is possible that the rhetoric of such portrayal denotes a vital surviving image in the imagination of both characters and readers. A female hero's uniqueness and exoticism is Byron's specialty, and the more divergent the fatal features are, the more likely that they will be imprinted in the minds of readers and victims.

With her unpredictable passion, the femme fatale promises ideal sensory/erotic experiences and novel artistic liking(s). As an ultimate embodiment of the Sadeian nihilistic hedonism, she excites male-sexual fantasies and as representative of archetypal evil, she is bursting with caprices; her status is characterized by instability and variations. Her one stable inclination is her hyper sexuality that inflames her male victims: she lusts for power by obtaining mastery over her lover. Byron's fallen woman is a creature of hardcore, sweeping erotic passion who turns her male's sensual fancies into loathsome nightmares. The polarizations of temptation and repulsion, of good and evil, and of positive and negative paradigms cohabit in Byron's fatal woman figure. The uncanny effect of the femme fatale

who projects “joy... and dread of some mischance” takes its fatal, heavy toll upon Juan: “In Juan’s look, pain, pleasure, hope, fear, mix’d” (Canto 8). This strange synthesis of dismay and captivation is aroused by the sublime nature of the femme fatale whose psychological state is undeniably psychosexual in nature. She is a disruptive force conquering the psychic space of the other/lover and forewarning of destruction.

Motivated by excessive debauchery, the femme fatale is a woman of sensation and action who is driven by instinct. Byron’s “maxim (not quite new)/ “Eat, drink, and love...” (Canto 2) further illustrates this notion. A predator as well as a huntress marks her dynamic identity and performance; she is prepared to snare her victim and stifle him by her erotic charge, from which she is overwhelmed by her ecstasy. Possessing an uncontrollable, libidinous appetite, she emerges as a powerfully dominant hedonist in the way she expresses her sensuality regardless of its consequences. Being literally and metaphorically empowered, she is a menace on her paramour to the extent of being unable to endure the sexual rapport with her. Her voracious desires along with her vacillating, puissant passions are pernicious enough to consume anguished male lovers. Undeniably, Byron’s portrayal of the fatal woman that rules the majority of the cantos in *Don Juan* comply with Virginia Allen’s characterization of the femme fatale. Through his artful depiction of such a deadly seductress, Byron’s philosophical doctrine is exposed: when sexual discourses are repressed, sexual desires, instead of being silenced, will be definitely provoked. To put it differently, released sexual passion proves fatal. Such being the case, transgressive erotic encounters and excessive indulgence in sex are the aftermath of repressing natural feelings and sexuality in both sexes. This philosophy is demonstrated in *Don Juan* which further exposes cultural fears as pertaining to an obsession with female sexuality. Ultimately, Byron exhibits his final opinion about female’s active individualism and the masculine fear of the uncanny power of female instinctive dominating sexuality. Although stemming from natural feelings, woman’s sexuality is intrinsically destructive for the male, as he proceeds on a circular pilgrimage, repeating Don Juanism stories in his chase of momentary pleasure. Thus, *Don Juan* is rendered an erotophobic mock epic, especially for male onlookers.

6. The Double Motif

A psychoanalytical issue, the Freudian “double” proclaims its supremacy in *Don Juan*, a poem of uncanny doubles. Freud treats the phenomenon of the double manifesting itself:

... in every shape and in every degree of development. Thus we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another—by what we should call telepathy—, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing—the repetition of the same features

of character-traits. (p. 234)

Doubling of characters adds an additional uncanny effect to the ambiance of Byron's poem. In a broader sense, the Byronic femme fatale could be considered the double of the repressed Victorian woman in the way this desirous sexual predator, along with her sexual libertarianism, makes the image of the fatal woman offensive to the Victorian era of reason and scientific progress and to its restrictive moral codes and social laws. This type mirrors a repressed woman's subconscious, epitomizing what was insular and decent in English culture. In effect, the hidden secrets of female prowess are exposed by Byron to threaten the Victorian's domestic sphere, destabilize their conformity and mock their respectability. Ironically, the fatal woman's presence as a literary and social motif empowers females, foreshadowing upcoming female movements calling for political, economic and social equality. In a repressed society, repressed sexuality transforms into violence, transgression and regression.

On another level, *Don Juan* reveals the technique of doubling in the pairing of Adeline and Catherine. Adeline is most definitely undistinguishable from Catherine in action and thought as seen before. In other words, Adeline is a renewed repetition of Catherine demonstrating similar characterization. Could it be that Byron, who is the Byronic hero in *Don Juan*, is proposing that these uncanny female figures are an appalling creation of his consciousness and the glamorous calculations of his own fantasies? A psychological reading of *Don Juan* reveals that the femme fatale is not only the offspring of Byron's masculine imagination but also serves as the double of Byron's self, a biological self with unleashed natural sexuality posing a dangerous threat on Juan, who is in turn Byron's double. Since Juan is Byron's double, the narcissistic poet cannot but submit to the ideal, aesthetic power of his femme fatale creation and falls in love with his creative transcendent art, and as Duffy remarks "It is the masochistic submission of the artist to his art, knowing that to merge with the ideal would be death but that to live without fully possessing it is unrelenting pain" (p. 158).

Catherine and Adeline are rendered as symbolic projections of Byron's psyche, more specifically a reflection of his inner, dark psychic struggles of his divided self and a projection of his alarm concerning fatal women. The frightening effect of the figure of the double proceeds as the image of the fatal woman unfolds. Interestingly, the fatal woman is also Byron's double in that she/they mirror his fearsome, unbridled sensual nature. In psychoanalysis, the femme fatale archetype becomes the projection of man's anima to use a Jungian term; the fatal woman, who springs from any writer's unconscious, becomes the female every male bears within his unconscious. To Jung, the anima is "bipolar and can therefore appear positive one moment and negative the next; now young, now old; now mother, now maiden; now a good fairy, now a witch; now a saint, now a whore" (p. 199). At the very beginning of *Don Juan*, Byron overtly declares: "My heart is feminine" (Canto 1). Like that of his whimsical fatal woman, Byron's erotic impulses and sensations immediately emerge to meet those of his double; she is his double image exposing his omnivorous and versatile sexuality.

The Byronic hero of the comic epic *Don Juan* is not Juan; it is the narrator or Byron himself. Although the Byronic hero and the Byronic dark fatal woman are of no established type, they could be considered

double since they are mysterious, noble, cunning, intelligent, ruthless, violent, seductive, emotional and manipulative. This familiar but uncanny doubling of the poet's immortal spirit and that of his creation is a sublimated manifestation of the repressed innate desires and instinctive erotic drives of the id, to use a Freudian concept. Arraying the doubling motif, Byron preserves the longevity of his created femme fatale archetype. Most definitely, Adeline who is Catherine's double (or vice versa) develops as Byron's double, his anima, another petrifying, unnerving division or extension of his wild, uncontrolled self.

7. Conclusion

I have analyzed Byron's femme fatale's archetype using Freud's concept of the uncanny to unravel Byron's creativity in presenting such an aesthetic and literary motif. Byron's aesthetic genius, his *magnus opus* *Don Juan*, is a creative, thrilling dark Romantic portrait of extensive sexuality. What Byron paints is a complex, yet versatile portrayal of an inimitable figure of the uncanny female. With such fluidity and mobility, the Byronic femme fatale gains intellectual independence, individuality and inaccessibility.

The Byronic version of the femme fatale possesses divergent qualities of the negative aesthetics of what is frightening such as her hedonism, elusiveness and outlandishly synthesizing adoration with horror and inflicting pleasure/pain upon her lover which are in line with the Burkean sublime and the Sadeian woman. Such features embody the sublimity of female power that males find uncanny and appealing. Being attractively horrifying and horrifyingly attractive, the femme fatale is a paragon of the contradictory good and wicked mother and pleasurable and painful lover. Such instability foregrounds her liminality which animated Byron's imagination. Through the creation of this attractive and intoxicating soul dispatcher, Byron's prowess exhibits his awareness of the macabre aspects of life and sound understanding of the psychological and moral paradigm of modernity.

Being a common truth and a social secret, the femme fatale, along with her whimsical sexual desires, is uncannily part of a male's subconscious psychic development. The most overarching perception of such a persona is her extraneous passion with which she attains an immortal individuality that finds resonance in the masculinist nature of the collective unconsciousness. A final subsequent question lingers: Is not it uncanny when Byron's *Don Juan*, which precedes Freud's essay by around a hundred years, remarkably forestalls upcoming psychoanalytic concepts?

A possible gallery of uncanny femme fatales might be further studied in Byron's oeuvres, ranging from Julia, Haidee, Dudu, and the Dutchess Gulbeyaz (*Don Juan*), Leila (*The Giaour*), Zuleika (*The Bride of Abydos*), Gulnare (*The Corsair*), Khaled (*Lara*), Francesca (*Oriental Tales*), Astarte (*Manfred*), or Myrrha (*Sardanapalus*).

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