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Improvisation and Mobility

Abstracts

Improvisation as a Means of Communicative Exchange in Byron's Poetry

Improvisation plays an important role in Byron's poetry, especially in his later poems like *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. Byron's improvisation has distinct functional goals. As J. McGann argues, the structure of Byron's poetry is communicative exchange and his improvisational manner enhances the communicative intercourse between poet and audience. Following the Italian tradition of improvisation, Byron introduces a new aspect of Romantic style – unpremeditated art of light and ordinary conversation characterized by seeming naturalness and ease. Byron acts as a social and public poet who uses the art of improvisation to address his audience directly, comment on actual social and political issues, expressing his thoughts in a digressive style. Sometimes, as in *Beppo*, he even criticizes himself for deviating from the subject. Byron himself underlines his spontaneous style, especially in *Don Juan* by declaring: 'I never know the word that will come next' or 'I have forgotten what I meant to say'. Byron's improvisation promotes the conversational style and conversely his conversational style gives the effect of continual improvisation. Writing in *ottava rima*, Byron uses these structural techniques to emphasize satiric digression. Byron's conversational style makes possible the co-presence of inconsistent emotions, transitions from one poetic mode and genre to another, which helps to create a satirical effect. Byron's claim that the style of *Don Juan* is that of spontaneous conversation is supported by numerous quotations, allusions and references to other texts, which creates the effect of communicative interchange.