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BYRON: MODES OF MODERNITY.  
A STUDY OF ALLUSION AND DIGRESSION

by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Glasgow  
Department of English Literature

August 1995

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis takes as its starting point an exploration and assessment of critical responses to sudden transitions of tone and juxtapositions of register in Byron's work. A survey of the reception of Byron's poetry and prose 1812-1830 establishes that juxtaposition was recognised as a feature of Byron's writing well before the publication of the *ottava rima* poems. Juxtaposition is identified as a moment which generates digression and the thesis focuses on the relationship between digression and Byron's differing modes of allusion to other texts. The study examines the materiality of Byron's poetry in relation to eighteenth-century examples of self-reflexive narrative, digression and parodic quotation in verse, novels, and dramatic writing. In particular, the influence of the writing and receptions of Laurence Sterne and Charles Churchill are discussed, together with Byron's experience of dramatic prologues to eighteenth-century comedies. The thesis concentrates on Byron's experiments with the genre of satire, paying close attention to the way prose notes punctuate Byron's verse compositions. Detailed analyses of parenthetical asides and signalled allusions in Byron's early verse (1806-1811), *Hints from Horace* (1811 and 1820-21), and *Don Juan* Cantos VI-XVII (1822-24) suggest ways in which Byron's allusive play with other texts is inflected by dialogue with his changing public reception and the relationship with his publisher John Murray, and friend John Cam Hobhouse. Exploration of the literary texture of *Don Juan* reveals complex shifting patterns of Shakespearean allusion; and figures of contingency within the poem are related to the reader's role in constructing and responding to digression. As well as close reading of the published work, the thesis draws on unpublished correspondence between Murray and Byron and archive research into Byron's use of the Parisian newspaper *Galignani's Messenger* and *Galignani's*

*Literary Gazette*. The thesis suggests that in Byron's *ottava rima* work digressive allusions create a mode of intertextuality which we recognise as anticipating modernist and postmodernist poetics of indeterminacy. The theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes offer approaches to the texture of digressive allusion: the thesis draws on these theories and concludes that an historicized reading of form may provide a way of negotiating our recognition of similarities and differences between literary texts.

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## PREFACE

Like so many beginnings, formally a Preface, this is in fact an Afterword. In my original proposal for this thesis I intended to trace Byron's forms of textual disruption through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and thereby to analyse Byron's influence on modernist literature in English. This initial study had assumptions about the stability of form built into it. As the research progressed, I discovered that it was not possible to discuss the recurrence of poetic figures in a purely formal way: what looks at first like the repetition of a literary trope in effect acquires a different meaning contingent on its new historical context.

My research began with an examination of Byron's contemporary reviews and focused on the way Byron's writing was perceived by readers to disturb by its sudden turns and transitions. This instability was not only identified with the later, *ottava rima* verse as I had expected; instead I found that it was detected in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* where Byron's satiric interpolations and whimsical prose notes were condemned for disrupting the harmony required of poetic composition. I have called this early nineteenth-century trope of instability digressive allusion. Although I characterise it as a figure of contingency I would argue that it can help us to define specific ways of approaching the issue of textual relations. In the course of its development, this study of digressive allusion in Byron's poetry has discovered the need for a methodology of historicized form to negotiate the differences between texts.

On 28 April 1992, in the early stages of my work, I visited the John Murray Archive at 50 Albemarle Street, London. I wanted to consult the

letter from John Murray to Byron relaying Francis Cohen's criticism that *Don Juan* 'drenched & scorched at the same instant'.<sup>1</sup> I also wanted to inspect the manuscript of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Cantos I and II to see if the satirical verse or prose interruptions were indeed part of the dynamic of composition. Two moments from that day exerted differing (arguably contradictory) pressures on the way the thesis evolved. As I sat in a book-lined alcove off the main entrance hall, Murray's doorman assured me that Lady Caroline Lamb had waited in exactly the same place for a glimpse of Lord Byron. The second moment was an instant of uncanny recognition when it became possible for me to trace the influence of Byron's manuscript prose notes in the fabric of his verse composition.

Responding to these two impulses, the thesis began to employ a combination of methods of close reading and contextual discussion. I decided to approach Byron's modes of textual instability by analysing the effects of juxtaposition, digression, parodic quotation and satirical prose notes within individual works by Byron and in relation to other literary texts and wider cultural and historical events. The thesis concentrates on Byron's satirical poetry 1806-1823 but within these dates is not all-inclusive.<sup>2</sup> From an examination of his early poetry, juxtapositions of genre and tone emerged as moments which generated Byronic digression. My first chapter examines the extent to which juxtaposed and digressive elements in Byron's work met with hostile criticism. By analysing the language employed in these criticisms, I began to explore the possibility that textual digression constitutes a mode of modernity, anticipating the later twentieth-century's hospitality to narrative deflection in verse and prose. Previous studies of digression in Byron's writing by E.D.H. Johnson, William T. Ross and Joel

<sup>1</sup>MS. letter postmarked 16 July [1819], location: John Murray Archive. See pp. 42-3 below.

<sup>2</sup>The thesis does not, for example, consider *The Vision of Judgement*. For a recent sympathetic treatment of allusion within this poem, see Peter Cochran, 'The Vision of Judgement: An Edition' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1992).

Dana Black have relied on a paradigm of rhetorical analysis which places digression in relation to the larger harmony of the completed work.<sup>3</sup> Such readings have tended to find a generalising tendency in the digression which can be assimilated into an overall unity.

In the course of writing the first two chapters, a bewildering number of assumptions about harmony, taste, and satire emerged from the writing of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century critics and philosophers. As my first chapter shows, Byron's juxtapositions were clearly perceived to violate canons of correctness but readers' theories of harmony were informed by varying political and aesthetic concerns. I have discussed some of the constructions of these aesthetic proprieties in the appendices, but a more detailed exploration of their constitution presents a subject for another thesis.

The need to contextualize Byron's forms of disruption led to a consideration of eighteenth-century writers who had employed self-reflexive narrative, juxtaposition, digression, and parodic quotation. In my second chapter Charles Churchill and Laurence Sterne exemplify various forms of self-interruption as do the prologues devised for specific productions of eighteenth-century drama. By focusing on the frequency of parenthetical asides and signalled allusion in these texts and comparing it with Byron's early verse, it became possible to see how Byron's texts employed and inflected eighteenth-century satirical and sentimental digressions with a more deliberate and radical questioning about the relationship between literary texts and the role of the reader (a questioning, I would argue, which anticipates tropes of modernist literature). Whereas we can see the materiality of the text at certain moments in Pope's *Satires* and *Epistles*, there is a

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<sup>3</sup>Edward Dudley Hume Johnson, 'Lord Byron in *Don Juan*: A Study in Digression' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1939); William T. Ross, 'Digressive Narrator and Narrative Technique in Byron's *Don Juan*' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1970; abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts*, 31 (1970-71), 5423A, p.107); Joel Dana Black, 'The Second Fall: The Laws of Digression and Gravitation in Romantic Narrative and their Impact on Contemporary Encyclopaedic Literature' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1979).

different kind of hospitality to concrete particularity in Byron's poetry. In the course of the second chapter it became evident that despite previous distinguished work on Byron as a satirist, much more work on Romantic satire remains to be done.

One aspect of Byron's modernity to me seemed to consist of a development of the satiric genre in the way his digressions punctuate unity or harmony with an insistent emphasis on specific, often bodily detail. I found this 'carnivalizing' impulse (in a Bakhtinian sense) present in Byron's early verse but at that stage its uses were mainly to overcome technical problems in verse construction. In the *ottava rima* verse, by contrast, digression is employed as part of a coherent questioning of authority. The 1811 and 1820-21 texts of *Hints from Horace* offered a bridge between Byron's early and mature verse without imposing an oversimplified trajectory of development on his career.

The third chapter of the thesis reconsiders *Hints from Horace* as a series of dialogues: between Byron's early and later critiques of the Lake School poets, between eighteenth-century and modernist classicism; and between Byron and his friends in England about the politics of publication. Through analysis of the different digressive characteristics of the translation in the 1811 and 1820-21 phases of the poem, I have suggested that Byron's digressive quotation of other texts creates a form of intertextuality which we can recognise as a modern dynamic. My research on the private and public intertexts of the poem locates previously unpublished letters from John Murray to Byron as a vital strand in the poem's polemic, disclosing the voice of William Gifford as one of the influences which led Byron to abandon his plans to publish the poem.

Byron's work on *Hints from Horace* (1820-21) coincides with the beginning of his break with John Murray as publisher, and the continuation of the re-politicised *Don Juan* under John Hunt's imprint. The fourth and fifth



chapters of this thesis examine the digressive texture of *Don Juan* from the harem episode (Canto VI), through the Siege of Ismail (Cantos VII and VIII), into Catherine's Russia and the English Cantos (Cantos IX-XVII). The digressive allusions of the later cantos of *Don Juan*, I argue, cannot be approached as eighteenth-century modes but invite comparison with twentieth-century perspectives on linguistic texture. Chapter Four offers a close reading of the effects of Shakespearean drama in Canto VI, showing how, as the reader recognises the voice of Shakespearean tragedy and co-produces its metamorphosis into sexual comedy, the act of reading becomes an act of complicity with generic disruption.<sup>4</sup> The chapter also focuses on ghostlier ways in which writing by Shelley and Keats figures in the text of *Don Juan*, creating a personal dialogue with two contemporaries whose deaths were marked by hostile reviews in England.

Instead of following readings which have identified allusion as a means of critical control of *Don Juan*, one argument of this thesis is that the radically different figurations of Shakespearean texts in Byron's writing transfer the focus of instability onto the responses of the reader.<sup>5</sup> This view of Byron's intertextuality suggests that whilst *Don Juan* offers us a poetics of indeterminacy it also presents an interrogation of the politics of reading by poet and public. In particular, my research has identified interwoven reports from the Parisian-based newspaper *Galignani's Messenger*, which

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<sup>4</sup> Again I would argue that this is a more radical form of disruption than the generic innovations of each era described by Alastair Fowler. See Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp.25-31.

<sup>5</sup> In his study of Byron, Peter J. Manning deploys a psychological reading in which allusion becomes a way of wrestling with the past. Byron's use of Shakespeare, therefore, follows the pattern which Manning perceives throughout *Don Juan* of combating isolation by inviting the reader into the theatre of the poem (*Byron and His Fictions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978). Jonathan Bate uses a cruder version of Harold Bloom's 'Revisionary Ratios' to show Byron overcoming his 'uneasiness about his own status as a poet' and 'establishing [an] untroubled and unselfconscious' relationship with Shakespeare (*Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp.230; 246). Anne Barton offers a more literary-based interpretation in which Byron's memories of a specific play control the allusive patterns of a whole Canto or more ('*Don Juan Transformed*' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp.199-220).

reports from the Parisian-based newspaper *Galignani's Messenger*, which (apart from letters from friends) was Byron's main source of information about political and social events in Britain whilst he was living in Italy. The fifth chapter examines the way that contemporary journalism is intermingled with and complicates the literary allusions of *Don Juan*, and I suggest that the historical self-consciousness of editorials reprinted in *Galignani's Messenger* inflects Byron's references to England in the English Cantos, and should qualify the prevailing view that Byron was out of touch with and nostalgic about English society.<sup>6</sup>

Developing the theme of Byron's relationship with his reading public, I examine the reappearance of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in *Don Juan*'s presentation of the Amundeville marriage in Cantos XIII-XVI. The chapter develops recent feminist criticism of *Don Juan* and examines the contiguities between tropes of femininity and Byron's textual instability. The difference between the subject of speculation in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the texture of speculation in *Don Juan* offers a possible measure of the changing emphases of modern and postmodern writing. It is, however, important to stress that *Don Juan*'s texture does not invite a limitless exercise of postmodern *jouissance*. The English Cantos offer complex shifting surfaces of digressive allusion and the most densely-plotted story-line of the poem since Juan left Spain. Adeline is at the centre of the English narrative web and the reader's relationship with her is, I would argue, a focus of contingency in the whole poem. To indicate these intricately shifting layers of textuality, I offer a close reading of the frozen champagne stanzas in Canto XIII which suggest something of the spirit with which Byron addresses the community of the poem. *Don Juan* renders the concrete details of its historical period as literature but the literary texture of the poem is simultaneously open to the

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<sup>6</sup>This is the view of E.D.H. Johnson and it is developed by Jerome J. McGann in the commentary to CPW and by Peter W. Graham in *Don Juan and Regency England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990).

random particulars of the world. This hospitality to the uncertainties of historical event invites a comparison with twentieth-century theories of textuality.

In the sixth and final chapter I examine ways in which the term 'modernity' has been inflected with the different contextual concerns of Byron scholars since the later 1950s. In spite of the shifting emphases of previous debates about Byron's modernity, I suggest that it is possible to discuss the influence of Byron's digressive modes without withdrawing into a rarefied formalist space. Poststructuralist theoretical models, I have suggested, enable us to talk about the liberating pleasure of digression in a way which was not possible for Byron's contemporary reviewers. The works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes in particular inform my account of the carnivalization of Byron's digressive allusions and the destabilising effect of intertextuality at different levels of awareness. Some of the philosophical assumptions of these writers, however, make it difficult to relate their ideas to Byron's writing except in the fragmentary way in which *Don Juan* raids other texts. I am conscious, therefore, that I have employed theoretical writing opportunistically and irregularly throughout the thesis. The reasons for this are given in part in my conclusion. I hope, however, that I have avoided the distorting effect of applying one *oeuvre* mechanically to another. The main discovery of the thesis has been the way that Byron's highly literary mode of digressive allusion becomes receptive to the deflections of historical matter. With a similarly historicized concept of form,<sup>7</sup> patient before the haphazard details of historical context, I think

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<sup>7</sup>Andrew Elfenbein's recently published study, *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; hereafter 'Elfenbein'), sets out to 'reexamine the historicity of influence' and 'to suggest how historicizing the workings of influence, with particular reference to Byron, enables a rethinking of the significance of Victorian texts' (Elfenbein, pp.3; 10). The main focus of Elfenbein's study is writing of the inner self, and this means that although he successfully complicates the concept of the Byronic hero in Victorian literature, he devotes little attention to the ways in which Victorian writers received the materiality of Byron's *ottava rima* writing. In his chapter on Carlyle, for example, Elfenbein concentrates on 'Teufelsdröckh as a means of supplanting the Byronic hero with the character

we would have a means of discussing the influence of different literary figures without effacing the differences or discords between literary texts.

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of a professional intellectual. The consequences of this thesis, by contrast, would be a reexamination of the linguistic 'farrago' of *Sartor Resartus*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I have received scholarly advice, guidance and suggestions from many friends and colleagues and I would like to thank Professor Michael Alexander, Mr. Bernard Beatty, Professor Jonathan Cutmore, Dr. Peter Cochran, Professor Robert Crawford, Thomas G. Duncan, Dr. David Fairer, Dr. Stuart Gillespie, Professor Peter Isaac, John Kerrigan, Professor David

Punter, Professor Patrick Reilly, the late Bill Ruddick, Dr. Rory Watson, and my Senior Honours students 1994-95. My parents, sisters, and grandmother have give encouragement and support throughout my education and I owe them more than thanks here could say. Drummond Bone, my supervisor, took me on as a research student during one of the busiest periods of his career. He has generously given hours out of the Dean's schedule and I would like to thank both him and Vivian Bone for their good-humoured hospitality to this demand on their time.

This thesis is dedicated to Nicholas Roe who is my supervisor in a different way. His passionate scholarship was the inspiration for research in the first place and he has seen the work through all its digressions with great care.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BLJ Lord Byron, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (London: John Murray, 1973-82)
- CHP *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*
- CPW Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-1993)
- Coleridge *The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry* ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 7 vols. (London: John Murray, 1898-1904)
- DJ *Don Juan*
- FP *Fugitive Pieces*
- GM *Galighani's Messenger*
- GLG *Galighani's Literary Gazette*
- HI *Hours of Idleness*
- Moore *The Works of Lord Byron: With His Letters and Journals, and His Life*, ed. by Thomas Moore, 17 vols. (London 1832-33).
- Nicholson Lord Byron, *The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. by Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)
- POT *Poems Original and Translated*
- POVO *Poems on Various Occasions*
- RR, B *The Romantics Reviewed, Part B : Byron and Regency Society Poets*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman, 5 vols. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1972)
- Steffan/Pratt *Byron's Don Juan: A Variorum Edition*, ed. by T.G. Steffan and W.W. Pratt, 4 vols. (Austin: Texas University Press, 1957)
- Supp. 'What comes uppermost': *Byron's Letters and Journals*, supplementary volume, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand (London: John Murray, 1994)

## NOTES ON TEXTS

All quotations from Byron's poetry unless otherwise stated are taken from CPW. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan* are referred to by canto and stanza numbers; all other poems are referred to by a line reference (l.).

Plays are referred to by Act, scene, and line. Where possible, I have given the volume and book numbers of eighteenth-century novels.

Where I have referred to MS. material, I have retained underlining and double quotation marks instead of the italics and single quotation marks used by CPW.

The edition of Shakespeare used is *The Arden Shakespeare*, second series, General Editors: Harold F. Brooks, Harold Jenkins and Brian Morris.

Quotations from Shakespeare's sonnets are from the New Penguin Edition of *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. by John Kerrigan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

All references to *Paradise Lost* are taken from Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Alastair Fowler, 2nd edn. (Harlow: Longman, 1968; repr. 1982); references are to book and line numbers.

All references to Pope are taken from *Poetical Works*, ed. by Herbert Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966; repr. 1978).

All references to the OED are to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., 20 vols., prepared by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

All quotations from the Bible are from the Authorised Version.



## CHAPTER ONE: 'SCORCHING AND DRENCHING'

### 1.1 Byron and Canons of Correctness

Byron 'violates our canons of correctness', John Addington Symonds claimed in his introduction to 'Lord Byron' for T. H. Ward's anthology *The English Poets* (1880).<sup>1</sup> Samuel Chew identified this essay as part of an important rehabilitation of Byron's reputation during 1880 although, as Chew observed, the essay was 'not altogether sympathetic'.<sup>2</sup> According to Symonds the 'canons of correctness' were defined by prevailing Neo-Alexandrine taste for 'picturesquely blended reminiscences of realism, culture, and poetical idealism' (Ward, IV, 253). The criterion of aesthetic harmony which was glossed here by the 'picturesquely blended' informed Symonds's summary of the 'mixed quality' of Byron's work (Ward, IV, 252).

A recognition that Byron's poems are 'exceedingly unequal' (Ward, IV, 252) and that 'a current of taste inimical to Byron had set in soon after his death' did not encourage Symonds to question pretexts for equating harmony with artistic success (see appendix on critical terminology). For Symonds, *Manfred* was found 'wanting in the essential elements of reality' because the main character is 'infected [...] with something melodramatic' and because Byron 'prepared no reconciliation of opposing motives in his dramatic scheme' (Ward, IV, 249). The defect of structure which Symonds detected in *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* was attributed to Byron's use of the poems as 'receptacles for the ideas that every passing day suggested' (Ward, IV, 250). The pilgrim in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* is condemned as 'a rococo creation' (Ward, IV, 247).

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<sup>1</sup>*The English Poets: Selections with Critical Introductions by Various Writers*, ed. by Thomas Humphry Ward, 5 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1880; repr. 1911; hereafter 'Ward'), IV, 244-55 (p.253).

<sup>2</sup>Samuel C. Chew, *Byron in England: His Fame and After-Fame* (London: John Murray, 1924; hereafter 'Chew'), p.300.

In 1880, *rococo* might be used to denote meaningless decoration or excessive ornamentation. For Symonds in particular, *rococo* suggested the elaborate style of Marlowe and the English Renaissance.<sup>3</sup> This hint of baroque superfluity was aimed at Byron's meandering narrative procedures and the image of frivolous variation glossed a disapproval of the juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements. Symonds summarised Byron's *Oriental Tales* with the dry observation that 'Byron did not excel in the art of telling a simple story, unvaried by digressions, unassisted by contrasts of pathos and humour' (Ward, IV, 247).

Symonds suggested that friendship with Shelley 'must be reckoned one of the most fortunate and decisive events of Byron's life' as it resulted in 'the loftier inspiration of *Childe Harold*, in the lyrical gravity of *Prometheus*, and in the maturer reflections of *Manfred*' (Ward, IV, 248). Yet despite Symonds's preference for 'harmonies deeper and more refined' (Ward, IV, 252), he also recognised the importance of 'Italian genius in its raciest expression' for Byron's poetic career (Ward, IV, 249). Symonds found himself, therefore, with the task of justifying his appreciation of work that contravened 'purity of outline and sincerity of feeling' (Ward, IV, 247):

But while the change of style and tone in *Childe Harold* has been already pointed out, no such failure can be indicated in *Don Juan*. Within itself, and judged by the laws of its own nature, it is vigorously organised. The flux and reflux of contrasted incidents, - the balance of emotions between pathos and comedy, humour and satire, - the correspondence of voluptuous and piquant, sensual and tender, touches, - the passage from

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<sup>3</sup> OED definition (2). The context of Symonds's use of 'rococo' is in a critique of the 'rhetorical excrescences' of Greene, who according to Symonds, 'indulged in extravagant imagery, which, because it lacks the animating fire of Marlowe's rapture, degenerates into mere bombast' (John Addington Symonds, *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama* (London: Smith & Elder, 1884), pp.562-63). The association with the English Renaissance offers a tangential link with the work of Leigh Hunt: see the discussion of Byron's association with the 'Cockney School' below, pp. 64-67. For a discussion of the lawless, unstable and effeminate associations of rococo, see Patricia Crown, 'British Rococo as Social and Political Style', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23 (1990), 269-82 (p.281). For the erotic and metrical characteristics of rococo, see Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, 'Leigh Hunt and the Rococo', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 41 (1992), 164-77.

Donna Julia to Haidée and Dudù, - the siege succeeding to the shipwreck, - the picture of St. Petersburg under Catherine followed by that of England ruled by Whig and Tory peers; - this counterpoise of interests, this rapid modulation from key to key, gives to *Don Juan*, fragment as it is, a fine artistic coherence. (Ward, IV, 250)<sup>4</sup>

This extract comprehends a process of assimilation whereby Byron's work is smoothed into 'coherence' for an audience 'accustomed to the art which appeals to educated sensibilities, by suggestions and reflections, by careful workmanship and attentive study of form, by artistically finished epitomes of feeling, by picturesquely blended reminiscences of realism, culture and poetical idealism' (Ward, IV, 253). With *Don Juan*, Symonds placed *The Vision of Judgement* (not *Beppo* as Chew stated (Chew, p.301)) as 'the two great works [...] on which his fame will ultimately rest, and last as long as there are minds to comprehend their many-sided excellence' (Ward, IV, 249-250). In Symonds's discussion of *The Vision of Judgement*, 'many-sided excellence' was again presented as artistic resolution where Byron's 'peculiar powers [...] are [...] combined in perfect fusion' (Ward, IV, 251).

To summarise Byron's poetic achievement, Symonds asserted that Byron 'succeeded best in all the mixed specimens he attempted', works which 'blend so many qualities, contrasted and assimilated by the poet's power' (Ward, IV, 251). His essay illustrates a response to Byron's poetry that was troubled by the need to discover organisation, balance, correspondence, and coherence. Symonds was, however, by no means the first Victorian essayist to suggest that Byron 'is out of harmony with us' (Ward, IV, 253). In a series of lectures on 'Poets of the Nineteenth Century' (1852), Frederick Richard Chichester, the Earl of Belfast, described the reader's experience of 'the workings of [Byron's] brain':

<sup>4</sup> 'Rapid modulation' at this time would be associated with the music of Schubert or Beethoven or possibly Liszt's piano transcriptions of Schubert and Beethoven. See appendix on critical terminology.

we cannot suppose hypocrisy or deceit in one who alternately leads us into the depths of his profound thoughts, awakens our sympathies for his sorrows, makes us almost to respect his religious doubtings from a glimpse into their profundity; then suddenly rouses us into consciousness, and destroys all these impressions by some flippant levity, some obscene allusion, or such a blasphemous scoff at religion, as makes us marvel which is the mask he assumes.

Reflection however will convince us that there is no mask in the case; that our author has written in sincerity, that he has felt each of the various passions, that he has engendered each of the thoughts he has expressed, that he could change his opinions with the rapidity of light, and yet that each was essentially his own, until a new one came and supplanted it.<sup>5</sup>

Belfast's psychological reading of Byron asserting that the poet 'lived two lives' anticipated Symonds's view that 'there are two distinct Byrons, interpenetrative, blended in his life and work' (Belfast, p.143; Ward, IV, 246). In Belfast's lecture, however, Byron's 'mobility' voiced the spirit of the age:

he breathed the restless, vacillating, superstitious, onward-tending spirit of the times; because, in the midst of wars, and amidst rumours of wars, when *Europe* was convulsed, when no man could tell what next was to befall, when nations knew not what they would, nor whither they were tending, when opinions were shaken, when kingdoms changed hands, and crowns and thrones were tottering, - one man arose whose mind was convulsed as was the face of *Europe*, whose will was as powerful and ill-directed as that of the raging nations; whose opinions were as shaken, as vacillating, as uncertain as those of the fallen empires and trembling kings. (Belfast, p.141)

This reading momentarily frees Byron from psychological criticism by receiving his voice as a register of cultural dislocation. The evocation of a 'convulsed' European mind reflected the historical content of *Childe Harold* which for Belfast was 'perhaps the most complete and finished of his

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<sup>5</sup>*Poets and Poetry of the XIXth Century: A Course of Lectures by the Earl of Belfast* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1852; hereafter 'Belfast'), pp.142-43. This lecture is identified but listed as unseen in Chew's bibliography (Chew, p.356).

productions' (Belfast, p.150). In spite of this, Belfast classed *Don Juan* as his 'greatest production' because (paradoxically) 'all attempt at consistency being thrown aside, we find here united the poet and the man' (Belfast, p.156). Although Belfast welcomed the 'wonderful compound' of *Don Juan*, he noted that 'it is impossible to keep pace with [Byron's] variety' and he went further to indicate that the convulsions of the poem made for disturbed reading:

It is painful to observe the delight he takes in destroying the effect which may have been produced by a brilliant flight of his imagination or a passage of tender pathos. Truly does he say of himself -

*I was born for opposition*

[...] This spirit of *opposition* is displayed even against himself. Is not the effect of '*Donna Julia's*' touching letter greatly marred by the details that follows about the 'gilt edged paper,' the 'crow-quill neat and new,' the colour of the wax, and the silly motto on the seal? (Belfast, pp. 158-159)

Belfast characterised this form of self-division in Byron's writing as a 'suicidal propensity' and therefore suggested that an experience of division rather than cohesion was generated by reading the poem.

Symonds and Belfast offered different readings of what Francis Cohen called Byron's 'scorching and drenching', but they both contrasted their assessments with the reception of Byron's work during his own life.<sup>6</sup> Belfast cast Byron as the interpreter and idol of a revolutionary era and Symonds placed him in the context of a 'past literature' of lyrical emotion and dramatic fervour. Both assumed that there was an undiscerning and unproblematic acceptance of Byron's work by its contemporary audience until the separation controversy in 1816 when the public of the day came to an equally uninformed verdict on the rest of Byron's career. The imposition of this

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<sup>6</sup>His metaphor is that "we are never scorched and drenched at the same time" - Blessings on his experience! - Ask him these questions about "scorching and drenching" (BLJ, VI, 207). For Cohen's letter to Murray, see pp.42-43 below and note 47.

pattern of singular adulation followed by complete schism oversimplifies the complexity of contemporary responses to Byron's writing which the following section will consider.

## 1.2 Critical Reactions to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I and II

An examination of contemporary reviews of Byron's writing shows that there was widespread discussion of Byron's unstable compounds of tone, mood and allusion throughout his career. There have been several surveys of contemporary attitudes to Byron, most notably Keith Walker's study, *Byron's Readers: A Study of Attitudes Towards Byron 1812-1832*, Romantic Reassessment No. 88 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1979; hereafter 'Walker').<sup>7</sup> This section of the chapter will examine some of the same material used by Walker, but suggests a modification to his conclusions about the idea of Byron.

Walker assesses the contemporary reception of *Childe Harold* by determining what proportion of the reviews were favourable and by concentrating his analysis on what specific reviewers found to approve. In this way Walker builds up a profile of Byron's reading public. The emphasis of this chapter will be the reviewers' early and persistent recognition of Byron and Byron's poetry as unstable and disruptive compounds. By concentrating on early public reservations about Byron's writing, the chapter focuses on an area of critical reception which has hitherto been overshadowed by Byron's immense fashionable popularity between 1812-14. Whilst the great majority of Byron's readers may not have been troubled by these elements of Byron's style, the stylistic traits traced by his contemporary reviewers

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<sup>7</sup>Other studies of Byron's reception may be found in Philip W. Martin, *Byron: A Poet Before his Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Herman M. Ward, *Byron and the Magazines 1806-1824*, Romantic Reassessment No. 19 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1973); Jay A. Ward, *The Critical Reputation of Byron's Don Juan in Britain*, Romantic Reassessment No. 91 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1979), Chapter 2.

provided an influential current of aesthetic and political thought and offer a model for the disruptions of modernist writing which set out to challenge all literary relationships.<sup>8</sup>

Public objections to literary manifestations of abrupt divorce and incongruous union may be detected in the first reviews of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. These critical responses to Byron's texts helped to inform the constructions of his biography, much as rumoured accounts of his personal history were brought to bear on readings of the poetry; as Keith Walker has pointed out, 'Byron's poems were sources for his life' (Walker, p.viii). One early motif in these critical and biographical constructions was the idea of Byron's 'perversion'. To anticipate the reception of a work beyond *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I and II for a moment, Francis Jeffrey's observations in the *Edinburgh Review* on *The Giaour* located 'perversion' in the poem's active influence over the reader:

The sterner and more terrible poetry which is conversant with the guilty and vindictive passions, is not indeed without its use both in purging and in exalting the soul: But the delight which it yields is of a less pure, and more overpowering nature; and the impressions which it leaves behind are of a more dangerous and ambiguous tendency. Energy of character and intensity of emotion are sublime in themselves, and attractive in the highest degree as objects of admiration; but the admiration which they excite, when presented in combination with worthlessness and guilt, is one of the most powerful corrupters and perverters of our moral nature; and is the more to be lamented, as it is most apt to exert its influence on the noblest characters. The poetry of Lord Byron is full of this perversion. (RR, B: II, 847)

The earlier connotations of the word 'perversion' included 'to turn round or about, turn the wrong way, overturn [...] to subvert' (OED). These meanings were overlaid by the more general sense of 'wicked' but I believe that the idea

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<sup>8</sup>For a detailed view of the way nineteenth-century readers internalised the opinions of Byron's contemporary reviewers, see Andrew Elfenbein, *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.53-58.

of enforced transition from one state to another was observed as an effect of Byron's literary technique before the looser pejorative sense of 'perverted' was applied to the protagonists of Byron's *Oriental Tales* and to Byron himself. In Symonds's essay the active sense of perversion in Byron's writing was obscured when Symonds explained that Byron's judgement of the world had been 'prematurely warped' before he began to write poetry and that his 'perverse ideas' were reflexes of self-defence acquired as a child.<sup>9</sup>

Perversion was located in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in Byron's mixture of different styles and in the character of the self-divided Harold. Byron's substantially edited attempts at 'variation' (as he termed it in the Preface) involved abrupt changes of tone, incorporation of incongruous material and allusion to contemporary social and political circumstances rather than the variation of metre invoked by Beattie.<sup>10</sup> The way in which reviewers responded to these innovations depended on a variety of factors including political affiliation, the tradition of the periodical and its intended readership. In June 1812 the *Critical Review* (at this time moderately Whig in its political position) was one of several periodicals to refer to Byron's invocation of Beattie in the preface:

The use of the burlesque in this poem is, we think, not sufficiently justified by the opinion of Dr. Beattie, which the author has quoted in his preface. The general complexion of the work is serious, and even melancholy. The occasional bursts of humour are, therefore, unpleasant, as breaking in too abruptly upon the general tone of the reader's feelings. What mind can, without very disagreeable sensations, turn on a sudden from the ridiculous picture of the Convention, before alluded to, to the contemplation of the Childe Harold's melancholy mood, and again to the description of a Cockney-Sunday? The latter is, also, pourtrayed in a style of *hackneyed*, not to say vulgar, ridicule, which could not have been much relished, even in a work of lighter composition. (RR, B: II, 616-617)

<sup>9</sup>Ward, IV, 245-46.

<sup>10</sup>For a discussion of juxtaposition in the expurgated stanzas, see Philip W. Martin, *Byron: A Poet Before His Public*, pp. 9-29 and Frederick L. Beaty, *Byron the Satirist* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985; hereafter '*Byron the Satirist*'), p.6.



This critique (combined with a following objection to the use of 'obsolete Spenserian words and phrases') reveals a subtle link between the canons of classical criticism and the criteria of Christian moral judgement. Aesthetic unity becomes here a form of decorum which is closely allied with social morality. During Byron's lifetime, the emphasis of literary criticism was shifting away from general rules of literary taste and towards a concentration on the psychological effects of individual readings of literature. According to later eighteenth-century standards, sudden juxtapositions could be read as a lapse of taste and would be recognised and condemned as such by a classically-educated reader. For many nineteenth-century critics, however, Byron's juxtapositions of pathos and humour appeared as a form of social transgression because it seemed that such deviations might debase the taste of the readership (now including an increasing number of non-classically educated women). These new concerns affected the way that eighteenth-century works were regarded, as can be seen in the moralising tone of the *AntiJacobin* in 1821 when it insisted that Byron's *Letter to John Murray Esqre.* cannot 'rescue *The Rape of the Lock* from the *imputation of Burlesque*' (RR, B: I, 56, italics mine).<sup>11</sup> This suggests that for some readers, Pope's use of the genre of comic contradiction was itself culpable.

No tabulation exists to explain acceptable gradations of humour or the constraints on satire. As René Wellek observes:

Compared to tragedy, the theory of comedy was given little attention during the 18th century. The old commonplaces about its salutary effect on morals and its ridicule of vice were repeated *ad nauseam*. Sentimental comedy [...] flourished on

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<sup>11</sup>The *AntiJacobin* found that the letter 'betrays rather a wish to attack Mr. Bowles, than any settled conviction of the sentiments and opinions advanced' (RR, B: I, 56).

stage [...] but seemed hardly to have any defenders among critics.<sup>12</sup>

The writings of Johnson, Campbell, Burke and Beattie suggest that incongruity and harsh combinations were to be avoided as departures from the decorum of established usage. Together with the Aristotelian classification of comedy and satire as secondary genres, this led to a morally pejorative attitude to the 'low' forms of writing. Not surprisingly, there is evidence that accepted standards of taste were upheld even as they were recognised as false, nevertheless, the disjunction between what critical theory dictated and what writers produced was sustained and rarely challenged.<sup>13</sup> Although distinctions can (and ought to be) made between the 'disagreeable sensations' experienced by Byron's first readers, the following survey is intended primarily to establish that disrelish was expressed and that when it was expressed, it frequently took the form of an attack on juxtaposition. This chapter, therefore, focuses on certain peculiarities of terminology in Byron's reviews which have not been noticed before.

For the *Eclectic Review* (voicing a Protestant, Dissenting point of view) in June 1812, Byron's 'wit' was received as a lapse in characterisation:

There are, however, some inconveniences attending this arrangement of the several parts, appropriated to the author and to the hero of the poem. Sometimes the Childe forgets (accidentally, we believe,) the heart-struck melancholy of his temper, and deviates into a species of pleasantry, which, to say

<sup>12</sup>René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950*, 7 vols. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955-91; hereafter 'Wellek'), I, 119-20

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Maria Edgeworth's account in a letter (1 February 1822) of a party at which *Don Juan* was read aloud by Edward Ellice against the better judgement of the company:

He *would* read passages of *Don Juan* to us and to tell you the truth the best of us & Lady Elizabeth herself could not help laughing. Lady Hannah turned her face almost off her shoulder and picked the embroidered corner almost out of her pocket handkerchief and she did *not* laugh.

(Maria Edgeworth, *Letters from England 1813-1844*, ed. by Christina Colvin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.339.

the truth, appears to us very flippant, and very unworthy of the person to whom it is attributed. (RR, B: II, 706)

The *Eclectic Review* discussed Dr. Beattie's opinion of the Spenserian measure and concluded that the metre was too diffuse for the witty:

That it would not be difficult to find instances of wit, of vehemence, and of pathos in this metre, everyone will admit; for it is the metre of Ariosto, of Thompson, and of Campbell: we maintain only, that it is not the best vehicle for that species of poetry. This difficulty, however, we do not state as any objection to the use of this measure by Lord Byron; for to wit he has no pretensions. (RR, B: II, 706)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>'Wit' was the subject of much debate in the eighteenth century and by the early-nineteenth century it had a very complex set of associations. Wit could mean a decorous exercise of discernment as in Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*: 'True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd' (l.297-98). In 'An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition' James Beattie argued that what Pope meant by 'wit' was essentially serious but Beattie cited Swift's 'Song of Similes' as an example of a humorous piece displaying wit:

the mutual relation, owing to the juxta-position, of so many dissonant ideas and incongruous proverbs, cannot fail to heighten greatly the ludicrous effect. Common, or even proverbial, allusions may successfully enough be introduced into burlesque, when they surprize by the peculiarity of their application. In this case, though familiar in themselves, they are remote in regard to the subject, and apparently incongruous; and may therefore raise our opinion of the author's wit.

(James Beattie, *Essays* (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1776; hereafter 'Essays'), p.620.

This association of wit with humour appears to be what the reviewer of the *Eclectic* is drawing on and the quotation is useful for repointing our sense of 'juxta-position' as a physical alignment. For Byron's distinction between wit and humour, see Nicholson, p.111. Here Byron may be following Hazlitt's essay 'On Wit and Humour' (1818) which suggested that wit was 'the eloquence of indifference', but that it was involved in the 'detection and exposure of difference'. Wrested quotations and Hudibrastic rhymes were therefore examples of wit. Following Beattie, Hazlitt's essay is brilliantly suggestive of the way that the 'putting together' of 'juxta-position' yields a disruptive effect:

it is the mirror broken into pieces, each fragment of which reflects a new light from surrounding objects; or it is the untwisting chain of our ideas, whereby each link is made to hook on more readily to others than when they were all bound up together by habit

(*The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: J.M.Dent, 1930-34; hereafter 'Howe'), XX, 352-53). Hazlitt's essay is also interesting in this context for its discussion of wit as a foregrounding of the 'arbitrary and capricious nature of the symbols' employed in language (Howe, XX, 354), and for the sceptical dynamic of wit 'lessening and undermining our faith in any thing' (Howe, XX, 360). For a recent discussion of the relationship between wit and allusion, see John Sitter, *Arguments of Augustan Wit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.175-86.

This extract gives some indication of the way that Byron's first readers were willing to regard his early inconsistencies as technical misjudgements deriving from the author's inexperience rather than as calculated disruptions of the heroic melancholy stance. Byron's experimental parody of archaic vocabulary was read by certain reviewers as an 'affectation' (see remarks by the *AntiJacobin* below). Having quoted extensively and approvingly from the poem to illustrate the 'beauties of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*', the *Eclectic* reviewer turned reluctantly to note that:

Lord Byron labours under a very unfortunate mistake as to his gifts and qualifications as a satirist [...] Can it be believed, that the author of the passages we have quoted could write such stanzas as the following? [quotes from the Cockney-Sunday stanzas Canto I, stanzas 69-70] Can any thing be more flippant than the foregoing passage? - unless, indeed, it be the ingenious personification of the imp 'Convention,' who, it seems, has taken up his abode in some infernal shape at the palace of Marialva ever since the period of the convention of Cintra, - or the following caustic animadversions on a book called *Ida of Athens*, the production of a Miss Owenson, who, it seems, is just now a popular writer of novels. (RR, B: II, 709)

Keith Walker links the critique of the Cockney Sunday stanzas to the rise of Sabbatarianism and discusses the Evangelical Christian responses to Byron's 'mildly sceptical stanzas' quoting Murray's reservations about 'some religious sentiments which may deprive me of some customers among the Orthodox' (see Walker, pp.12-20). Murray's communication suggests that he, at least, expected some of Byron's readers to be ruffled by the poem. In his consideration of the reception of Byron's political satire Walker is disappointed by the lack of 'any discussion by reviewers of the issues Byron tried to raise in these notes' (Walker, p.14). Although many reviewers avoided being drawn into controversy about issues raised in the notes to the first two cantos of the poem, several located a sense of incongruity in the tone of the notes continuous with the incongruous disruptions of the text. I wish

now to focus on objections to the notes and to suggest that they may function in a way similar to the satiric digressions within Byron's poetry.

Following his comments quoted above, the *Eclectic* reviewer went on to quote from the extensive note to Stanza 73 in the second Canto. This reference is a clear indication that the notes to Byron's poems were regarded as an integral part of the volume. The tone of some of these notes suggests that their significance is not only their provision of detailed local information - but that they form digressive allusions within the volume and that they interrogate the dominant mood of the poem.<sup>15</sup> The detailed specificity of Byron's notes works with the mock-serious tone to offer an extended possibility of parody throughout the whole work.<sup>16</sup> The satirical voice occurring in some of the endnotes may therefore be read as continuous with the satirical disruptions of the poem which Byron was advised to reduce. Murray wrote to express concern about 'some expressions concerning Spain and Portugal which [...] do not harmonize with the now prevalent feeling'.<sup>17</sup> I would argue that in *Childe Harold* we can detect the start of the digressive and allusive style of Byron's *ottava rima* work. In *Beppo* Byron incorporated footnotes into a stanza whilst in *Don Juan*, the 'odious sarcasms' of the concluding couplet may be read as a subversive footnote to the rest of the stanza (RR, B: I, 149).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>By 'digressive allusion' I mean a specific topical or literary reference which is self-consciously drawn from a source outside the immediate text and which leads the reader away from the immediate text. I will go on to argue that all allusions invite the reader to digress in varying degrees from the poem but that the process of digressive allusion constitutes a distinguishing feature of Byronic intertextuality, culminating in the *ottava rima* poems.

<sup>16</sup>For a different reading of Byron's 'urbane Voltairean detachment' in his notes, see Marilyn Butler, 'The Orientalism of Byron's *Giaour*' in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, ed. by Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988; hereafter '*Byron and the Limits of Fiction*'), pp.78-96 (p.87).

<sup>17</sup>Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the House, 1768-1843*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray 1891), I, 208. Murray locates disruption in the poem ('expressions...which...do not harmonize') and projects this form of interruption into an adverse effect on the sale of the poem ('would so greatly interfere with the popularity').

<sup>18</sup>The reviewer in *Blackwood's* found 'odious sarcasms' in the first two cantos of *Don Juan* in the review of August 1819 (RR, B: I, 149).

In February 1812, writing for the liberal Whig *Edinburgh Review*, Francis Jeffrey criticised Byron's 'license of variety' and observed that 'the Notes [to *Childe Harold*] are written in a flippant, lively, *tranchant* and assuming style - neither very deep nor very witty' and he registered the difference in voice between the notes and the 'general strain' of the 'Satanic personage' (RR, B: II, 837; 841): 'Lord Byron seems inclined to speak much more favourably in prose than in verse' [on the character of the Portuguese and the Greeks] (RR, B: II, 841).

The Dissenting *Critical Review* said that the notes had been annexed to the poem 'much too sparingly for our wishes' (RR, B: II, 617) and included discussion and quotation from them and from the contents of the appendix. This reviewer went to some length to defend Lord Elgin from the severe 'judgement' of Lord Byron, referring to 'those attacks on private feeling in which the satirical powers of the author have led him too wantonly to indulge' (RR, B: II, 615). Warning Byron that 'the use of the hatchet is rarely, if ever, warrantable either in poetry or prose' (RR, B: II, 616), the reviewer indicated that he had read the stanzas on Elgin with the note as part of the same attack. George Ellis, writing for the Tory *Quarterly*, also responded at length to the endnotes:

On the subject of the notes, which are always lively and amusing, and sometimes convey much curious information, we should have had no comments to make, if Lord Byron had not occasionally amused himself with provoking controversy, and, in one instance at least, without any very legitimate reason. (RR, B: V, 1994)

Ellis's comment suggested that he was prepared for the notes appended to the poem to be written in a conversational tone but that notes were not expected to '[provoke] controversy'. The subversive principle at work in Byron's

notation was manifest in tonal lapses which disrupted the relationship between the poet and the reader:

Whilst we feel ourselves indebted to Lord Byron for the light which he has thrown on the character and manners of the Albanians, we are sorry that [...]he should condescend, more than once, to employ a tone of sarcasm which nearly borders on coarseness and vulgarity. (RR, B: V, 1994)

It was generally perceived that the intrusion of flippancy or sarcasm into *Childe Harold* represented a violation of aesthetic canons far overstepping the precedent Byron had cited in his preface. In Beattie's stanza, William Roberts pointed out for the Tory, Evangelical *British Review* (June 1812), 'All is in harmony and correspondence. The hero, the scenery, the moral, and the embellishment so happily meet [...] that it seems as if it held them together by a sort of enchantment' (RR, B: I, 401). Roberts did not find the elements so happily blended in *Childe Harold* and he criticised Byron for 'inconsistent' disquisitions on the modern world in a gothic idiom (RR, B: I, 401).

In his cautious review of Cantos I and II, Francis Jeffrey claimed that 'none of all the imitators of [Spenser] have availed themselves more extensively of the great range of tones and manners in which his example entitles them to indulge' (RR, B: II, 837). But the reception of these innovations was and is a relative phenomenon. The review of *Childe Harold* in the moderately Tory *Literary Panorama* (March 1812) described the poem as one in which 'narrative, feeling, description, sentiment, satire, tenderness and contemplation, are happily blended' (RR, B: IV, 1521). This favourable verdict might, however, be attributed to the fact that the C. Dallas who wrote the review was almost certainly the friend who encouraged Byron to publish *Childe Harold* and who received the manuscript (see Reiman's note, RR, B: IV, 1520 and positive identification by Herman M. Ward, *Byron and the Magazines*

1806-1824, p.81). The reviewer referred to the subversive mixture of the Childe's character as one to which the reader became 'reconciled':

When the love of virtue, and the practice of vice, meet in the same person, as they sometimes do, - *video meliora, probaque, deteriora sequor*, - condemnation in the observer is associated with pity approaching to affection: 'His virtues and his vices are so mingled,' says Ventidius of Mark Anthony, 'as must confound God's choice to punish one and not reward the other.' (RR, B: IV, 1521)

This reviewer was one of the minority of critics who did not consider the moral contradictions of the first of Byron's heroes to be disturbing. Responses to Byron's mixture of hero and villain will be discussed more fully in the context of the *Oriental Tales*. The ensuing revisions of Byron's literary reputation were, however, anticipated by the reaction of the *AntiJacobin Review* to the persona of the Childe. As early as August 1812, the problematic response to Byron's contradictory hero was meshed with Byron's process of composition.

The *AntiJacobin* began by condemning Byron for 'whimsically, and improperly' denominating the poem a 'Romaunt' which misled the reviewer 'to look for all the characteristics of a regular poem' (RR, B: I, 10):

'A Romaunt,' without interesting incidents, daring enterprizes, or heroic achievements; and above all, without a hero [...] is a perfect anomaly in the annals of chivalry, or in the history of romance. Besides, there is an appearance of affectation in the use of the obsolete expressions 'Childe' and 'Romaunt,' displaying a puerility unworthy (sic) the manly mind of Lord Byron, and exceeded only by the childish remarks inserted in the preface to justify the use of them. (RR, B: I, 11)

The reviewer then made a half-hearted attempt to separate the author from the 'fractious, wayward, capricious, cheerless, morose, sullen, discontented, and unprincipled character, which 'Childe Harold' exhibits' (RR, B: I, 11):



We object, then, to the political prejudices, to the unpatriotic defects, and to the irreligious principles, of this bastard of the imagination. He arraigns wars, generally, and indiscriminately, confounding the just with the unjust, the defensive with the offensive, the preservative with the destructive, not with the judgment of a sage, but with the settled moroseness of a misanthrope. (RR, B: I, 11)

As the review progressed, the accusations of indiscriminate caprice were gradually extended to describe Byron's style of writing and his political sentiments. Byron's note on Lord Elgin was characterised as 'much too severe for the occasion, and too indiscriminate to be just' (RR, B: I, 18); the notes alluding to the Catholic Question were censured for being 'precisely such language as we should expect from the mouth of Childe Harold' and Byron's comparison of the British with the Turkish governments was dismissed as the product of 'unsettled principles and wayward mind' (RR, B: I, 18).

In these examples, Byron's literal refusal to discriminate was equated with democratic principles and the 'straying' of his plot and 'mingled' character was established as the image of a liberal mind: 'Consistency is no necessary ingredient, it seems, in the character of a poetical hero' (RR, B: I, 13). The *AntiJacobin* extracted from Canto I the stanzas on Cintra (24-26) with a quotation of Byron's note and offered the following comment:

The loose sneers, and sarcastic remarks, which an author, who suffers no restraint from principle, may introduce in the course of a poetical narrative, where they appear to be merely *incidental*, are calculated to do more mischief, because the ordinary reader is not on his guard against them; than laboured treatises, composed for the avowed purpose of attacking the settled order of things in any state or government. (RR, B: I, 13)

Here, it is possible to detect an early political reading of Byronic digressive allusion. It is clear that the reviewer was concerned about the 'rant of democracy' (RR, B: I, 15) in sustained passages (for example I. 37-44) but he

saw in these stanzas a deliberate collision of material: 'the bard seems determined, that the delight which his genius is able to impart shall be marred by the unseasonable intrusion of his offensive sentiments' (RR, B: I, 14). In this politically-motivated attack, the content of Byron's asides received more attention than the manner in which they emerged from the poem. The Tory *Quarterly*, however, opposed Byron's allusion to religious beliefs on the grounds that the act of alluding to such subjects was a source of general social discord: 'The common courtesy of society has, we think, very justly proscribed the intrusive introduction of such topics as these into conversation' (RR, B: V, 1994).

The question as to what extent perceived violations of sentiment and literary taste could be ascribed to political bias is difficult to assess. It is possible to detach aesthetic from political judgements with an awareness of the political stance of individual magazine editors. In Byron's case, however, politically motivated attacks chose the form of a critique of aesthetic inconsistency. Malcolm Kelsall has argued that Byron's sudden transitions and shifts of conceptual frame fulfil a traditional Whig ideal of 'checks and balances' in composition. It is likely, therefore, that anti-Whig readings, would read Byron's arrests and questions as destabilising.<sup>19</sup>

The *Quarterly* judged that 'inconsistencies [...] are by no means innocent' if they have led Byron 'to adopt that motley mixture of obsolete and modern phraseology by which the ease and elegance of his verses are often injured, and to degrade the character of his work by the insertion of some passages which will probably give offence to a considerable portion of his readers' (RR, B: V, 1991).<sup>20</sup> 'Offence' in this context incorporates reaction to Byron's political questions. At this stage, however, it is appropriate to note that Liberal and Reformist writers would also object to Byron's contradictory

<sup>19</sup>Malcolm Kelsall, *Byron's Politics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987; hereafter 'Kelsall')

<sup>20</sup>'motley mixture' is a pejorative term from Pope's *The Dunciad*, II. 21.

style in *Don Juan* (see pp. 49-50; 58-60 below). This suggests that interpretations of Byron's art of digressive allusion were often politically informed, although not always accountable to politics.

Certain early reviews located a 'motley mixture', not only in the heterogeneous scenes of the volume, and in the capricious character of the pilgrim but in the various verbal registers. For the *AntiJacobin*, disruption of the linguistic surface of the poem was also 'highly offensive' and fuelled the overall condemnation of inconsistency and incorrectness (RR, B: I, 18). Several other reviews objected to the anachronistic use of Spenserian dialect (for example the *Quarterly* and the *British Review*). The Whig *Monthly Review*, however, was not alone in praising Byron's handling of the Spenserian stanza and his introduction of old words.<sup>21</sup> The lack of a critical consensus on poetic diction highlights the much more generalised objection to Byron's satirical interruptions in what was perceived to be a travel poem.<sup>22</sup>

The genre of the descriptive travel poem was well established and popular from the 1780s onwards. Interest in this genre was heightened by the wars with France which hindered tours across the continent. The same political conflict also led to the travel poem becoming a genre of cultural consolidation where the stimulus of different landscape and society offered a space for reflection on the superiority of home.<sup>23</sup> If satire occurred in the

<sup>21</sup>The *British Review* referred to the impropriety of 'silly affectation' (RR, B: I, 401). For the *Quarterly*'s criticism, see RR, B: V, 1991. The praise of the *Monthly Review* for the Spenserian stanza form is accompanied by appreciation of Byron's 'digression' on Andalusian ladies (RR, B: IV, 1731-32), but also by criticism of the style for being 'rather too full of classical allusions. Hades, Eros, Lethe &c. may be considered as exploded; and his great command of graceful and unaffected diction renders needless all resort to allegory or mythology' (RR, B: IV, 1734-35).

<sup>22</sup>Richard Cronin analyses Byron's disruption of a different genre when he suggests that Byron is appropriating the form of Scott's *Don Roderic* and making 'the historical cast of Scott's learning [...] resolutely contemporary'. See Richard Cronin, 'Mapping *Childe Harold* I and II', *Byron Journal*, 22 (1994), 14-30 (pp. 16-17).

<sup>23</sup>John Cam Hobhouse (who accompanied Byron on his 'Eastern Pilgrimage') affords an example of the usual tone of reflection:

Properly speaking, the word comfort could not be applied to any thing I ever saw out of England, which any one in my place, who was not afraid of being charged with a foolish nationality would be ready to confess.

travel poem, it was at the expense of other nations.<sup>24</sup> Byron's satire in text and notes directed against British non-achievement and mis-management therefore undermined the accepted basis for travelogue.

The *Monthly Review* approved the 'tone of practical good sense' in Byron's papers on the general state of Greece but the reviewer Thomas Denman queried Byron's 'long indulged propensity to satire' in his poetry as manifest when he 'makes Childe Harold give vent to certain political disgusts' (RR, B: IV, 1731). As Theodore Redpath notes, Thomas Denman continued to urge Byron towards unity of story and connection of incidents.<sup>25</sup>

Having criticised the 'inconsistency' of Byron's subject matter and its 'antique air' (RR, B: I, 401), William Roberts wrote for the *British Review* in June 1812 that the notes 'appear [...] to have been put together in haste; and in a style and tone which we cannot wholly admire' (RR, B: I, 407). Regarding the note on the condition of Irish Catholics, Roberts accused Byron of 'indulging in comparisons which his excellent sense must feel to be unfounded, and which are too preposterously violent for declamation, or even poetry to adopt' (RR, B: I, 407). In April 1812 the *Scourge* felt unable 'to bestow upon [the poem] that warm and unmingled praise which would alone secure us, in the mind of his lordship, from the suspicion of being guided in our criticism by any feeling of personal resentment' (RR, B: V, 2223). The *Scourge* published political cartoons by Cruikshank but the reviewer regarded

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(J. C. Hobhouse, *A Journey Through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe, and Asia to Constantinople, During the Years 1809 and 1810*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London: J. Cawthorne, 1813), I, 40).

Hobhouse was not a supporter of the Tory government but his reflections on England in the course of his prose *Journey Through Albania* sound similar to those made in Leake's *Researches in Greece* (1814), Annesley's *Voyages and Travels* (1811) and Gell's *The Geography and Antiquities of Ithaca* (1807); the latter two were dedicated to Richard, Marquis Wellesley, and George III respectively.

<sup>24</sup>One of the exceptions to this practice is the travel writing of John Galt which gleefully undercuts English institutions like the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

<sup>25</sup>Theodore Redpath, *The Young Romantics and Critical Opinion 1807-1824* (London: Harrap, 1973; hereafter 'Redpath'), pp.52-53.

Byron's inclusion of grotesque caricature in *Childe Harold* as misplaced and reprehensible:

His attempts at humour are singularly unsuccessful; but we must now hasten to gratify our readers by an extract or two from the more fortunate passages of the work, and shall leave the stanzas on the Cintra convention, to be read by those who delight in the contemplation of deformity. (RR, B: V, 2225)

The predominant political motive for objecting to Byron's volatile mixture of material may be seen in the way that the Tory *Satirist* (October 1812) responded to the stanzas on the convention of Cintra as an incongruous 'sneer':

we do not see why Lord Byron should have gone out of his way to dwell, and with apparent complacency too, on an event which, at least, *he* conceives to have been disgraceful to his country. (RR, B: V, 2112)

This use of a metaphor of travel to characterise Byron's satiric excursions anticipates the Shandean model of digression which Byron was to invoke for *Don Juan*. The reviewer's patriotic objection to the inclusion of these stanzas was followed by his critique of the Albuera stanzas (l. 41-44):

it has been reserved for your Lordship, with apparent delight, to luxuriate in the attempt to degrade every thing that mankind has consented to honour; and to confound, in one sarcastic and indiscriminating condemnation, the slaves of a tyrant, with the free warriors of humanity and independence! (RR, B: V, 2113)

This political sense of outrage at palpable lack of discrimination anticipated the responses of readers of *Don Juan* who were to object that Byron's juxtapositions confounded and negated moral distinctions. When the reviewer for the *Satirist* came to the 'delightful' stanzas on the Maid of Saragoza (l. 55-56), he read in the sudden shift of values an instability of

authorial identity: 'Who could believe that the writer of such animated lines, and the writer of those which called forth our British resentment, was the same individual?' (RR, B: V, 2114).

The 'abruptness' which was later considered characteristic of Byron's treatment of his audience was, therefore, sensed in the reviews of his earlier work. The *Satirist* noticed 'energetic passing allusion', 'abrupt apostrophe' and 'violent attack' in *Childe Harold* which was welcomed 'notwithstanding the dissatisfaction which certain passages have excited in our breast' (RR, B: V, 2113-2118). The response of this magazine is informative because, despite its vested interest in satire, Byron's mode of contemporary reference proved disturbing.<sup>26</sup> In particular, it was the collision of satire with the sublime that upset contemporary reviewers. The *Gentleman's Magazine* had welcomed the sustained satire of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* as evidence that the author was an English 'Patriot' and 'Lover of his Country' (RR, B: III, 1076); responses to *The Waltz* as a sustained piece of satire were brief and generally favourable; remarkable only insofar as several of them missed Byron's references to the Prince Regent.<sup>27</sup>

### 1.3 Critical Reactions to the Oriental Tales

Byron had claimed that the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* were experimental, a comment which led most of his reviewers to look for

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<sup>26</sup>The magazine frequently advertised its generic inclinations, for example, 'Satirists as we are by profession' (RR, B: V, 2116).

<sup>27</sup>RR reprints nine reviews of *The Waltz*, seven of which offer no objections to the tenor of Byron's satire. Criticism is voiced by the *British Critic*, accusing Byron of 'flippant and unnecessary levity' on subjects connected with religion and for 'going out of his way to satirize' Wellington. The reviewer's summary of Byron's offence is interesting: 'The author is not perhaps aware that political discontent is a crime as dangerous to encourage as indecency, and often more fatally mischievous in its immediate effects' (RR, B: I, 237). The *Satirist* registered a digressive tendency in the topical allusions: 'when the author departs from Waltz to politics, all his wit forsakes him' (RR, B: V, 2123). See also the comments by Frederick L. Beaty, 'The poem received little critical attention - and that mostly unfavourable' (*Byron the Satirist*, p.72).

completion and unity in his next popular production. When it appeared, however, the 'fragment of a Turkish Tale' must have been extremely baffling to read. *The Giaour* was, as the *Satirist* described it, a 'voluntarily mutilated' composition, a collection of fragments like the 'erection of ruins' (RR, B: V, 2125). Byron himself had expressed fears about the reception of its form which were, in part, realised.<sup>28</sup>

Following the review of *Childe Harold*, the *Antijacobin* had continued its 'wayward' characterisation of Byron in December 1812 with the publication of 'Rejected Addresses'. In a detailed critique of Byron's address at the opening of the New Theatre Royal at Drury Lane, the reviewer highlighted 'confusion of figures'; 'inconsistent', 'unharmonious', and 'strange incongruous description' (RR, B :I, 23-24). The association of these figures with Byron's political sympathies was made explicit when the reviewer suggested that the address of Edmund L. Swift, although superior to Byron's, had been rejected for 'some *private* reason':

and we strongly incline to think, that had the oblique reflection on Buonoparte [...] and the compliment to a British hero [...] been omitted, the address of Mr Swift would have been accepted. (RR, B: I, 27)

In August 1813, the *Antijacobin* reviewed the second edition of *The Giaour*. After endorsing the current popularity of the poet ('Lord Byron is, unquestionably, one of the best poets of the present day'), the reviewer began to comment on what 'constantly breaks forth' in Byron's writing:

The chief defect of his poems, in the estimation of the moral reader, is the ambiguity cast on his opinions, on the most serious and solemn subjects. It is not that any marked absence of religious or moral principle is betrayed in any particular passages; but that there is a doubt left on the reader's mind by

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<sup>28</sup>The general horror of *fragments* makes me tremulous for the "*Giaour*" (BLJ, III, 62).

the loose and ambiguous manner in which allusions are made, in different places, to topics of the nature referred to. (RR, B: I, 30)

The *AntiJacobin*'s definition of 'moral' involved the unambiguous maintenance of existing political structures and emphasis on the religious consolation of a future state (not dissatisfaction with the present). Byron's contradictions represented a threat to the 'harmony' of the status quo. Particular exception was taken to the line 'Even bliss - 'twere woe alone to bear',

Because woe and bliss are incompatible; the moment woe comes, bliss is expelled from the heart; they cannot dwell together in the human bosom. We are not converts to the justice of the poet's general position. (RR, B: I, 34)

In this passage, we can see how a Tory denial of uncertainty and instability as aesthetic positives underlay the violent rejection of Byron's (and Keats's) 'loose' poetic experiments.

'Mawkishness' in thematic, stylistic or generic manifestations was perceived as a political threat and criticised as aesthetic failure. The generic revolution (which led to the production of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)) had imparted a high emotional charge to traditionally low forms and challenging tropes like unanswerable questions. Such experiments with genre were treated as assaults on the settled order of things by conservative and Tory critics.<sup>29</sup> For the *AntiJacobin*, manifestations of irresolution were only acceptable in a marginal or transient condition; as a precedent to, or the result of deviation from economic, social or religious conformity:

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<sup>29</sup>In June 1801, the *Monthly Monitor* attacked the *Lyrical Ballads* for 'obscurity' and 'studied abruptness [...] which makes them assume the appearance of mere fragments'. The political inferences drawn from this style led the reviewer to conclude that the volume displayed a 'wayward spirit of discontent [...] calculated to diffuse the seeds of general dissatisfaction' (RR, A: II, 687).



Why did not Lord Byron point the moral of this tale? Why not close the scene of his infidel's life, with those struggles, doubts, and apprehensions, which must necessarily assail a man who is conscious of approaching death? [...] Voltaire's infidelity was tolerably obstinate, but it was not proof against the presence of sickness, and the supposed approach of death. At all events, the poet, who formed the character of his infidel to his own mind, might, without any inconsistency, have made the admonitions of the monk productive of those doubts, apprehensions, and struggles, which would have afforded him the opportunity of rendering the last scene of his life instructive. (RR, B: I, 35)

Citing the example of Voltaire, the reviewer hints that Byron's thought is comparable; an early indication of the pigeon-hole prepared for any work that could be perceived as revolutionary in character.<sup>30</sup> Four years before Byron's experiment with Italian verse narrative, the *Antijacobin* was developing a method of dismissing his power to unsettle.

In March 1814 *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair* were examined in the light of 'Lord Byron's consistency, truth, and trust-worthiness', elements which formed the 'main object' of the review (RR, B: I, 35). The article began with a caricature of Byron's fertile muse:

The muse of Lord Byron is so extremely prolific, that if she do not actually bring forth *Twins*, her offspring succeed each other with such wonderful rapidity, that it becomes almost impracticable to complete the examination of the beauties and deformities of one, before another bursts upon us. As his lordship, however, appears now to have completely filled his literary nursery, by the exhaustion of his stock, he may possibly afford the public some respite from the labour of perusing the gloomy effusions of his brain. (RR, B: I, 36)

This evoked an image of the unnatural productivity and strange combinations ('beauties and deformities') with the suggestion of a sexual slur not far beneath the surface. The description of a self-multiplying muse was a

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<sup>30</sup>Reviews which used the name of Voltaire to characterise Byron's work included the *Literary Gazette* on *Don Juan* I and II, and on *Don Juan* VI, and the *Reasoner* on the *Giaour*.

travesty of the eruptive, volcanic metaphors used to praise Byron's genius and the figure anticipated classifications of *Don Juan* as a 'monstrous' or 'grotesque' production.

The prose dedications to *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair* were singled out by the Anti-AntiJacobin as evidence of 'gross and glaring inconsistency' (RR, B: I, 36), and the reviewer devoted considerable space to contrasting Byron's earlier satiric references to Lord Holland, Lord Carlisle and Walter Scott with the most recent allusions.<sup>31</sup> The gleeful analysis of Byron's changed public regard for Moore shows how the reviewer set out to discredit Byron. Having quoted the inscription which hailed Moore as 'the firmest of the Irish patriots, and the first of Irish bards', the *AntiJacobin* recalled Moore's appearance in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: "'Tis Little, young Catullus of his day / As sweet, but as immoral, in his lay' (l.287-288). The reviewer forced home his point:

What ? This purest of Patriots is immoral ? What ? 'the Poet of all circles,' is 'the advocate of lust'! Monstrous ! but who can doubt Byron ?(RR, B: I, 39)

Using 'but who can doubt Byron?' as a rhetorical refrain, the reviewer connected the opening picture of Byron's swarming literary nursery with his 'monstrous' reversal of judgement. Having re-established the caricature of 'flagrant tergiversation' (RR, B: I, 39), the reviewer went on to attack Byron's treatment of his audience:

he does not condescend to state to the public one single reason for the revolution which has taken place in his sentiments; nor even to note to what extent that revolution has proceeded, nor to what persons it applies. This is treating the public rather cavalierly. (RR, B: I, 41)

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<sup>31</sup>Extensive coverage of 'Lord Byron's tergiversation' appears in RR, B: I, 36-39. The *British Review* also noted names from Byron's earlier satire occurring 'in a list of the admired friends' (RR, B: I, 422).

The predictable conclusion to this line of argument was that Byron's allusions to contemporary events or public figures were not to be relied upon:

a tone and spirit of dogmatism very ill become a man, whose opinions and whose principles are as unsettled as the wind; and who seems to take delight only in venting the splenetic effusions of a restless, wayward, and perturbed imagination. (RR, B: I, 41)

This verdict on Byron's prose is then brought to bear on the poetry where the reviewer noticed

the strange propensity of this young man's mind to delight in scenes of horror, and to familiarize itself with the most odious characters that a depraved imagination can present, or a distorted fancy pourtray [sic]. (RR, B: I, 44)

The juxtaposition of 'delight' and 'horror' was set up here to suggest wilful contradictions of value as the reviewer insisted that the depiction of Conrad's 'chaos of mind' (l.326-335) was an example of calculated offence: 'A more hideous assemblage of detestable qualities were never surely compressed before within so small a space' (RR, B: I, 45). In this, as in most of the reviews of Byron's *Oriental Tales*, the danger to the readership was located in the unresolved mixture of moral qualities. Reviewers were disturbed by what they saw as a deliberate collision of opposites.

William Roberts wrote of the 'veriest compound' and 'fantastic composition' of Conrad (RR, B: I, 423). He was unwilling to accuse Byron of a premeditated assault on society 'but', he wrote,

we must once more declare ourselves hard to be reconciled to these pictures of character which give to the fierce and sanguinary what belongs only to the gentle and the generous [...] to violate the consistencies of morality without any charter

from nature is a gratuitous injury to the cause of virtue. (RR, B: I, 423)

The threat of the 'delusive compound' (RR, B: I, 429) was identified by Roberts as originating from 'modern poetry and the German drama' (RR, B: I, 415). In October 1813, he had aligned *The Giaour* with 'the perverted aim of the moral of *Childe Harold*' the intention of which was to introduce 'a being':

whose tumultuous passions, mixed with a sort of blustering humanity and turbid sentiment, assume the right of trampling upon the rights of others, of breaking the bands of society. (RR, B: I, 415)

Four months later, Roberts returned to his theme in a review of *The Bride of Abydos* when he objected to the character of Selim as 'a motley pageant of opposite qualities':

Such characters are unnatural at best, because the law of our nature forbids this preposterous union of violence with tenderness, of habitual ferocity with gentle propensities. And, in a moral view, surely the tendencies must be very bad of all such pictures as confound the relations of conduct and sentiment, and exhibit virtue as the fortuitous offspring of vagrant feelings rather than as the fair daughter of truth and conscience. (RR, B: I, 417)

This psychologically-based reading is representative of the criticism that was to carry the idea of 'Byron' throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Not until Byron's 'preposterous' juxtapositions were identified as a product of cultural dislocation could his voice be heard in the deconstructive reflexes of modernist writing.

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<sup>32</sup>Roberts, however, did continue to stress the association between 'stately despisers of form' and German philosophers, 'who have shewn how easy it is for a man to be the perpetrator of the deepest crimes, and, at the same time, to be actuated by feelings the most disinterested and exalted' (RR, B: I, 417).

Roberts made frequent appeals to the 'law of nature' in his articles but the political motivation of his critique is suggested by repeated invocations of Edmund Burke. Referring to Byron's fragmented narration of *The Giaour*, Roberts was reminded of 'those who, in the language of Mr. Burke, are expert in 'arrangements for general confusion' (RR, B: I, 411). As Chris Baldick has shown, Burke's characterisations of the 'political monster' that arose from the French Revolution had been widely disseminated through debate and a series of political cartoons:

The French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world [...] Everything seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies. In viewing this monstrous tragico-comic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror.<sup>33</sup>

Burke's well-known evocation of revolutionary confusion in France was subsequently used to disclose the incipient political threat in Byron's mixed forms and contradictory heroes. Furthermore, the extent to which Burke's ideas had permeated English society is shown by the widespread acceptance of an aesthetic vocabulary which implied Burkean categories of political organisation (see appendix on critical terminology).

In November 1813 the *Christian Observer's* review of *The Giaour* criticised its fragmentary form because 'imperfection is no part of the sublime or the beautiful [...] ruins, deprived of their associations, are defective just to the amount in which they fall short of a whole' (RR, B: II, 572). The phrase 'ruins deprived of their associations' offers a suggestive model for the way

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<sup>33</sup>Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.10. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event*, ed. by Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968; repr. 1983; hereafter '*Reflections on the Revolution*'), pp.92-93.

that Byron's digressive allusions effect a shift of conceptual frame. Indeed, Byron's digressive allusions were also regarded as an aesthetic 'imperfection', compromising the status of the sublime or the beautiful. In the character of the Giaour, the review continued, Byron 'has endeavoured to ally lofty with vicious qualities' so that the concluding speech of the poem 'savours too much of Newgate and Bedlam' (RR, B: II, 573; 576). In retrospect it seems bizarre that a reviewer (even one writing for the Evangelical mouthpiece of the Clapham Sect) might attempt to marginalise a best-selling author with the mad and the criminally insane but it is comprehensible as part of a wider cultural reaction against any form of instability.<sup>34</sup>

Byron's authorial irresponsibility was seen as continuous in 'the flippancy, the puerility, and the licentiousness of some of the notes; all which qualities are so many violations of pure taste' (RR, B: II, 574 and see appendix on critical terminology). The effect of narrative dislocation was also traced in the 'mischief' of Byron's 'laboured similes':

he who leads us very curiously to search for points of resemblance, forces us also to notice the points of dissimilarity. Lord Byron is a capital offender upon this score; and it is the greater offence because evidently not the consequence of forgetfulness, but of labour; not of accident, but of premeditation. (RR, B: II, 574)

The objection that violent similes were vexing to read anticipates the effects of Byron's *ottava rima* writing and also reinforces the operation of a Burkean principle:

The mind of man has naturally a far greater alacrity and satisfaction in tracing resemblances than in searching for differences; because by making resemblances we produce new images, we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock; but in making distinctions we offer no food at all to the imagination;

<sup>34</sup>See, for example, 'Z' on Keats's 'poetical mania' in the fourth 'Cockney School' essay (*Blackwood's*, 3 (1818), 519-24 (p.519)).

the task itself is more severe and irksome, and what pleasure we derive from it is something of a negative and indirect nature.<sup>35</sup>

Burke's antipathy to the 'irksome' search for differences underlay the emphatic sense of discord voiced by many reviewers over Byron's mingling and intermingling, incongruous images, and peculiarities of thought and expression.<sup>36</sup>

The *Critical Review* by-passed the invocation of a Burkean aesthetic and made Byron an immediate cause of revolution. Introducing *The Corsair* in February 1814, the reviewer remarked that

The last half century has produced as great a revolution in the world of fiction as of fact. Within that time established customs have been set aside, grave opinions derided, and the bounds of poetic licence extended beyond the limits of ordinary vision. Lord Byron is one of the mighty spirits who lead the revolt. (RR, B: II, 630)

The features of the 'modern' school were listed as,

an unsparing contempt of all kind of rule and minor adaptation; a disproportionate attention to some favourite train of associations; and a proud disregard to every species of arrangement and development, which tamely infers the propriety of beginning, middle, and end. (RR, B: II, 630)

This criticism (which might equally well have been directed at *Don Juan*) follows the pattern of adverse criticism that was set in motion in 1812. The *Eclectic*, for example traced the continuation of the 'keen and bitter satirist' in Lord Byron from *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the *Oriental Tales* (RR, B: II, 723). Like *Childe Harold* the

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<sup>35</sup>Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. by Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; hereafter 'A Philosophical Enquiry'), pp.17-18

<sup>36</sup>Francis Jeffrey on *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (RR, B: II, 837); George Ellis on *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos* (RR, B: III, 2002); the *New Review* on *The Giaour* (RR, B: IV, 1933).

character of the Giaour was found to be 'made up of qualities which, in real life, never were nor will be united' (RR, B: II, 715).

Despite the reviewers' preoccupation with melancholy in the Oriental Tales, there was also a keen awareness of an unclassifiable element in Byron's writing. Francis Jeffrey tried to familiarise this 'radically incongruous' character by aligning *The Giaour* with the work of other 'modern poets' (Southey, Campbell and Scott) just as he regarded the taste for fragments as a sign of 'the increasing levity of the present age' (RR, B: II, 851; 842). In October 1813 the *Reasoner* traced 'an incongruous system of philosophy' through 'the doctrines of Voltaire, the ravings of Rousseau, the whimsies of Monboddio and the conceits of Darwin' to Byron and the reviewer likened the Giaour to Childe Harold: 'both children of nature, they meet with misfortune; and the language of both breathes the sentiment and sophistry of wavering minds and unfixed principles' (RR, B: V, 2086-87).

Besides locating incongruities in specific areas of the text as in the examples above, reviewers also recorded incongruity as an overall characteristic of Byron's writing. The *British Review* condemned Byron's 'attempts at humour' and 'ill-placed drollery' in the notes to *The Giaour*:

The notes which his lordship has added by way of explanation of these words, and also of particular facts and customs to which the poem alludes, are beyond measure trifling and injudicious. Some of them tell us what everybody knew before. Some of them come in aid of the odd words used in the text, and ought not to have been rendered necessary; and some of them call our attention from the midst of tumult and slaughter to some ridiculous story, or fable of superstition. (RR, B: I, 413)<sup>37</sup>

The reviewer cited the note upon the phenomenon of the Captain Pacha's whiskers as a violation of 'poetical proprieties' (RR, B: I, 415). His comments

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<sup>37</sup>The use of the irrelevant localised particular is noted by A.B. England as a feature in the writing of Jonathan Swift which is carried into the writing of *Don Juan*. See A.B. England, *Byron's Don Juan and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975; hereafter 'England'), p.134-5.



unexpectedly suggest a continuity between Byron's narration of the Turkish Tales and *Don Juan*. Similarly, Thomas Denman objected to the tone of the notes to *The Giaour*, 'since they are in a style of sprightliness which ill accords with the narrative, and which is not in itself peculiarly commendable' (RR, B: III, 1743). Also in the *Monthly Review*, John Hodgson detected Byron's style of juxtaposition in *The Bride of Abydos*: 'in this, as in his former works, Lord Byron displays a singular mixture of gloom and playfulness; in some instances, as the reader cannot fail to remark, not blended with sufficient softness, but always giving an air of originality' (RR, B: III, 1744). The (liberal Whig) *Scots Magazine* was censorious about Byron's inclination to digress in *The Giaour* and described the fragment form as 'the resource which Lord Byron has found in order to preserve still the privilege of wandering from subject to subject' (RR, B: V, 2147).

Recent works by Marjorie Levinson, Balachandra Rajan and Anne Janowitz have discussed the development of the fragment form but are unable to account for evidence in reviews of *The Giaour* which suggest that reviewers were familiar with the fragment as an established literary mode.<sup>38</sup> It is possible that the critical acceptance of the fragment was eased by its association with Byron's methods of composition. The *Scots Magazine* reviewer discerned a dandyish spirit of paradox in the notes to *The Giaour*:

These Lord Byron seems to have studied to write in a manner  
the most opposite possible to that in which he has composed the

<sup>38</sup>See, Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp.235-36; Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp.11-17; Balachandra Rajan, *The Form of the Unfinished: English Poetics from Spenser to Pound* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). The development of the fragment in the early nineteenth-century is discussed briefly in the unpublished doctoral dissertation by Joel D. Black, 'The Second Fall: The Laws of Digression and Gravitation in Romantic Narrative and their Impact on Contemporary Encyclopaedic Literature' (Stanford University, 1979), pp.256-58. Black argues that the frequency of the fragment form may be explained by the writer's awareness of and need to limit himself to a specific perspective. I agree with this suggestion, but not Black's argument that a fragmentary poem or prose piece of the Romantic period entails a missing, complementary poem or prose piece which was necessarily excluded from the finished work.

poem. They aim at that flippant wit, and careless indifference, which forms the reigning tone among the most frivolous of the fashionable circles [...] these notes, occurring very frequently, interrupt completely that tone of deep solemnity which reigns unbroken through the poetry. (RR, B: V, 2149)

The reviewer selected the notes on the scorpion and Al-Sirat to illustrate his point (CPW, III, 418-419). Three months after this article, the *Scots Magazine* located a wilful, disruptive spirit in the narration of *The Bride of Abydos*:

Lord Byron has not patience to tell a story well. There is a certain restlessness, an eagerness continually to feel and say something striking, inconsistent with that tempered animation which alone suits such a strain. (RR, B: V, 2152)

It is remarkable how the language of these early reviews anticipated (and, to some extent, directed) the responses to *Don Juan*. The *Scots Magazine*, for example, saw Byron in the first two Cantos of *Don Juan* 'poisoning the current of fine poetry, by the intermixture of ribaldry and blasphemy such as no man of pure taste can read a *second* time, and such as no woman of correct principles can read the *first*' (RR, B: V, 2188-89), but an idea of Byron as wrecker of sentiment and as someone at odds with his audience had been building up since the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold* and the *Oriental Tales*. In these works, as in the *ottava rima* poems, it was the experience of 'intermixture' which offended.

There were, however, limited attempts to find a positive value in Byron's 'intermixed' style. Reviewers who were (or who wished to be seen as) forward-looking tended to refer to 'his Lordship's disposition to be occasionally whimsical' (*New Review* (December 1813), RR, B: IV, 1933). This response stressed a non-serious rather than an immoral aspect of contradiction. George Ellis displayed a similar enlightened tolerance when he observed that the author of *Lara* 'seems to have taken a whimsical pleasure in

disappointing, by his second Canto, most of the expectations which he had excited by the first' (RR, B: V, 2025). Ellis devised a reason for Byron's use of the fragment form for *The Giaour*, asserting that, 'many beauties of style which escape observation in a simple and connected narrative, would be forced on the reader's attention by abrupt and perplexing transitions' (RR, B: V, 2012). Ellis continued thoughtfully, 'It is only when a traveller is obliged to stop on his journey that he is disposed to examine and admire the prospect' (RR, B: V, 2021). But he could not detect any positive aesthetic manoeuvre in disunity of character, and registered doubt about the artistic success of *The Corsair* because Conrad was 'a personage so eccentric, so oddly compounded of discordant qualities, and so remote from common nature' (RR, B: V, 2026). Nevertheless, Ellis judged Byron's genius to be more significant than the incongruities that he thought stemmed from the 'capricious' character of *Childe Harold* (RR, B: V, 2026).

Ellis died in 1815. We are not able, therefore, to trace his responses to Byron's *ottava rima* work. It seems likely, however, that Ellis would have disapproved because he placed such critical emphasis on a poem's effect on its reader. This concern with the response of the audience was also at the centre of the Tory *Satirist's* reviewing policy. Between 1812-1814, the *Quarterly* and the *Satirist* offered what are (in retrospect) complementary reviews of Byron's work discussing the effect of textual disruption on the reader. Having mocked Byron for erecting 'a ruin' in *The Giaour*, the reviewer of the *Satirist* allowed that 'there are some advantages in this mode of exhibiting sudden and detached views of a subject' (RR, B: V, 2125). The review offered a commentary on the opening lines of the poem:

We do not recollect a greater violation of those rules of composition which refer to the introduction of any subject [...] After an obscure and unfinished hint of the calmness of the weather, we are suddenly told of the grave of THEMISTOCLES, which grave is immediately converted into a tomb. An allusion

is made to the use of the tomb as a beacon to mariners: we are then reminded of the Athenian's achievements; and before the conclusion of this single and opening sentence, the reader, who has been whirled about with such extraordinary rapidity, is surprised with an interrogation as to the probability of the world's ever again seeing such a hero. (RR, B: V, 2125-26)

I have quoted this commentary at length because it illustrates the way Byron's early digressive and allusive style was felt to destabilise the reader. This review of *The Giaour* made light of the 'whirling about', the 'pantomimic changes of scene' and Byron's 'extensive digressions' (RR, B: V, 2126-28) but the reviewer concluded with an admonishment:

Nothing can be more fatal to the effect of any composition, however abounding with beauties [...] than such repeated interruptions as those in 'the Giaour;' and which extinguish interest almost as soon as it is excited. (RR, B: V, 2133)

The *Satirist*, therefore, tended to view Byron's transitions as a flaw in the overall composition whereas the writer for the *Quarterly* suggested that 'peculiarity' was somehow separable from Byron's poetic power. When Ellis speculated that the popular acclaim of *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos* might have 'confirmed' Byron 'in a love of paradox and disdain of received opinions' (RR, B: V, 2012), he anticipated the controversial element of Byron's style that would culminate in what Byron described as the 'Moscow' of *Don Juan*.

#### 1.4 Critical Reactions to Byron 1816-17

It is clear, therefore, that Byron's contemporaries responded to the sudden transitions and unexpected allusions in his narratives before the innovation of *ottava rima*: incongruity was very well established as a Byronic trope before the reception of Byron's major comic works. During 1816, the

early associations of Byron's 'wayward' interruptions with his (democratic) satirical inclination were modified by his involvement with the theatre.<sup>39</sup>

Josiah Conder's review of *Poems* 1816 in the *Eclectic* referred to 'the mind of the artist at leisure' who 'coolly [attends] to the costume of the passions he delineates':

Garrick, in the most pathetic part of *King Lear*, had his mind sufficiently at leisure to observe the aspect of his audience, and to whisper, with a low oath, to a fellow actor, 'Tom, this will do'. Sterne, the licentious, the unfeeling Sterne, could excel in pathos. (RR, B: II, 737)

Conder's attitude to Sterne is another indication of the way that a digressive style was associated with unlicensed moral behaviour.<sup>40</sup> The popularisation of an idea of Byron's dramatic persona encouraged readings of incongruity in his writing.<sup>41</sup> The impression of 'pantomimic' changes of scene in Byron's poetry was also enforced by biographical portraits. One for example is Walter Scott's depiction of Byron in his review of *Childe Harold* Canto III for the *Quarterly*:

The flashes of mirth, gaiety, indignation, or satirical dislike which frequently animated Lord Byron's countenance, might, during an evening's conversation, be mistaken by a stranger, for the habitual expression, so easily and so happily was it formed for them all; but [...] [his features'] proper language was that of melancholy. Sometimes shades of this gloom interrupted even his gayest and most happy moments. (RR, B: V, 2031)

<sup>39</sup>George Cruikshank's cartoon of the reopening of the Drury Lane Theatre, *Management - or Butts & Hogsheads* (December 1812), includes a satiric portrayal of Byron associated with the political party of Lord Holland. The cartoon is discussed in Richard Lansdown, *Byron's Historical Dramas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; hereafter 'Lansdown'), p.26.

<sup>40</sup>Like Voltaire, Sterne was cited in both positive and negative contexts in reviews of Byron's poetry. For a positive allusion in 1816, see RR, B: V, 2266.

<sup>41</sup>Peter Manning registers the similarity between the 'discontinuous effects' of Edmund Kean's acting and Byron's *Eastern Tales* in 'Edmund Kean and Byron's Plays', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 21-22 (1972-73), 188-206 (191).

Scott accentuated the abruptness of Byron's transitions of mood by claiming that melancholy was his 'proper' condition. This delineation of a rapidly changing countenance was endorsed and promulgated by Madame de Staël. As Maria Edgeworth recorded in a letter of 8 September 1818:

Madame de Stael saw a good deal of Lord Byron at Coppet and said that there is one striking characteristic resemblance between his countenance and Bonapartes - that the different parts of the physiognomy never agreed in expression. When the mouth smiled the eyes did not smile.<sup>42</sup>

Byron's instability of identity in these two extracts is fixed as a biographical trait to be recognised by those 'who had an opportunity of studying his features for a length of time' or those who 'saw a good deal of Lord Byron'. For other reviewers, therefore, the indulgence of whimsical behaviour was associated with a fashionable, cosmopolitan society.

In May 1816, William Roberts had reviewed 'Fare Thee Well' unfavourably as 'a phenomenon [of] the gloomy-gay world', written not by 'a German, or Frenchman, or Italian, but an *Englishman*' (RR, B: I, 437). His disquiet was not allayed by the appearance of *Childe Harold* Canto III which he reviewed noting the Childe's 'foul admixture':

His impertinence is everywhere; it mixes itself with every scene; the glassy lake, the green valley, the azure distance, and the hoary pile, have all their peace disturbed by the repinings of a moody profligate. (RR, B: I, 440)

Roberts continued in the same vein to criticise 'the sport of a tumultuous assemblage of undisciplined feelings', 'this wayward temper', 'fretful moods and inconsistencies', 'discordant principles' and a 'strange jumble' amongst the 'play and pliability of Lord Byron's genius' (RR, B: I, 439-450). Clearly,

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<sup>42</sup>Maria Edgeworth, *Letters from England 1813-1844*, ed. by Christina Colvin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.84

Roberts had recognised that 'play' or 'variety' were essential constituents of Byron's poetry but he continued to read juxtaposition as an aesthetic and moral negative. Reviewing *Manfred* in August 1817, Roberts summarised his position:

The mischief that lurks in all Lord Byron's productions is this - they are all lying representations of human nature; they bring qualities of a most contradictory kind into close alliance; and so shape them into seeming union as to confound sentiments, which, for the sake of sound morality and social security, should for ever be kept contrasted, and at polar extremities with respect to each other [...] These representations go beyond mere contradictoriness of character; they involve a confusion of principle, and operate very fatally and very diffusively in strengthening prejudices, which are at the bottom of our falsest estimations of men and things. (RR, B: I, 453)

Roberts's use of the word 'diffusively' is an indication of the breadth of influence he feared Byron to have. His criticism shows that Byron's writing had acquired a cumulative reputation for contradiction which could be traced to characterisation, plot, and more generally as an operating principle within the text.

The *Monitor*, an essay-periodical which began in 1817 (in the tradition of the *Spectator* according to Reiman) also adopted this cumulative response to *Manfred*. The reviewer placed Manfred in a long line of Byronic heroes with the same mind 'whose morbid sensibility is forever blighting its own outgoings' (RR, B: IV, 1647). This characterisation of self-division anticipated the responses of the Earl of Belfast and, like the later nineteenth-century critics, the *Monitor* suggested that Byron's mind 'seems to have received a warp from its straight course. Indeed, the degree to which subversive humour was expected in Byron's poetry was illustrated by the *Eclectic's* imputation of burlesque in Manfred's death scene:

We acquit the noble Author of any design to *burlesque* the awful realities which he brings upon the scene; but [...] the poet is playing with *edge tools*. (RR, B: II, 751)

The idea of 'edge tools' seems to have been a current expression for any writing of the secondary class like satire or burlesque.<sup>43</sup> *Blackwood's Magazine*, for example, censured Southey for his *Vision of Judgement* because 'Mr Southey is no satyrist, and should keep his fingers from edge tools of all sorts' (RR, B: I, 178). The phrase suggests that satirical poetry was regarded as a borderline and slightly *risqué* genre which helps to account for the objections raised when Byron mixed it with the accepted modes of the sublime or the pathetic.

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<sup>43</sup> 'Edge tools' are implements with a sharp cutting edge. See also OED (2) for the figurative and proverbial usages of 'play or jest with edge tools'.



### 1.5 Ottava Rima and English Wit

By 1818, most of the reviewers of Byron's work could draw on a prejudiced notion of the sort of poetry he wrote. *Beppo* and *Childe Harold* Canto IV were reviewed within months of each other and the contingencies of publication (the authorial anonymity of *Beppo*, for example) meant that the reception of the earlier publication often informed the reviews of the later one. This continuity was less marked in periodicals which could assign different reviewers to new work as it appeared or where there was a deliberate playing-off of reviews about the same author.

In the *Edinburgh Review*, *Beppo* was reviewed by Francis Jeffrey in February 1818 followed by a review of *Childe Harold* Canto IV in June of that year by John Wilson. Jeffrey's summary of the conversational style of *Beppo*: 'nothing very powerful, and nothing very long' (RR, B: II, 889) was markedly different from Wilson's interpretation of Byron as 'the undoubting adorer of power' (RR, B: II, 908), but in other periodicals, responses to the completion of *Childe Harold* and Byron's first extended use of *ottava rima* now appear to overlap.

The cumulative effect of Byron's contemporary reviews was such that *Beppo* could be read as a confirmation of reviewers' earlier suspicions about Byron's designs on his audience. It is as if Byron's change of medium had been anticipated by the volatile shifts of tone within his earlier poems. Although many reviewers welcomed *Beppo*, other critics voiced disapproval. Their worries were compounded by traditional critical ambivalence about the propriety of comic and satiric genres. As John Hookham Frere's *Whistlecraft* is acknowledged as Byron's model for English *ottava rima*, the public reception of *Whistlecraft* and the Italian serio-comic form has a bearing upon responses to *Beppo*.

The relative scarcity of *Whistlecraft* was mentioned by Southey in his letter to Walter Savage Landor (20 February 1820) as a prelude to attacking the 'foul blot' and 'high treason' of *Don Juan*:

What [Frere] produced was too good in itself and too inoffensive to become popular; for it attacked nothing and nobody; and it had the fault of his Italian models, that the transition from what is serious to what is burlesque was capricious.<sup>44</sup>

Southey's mention of 'capricious transitions' as a fault is consistent with previous objections to Byron's want of unity and connection. Although the Italian model offered a precedent for mixing mood and allusion, English adaptations had tended to tone down the contrasts. In April 1819, the *Quarterly* published a detailed article on 'Narrative and Romantic Poems of the Italians', embracing reviews of *Whistlecraft* and William Rose's *The Court of Beasts*.<sup>45</sup> The essay was written by Ugo Foscolo but rendered into good English by Francis Cohen, later Sir Francis Palgrave.<sup>46</sup> The article, therefore provides a context of literary discussion for Cohen's remarks on the first Cantos of *Don Juan* to which Byron responded in his letter to Murray of 12 August 1819.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Redpath, p.259

<sup>45</sup>'Narrative and Romantic Poems of the Italians' *The Quarterly Review*, 21 (1819), 486-556; hereafter 'FC'

<sup>46</sup>Palgrave was identified as the translator of Foscolo's article by R.D. Waller in his introductory essay to J.H. Frere, *The Monks and the Giants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1926), p.60.

<sup>47</sup>Cohen's letter is in the Murray Archive: it contains the following passage which allows us to see why Byron's contradictions were regarded as a departure from English tradition and Italian precedent:

Like Shakespeare he shows that his soul can soar well into the seventh heaven & that when he returns into this body he can be as merry as if sublimity ne'er was known. - But Lord B. should have been grave & gay by turns; grave in one page & gay in the next; grave in one stanza & gay in the next; grave in one line, & gay in the next. And not grave & gay in the same page, or in the same stanza, or in the same line. - If he had followed <Casti more clearly> Ariosto more clearly, he would have produced a masterpiece, & not a spurt of fancy. Nothing can be better calculated to display the labours of a great poet, than a composition admitting of a ready transition from fun & dishing to sublimity & pathos, but this thing must be interchanged, they must not be mixed up together: they must be kept distinct - though contemplated jointly. If we

Discussing Rose's source in the poetry of Casti, the article advanced the view that in the sixteenth century, the spirit of chivalry could be blended with the spirit of licentiousness: 'A thousand such contradictions may be found in the history of civilized society', but, the reviewer asserted, 'we cannot judge of ancient decency by a modern standard' (FC, pp.489-90). Casti's levity and contradiction were here related to a past literature and ruled inappropriate for the English audience of 1819 in a process which anticipates the later nineteenth-century's historicization of Byron's writing:

We may or may not be purer in our morals than our ancestors were; but it is quite evident that our taste is more chaste. It therefore becomes the duty of every writer to avoid offending delicacy; and if he sins against the feeling of the age, the genius which he prostitutes will not redeem him from contempt. (FC, p.490)

An inability to relish strong contrasts is here seen as a mark of a more refined taste. Rose was congratulated for having 'purified his satire' and for the way 'his allusions to the foibles of individuals are poignant without being ill-tempered' (FC, pp.494-495). The mixture of the mournful and the ludicrous in Casti was seen to be admirably smoothed-over in Rose's free translation. In the same way, the author of *Whistlecraft* was commended for successfully 'uniting great playfulness with poetical dignity':

We hope that he will be induced to continue this style in chastening and correcting the extravagant fancies of Pulci and the romantic poets. The acumen and acquirements of the man of

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stand on a mountain we gladly view a storm breaking on one side of the horizon & dark clouds impending & the sun shining bright & calm in the other quarter of the heavens, but we are never drenched & scorched at the same instant whilst standing in one spot.

(Extract from M.S. letter postmarked 16 July; location: John Murray Archive. I acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of Peter Cochran who informed me of the existence of this letter and Virginia Murray who helped with the transcription of it).

Cohen's letter to Murray suggests that it is the frequency of Byron's transitions which disturbs his contemporary readers: to change tone 'by turns' (of the page) would have been acceptable but tonal transitions within the same page are not.

letters, and the originality of the poet, will undoubtedly enable<sup>44</sup> him to mellow and harmonize the materials which he derives from these writers, and perhaps to create a style which, while retaining the blithesomeness and ease of his models, will become completely English, and be truly naturalized by English wit and English feeling. But he must do his best to gain the suffrages of the ladies, who, in every country, and particularly in England, are, after all, the supreme arbiters of the destiny and reputation of the new poetry. (FC, pp.508-509)

The use of the Italian narrative was therefore welcomed to the degree that it was 'mellowed and harmonized'. 'English wit', as the reviewer emphasised with reference to Casti, was distinguished by its display of 'correct' morals (FC, p.490). In Foscolo's discussion of Ariosto, however, there was a hint of the disconcerting experience of reading *Don Juan* which Cohen would later express to Murray.

Whilst we read it is scarcely possible to pause for reflection. Ariosto increases the power which he obtains over us by the suspense in which we remain during such a varied series of events, and the confusion which they produce in our memory. At the moment when the narrative of an adventure rolls before us like a torrent, it suddenly becomes dry; and immediately afterwards we hear the rushing of other streams, whose courses we had lost but which we were desirous of regaining. Their waves mingle and separate again, and precipitate themselves in various directions; and the reader remains in a state of pleasing perplexity. (FC, p.530)

The fluvial metaphors in this account suggest that Ariosto may be said to provide and then withhold 'drenching' for the reader: his variations, however, are compassed in one tone. For Cohen, the difference between reading Ariosto and reading Byron must have been the sense that Byron's variations were more thoroughly incongruous: his 'streams' commingle with 'scorching' so that the reader is confronted with displeasing perplexity.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Cohen's article provides an intriguing possible source for Byron's use of the phrase 'gentle reader' in *Don Juan*. Referring to earlier translations of Ariosto, the article quoted from Sir John Harrington's version,

*Beppo* was cited once in Cohen's article as a modern counterpart of the poetry of Forteguerra with which it shared the ability to present commonplace remarks 'with fresh graces' (FC, p.505). Considered in isolation, the style of *Beppo* seemed to some reviewers to be innocuous enough: if, however, the poem was located as a further stage in Byron's system of debasing poetry, critical responses became markedly more hostile. *Blackwood's Magazine* for June 1818 published 'A Letter to the Author of *Beppo*'.<sup>49</sup> In a note to the editor, the correspondent claimed to answer Jeffrey's 'flimsy' review of the poem (PA, p.323). In contrast to Jeffrey's tolerance, 'Presbyter Anglicanus' argued that *Beppo* had confirmed 'the notion which [he] had long ago formed of Lord Byron's true character' (PA, p.323).<sup>50</sup> He then summarised Byron's poetic career:

You are the enemy of your species. You have transferred into the higher departments of poetry (or you have at least endeavoured to transfer) that spirit of mockery, misanthropy, and contempt, which the great bards of elder times left to preside over the humbler walk of the satirist and the cynic. (PA, p.325)<sup>51</sup>

Byron's attempt to mix 'high' and 'low' departments of poetry was here seen as a base enterprise: the publication of *Beppo* cast Byron as 'low':

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'It may be, and is by some objected, that although Ariosto wrote Christianly in some places, yet in others he is too lascivious, as in that of ..... Alas! if this be a fault, pardon him this one fault, though I do not doubt but that too many of you, gentle readers, will be too exorable on this point, yea, methinks I see some of you searching already for those places of the book [...]'  
We are far from suspecting the 'gentle readers' of our days, like Sir John Harrington. (FC, p.489).

<sup>49</sup>'Letter to the Author of *Beppo*', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (1818), 323-329; hereafter 'PA'.

<sup>50</sup>The identity of 'Presbyter Anglicanus' is open to debate. Theodore Redpath suggests that it may be John Gibson Lockhart, or Revd. Dr. George Croly (Redpath, p.43 and n.). Andrew Nicholson discusses Byron's assumption that the author is Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers (Nicholson, p.366 n.). The author may well be Jeffrey himself.

<sup>51</sup>As well as the system of perversion at work in Byron's poetry, PA identified a dangerous instability, 'your mind floats and fluctuates in a cheerless uncertainty, between annihilation and despair' (PA, p.326).

We see you in a shape less sentimental and mysterious. We look below the disguise which has once been lifted, and claim acquaintance, not with the sadness of the princely masque, but with the scoffing and sardonic merriment of the ill-dissembling reveller beneath it. In evil hour did you step from your vantage-ground, and teach us that Harold, Byron, and the Count of Beppo are the same. (PA, p.329)

This letter was probably written in jest to (or by) Jeffrey; nevertheless, it reiterated a view of Byron current at the time in its identification of continuities between *Childe Harold* and *Beppo*.

The *Gentleman's Magazine*, for example, reviewed *Childe Harold* Canto IV in July 1818 and objected to the way 'Lord Byron closes a well-written preface on general topicks with a sudden plunge into politicks, painful to the admirers of the man of genius' (RR, B: III, 1112). The abruptness of the 'plunge' had clearly become a recognisable Byronic trope as it enabled the *Gentleman's Magazine* to identify the author of *Beppo* in August 1818:

The Poem wanders on from digression to digression, occasionally pointed, or even sour and satiric, but chiefly in the easy and listless style in which verse is allowed to fashion sentiment [...]. The Poem has been given to a large parentage; but from some peculiar expressions, from its ardour in praise of foreign beauty, and its rapid turn from festivity to satire, we presume it to be Lord Byron's. (RR, B: III, 1115)

This review shows clearly that it was the texture of the verse, its 'rapid turn' rather than its content which was recognised as Byron's.

Following an instinct that anticipated the views of many twentieth-century critics, William Roberts described *Beppo* in May 1818 as 'a burlesque upon Lord Byron's manner':

For the resemblance between the solemn banter, and epicurean sarcasm which mark every page of the *Childe Harold*, and the derisory ease and ironical pleasantry with which all serious

things are treated in this poem of *Beppo*, is most successfully<sup>47</sup>  
preserved. (RR, B: I, 456)

Roberts did suspect Byron to be the author, and the sense that *Beppo* 'preserves' the style of *Childe Harold* reinforces the subversive rather than the melancholic reading of Byron's early work. In *Beppo*, Roberts criticised the 'little facetious, frolicsome attacks' as a dangerous species of 'French ridicule' (RR, B: I, 457). In August 1818, Roberts reviewed *Childe Harold* Canto IV. He devoted much space to an analysis of the 'absurdities and puerile contradictions' of the preface (RR, B: I, 460), and he made his review continuous with the one of *Beppo* by questioning Byron's cosmopolitanism. Describing the modern character 'bred out of the French revolution', Roberts attacked Byron's contemporary allusions and his

most unnatural and contradictory [union of] the false philosophy of the continental schools, with all its anti-social and disorganizing principles, a creed [...] subversive of all established discipline. (RR, B: I, 462)

The verse of *Childe Harold* Canto IV was subsequently criticised for 'many and great inconsistencies', the 'jostling and crossing' of the hero and author, and, most *Beppo*-like, 'the profane levity with which subjects and names, the most solemn and adorable have been generally treated' (RR, B: I, 463-466).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> For example, 'From Jove to Jesus' (CHP, IV, 146). The stylistic revolution of *Beppo* was registered by Lord Holland in an unpublished letter to Byron of 9 March 1819:

among many other good things in *Beppo* the excellence of your politicks ought not to be overlooked - Nothing can be worse than the system pursued since you left England - Arbitrary principles supported by the most hypocritical professions & the employment of spies to create the treason it was convenient to suppose have been resorted to by Government & sanctioned by Parliament till a positive disunion between the upper and lower classes of society seems really likely to be the consequence - In this state of things I have more than once regretted that your proxy was extinct with last session & half reproached myself with not sending you another - However I did not venture to do so till I had consulted Hobhouse whom I had expected every day but who did not arrive till lately - He tells me you would like to sign & I enclose it - It must be sealed with your arms or crest. (MS. location: John Murray Archive)

The Tory review, the *Literary Gazette* assumed that *Beppo* was the work of *Whistlecraft*; approving the style of 'ingenious, playful satire' (RR, B: IV, 1396) and found the rapid turns of the narrator vastly amusing :

The author is a perfect knight-errant of Parnassus; at this tilt he is harnessed for the field in one kind of armour, and the next tournament he enters the lists cap-a-pee in another. (RR, B: IV, 1395)

Two months later the *Literary Gazette* detected some of the same characteristics of comic verse in *Childe Harold* Canto IV and, surprisingly, approved its 'wonderful rapidity':

The transitions are so quickly performed, and there is so much of the magic lantern in the manner of whisking us from Venice to Rome, from Rome to Greece [...] from Mr Hobhouse to politic, and back again to Lord Byron; that our head is absolutely bewildered by the want of connexion, while our imagination is delighted by the sweet medium through which all this confusion is carried on. (RR, B: IV, 1399)<sup>53</sup>

There was, however, objection to Byron's 'abominable' mode of 'mixing up slanders against our own country, with this party predilection for another' (RR, B: IV, 1399) which contrasted with the genial reception of the satire in *Beppo* (RR, B: IV, 1396). The reviewer also disapproved of Byron's treatment of the ruins of Rome, 'mixing up with the recollections they suggest, recollections of his own past life, and bitter reflections on humanity' (RR, B: IV, 1400). Unexpectedly, perhaps, the reviewer regarded the apostrophe to Venus as approaching the 'ludicrous':

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Holland's letter locates a form of political action in *Beppo* - apparently in the way that the style of the poem counters the Government's system of 'hypocritical professions' and the 'disunion between the upper and lower classes of society'.

<sup>53</sup>The enterprising editorship of the *Literary Gazette* is considered by Harry Ransom, 'William Jerdan, Editor and Literary Agent', *Studies in English*, 27 (1948), 68-74 and R.W. Duncan, 'Byron and the London *Literary Gazette*', *Boston University Studies in English*, 2 (1956), 240-50.



This is oddly facetious in such a work as the poem before us, and we do not wonder at the writer exclaiming in *Beppo*,  
 'I fear I have a little turn for satire,'  
 since even in his gravest productions there is this occasional peeping out of fun and doggerel, inspite of the sack-cloth and ashes which he pretends to throw over his Muse. (RR, B: IV, 1400)

This extract is reminiscent of the *Eclectic's* suspicion of burlesque in *Manfred*, and both reviews indicate how Byron's variety had wrong-footed the reviewers. It is almost certain that familiarity with *Beppo* informed the *Literary Gazette's* discovery of the facetious spirit in *Childe Harold* Canto IV. Certainly, its reviewer acknowledged the effects of Byron's disruption of genre when he categorised *Mazeppa* as 'written in a humour between grave and gay, neither tragic nor comic, a mule and mougrel [sic] between *Beppo* and the *Bride of Abydos*' (RR, B: IV, 1403).<sup>54</sup>

Although political objections can account for some of the offence taken, it is important to distinguish between political prejudice and the form it adopted in reviews. Byron's power to unsettle was not felt solely by the Tory critics. For instance, Hazlitt's review of *Beppo* in the *Yellow Dwarf*, March 1818, criticised 'the bitterness of the satirist' whom he depicted 'digressing from his digressions' (RR, B: V, 2335). But his criticism of *Childe Harold* Canto IV went beyond mild rebuke to attack Byron for 'indigestion of the mind' (RR, B: V, 2336). 'Politically and practically speaking', Hazlitt asserted, 'a house divided against itself cannot stand' (RR, B: V, 2336). He found the versification and style of the poem 'as perverse and capricious as the method or the sentiments' (RR, B: V, 2336), and he objected both to the 'alternate mixture of enthusiasm and spleen' (RR, B: V, 2337), and to the disjointed mode of composition:

<sup>54</sup>Bernard Beatty identifies *Mazeppa* as a transitional point in Byron's verse. See Bernard Beatty, 'Continuities and Discontinuities of Language and Voice in Dryden, Pope, and Byron' in *Byron Augustan and Romantic*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (London: Macmillan, 1990; hereafter '*Byron: Augustan and Romantic*'), pp. 117-35 (p.131).

There is here and in every line an effort at brilliancy, and a successful effort; and yet, in the next, as if nothing had been done, the same thing is attempted to be expressed again with the same effort of labour as before, the same success, and with as little appearance of repose or satisfaction of mind. (RR, B: V, 2338)

The appearance of a 'Mass of discordant things' (RR, B: V, 2338) disturbed Hazlitt because it seemed to deny the possibility of effective political action. Beyond his predictable differences with Byron about the career of Napoleon, however, Hazlitt's criticism expressed the sense of bafflement at Byron's verse which proved common to Liberals and Tories alike.

The Nonconformist *Eclectic* was ignorant of Byron's authorship of *Beppo* when it noticed the publication briefly in June 1818, but had become aware of it by July 1818, when Josiah Conder reviewed *Childe Harold* Canto IV. He described the whole poem as 'a long succession of stanzas, cohering together by no other law than that of *juxta-position*' (RR, B: II, 756). *Beppo* was seen, therefore, as an exposition of the worst traits of Byron's work:

It shows that its author can imitate [...] but nothing more. The powers of observation and satire which it displays, were known to belong to Lord Byron, before his wayward vanity led him to sport the incognito in that motley disguise. (RR, B: II, 756)

The implicit relegation of 'observation and satire' to a secondary poetic rank displays a critical intelligence anchored in the values of the late eighteenth-century (see appendix). Developing his theatrical analogy, Conder linked the meditation on Rome in the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold* with the satirical mood of *Poems* 1816:

In the midst of his enthusiasm, [Lord Byron] is still cool enough to be able to digress to his own domestic affairs; like the tragic actor, who, in the very paroxysm of his mimic agonies, has his feelings perfectly at leisure for a whispered joke. (RR, B: II, 757)

Like so many contemporary reviewers Conder was acutely aware of Byron's whimsical narrative style and he objected to Byron's digressive personal allusions:

The digressions are as well managed as possible, but still, the effect of these intrusive passages is, we think, incongruous with the majesty of the scene; and the reader feels it as an unwelcome interruption to be called off to listen to the oft-told tale of Childe Harold's ineffable miseries. (RR, B: II, 757)

The fourth canto was, therefore, described in terms of Conder's cumulative experience of Byron's earlier work. Reiman identifies this article as the last time Conder reviewed Byron (RR, B: II, 754) but the *Eclectic* sustained Conder's line of objection in its review of *Mazeppa* in August 1819. In this article, the reviewer intensified Conder's suspicion of deliberate disruption in Byron's transitions:

When he calculates that the reader is on the verge of pitying him, he takes care to throw back the defiance of laughter, as if to let him know that all the Poet's pathos is but the sentimentalism of the drunkard between his cups, or the relenting softness of the courtesan, who the next moment resumes the bad boldness of her degraded character. With such a man who would wish either to laugh or weep? And yet, who that reads him, can refrain alternately from either? (RR, B: II, 760)

Although harshly critical on moral grounds, the reviewer has admitted the force of Byron's contradictions. And in some respects his critique answered Cohen's objection to *Don Juan*; here the reviewer acknowledges the reader's susceptibility to the 'alternate' scorchings and drenchings of Byron's poetic manner.

The *Scots Magazine* was one of the first reviews to recognise *Beppo* as written in the familiar style of Lord Byron. In April 1818 the magazine claimed that

it is by no means inconsistent with the peculiar bent of his wild and wayward genius. It exhibits more ease and more good nature than any of his late satirical effusions, and has, we think, a striking affinity to the light, flippant, and sarcastic vein of some of his *earliest* poetical attempts, and the occasional 'sparkling up' (As Mr Hunt would say) of his prose notes. (RR, B: V, 2175)

This review discovered a continuity between *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Byron's prose notes and *Beppo*. 'Flippancy' and 'sarcasm' are not castigated in these compositions because the reviewer allowed them as consistent satiric expressions. The next month's issue, however, objected to *Childe Harold* Canto IV for

occasional bursts of the same indignant spirit which has, on other occasions, so recklessly thrown itself in the face of mankind. (RR, B: V, 2180)

These interruptions were not appreciated because they were considered out of character with the 'more subdued' character of the work. Paradoxically, *Beppo* could be regarded from a certain perspective as 'unmixed' and 'harmonious' because the Italian genre prescribed comic interruptions. This led to the *Monthly Review* describing *Beppo* as 'meritoriously droll' in March 1818.

Most readers recognised Byron's temperamental sympathy with the *ottava rima* form and Murray cautiously enquired whether Byron was intending to produce another poem in this vein:

Mr. Frere is at length satisfied that you are the author of 'Beppo'. He had no conception that you possessed the protean talent of

Shakespeare, thus to assume at will so different a character. He,<sup>53</sup>  
and every one, continues in the same very high opinion of its  
beauties. I am glad to find that you are disposed to pursue this  
strain, which has occasioned so much delight. Do you never  
think of prose? (Smiles, I, 393)

Murray was inclined, perhaps, to be wary of the direction that 'another lively tale like 'Beppo' might take (Smiles, I, 396) hence his enthusiasm about a prose work. Byron, however, seized on the possibilities of the *ottava rima* form. Foscolo's (and Cohen's) authoritative essay had set a standard for the English imitators of Italian verse narrative. At the end of their article, in the *Quarterly's* listing of new poetry publications, *Don Juan* was the anonymous final entry.<sup>55</sup> It arrived on the public scene at the very moment when *ottava rima* had been recommended to English readers as a 'naturalized' verse form.

#### 1.6 Critical Responses to *Don Juan*

It is not possible to impose a single trajectory on the reception of Byron's work but it is possible to locate recurring terms and conditions of dispute. One of these is the question of how much disruption could be tolerated in the name of 'variation'. The earliest reviews of *Don Juan* in July 1819 gave the poem a mixed reception. Reviewers in the *Literary Chronicle* and *Literary Gazette* claimed that 'internal evidence' identified Byron as the author. The *Literary Chronicle* judged *Don Juan* to be inferior to the satire of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and inferior to the humour of *Beppo*. The *Literary Gazette*, however, detected a closer continuity with *Beppo*:

Don Juan is written in the style of the renowned Beppo. The author, either seriously or in jest (for his jokes and his gravity are so mingled together that we cannot always separate the one from the other) assures us that his attention is to write a regular epic. (RR, B: IV, 1406)

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<sup>55</sup>*Don Juan* 4to. 1l. 11s. 6d. (*The Quarterly Review*, 21 (1819), p.564).

This Tory magazine gave surprisingly good reviews to Byron's poetry; the reviewer accepted Byron's method of 'wedding the most beautiful thoughts and expressions to the most jocose in the same verse' (RR, B: IV, 1407), and even cited Voltaire as an authority for mixed moods:

We might object to the touches of the ludicrous [...] but Voltaire and others, the greatest wits and satirists of all ages, have set the example of considering this 'great globe itself', as the theatre of farce, in which human miseries, vices and crimes, are to be laughed at like human follies. (RR, B: IV, 1409)

The coupling of satire and wit suggests the reviewer's preference for incisive social comment.<sup>56</sup> By contrast with the *Literary Gazette's* reception of *Whistlecraft*, the heterogeneity of *Don Juan* was applauded:

Like the dolphin sporting in its native waves, however grotesque, displaying a new hue and a new beauty, the noble author has shewn an absolute controul [sic] over his means, and at every cadence, rhyme, or construction, however whimsical, delighted us with novel and magical associations. (RR, B: IV, 1410)

Byron's turns and rhymes delighted the reviewer.<sup>57</sup> The first two cantos of *Don Juan* were welcomed as:

a singularly felicitous mixture of burlesque and pathos, of humorous observation and the higher elements of poetical composition. Almost every stanza yields a proof of this, as they are so constructed that the six first lines and the last two usually alternate with tenderness or whim. (RR, B: IV, 1412)

<sup>56</sup>In a reference to *Whistlecraft*, the *Literary Gazette* advised the author that his poem 'might have been more entertaining had the aim of its satire been more distinct and its allusions a little more tangible' (*Literary Gazette*, 26 (1817), p.3).

<sup>57</sup>The dolphin image echoes Byron's figure of variation in *Childe Harold* Canto IV stanza 49. The allusion from *Antony and Cleopatra*, 'his delights / Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above / The element they liv'd in' (V. 2. 88-90), was used by several reviewers to characterise Byron's rhetorical *bravura*.

After the first two cantos, however, the *Literary Gazette* gave increasingly hostile reviews to the poem, referring to 'infection' in Cantos III, IV and V, and criticising the way the narrative was 'so often and so oddly interrupted' (RR, B: IV, 1426). The idea of 'infectious' disease linked Byron's allusions with the widespread claims that he had 'prostituted' his muse.<sup>58</sup> In a critique of Canto VI (July 1823), the reviewer reversed the earlier verdict of the magazine attacking the way that

the most obscene allusions are unblushingly hazarded, and indeed defended (on the authority of Voltaire;) the most sacred subjects are sedulously sought for profane illustrations. (RR, B: IV, 1461)

The charge of profanity reflected Southey's attack on Byron in 1821 as a member of the Satanic School: in Byron's account of the Siege of Ismail, the reviewer found 'that hellish laughter amid slaughter and horror, which is so peculiarly the forte of the noble Bard' (RR, B: IV, 1462). Phrases like 'a jumble of grossness and nonsense', 'brutal allusions', and 'this wretched mixture of everything that is wicked and silly' (RR, B: IV, 1464-1465) met Cantos IX, X and XI in September 1823. In December 1823, the *Literary Gazette* abruptly changed its tone (perhaps following Byron's alleged break with Leigh Hunt) and Cantos XII, XIII and XIV were described as 'a very amusing Beppoish effusion' (RR, B: IV, 1468). *Beppo* was clearly regarded by one of the *Literary Gazette's* reviewers as the acceptable face of digression but these swings of

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<sup>58</sup>The image of the prostituted muse combined allegations of Byron's 'perversion' or degradation of his genius with earlier responses to his imaginative fertility. See, for example, the *British Critic's* characterisation of the 'non-descript goddess' of *Don Juan*:

In the first canto we saw her elegant, highly talented, and graceful, and lamented her deflection from virtue. We can trace her subsequently through each stage of deterioration, till we find her a camp-follower at Ismail, still possessing allurements of a coarse and sensual sort, and though thoroughly depraved, full of anecdote and adventurous spirit [...] her conversation a mixture of metaphysical scraps picked up in the course of her former education; with broader slang and more unblushing indecency, than she had as yet ventured upon. (RR, B: I, 339-40)

opinion within one magazine illustrate how reception of Byron's writing defined a cusp of different terms for aesthetic evaluation.

Although the first evidence of Byron's return to the 'Beppoish' was welcomed by the *Literary Gazette*, this style represented a dangerous level of burlesque for the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* in October 1819:

Beppo was in many parts reprehensible, but Don Juan is scandalous throughout. There was in Beppo wit, ease, *naïveté*, abundant humour, and occasional strength [...] but there was also much intemperate and unseasonable levity. (RR, B: II, 798)

This belated view of *Beppo* prepared the way for an attack on *Don Juan* as an 'enchanted repository of pollution' (RR, B: II, 799). All the charms of *ottava rima* began to be seen as wiles to draw the reader into sympathy with a depraved outlook (duplicating fears about the destabilising moral effect of Byron's Turkish heroes). Byron's subversive interruptions had, in *Don Juan*, become much too frequent to be regarded as occasional lapses:

the occasional profanity which defiled his graver, and the indecency which stained his lighter productions, are here embodied in the compactness of a system, and have been madly exalted from their station as humble though repulsive accessories of his theme, to be its avowed end, purpose and consummation. (RR, B: II, 799)

The objections to Byron's systematic disruptions focused in Cantos I and II on the presentation of Julia's letter and the shipwreck stanzas. The Dissenting *Investigator's* response may be seen as representative outrage: the reviewer described the 'mischievous levity' with which 'every finer and kindlier emotion of the heart is tacitly and insidiously neutralised and destroyed by its constant and systematic association with the ridiculous and the absurd' (RR, B: III, 1182). As in the previous extract, it was the suspicion of a 'system' at



work which caused much of the hostility. The reviewer quoted Canto II stanzas 20 and 21 (Juan's sea sickness) and commented:

We should be inclined to remark on the four last lines of this quotation, that the whole circle of poetry does not contain a more striking contrast of beauty and deformity - exquisite feeling and the most disgusting want of it, - but that it is succeeded by a description of a shipwreck, wherein this forced and revolting union is carried to a height. (RR, B: III, 1182)

'This forced and revolting union' ( 'those unaccountable turns of levity' as the liberal *New Monthly* expressed it (RR, B: V, 1908)), reveal the familiar tropes which reviewers identified with Byron's methodical process of 'degrading' poetry and human experience. Blame was frequently attached to Byron's distance from his readers and his own work.<sup>59</sup> The *Investigator* located this indifference in the 'rapid succession' with which 'genuine pathos' was 'enlivened and harlequinaded by ludicrous double rhymes':

- sneers at Noah's ark and the Christian creed - comparisons of the rainbow to a kaleidoscope, or black eyes got in a boxing match - and allusions so grossly indecent, that none but minds the most debased could conceive them, or any but the foulest mouths amongst the lowest ribalds could give them utterance. (RR, B: III, 1182-1183)

It was Byron's exposure of contradictory areas of experience '[jumbled] in one undistinguished mass' (RR, B: III, 1181), which violated the canons of morality, aesthetics, taste and social hierarchy. For the *Investigator*, in October 1821 Byron had 'perverted [wit] to his destruction' (RR, B: III, 1169): the reviewer quoted, 'Tis strange - the Hebrew noun which means 'I am',/The

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<sup>59</sup>In their suspicion of authorial indifference, Byron's contemporary reviewers may be said to have anticipated an Ibsenian/ Joycean view of the artist as scientifically detached from his work and his readers, 'indifferent, paring his fingernails' (James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Granada, 1977), p.195.

English always use to govern d - n' - and observed that Byron ought to repent:

the use of one of these words, as well as the other, thus strangely, and we will add blasphemously, united, for the jingle of a rhyme, and the pointing of a jest. (RR, B: III, 1169)

Here the reviewer echoed Byron's use of the word 'strange' but failed to realise that this questioning might form part of the poet's as well as the reader's experience. Byron was perceived to have 'studiously intermixed' (RR, B: III, 1183) genuine poetry with blasphemy and ribaldry which was worse than composing something devoted entirely to depravity. Embodied in the very structure of the verse, his manifest design to confound the serious with the non-serious meant that Byron's whole production was condemned as licentious and irreligious by the *Investigator* and by *Blackwood's*. For *Blackwood's* the 'wickedness' of the first two cantos was 'inextricably mingled with the beauty and the grace' (RR, B: I, 143):

The moral strain of the whole poem is pitched in the lowest key - and if the genius of the author lifts him now and then out of his pollution, it seems as if he regretted the elevation, and made all haste to descend again. (RR, B: I, 144)

*Don Juan*, however, was regarded as a work of deliberate provocation, not only by Evangelicals and Tories, but by educated Liberals. In the circle of Liberal sympathisers that included Leigh Hunt and Keats, for example, there is evidence of strong resistance to Byron's mingled style. On 20 September 1819 Richard Woodhouse wrote to John Taylor about Keats's proposed alterations to 'The Eve of St Agnes':

[Keats] has altered the last 3 lines to leave on the reader a sense of pettish disgust, by bringing Old Angela in (only) dead stiff & ugly. - He says he likes that the poem should leave off with this Change of Sentiment - it was what he aimed at, & was glad to

find from my objections to it that he had succeeded. - I apprehend he had a fancy for trying his hand at an attempt to play with the reader, & fling him off at the last - I shd. have thought, he affected the Don Juan style of mingling up sentiment & sneering; but that he had before asked Hessey if he could procure him a sight of that work, as he had not met with it, and if the 'E. of St A.' had not in all probability been altered before his Lordship had thus flown in the face of the public.<sup>60</sup>

There is an intriguing possibility that Keats may have adopted Byron's harsher voice to forestall criticism of his work as weak and sentimental: Keats was determined to write 'for men' and Byron's earlier work had been reviewed as 'manly' verse. Woodhouse's letter is more important in this context, however, for pointing to the disjunction that was felt to exist between Byron and his audience in September 1819. Woodhouse may be taken as a barometer of taste for educated readers with strong liberal sympathies.<sup>61</sup> His expression of distaste, however, at 'the *Don Juan* style of mingling up sentiment and sneering' indicates how Byron's *ottava rima* embodied an idea of perversion for Liberals and Tories.

What separated Byron's juxtapositions from those of his models was the sense of many readers that *Don Juan* undermined every position. Even the radical publisher William Hone protested about the 'character' of the poem: 'it keeps no terms with even the common feelings of civilized man [...] It wars with virtue, as resolutely as with vice' was how his 1819 pamphlet summarised the matter.<sup>62</sup> Hone's troubled response parallels that of Byron's friend Hobhouse who criticised *Don Juan* because he felt that those opposing

<sup>60</sup>Keats: *The Critical Heritage*, ed. by G.M. Matthews (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p.149

<sup>61</sup>Richard Woodhouse, Jr. was educated at Eton. He trained as a lawyer and acted as a literary adviser to Keats's publisher John Taylor. According to Taylor, he was 'strictly religious' which may account for some of his animus against *Don Juan*. See *The Keats Circle: Letters and Papers 1816-1878*, 2nd edn., 2 vols., ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), I, p.cxliv-cl.

<sup>62</sup>'Don John, or "Don Juan Unmasked" Being a Key to the Mystery Attending that Remarkable Publication; with a Descriptive Review of the Poem and Extracts' 3rd edn., (London, 1819).

the corruption of the Establishment should uphold an unimpeachable moral<sup>60</sup> standard:

The objections were, you may easily imagine, drawn from the sarcasms against the lady of Seaham - from the licentiousness and in some cases downright indecency of many stanzas and of the whole turn of the poem - from the flings at religion - and from the slashing right and left at other worthy writers of the day.<sup>63</sup>

Hobhouse's response suggests that he felt the asides and allusions constituted the main 'turn' of the poem.<sup>64</sup>

In a curious way, radical reformist fears about the effect of *Don Juan* duplicated the responses of extreme supporters of the Tory government, established church and monarchy. William Roberts, who had asserted the 'purity' of English institutions against the 'untempered' and 'rash' persuasions of Hobhouse's *Historical Illustrations* (RR, B: I, 472), expressed the same doubts as Hone and Hobhouse over the publication of *Don Juan*. In December 1821, Roberts attempted to overcome his first humiliating encounter with *Don Juan*, by writing increasingly detailed analyses of Byron's subtle threat to English culture:

It has appeared to us that the most extraordinary part of the character of this poem is this, that it delights in extracting ridicule out of its own pathos. While it brings the tears of sympathy into the eyes of the reader [...] a heartless humour immediately succeeds, showing how little the writer participates in the emotion he excites. Skilful to play upon another's bosom, and to touch with mysterious art the finest chords of sensibility himself, he is all the while an alien to his own magical creation [...] There is as much bad taste in this as there is moral mischief. It is true that this existence is a medley of joy and sorrow, close upon each other's confines; and that moral and pathetic representations of life in prose or verse proceeding in correspondence with the reality, admit of being

<sup>63</sup>*Byron's Bulldog: The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron*, ed. by Peter W. Graham (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984; hereafter '*Byron's Bulldog*'), p.257.

<sup>64</sup>Hobhouse's objections to *Don Juan* have been commented upon in Elizabeth French Boyd, *Byron's Don Juan* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1945), p.14. See also Peter Cochran, 'The Domestic Reception of *Don Juan*' forthcoming in *Romanticism*.

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chequered by grave and gay, pensive and playful moods; but they must not be suffered to run into one another and disturb each other's impressions. Sorrow is engrossing - nor can the heart at the same time lend itself to two opposite emotions. (RR, B: I, 490)<sup>65</sup>

Roberts attempted to distinguish between a just, Johnsonian imitation of the varied human lot and Byron's world of contradiction where constant collisions and qualifications of experience led to a sense that no stable emotional states existed.<sup>66</sup> Like Francis Cohen, Roberts found the 'alacrity' of the transitions unsettled his response to the poem (RR, B: I, 490). Roberts's assertion that mixed representations of life 'must not be suffered to run into one another and disturb each other's impressions' suggests that he found the consequent checking and qualification of response prompted by the poem constituted a difficult challenge. The reader's resistance to such questioning, represented by Roberts's remarks, was also behind many of the contemporary objections to *Don Juan*.

The *New Monthly* complained in August 1819 that Byron destroyed the positive 'illusion' of integral involvement with his narrative

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<sup>65</sup>For details of Byron's successful baiting of William Roberts in *Don Juan*, see Nicholson, pp. 78-85 and n.

<sup>66</sup>Samuel Johnson's appreciation of the mixture of human emotions in Shakespearean drama is exemplified in his 1765 Preface:

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

(*The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by E.L. McAdam Jr., with Donald and Mary Hyde, and others, 16 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958-90; hereafter 'Johnson'), VII, 66). Johnson also found this 'variety of proportion' troubling: 'What he does best, he soon ceases to do [...] He no sooner begins to move, than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity' (Johnson, VII, 74). For further discussion of the difference between Shakespearean and Byronic variation, see Chapter Four, p. 225 below.

by passing at once, with a surprising and unaccountable indifference, from images of pathos, beauty and grandeur, to ludicrous and burlesque similes and expressions. The want of judgment, bad taste, and ill effect of these transitions are palpable. (RR, B: V, 1909)

The idea that Byron's transitions could be 'palpable' emphasises the reader's violent sense of dislocation. 'Ill effect' was glossed in another way in the *Champion* (August 1819) by John Thelwall for whom 'indifference' represented a transgression of 'all that the social heart should hold in reverence' (RR, B: I, 540). Thelwall's reverence for social community at this time took the form of writing conversation poems and giving elocution lectures. It is interesting to imagine the effect that Byron's calculated disruption of a conversational style and fragmentation of lyrical interchange would have had on a writer dedicated to harmonising everyday speech.<sup>67</sup> Thelwall objected to the 'Cuckoo strain' of adultery in *Mazeppa* (RR, B: V, 536) and he recorded the 'same admixture of minuteness, levity, pathetic incident and flippant animadversion' throughout Cantos I and II of *Don Juan* (RR, B: I, 541). Overall, Thelwall lamented Byron's use of irony and the way in which 'every tie of social confidence treated as flax to [...] the flame of his wit' (RR, B: V, 538).

Committed to poetic experimentation when it began in 1796, The *Monthly Magazine*, on the other hand, gave generally favourable reviews to *Don Juan*. Its reviewer recognised the 'latitude of subject and expression' in Byron's Italian models and suggested in September 1821 that Byron was not, therefore, 'very outrageous' (RR, B: IV, 1685). Nevertheless, the magazine referred to Byron's 'singular mixture of pathos, doggerel, wit and satire' in Cantos II, IV and V, and his 'strange and almost malignant delight in dashing

<sup>67</sup>Thelwall used the terminology of 'inherent principles of prosodial harmonies' to refer to his theories of elocution in an unpublished letter of 26 December 1826 to William Whewell (Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge) (MS. location: Trinity College Library, Cambridge). I am grateful to Dr Nicholas Roe for allowing me to consult his transcriptions of Thelwall's correspondence.

the laughter he has raised with tears, and crossing his finest and most affecting passages with burlesque ideas, against which gravity is no proof' (RR, B: IV, 1680). This comment suggested that active disruption of the reader was one of Byron's aims, but the reviewer then speculated that 'perhaps this style is the real transcript of his mind'; an idea which attempted to accommodate Byron's instability as biography, anticipating Thomas Moore's codification of Byron's contradictions in his 1830 *Life of Lord Byron*.<sup>68</sup>

A biographical explanation of the style of *Don Juan* was also advanced by Leigh Hunt in the *Examiner* in 1819:

*Don Juan* contains specimens of all the author's modes of writing, which are mingled together and push one another about in a strange way. (RR, B: III, 1004)

Whereas other reviewers had described Byron's sudden turns as 'unaccountable', Hunt (who had been mocked by reviewers for addressing Byron familiarly in the dedication to *Rimini* in 1816) asserted that,

it is not difficult to account for this heterogeneous mixture, - for the bard has furnished us with the key to his own mind. His early hopes were blighted, and his disappointment vents itself in satirizing absurdities which rouse his indignation [...] But his genius is not naturally satirical; he breaks out therefore into those frequent veins of passion and true feeling [...] and goes on with them till his memory is no longer able to bear the images conjured up by his fine genius; and it is to get rid of such painful and 'thick-coming' recollections, that he dashes away

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<sup>68</sup>Moore's edition of the letters and journals surrounded Byron's writing with a protective gloss of biographical commentary. Byron's 'habit of forming [...] incongruous juxtapositions' was coupled with a 'natural tendency to yield [...] to every chance impression, and change with every passing impulse' (Thomas Moore, *The Works of Lord Byron With His Letters and Journals, and His Life*, 17 vols., (London: John Murray, 1832-3; hereafter 'Moore'), VI, 235-37). By stressing the experience of schism in Byron's childhood and the 'strange assemblage of contrary elements, all meeting together in the same mind' in 1818, Moore prepared the way for readings of *Don Juan* as case history: 'the most powerful and [...] painful display of the versatility of genius that it has ever been left for succeeding ages to wonder at and deplore' (Moore, IV, 122). It was Moore's version of Byron, I would argue, that fixed the view of Byron and *Don Juan* as a 'painful mixture' of personal misfortune and psychological oddity for the rest of the nineteenth century (Moore, VI, 235). For a detailed account of Moore as a biographer, see Joseph W. Reed Jr., *English Biography in the Early Nineteenth Century 1801-1838* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp.102-26.

and relieves himself by getting into another train of ideas, however incongruous or violently contrasted with the former. (RR, B: III, 1004)

Hunt's theory of the 'refuge' of violent contrast is comparable with the *Monthly Magazine's* claim that Byron's continual digressions, irony and sarcastic humour are 'an apparent levity, which however often serves but as a veil to deep reflection' (RR, B: IV, 1707). Following the theatrical analogies of earlier reviews, many commentators characterised the narrator of *Don Juan* as a 'motley jester'.<sup>69</sup> Confusion about the 'sincerity' of the narrative voice of the poem was added to by Byron's involvement with the 'hobby-horse of Radicalism' (RR, B: I, 335).

### 1.7 Critical Responses to Byron as a Cockney

In 1822, as soon as Byron's collaboration with Leigh Hunt on the *Liberal* was known, Tory reviewers began to trace Cockney influences in his work. One popular caricature of the Cockney School invoked the image of a grotesquely compounded creature. This is the way that the *Investigator* presented Hunt's poetic style in January 1823:

His frequent grotesque intermixtures of the grave and the gay - the sombre, the sentimental, and the jesting, recall indeed very powerfully to our recollection, some exhibitions which have often caught our childish gaze in London streets [... ] We allude to a monkey perched upon the shoulders of a bear, or frisking to the creaking of a hurdy-gurdy, on a camel's hump. (RR, B: III, 1208)

The criticism was directed at Hunt in a review of the *Liberal* No I where Byron was attacked for the 'pantomimical' *Vision of Judgement*, and Southey

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<sup>69</sup>For example, the *British Critic* in August 1823 (RR, B: I, 308) and the *London Magazine* in January 1822 (RR, B: IV, 1611).



for his 'hexametrical whimsey': all parties, therefore, were depicted as grotesque and ridiculous in some measure (RR, B: III, 1207; 1201). In *Blackwood's* and the *British Critic*, however, parallels between Byron and Hunt were located precisely in images of disharmony and opposition; 'anti-British garbage', 'unmusical drawl', 'lispering dull *double-entendres*' and 'hymning Jacobinism' (RR, B: I, 205). Byron's rhymes in *Don Juan* Cantos VI, VII and VIII were depicted as the result of his listening to Cockney 'gibberish' by *Blackwood's* and were attributed to Hunt's joint authorship by the *British Critic*. In March 1823 the *British Critic* summarised Byron's juxtapositions to date:

To blow hot and cold from every point in the compass, to praise and abuse respectively republics and monarchies; monarchies and republics; to libel and flatter England and America, Buonaparte and Tom Paine, the king and the people, friends and enemies, men and women, truth and justice, backwards and forwards ten times over; to do all this without any excuse or bashfulness *within the continent of one work*, is really at once a symptom, a proof, and a consequence of an order of intellect, which we have no adequate terms to describe. (RR, B: I, 321)

Byron's writing had the effect of subverting polar oppositions which had sustained political debate in Britain since the French Revolution. The Cockney School influence was therefore depicted by the Tory *British Critic* as a menace to both Whigs and Tories:

The case is perfectly plain. Lord Byron has perceived too late that public opinion has connected him, more than he may approve, with the Riminists, or Cocknio-Carbonari, or whatever name may rejoice the ears of the literary club which he has been pleased to found at Pisa. As obvious must it have become [...] that these his chosen friends are scouted both by Whig and Tory as a gang of despicable Pilgarlics, insensible alike to English prejudices, English pursuits, English humour, and the comforts of an English fireside. Alike coarse, fluttering and insignificant, their body collective has been roughly brushed away, like a nauseous flesh-fly from the front of Whiggism on which it had

crawled for a while, and not even Lord Byron himself has escaped a portion of the disgrace. (RR, B: I, 337)

The emphasis on political paradox allowed the reviewer of this periodical to account for all Byron's textual disruptions by categorising him in a review of *Werner* in March 1823 as 'the dupe of Leigh Hunt':

the Aristocratico-democrat is the tame hackney scrivener of the jacobinico-radical; the macaroni simperer on the patrician properties of long fingers is linked hand in hand with the mutton fist of the sometime tenant of a gaol. (RR, B: I, 322)

For the Tory reviewers, the literary and domestic association with Hunt confirmed the operation of a contradictory spirit in Byron's work first suggested by his prefaces, dedications and notes. The monstrous compound of Byron and Hunt was presented to the public to dismiss Byron's poetry in a way similar to that in which Keats had been caricatured and belittled by Lockhart as the foster child of Hunt.<sup>70</sup> The political caricature of Byron's incongruous affiliation with 'the Pisan Confederacy' represented one method of accommodating his 'scorching and drenching' but other reviewers were aware that the instability of Byron's poetry was not comprehended simply by political difference.

Two reviews which took stock of Byron's work up to 1822 and 1823 help to clarify the variety of interpretations which were placed on the transitions of *Don Juan*. In an article on Byron's tragedies in the *Edinburgh Review*, (February 1822) Jeffrey discussed the effect of *Don Juan*:

The charge we bring against Lord B. in short is, that his writings have a tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue - and to make all enthusiasm and constancy of affection ridiculous [...] when the satirist deals out his sarcasms against the sincerity of human professions, and unmasks the secret infirmities of our

<sup>70</sup>See Nicholas Roe, 'Keats's Lipping Sedition', *Essays in Criticism*, 42, (1992), 36-55.

bosoms, we consider this as aimed at hypocrisy and not at mankind [...]. The true antidote to such seductive or revolting views of human nature, is to turn to the scenes of its nobleness and attraction; and to reconcile ourselves again to our kind, by listening to the accents of pure affection and incorruptible honour. But if those accents have flowed, in all their sweetness, from the very lips that instantly open again to mock and blaspheme them, the antidote is mingled with the poison, and the draught is more deadly for the mixture! (RR, B: II, 936)

For Jeffrey, Byron's 'theatrical exhibition' undermined not only the illusion of sincerity in the poem but the illusion of any public meaning or coherence. Byron demonstrated 'by example, how possible it is to have all fine and noble feelings, or their appearance, for a moment, and yet retain no particle of respect for them - or of belief in their intrinsic worth or permanent reality' (RR, B: II, 937). Don Juan was, therefore, a process of education for the reader in the relativity of value. Jeffrey read this sceptical process as 'a system of resolute misanthropy': 'all good feelings are excited only to accustom us to their speedy and complete extinction' (RR, B: II, 937-938).

It is open to twentieth-century readers, although it was not to Jeffrey, to distinguish relativity from cynicism. A writer for Leigh Hunt's *Literary Examiner* in July 1823, however, offered another reading of Byron's juxtapositions - not just the affirmation of Lockhart's 'stick to Don Juan; it is the only sincere thing you have ever written' - but a closer reading of the process of sudden transition. This writer located in Byron's writing

an intuitive perception of the almost mathematical point which marks the confines of vice and virtue, harmlessness and innocence; and a rapid detection of the approximation of extremes, which renders him the Asmodeus or Mephistophiles of poets [...]. It is not confounding good and evil to shew the slightness of the partitions which divide them; on the contrary, the former may be guarded and secured by a dread of the rapidity of glance which can at once perceive and expose the myriads of lurking avenues by which the one can slide into the other. (RR, B: III, 1360)

Here, the reviewer suggests that Byron's contradictions work to enhance difference in the ambivalent areas of morality where one motive can 'slide' into another. These contrasts, he claimed, were 'alarming' mainly to those who were 'muffled up in exterior decencies' and who 'place well-doing in a mental costume' (RR, B: III, 1360). The reviewer therefore displaced the theatrical analogy from Byron's narration onto the reader's response.

In some ways, this reading approximates to Byron's answer to Murray: 'I will answer your friend C.V. who objects to the quick succession of fun and gravity - as if in that case the gravity did not (in intention at least) heighten the fun' (BLJ, VI, 207). Byron's parenthesis, however, suggests the counterside of his argument (intention is not the same as effect). There are also insecurities in the reviewer's attempt to discover a moral point in *Don Juan*. The 'slight partitions' of juxtaposition become 'myriads of lurking avenues' admitting the unfixedness of meaning. Three diverse opinions; Jeffrey's, Hunt's, Byron's - all located an instability in the poetry which, I have argued, existed from the start of Byron's critical reception. Between 1812 and 1830 the experience of textual disruption became a recognisable part of Byronism. In the next chapter, I will identify and explore some of Byron's constructs of dislocation.

## CHAPTER TWO: FORMS OF DIGRESSION

The reactions of Byron's contemporary reviewers indicate that his modes of abrupt transition and sudden juxtaposition were perceived to break with eighteenth-century expectations. In the following chapter I will examine the relationship between eighteenth-century modes of digression and allusion and Byron's use of these tropes in his early poetry. As note 15 above suggests I believe there is a reciprocal relationship between digression and allusion: a reciprocal relationship is assumed for this chapter which focuses on digression. At the end of the chapter there is a brief further examination of allusion which then forms the main subject of Chapter Three. In Chapter Four the concept of digressive allusion will be refined in the context of Byron's *ottava rima* poetry in *Don Juan* Cantos VI, VII, and VIII.

### 2.1 Byron's Early Poetry 1806-1812

In 'To the Earl of [Clare]', first published in *Poems Original and Translated* (1808), Byron makes one of his earliest self-conscious deviations from the proclaimed subject of a poem. 'To the Earl of [Clare]' comprises seventeen stanzas: five and a half of these digress from the history of the friendship between Clare and Byron, though the digression is initiated by Byron's deprecation of his own career in the light of Clare's:

'Tis yours to mix in polish'd courts,  
And shine in Fashion's annals.

'Tis mine to waste on love my time,  
Or vent my reveries in rhyme,  
Without the aid of Reason. (l.35-39)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The poem appears in CPW, I, 94-98 and Coleridge, I, 200-205. The editions differ in several points of punctuation and capitalisation. No complete MS. exists. In the first edition of *Poems Original and Translated* (1808) parenthesis and italics are present as in CPW. The notes to l.48 and l.60 are present as footnotes on the same page as the text of the poem (as in

As the aside develops, the speaker apparently reflects on the wider condition of love poets in general:

For Sense and Reason, (Critics know it,)  
Have quitted every amorous Poet,  
Nor left a thought to seize on. (l.40-42)

The attribution in brackets draws attention to the reception of the verse and introduces a note of antagonism: amongst the abstract forces of contemporary culture ('Fashion', 'Sense', 'Reason') the appearance of the party of 'Critics' initiates a shifting frame of reference.<sup>2</sup> With the change of stanza, the speaker moves suddenly from those general qualities to the particular case of Thomas Moore:

Poor LITTLE! sweet, melodious bard!  
Of late esteem'd it monstrous hard,  
That he, who sang before all;  
He who the lore of love expanded,  
By dire Reviewers should be branded,  
As void of wit and moral. (l.43-48)

In this stanza the dislocation of the poem from Clare as subject is complete. Byron has also abandoned the original epistolary discourse of high society for the clashing world of the magazines. The humour of the digression is

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Coleridge). All quotations in this chapter will be taken from CPW but points of difference in use of parenthesis or marks of quotation between CPW and Coleridge will be given in footnotes. Where possible, an MS. reading and a reference to the earliest published text will be supplied.

<sup>2</sup>The reference to critics within a literary text is exemplified in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, Volume II, chapter 8:

If my hypercritic is intractable, alledging, that two minutes and thirteen seconds are no more than two minutes and thirteen seconds, - when I have said all I can about them; - and that this plea, though it might save me dramatically, will damn me biographically, rendering my book from this very moment, a professed ROMANCE, which, before, was a book apocryphal: - If I am thus pressed - I then put an end to the whole objection and controversy about it all at once.

(Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman*, ed. by Graham Petrie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967; repr. 1986; hereafter 'Tristram Shandy'), p.123).

sustained, appropriately, by the apposition of two registers: the communal generosity of 'sweet', 'melodious', 'love', 'expanded' set against the vocabulary of the outcast: 'monstrous', 'dire', 'branded', 'void'. This element of hyperbole dissociates the speaker from the judgements of the literary world. The stanza is accompanied by a footnote giving details on the victimisation of 'Poor LITTLE': 'These stanzas were written soon after the appearance of a severe critique in a Northern review, on a new publication of the British Anacreon.'

Byron's readers would surely have known that the 'severe critique in a Northern review' could only refer to the *Edinburgh Review*, so the euphemistic footnote hardly contributes much to the readers' knowledge of Little's circumstances. This is an early example of digressive allusion within a poem by Byron which refers to the reception of literature simply for the pleasure of expatiating. As formal annotation the note is largely redundant, leading the reader further away from Clare (the ostensible subject of the poem) and complicating still further the formal progress of the digression.

Turning from Clare to Moore Byron offers the 'melodious bard' slight reward for his simple work:

And yet, while Beauty's praise is thine,  
 Harmonious favourite of the nine!  
 Repine not at thy lot;  
 Thy soothing lays may still be read,  
 When Persecution's arm is dead,  
 And Critics are forgot. (l.49-54)

The use of 'And yet' signals the poet's susceptibility to afterthought and the mock-elevated sentiment comically extends the reach of a poem which was supposed to be immersed in 'those scenes regretted ever' (l.15). The address to Little also verges on being a justification for the speaker's own tendency to 'waste on love [his] time' but before this line of argument can be

developed, the poem veers-off in another direction - again advertising the spontaneity of the change with the conversational use of 'still':

Still, I must yield those worthies merit,  
Who chasten, with unsparing spirit,  
Bad rhymes, and those who write them;  
And though myself may be the next,  
By critic sarcasm to be vexed,  
I really will not fight them. (l.55-60)

This has the effect of answering the footnote's lofty reference to 'a northern review'. The poet's self-deprecating reflection is set in conspicuously uninspired verse ('merit' is rhymed with 'spirit' and the line-ending 'them' is duplicated to complete the stanza), voicing a retreat from the violent arena of critical judgements and poetical reactions. Versified self-restraint is humorously expanded by a prose note which mockingly employs the heroic vocabulary of a literary battle:

A Bard, (*Horresco referens*,) defied his Reviewer to mortal combat; if this example becomes prevalent, our periodical Censors must be dipt in the River Styx, for what else can secure them from the numerous Host of their enraged assailants. (CPW, I, 372)

In this note, the aggressor/victim roles of the previous stanzas are reversed and reviewers are portrayed as the beleaguered party. There is also, however, the relish of a contemporary joke. Byron's parenthetical shudder was ironic, since the duel in question (between Moore and Jeffrey) was renowned for posing no threat to life.<sup>3</sup> The comparison of Edinburgh

<sup>3</sup> 'On examination, the balls of the pistols, were found to have evaporated. This incident gave occasion to much wagery in the daily prints' (*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1467 note). In the MS. *British Bards* (location: British Museum) a parenthesis is used to point the satire, '...the balls of the pistols (like the courage of the combattants) were found to have evaporated'.



reviewers with Achilles works to suggest their undiminished capacity to 'enrage' the objects of their literary criticism.

Up to this point, the digression has advanced six different points of view; the speaker viewing himself, the speaker looking at Little from the perspective of the general public, Little considering the critics, the speaker seeing Little in the future, the speaker contemplating the critics and finally, the speaker imagining how the critics and public might regard him:

Perhaps, they would do quite as well,  
To break the rudely sounding shell,  
Of such a young beginner;  
He, who offends at pert nineteen,  
Ere thirty may become, I ween,  
A very harden'd sinner. (l.61-66)<sup>4</sup>

The hyperbolic suggestion of 'sin' works to release the speaker's verse from the threat of critical retribution but the irony cannot deflect attention away from the display of 'such a young beginner'.

Once the digression has effectively identified Byron, the poem rebounds abruptly to its other subject with a new stanza:

Now [Clare] I must return to you,  
And sure apologies are due,  
Accept then, my concession;  
In truth, dear [Clare], in fancy's flight,  
I soar along from left to right,  
My Muse admires digression. (l.67-72)

Even the return to the subject is delayed comically by the poet's acknowledgement of his lapse and then further excuse for his behaviour.

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<sup>4</sup>'Egotism' (dating from 1807) uses the 'sinner/beginner' rhyme: making use of sexual *double entendre*:

Some sage *Mammas* with gesture haughty,  
Pronounce me quite a youthful Sinner -  
But *Daughters* say, 'although he's naughty,  
You must not check a *young Beginner*!' (l.13-16)

Again we are served with the image of a poet fancifully zig-zagging across Parnassus.<sup>5</sup> The digressive elaboration is sustained for a further stanza where Byron approaches Clare's career obliquely,

I think, I said, 'twould be your fate  
To add one star to royal state. (l.73-74)

- then Byron passes on to enumerate his wishes for Clare's future: 'And grant [...] may you [...] may your [...] be still'. The poem ends neatly as he gathers up the observations on his own career and turns them into a tribute to Clare:

I'd *wave* at once, a *Poet's* fame,  
To *prove* a *Prophet* here. (l.101-102)

Written in July or August 1807, 'To the Earl of [Clare]' illustrates the way that Byron was disposed to use self-conscious digression from the outset of his poetic career. In this verse epistle it is the sudden changes of tone and shifts in the frame of reference which disrupt the poem. The rapidly changing subject was common to the verse epistle but Byron disrupts the genre by fragmenting poetic voice.<sup>6</sup> This 'amused consciousness of certain forms of

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<sup>5</sup>The figure of an errant, conversational muse in flight appears in Matthew Prior's 'An Epistle to Fleetwood Shepherd, Esq.':

Kind Sir, I should be glad to see you;  
I hope you're well; so God be wi' you;  
Was all I thought at first to write; -  
But things, since then, are altered quite;  
Fancies flow in, and Muse flies high,  
So God knows when my clack will lie;  
I must, Sir prattle on, as afore,  
And beg your pardon yet this half hour. (l.105-112)

(*The Poetical Works of Matthew Prior* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1858))

Prior's poetry is notable in this context for its frequent employment of parentheses and recourse to self-conscious digression. See, for example, *Alma; or, The Progress of the Mind*, Canto II, l. 543; 562. Digression and flight are linked by Thomas Moore in *The Twopenny Post Bag*, Letter VIII: 'But, hang this long digressive flight!' (l.54), *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore* (London: Frederick Warne, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup>Stuart Tave quotes Sir Henry Wotton on the proximity of extremes of emotion:

youthful naiveté' has been noticed before, for example by Jerome McGann.<sup>7</sup> But although McGann observes that 'an ironic strain pervades the volume' of *Hours of Idleness* (*Fiery Dust*, p.14), the focus of his study is on Byron's presentation of himself as hero.<sup>8</sup> This chapter analyses the variety of devices adopted in Byron's disruption of eighteenth-century tonal stability. Andrew Rutherford, Willis W. Pratt and, more recently, Frederick L. Beaty have discussed the ways in which tropes of juxtaposition are established in Byron's juvenilia.<sup>9</sup> None of these critics, however, explore in any detail the literary

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'though Gladness, and Grief, be opposites in Nature; yet they are such Neighbours and Confiners in Arte, that the least touch of a Pensill, will translate a Crying, into a Laughing Face.'

It was, however, only in the eighteenth century, according to Tave, that 'this coincidence of extremes came to be particularly cherished: it was one expression of the mysterious and marvellous complexity of man, and above all the Englishman.' See Stuart M. Tave, *The Amiable Humorist: A Study on the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960; hereafter 'Tave, *The Amiable Humorist*'), p.191.

<sup>7</sup>Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968; hereafter '*Fiery Dust*'), p.18

<sup>8</sup>For examples of the way in which McGann foregrounds the heroic posturing of Byron's early verse see *Fiery Dust*, pp.18-19 and pp.20-21, where having noticed the tension between Byron's 'visionary and skeptical imaginations', McGann provides a unifying overview: 'In *Hours of Idleness*, the radical splits in Byron's various conventional postures result from his desire to identify with a heroic order of human life that is at once of this world [...] and quite beyond it' (*Fiery Dust*, p.21).

<sup>9</sup>Referring to Moore's pseudonymous poems. and the 'English Augustan tradition', Beaty writes:

Nor were these seemingly incompatible modes always reserved for separate poems. As 'Childish Recollections' and 'The First Kiss of Love' show, they were sometimes used in conjunction, with traces of cynicism reflecting the poet's ambivalence even in sentimental lyrics. This ingrained combination of satire and sentiment (which critics would later term a dialectical interplay of Classic and Romantic) produced from the very outset of Byron's literary career a poetical voice with two modulations.

(*Byron the Satirist*, p.18).

Andrew Rutherford provides a more general account of the impulse behind Byron's juxtapositions:

Byron's Muse was Janus faced, and his poetry oscillates between the poles of sentiment and satire. This duality appears in his earliest work, and it is even indicated by the rival accounts of what induced him to write poetry in the first place.

(Andrew Rutherford, *Byron: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962; hereafter 'Rutherford'), p.15).

Pratt sees the early satirical bent of Byron's imaginative process as chastened and deflected by the reception of his work at Southwell:

But in conscientiously pursuing a chaste muse Byron allowed the second edition of *Fugitive Pieces* to lose its realistic and humorously mocking quality, the one characteristic that distinguished it from a hundred other sentimental and romantic effusions of the day. It was not, in fact, until *Beppo* was written, in 1818, that the real

context of or the precise forms effected by this instability. This lack of detailed formal attention is the starting point for the next section of this chapter.<sup>10</sup>

A survey of Byron's earliest works (1798-1811) in the first volume of McGann's Clarendon edition of *The Complete Poetical Works* reveals a frequent use of bracketed asides. These structures may be read as a simple form of digression in which a unit of sense is graphically disconnected from its context in the rest of the poem. By classifying parenthetical asides as digressions, I am aiming to extend M. K. Joseph's more restrictive definition of digression as

passages in which Byron temporarily takes leave of the story to make some personal aside or general statement, for which there is no immediate basis in the story.<sup>11</sup>

Although this definition does not preclude parentheses of a few words, Joseph's study of *Don Juan* privileges length of absence from the story over the act of taking leave from it. Having suggested the category of digressive allusion, I wish to examine more fully the relationship between sudden transition, allusion and digression in Byron's poetry. The next stage of this examination will offer a formal analysis of parenthetical asides, signalled

comic detachment emerged again in his writing and established the psychological pattern for his humorous masterpiece *Don Juan*.

(Willis W. Pratt, *Byron at Southwell: The Making of a Poet with New Poems and Letters from the Rare Books Collections of the University of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1948; hereafter '*Byron at Southwell*'), p.44).

There is a considerable distance here between the readings of 'dialectical interplay', 'two modulations', 'duality', and 'real comic detachment'. The work of these critics does illustrate, however, that several varieties of textual instability have been located in Byron's early verse. See also Claude M. Fuess, *Lord Byron as a Satirist in Verse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912; hereafter '*Fuess*'), p.44.

<sup>10</sup>The eighteenth-century literary context is studied by A.B. England who provides a discerning account of the differences between eighteenth-century tropes of juxtaposition and those in *Don Juan*, for example, the way that 'the narrator's presence, instead of being an authoritative force for coherence and order, actually creates all kinds of structural imbalance and disproportion' (England, p.186). One of the aims of the thesis is to assess how far these configurations pre-date *Don Juan*, and to what degree other eighteenth-century genres not considered by England shape the reception of Byron's digressive modes. Other approaches to the precedents for and shapes of digression in Byron's writing are discussed below, p. 114 and note 61.

<sup>11</sup>M.K. Joseph, *Byron the Poet* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964; hereafter '*Joseph*'), p.199

allusions, and encyclopaedic footnote material in Byron's poetry, since these are the points at which digressive allusion is generated.<sup>12</sup> I hope eventually to be able to show how Byron's distinctive inflection of the trope of digression anticipates a modernist awareness of the critical relationships between reader, text, and other texts.

## 2.2 Digression as Literary Trope

As we saw in my first chapter, contemporary reviewers of Byron's poetry recognised the occurrence of digression in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the *ottava rima* verse. For late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century readers, digression was a familiar structural device whereby poet or narrator temporarily departed from the ostensible subject of poem or novel, but discovered in the process of digressing, a connection or relevance to the main subject. Richard Terry has traced the relationship between theories of digression and transition in the eighteenth-century long poem, and he distinguishes between the use of digression to affirm hidden continuity, and digression as 'an autonomous textual unit'.<sup>13</sup> The eighteenth-century preference for affirmative continuity in digression is adopted by twentieth-century critics in two doctoral dissertations from the 1970's which treat *Don Juan* at some length. William T. Ross refines M.K. Joseph's definition of digression by classifying it as

<sup>12</sup>The first detailed investigation of these formal devices in Byron's *ottava rima* verse may be found in J. Drummond Bone, 'Beppo: The Liberation of Fiction', in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, pp.97-125.

<sup>13</sup>Richard Terry, 'Transitions and Digressions in the Eighteenth-Century Long Poem' in *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 32 (1992), 495-510 (p.502). Terry examines the use of Newtonian cosmology as a paradigm for understanding the way that digressions and transitions provided unity in intermixture. Terry emphasises the 'equivocal' aesthetic definitions of order implicit in 'the ubiquitous poetic trope of *concordia discors*' (pp.508; 505). Whilst responses to Byron's transitions could be seen as 'equivocal' to the extent that there was no aesthetic consensus at the time, this thesis focuses on the point at which transition or heterogeneity was perceived as unacceptable.

any wandering away from the narrative line whose departure is signalled by some sort of 'spring', psychological or rhetorical, and whose function is to generalize upon the immediate and particular situation in the narrative.<sup>14</sup>

Ross also finds, however, that 'there is simply too much gray matter to divide the poem into narrative and digression' (Ross, p.109). Added to this, Ross argues that 'the digressions and the narrative have a commonality of purpose which mutes any distinction between them' (Ross, p.110). This leads Ross to shift the emphasis of his investigation onto 'the function of a digressive poem rather than the function of different entities within the poem' (Ross, p.115). Ross concludes that what the digressions offer is the 'felt unity' of authorial presence (Ross, p.120).

Joel Dana Black initially establishes a more subversive pedigree for digression by tracing its origins in dramatic transgression.<sup>15</sup> Black's dissertation begins by suggesting that digression offers a 'dynamic disorganization' (Black, p.4) or stylistic levity which might counteract the physical prohibitions discovered in the law of gravity. My thesis will be drawing on the same transgressive sense of digression including the associations of moral and spatial deviation which are available in late

<sup>14</sup>William T. Ross, 'Digressive Narrator and Narrative Technique in Byron's *Don Juan*' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1970; abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts*, 31 (1970-71), 5423-A; hereafter 'Ross'), p.107. The focus of the present thesis is on the sense of distinction between narrative and digression, and on the way that digressive allusion has a particularising tendency rather than the 'generalizing' function defined by Ross.

<sup>15</sup>Joel Dana Black, 'The Second Fall: The Laws of Digression and Gravitation in Romantic Narrative and Their Impact on Contemporary Encyclopaedic Literature' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1979; hereafter 'Black'). Black locates the transgressive origins of digression in the '*parekbasis*' or 'stepping aside' of protagonists in Greek tragedy (Black, pp.12-18). Black argues that the earlier moral sense of digression was then absorbed into literary theory where it was used to classify a fault of style. Seventeenth-century scientific empiricism was hostile to digressive discourse (Black cites the well-known Royal Society of London's proscription of 'all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style' (Black, pp.27-28)), but by the first decade of the eighteenth century, positive appraisals of digressions were appearing in rhetorical theory (Black cites Congreve's observations on Pindar's style (Black, p.19)). For the background to the Royal Society's rejection of 'those spacious Tropes and Figures of imaginative writing which result in only mists and uncertainties', see Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp.38-39.

sixteenth-century uses of the term. Shakespeare, for example, uses the double sense of 'digression' as physical journey and (sexual) transgression in *The Taming of the Shrew* when Petruchio answers the urgent enquiries about his late arrival and extraordinary dress for his own wedding:

Tedious it were to tell, and harsh to hear.  
Sufficeth I am come to keep my word,  
Though in some part enforced to digress,  
Which at more leisure I will so excuse  
As you shall well be satisfied withal.  
But where is Kate? I stay too long from her. (III. 2. 103-108)

Digression becomes here, as it appears so often, a case of special pleading: the speaker identifies value in the deviation, but is obliged to apologise for the appearance of irregularity and he emphasises his awareness of temporal delay in the narrative action.

Whilst keeping in view the transgressive sense of digression documented by Black and others, I wish to avoid the tendency of Black's thesis to translate the 'dynamic disorganization' into something much more cohesive:

All the disparate, disorganized knowledge [...] acquires a dynamic, organic unity through the hero's unconscious shaping process of *formation* which is the ostensible subject of the narrative. (Black, p.252)

Black concludes that, like Sterne, Byron is a narrative technician using 'digressive techniques to strike a stylistic equipoise between gravity on the one hand and levity on the other' (Black, p.270). These ideas of 'organic unity' and 'stylistic equipoise' show a concern with what Byron's contemporary reviewers felt was lacking in his poetry, and I am unwilling to see 'disorganization' soothed (unconsciously) into 'unity'.

My approach is closer to that of A.B. England who defines the characteristics of digression as combining the obtrusive presence of the

narrator, and discursive rumination. This combination is exemplified for England in the narratives of Fielding (England, pp.151-53). England finds that the digressive mind can be a 'force for order' in eighteenth-century literature, but in *Don Juan* England suggests that this is only an 'intermittent' impulse (England, p.161). The impression of digression in *Don Juan* is, therefore, one of 'discontinuity' (England, p.167), and this is eventually referred to by England as Byron's experience of reality (England, p.184). This is close to the conclusion of E.D.H. Johnson's thesis on *Don Juan*.<sup>16</sup> Johnson, however, defines digression as material 'not directly relevant to the story' (E.D.H. Johnson, p.1). He suggests that it is not possible to tabulate digression in the poem, and off-loads analysis onto biography:

Anything like a complete tabulation of Byron's handling of the digressions in *Don Juan* is impossible. They are as varied and apparently unmethodical as his own thoughts, of which they are, indeed, the best record throughout the latter years of his life. [...] It is over the digressions that we linger because they are the key to a right understanding not only of Byron himself and of his art, but also of his relationship to the period in which he lived. (E.D.H. Johnson, p.52)

Johnson's study of digression sees it as part of a 'search for a subject which would reconcile and harmonize all [Byron's] talents' (E.D.H. Johnson, p.96).<sup>17</sup> He exemplifies the way in which critics familiarise the digressive voice of *Don Juan* so that abrupt transitions and discontinuities are assimilated by organising principles until they do 'not interfere with the narrative's continuity' (Black, p.126).

<sup>16</sup>Edward Dudley Hume Johnson, 'Lord Byron in *Don Juan*: A Study in Digression' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1939; hereafter 'E.D.H. Johnson').

<sup>17</sup>Although I disagree with Johnson's approach to digression, I find his analysis of the techniques of Italian medley writing and the Whig perspective in *Don Juan* very suggestive, and, in some respects, looking forward to work by Malcolm Kelsall in *Byron's Politics* (1987).



Unlike Johnson, I am concerned with surface differences rather than the disclosure of underlying homogeneity.<sup>18</sup> I wish to complicate the idea of surface and suggest ways in which Byron's writing offers the reader a shifting, layered surface as meaning rather than suggesting that meaning is located in a reflection of Byron's mind, a reflection of unstructured reality, or in the reconciliation of difference or the transcendence of contradiction.

### 2.3 Parenthetical Addresses

*In But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses in English Printed Verse*

John Lennard has examined Byron's use of parentheses for verisimilitude in self-expression and as a trigger in satirical verse.<sup>19</sup> Lennard's chapter on Byron's poetry concentrates on *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan*, and he concludes that Byron's parentheses function to sustain the relationship between Byron and the reader:

To a considerable extent the use of lunulae [...] becomes a mannerism, serving, like grunts of agreement on the telephone, as phatic communication, reassuring the reader that the 'line' is still open, that the private, mercuric Byron is still there.  
(Lennard, p.160)

I am indebted to Lennard's work on the mimetic effects of parentheses but I would argue that Byron's bracketed asides work to check and modify the relationship between poet and reader - sustaining tension rather than offering a regular form of reassurance. By examining bracketed asides in Byron's poetry up to 1812, this section will analyse a range of disruptive effects achieved by parentheses.

<sup>18</sup>A recent analysis of digression which also foregrounds surface, but in the case of Keats rather than Byron is to be found in Susan J. Wolfson, 'Keats's *Isabella* and the "Digressions" of "Romance"', *Criticism*, 27 (1985), 247-61.

<sup>19</sup>John Lennard, *But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses in English Printed Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991; hereafter 'Lennard')

Out of 173 poems in the first volume of the *Complete Poetical Works* edited by Jerome McGann 23 poems make use of between one and three parentheses. This figure does not include *Hints from Horace* which itself contains 23 bracketed asides and will be considered separately. In examining Byron's early use of bracketed phrases I have adopted an inclusive approach and have considered some instances where brackets appear in the edition of E. H. Coleridge but not that of Jerome McGann. Where the two editions do not concur I have noted which edition is being used and, where possible, I have supplied a manuscript reading and referred to the first published edition.

At its most basic level the separate syntactic unit of the parenthesis allows Byron to introduce extraneous subject matter at almost any point in the line, thus increasing the verbal resources available to complete the pattern of rhyme and metre. For example, the parenthetical aside in 'Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos' helps to supply a rhyme for the month:

If in the month of dark December  
 Leander, who was nightly wont  
 (What maid will not the tale remember?)  
 To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!<sup>20</sup>

In this case, though, Byron's parenthesis also scores a small satirical point by suggesting *sotto voce* that maids are bound to remember nightly activity. In this respect, we can see how the parenthesis has been made more provocative than the original manuscript draft of this line '(If I the tale aright remember)' (CPW, I, 281). Two other instances in Byron's early verse show him turning the parenthetical line-filler to advantage. In 'To Mary on

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<sup>20</sup>Coleridge also has parenthesis. An extensive prose note was attached to the poem at the foot of the page on which it appeared in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I and II volume.

Receiving her Picture' (Coleridge only), the use of a bracketed clause draws attention to the work of art:

This faint resemblance of thy charms,  
 (Though strong as mortal art could give,)  
 My constant heart of fear disarms,  
 Revives my hopes, and bids me live. (l.1-4)<sup>21</sup>

This parenthetical aside underlines the poet's sense that the picture is at a remove from Mary's face, and emphasises the consciousness of the boundaries of art. It checks the sense of the stanza as it balances the iambic tetrameter flow of the first line and in this way imparts a quality which is almost always present in Byron's parenthetical digressions; self-reflexive rhythmical artistry.

In 'Verses, Written in Compliance with a Lady's Request to contribute to her Album,' (first published in 1829; see CPW, I, 389-90), Byron again employed a parenthesis which reflects the processes of the poem's composition:

They say that Love had once a book,  
 (The urchin loves to copy you)  
 Where all who came a pencil took,  
 And wrote, perhaps, a word or two. (l. 1-4)<sup>22</sup>

The last line of this stanza is constructed around a hesitation and its 'perhaps' balances the parenthetical check of line two. The effect of the direct address in parenthesis is to set up a tension between the intimate occasion of the poem and Byron's public readership. 'Written in Compliance' suggests the pressure of a particular audience. This (sexual) tension between the poet's

<sup>21</sup>No MS. available. The poem was published in FP, POVO, HI, POT (CPW, I, 367). A parenthesis appears in FP but not in POVO, HI, POT.

<sup>22</sup>No MS. available. McGann suggests that 'the style is early Byron' (CPW, I, 390). See the poem 'They Say That Hope Is Happiness' (1814) for the similar cadence of 'They say that...' but a tone of melancholy disillusionment prevails in the later poem.

performance and the anticipation of the reader is carried in the checks of parenthesis. At the poem's conclusion, the complimentary aside of the first stanza opens into public address as the poet bows out of his act of compliance:

And I refer the truth to you,  
For *Love* and *you* are near related. (l.59-60)

These minor examples illustrate a way in which Byron's very early use of formal hesitation allows the possibility of dialogue with an implied audience to affect the rhythmical flow of the line. If an inclusive list of parenthetical interruptions in the first volume of the McGann Clarendon edition is divided according to where the brackets occur in relation to the line, it emerges that for every instance of a parenthesis occurring at the beginning of a line, there are four uses of parenthesis falling at the end of a line and almost eight uses of parenthesis occupying a whole line.<sup>23</sup> This may confirm the view that Byron's parenthetical asides are closely bound-up with the completion of his rhyme scheme but it also supports the reading of Byron's parentheses as after-thoughts and a formal reflex anticipating the function of the end couplet in the *ottava rima* verse.

A substantial proportion of the early parenthetical asides offer personal reflection and the majority of these are potentially self-ironising or humorous. The degree of self-irony is unstable and it can tip into self-defence, for example, on the subject of writing verse. 'To a Knot of Ungenerous Critics' interrupts an elaborately hostile prediction about 'canker'd brows' to assert,

(Whilst Truth my sole Defence is nigh,

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<sup>23</sup>Based on CPW, I the statistical breakdown of lines affected by parenthesis is as follows:  
 parenthesis at beginning of line: 5  
 parenthesis at end of line: 21  
 parenthesis enclosing whole line: 38  
 parenthesis occurring mid-line: 8

Prepared the danger to defy). (l.25-26)

The overstatement in this case has no qualifying self-irony: invective is interrupted only to offer the ultimate self-justification of 'Truth'.<sup>24</sup> The recollection of *Paradise Lost* a few lines later is another attempt on the part of the poet to gain external authority:

Truth poisoning high Ithuriel's spear  
Bids every Fiend unmask'd appear,  
The vizard tears from every face,  
And dooms them to a dire disgrace. (l.41-44)

But the paraphrase of Milton (*Paradise Lost*, IV. 810-14) transmits no more than another gesture of self-defence as the tone of the poem insists on parity not difference between the Southwell critics and the 'vain aims' of Satan. Byron's identification of himself with Ithuriel is betrayed forty lines later in the open quotation of Pope:

Why should I point my pen of steel  
To break 'such flies upon the wheel?'  
With minds to Truth and Sense unknown,  
Who dare not call their words their own. (l.81-84)<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Byron's employment in l.41 of the Ithuriel figure used by both Edmund Burke and Thomas Mathias to expose the deformity of French principles shows how dependent he was on traditionally Tory modes of literary attack in his early writing. See *The Pursuits of Literature: A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues with Notes*, 8th edn. (London, 1798), p.62. See also Fucss, p.85 for recollections of Mathias and Gifford in Byron's satire.

<sup>25</sup>As this is the first signalled allusion to be considered in the chapter it is appropriate to note that the textual commentaries in CPW note allusion in several different ways: in this case the comment on l.41 and l.82 is in the same form ('See *Paradise Lost*, IV. 810-12' and 'See Pope's 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot', l. 307-8). This makes no distinction between the presence of signalled or unsignalled allusions to other texts in the poem. In the editorial introduction to CPW, I, McGann states that he has 'tried to identify all of Byron's explicit literary allusions and echoes, and as many of his less explicit ones as [he] has recognised' (CPW, I, p.xliv). The editorial criteria for distinguishing between an explicit allusion and an explicit echo are not divulged. McGann's other forms of reference are, 'Echoes...', 'Echoing...', 'The poem deliberately recalls...', 'recalling...', 'Perhaps recalling...', 'Alluding to...', 'a misquotation of...', 'The stanza refers to...', 'Cf...'. Sometimes the commentary is simply a line reference to another text. This suggests, I think, the editor's sense that Byron makes allusions in a number of differing ways although no editorial system has been devised to accommodate these nuances. A discussion of criteria for identifying signalled allusions is given on p.121 below. See also the discussion on pp.137-44 and notes 74, 85, 93.

Byron's biographical qualifications to verse narrative, in 'Childish Recollections', however, snare the reader more artfully as he lingers to recall the complexities of a reciprocal relationship:

The smiles of Beauty, (for, alas! I've known  
What 'tis to bend before Love's mighty throne;)   
The smiles of Beauty, though those smiles were dear,  
Could hardly charm me, when that friend was near. (l.199-202)

Here, the parenthesis insinuates the way that the poet has frequently been captivated by 'smiles of Beauty'. This lends a delicate ambiguity to the word 'hardly', and shows how Byron's digressions may complicate a later phrase or image in the main narrative. In the poem written 'On Finding a Fan Of Miss A[nne] H[ouson]', the parenthesis in the penultimate line is the intervention of a 'wayward fate' which deflects the object of the stanza (warmth of passion) into the necessary rhyme of 'other':

Or, if it chance to wake again,  
Not always doom'd its heat to smother,  
It sheds (so wayward fates ordain)  
Its former warmth around another. (l.17-20)

The link which is constructed here between sexual mutability and formal digression will be of vital importance for Byron's later *ottava rima* work (see Chapter Five, pp. 302-18).

In 'To Marion', '[Translation from Anacreon] Ode 3', 'Egotism' and the two 'Farewells' to Malta and Hobhouse, Byron uses bracketed asides to allow a tone of playful scepticism to modify an otherwise elegiac voice. The

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Beaty describes the use of Pope in the poem above as 'allusive quotation', showing, 'by virtue of its context, that the unjustly maligned youth saw himself in the role of Pope retaliating against Lord Hervey's calumnies' (*Byron the Satirist*, pp.22-23). Byron deploys Pope's 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' in a prominent footnote in HL. See 'Childish Recollections' l.120 and note (CPW, I, 383).

genre of the valediction has a tradition of loving itemisation, concentration on the physical qualities of place or person to be quitted. Byron departs from this formula, using parenthesis to reinforce the counter-genre of relief at departure. In his 'Farewell Petition to J[ohn] C[am] H[obhouse] Esq.' (not published until 1887), Byron disrupts the formal farewell with the outrageously archaic language employed in the early stanzas of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

Oh thou yclep'd by vulgar sons of men  
Cam Hobhouse! but by wags Byzantian Ben!  
Twin sacred titles, which combined appear  
To grace thy volume's front, and gild its rear. (l. 1-4)<sup>26</sup>

In this voice, Fletcher (Byron's manservant) becomes 'that man of woes' whilst his wife is 'lone Penelope'. The mock-heroic idiom allows Byron to embark on an eight-line list of the sufferings endured by Fletcher which translate him into a series of objections, resistances, and complaints. The figure of Fletcher is gradually replaced by a catalogue of things: a summary of 'abroad' overtakes the picture of the servant and, arguably, the whole poem.<sup>27</sup> The poem then continues by drawing attention to itself as literature;

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<sup>26</sup>Coleridge publishes this poem from *Murray's Magazine* 1887; CPW gives as copy text MS.M (location: John Murray Archive), collated with *Murray's Magazine* and C. There are, however, two lines in MS. M which are missing from CPW. Between l.22-23 in CPW, MS.M has:

The Vizier's galliot, and Albanias' rocks  
All Asias' bugs, and Pera's sable Fox:-

The presence of these lines makes more sense of the following lines which were obviously intended as a crescendo: 'Be these the themes to greet his faithful Rib,/ So may thy pen be smooth, thy tongue be glib!' The mention of the Fox was probably the reason for the omission of the lines from *Murray's Magazine*. The *double entendre* of 'gild its rear' was obscure enough to be left standing. Another discrepancy between MS.M and CPW is that 'threatened' in l.18 is underlined in the MS. and should therefore be italicised in CPW.

<sup>27</sup>For the way in which lists in *Beppo* 'float free' of the poem see J. Drummond Bone, 'Beppo: The Liberation of fiction' in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, pp.102-123. See also England on the ways in which Swift and Byron share 'an absorption in the analogised particulars for their own sake. And these particulars are not formed into coherent, progressive patterns. In fact, they do not appear to be related to one another in any meaningful way at all' (England, p.134).

talking about the 'paths of Sale', quoting Pope, and foregrounding the difficulties of verse-writing:

Tell him, my guide, Philosopher, and Friend,  
Who cannot love me, and who will not mend,  
Tell him, that not in vain I shall essay  
To tread and trace our 'old Horatian way',<sup>28</sup>  
And be (with prose supply my dearth of rhymes)  
What better men have been in better times. (l.34-40)

As in Byron's later poetry, the promise to close comes some time before the poem stops: 'Here let me cease, for why should I prolong/ My notes...' occurs thirteen lines before the end. The interim is filled with projections of publication:

Go, get thee hence to Paternoster Row,  
Thy patrons wave a duodecimo!  
(Best form for *letters* from a distant land,  
It fits the pocket, nor fatigues the hand.) (l.47-50)

The effect of this parenthetical observation on book production is humorous because the voice of business acumen contrasts with the emotional value 'thy volume' and 'thysself' were accorded in the opening lines of the poem. The material concern with the size of Hobhouse's work also insistently places Byron's poem as literary production and draws the reader into the discussion about readership. Attention to the book as physical object was not a new literary device in 1810 but Byron's emphasis on the economy of reading lends a more unusual inflection to the genre of valediction.

The 'Farewell to Malta' abandons emotional leave-taking through a series of parenthetical interpolations which focus attention on comically mundane details. The poem parodies loco-descriptive valedictions (for

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<sup>28</sup>For the private sexual code of 'old Horatian way', see Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England* (London: Faber, 1985; hereafter 'Crompton'), p.146,



example, 'Corydon's Farewell, on Sailing in the Late Expedition Fleet') and by an accumulation of common nouns suggests that Malta might be anywhere:

I go - but God knows when, or why,  
To smoky towns and cloudy sky,  
To things (the honest truth to say)  
As bad - but in a different way. (l.21-24)

The specificity of place is here juxtaposed with the colloquial surrender of detail in 'God knows when, or why'. This repeats a satirical technique of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* where exact allusions to bad verse are juxtaposed with the poet's vain efforts to describe them:

And skip at every step, Lord knows how high,  
And frighten foolish babes, the Lord knows why. (l.159-60)

The same resignation ('Lord knows what [...] Lord knows who') is used in 'Parenthetical Address, by Dr. Plagiary' to satirise the déclassé persistence of Dr. Busby and his son (see pp. 131-32 below).

In the 'Farewell', the image of Malta is displaced by the whimsical thought processes of the poet, who lacks a positive identity:

But only stare from out my casement,  
And ask, for what is such a place meant?  
Then, in my solitary nook,  
Return to scribbling, or a book,  
Or take my physic while I'm able  
(Two spoonfuls hourly by the label). (l. 49-54)

This last parenthesis has the effect of jolting the reader out of a listless survey and into the comedy of specificity. Byron here supplies a piece of detailed information which follows on by association from the mention of physic, but the exactitude is so irrelevant that it unbalances the scene. Byron referred to the poem as 'a copy of Hudibrastics' (BLJ, II, 126) intended only

for private circulation but it was published in 1816 in *Poems on His Domestic Circumstances* (sixth edition).<sup>29</sup> The feminine rhyme scheme ('-ary nook'/'or a book') is an early indication of potential which would be released in *Don Juan*. Although Byron professed to be puzzled in 1811 when the circulation of the verses caused disquiet ('I am sure there is nothing to annoy any body, or a single personal allusion throughout,' (BLJ, II, 126)), it is easy to see how the casual specificity of this poem (especially references to 'Mrs Fraser') might be received in 1816 in the context of the hostile separation verses. In both cases, the contexts of rapid private circulation and pirated publication contribute to associate Byron's digressive style (like Sterne's) with sexual license.

The humour of the 'Farewell to Malta' contains a form of fatalistic self-mockery which exerted a destabilising force in Byron's poetry throughout his career. A pertinent early example occurs in the second line of 'Egotism':

If Fate should seal my Death to-morrow,  
(Though much I hope she will *postpone* it). (l.1-2)

Here, the aside provides an instance of a calculated sinking of tone undercutting the gravity of *momento mori* in the first line.<sup>30</sup> The emergence

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<sup>29</sup>CPW, I, 454-55.

<sup>30</sup> Other examples of parenthesis interrupting the tone of a poem occur in 'To Marion' where Byron offers a knowing counter-point to his 'artless song' with a dramatic aside to the reader:

All I shall, therefore, say, (what'er  
I think, is neither here nor there). (l.27-28)

This is more colloquial and more sly than the earlier draft of the poem where parenthesis was used to offer a bald apology in advance:

All I shall therefore say of these  
(Thy Pardon if my words displease). (CPW, I, 53)

The later version is more witty because it is self-reflexive: parenthetical utterance is itself 'neither here nor there'.

Many of the poems which use bracketed phrases are addressed to a specific person and assume a degree of contest between poet and addressee. This occurs in 'Egotism', for

of a new voice, as in this instance from 'Egotism', works as a brake and a question-mark. We are unsure whether the remark in parenthesis carries the same weight as the voice of the main text and this element of uncertainty may destabilise our reading of the poem by questioning the poet's relationship with his readers. His qualification renders impossible any naive acceptance of previous or subsequent statements and it subverts the authority of the lyric 'I' in a manner which reminds us of the narrator of *Don Juan*. In Byron's early poems, however, textual self-awareness is used without any sense of the coherent philosophy which underlies the later *ottava rima*. Instead, the parenthetical voice is used to insert a momentary rhetorical question-mark over generic expectations.

This enforced questioning has a peculiarly disruptive effect in genres which draw on a tradition of bracketed asides for informative but uncontroversial material; simple reference or stage direction, for example.<sup>31</sup> When Byron's texts contain parentheses to attribute a report to a specific party, the effect is often to provoke doubt. One example of this was the aside in 'To the Earl of [Clare]': '(Critics know it)'. The idea of an unreliable reference also occurs in 'To Miss E[lizabeth] P[igot]' as Byron expands his observations on the Muslim view of marriage to incorporate Christian teaching on this topic:

'Tis surely enough upon earth to be vex'd,  
 With wives who eternal confusion are spreading;  
 'But in Heaven' (so runs the Evangelist's Text,)
 'We neither have giving in marriage, or wedding.'

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example, in parentheses which interrupt the poem to assert the good faith of the poet's last observation, as if in answer to a questioning other presence:

Some ancient Dames, of virtue fiery,  
 (Unless Report does much belie them,)
 Have lately made a sharp Enquiry,  
 And much it grieves me to deny them. (l.21-24)

<sup>31</sup>John Lennard offers a detailed and convincing account of the development of the convention of parenthetical speech in Coleridge's 'Christabel' (Lennard, pp. 124-5).

From this we suppose, (as indeed well we may,)
 That should Saints after death, with their spouses put up
 more,
 And wives, as in life, aim at absolute sway,
 All Heaven would ring with the conjugal uproar. (l.21-28)

This passage appropriates Biblical quotation for a comic misinterpretation. The parenthetical asides signal the satirical purpose by introducing and singling out the figure of the Evangelist. Byron contrives to juxtapose this evangelical obsession with Scripture and his own radically material insistence on human 'uproar'.

The collision of quotidian strife with Biblical authority (in the manner of a Mystery play) looks forward to Byron's comic technique in *The Vision of Judgement*. As Willis Pratt notes: 'the difference [between the poems] is in degree and not in kind' (*Byron at Southwell*, p.47). Pratt also observes that the direct references and irreverent passages as well as the erotic ones were edited out of *Fugitive Pieces*. In this case, the last six stanzas of the poem were removed. This censorship suggests that even in Byron's juvenilia, digressive allusion was felt to be unacceptable, even subversive. The questioning of authorities is emphasised by the way that Byron goes out of his way to cite them. The reference to the New Testament is meticulously (for a poem) sourced:

If a glimpse of redemption you wish to behold,  
 Of St. MATT.- read the second and twentieth chapter.  
 (l.19-20)

The effort to be exact contributes to the bathos of the interpretation. Byron's careful placement of quotation marks creates the expectation of a decorum which is rendered farcical:

Still I can't contradict what so oft has been said,

16)<sup>32</sup> 'Though women are angels, yet wedlock's the devil.' (l.15-16)

The use of bracketed phrases to remind the reader who is speaking can also be a source of humour simply because of the deft way that the attribution is inserted into an out-pouring of speech. In Byron's early poetry this technique can lead to unintentional humour as, for example, in his translation of 'The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus' from the *Aeneid*:

'With patience,' (thus Hyrtacides began,  
'Attend, nor judge, from youth, our humble plan'. (l.99-100)

This interruption before the speaker has finished a sentence undercuts his call to be heard 'with patience'. Byron uses a parenthetical attribution of speech with more success in 'Epitaph from a Sickbed' (CPW only) where the poet narrates his own demise:

Odious! in boards, 'twould any Bard provoke,  
(Were the last words that dying Byron spoke). (l.1-2)<sup>33</sup>

The commentary is all the more comic here because it follows the ludicrous abruptness of the supposed 'last words'. In 'The Curse of Minerva' (CPW only), Byron uses the same parenthetical attribution of speech to achieve the incongruity of religious attention in a mock-heroic context:

<sup>32</sup>McGann traces this signalled allusion to *Troilus and Cressida*: 'Women are angels, wooing / Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing' (l. 2. 291-2). The quotation, therefore, is not precise. Byron has adapted Cressida's words to make his own point. The misogynist's humour behind the joke is both acknowledged and reasserted by this appropriation as Cressida's immediate dramatic situation is obscured by a more general prejudice. By reformulating her comment as a proverb: 'what so oft has been said', Byron turns Cressida's point about masculine mutability into an indictment of women. I am not certain, however, that McGann's reference can wholly account for 'wedlock's the devil'. It seems more likely that Byron is compounding two texts in one allusion. Fuess claims that l.16 'might have fitted into *Don Juan*' (Fuess, p.44).

<sup>33</sup>MS. in the Murray Archive. The parenthesis is present as in CPW.

'Mortal!' ('twas thus she spake) 'that blush of shame  
Proclaims thee Briton, once a noble name.' (l.89-90)<sup>34</sup>

As well as creating a humorous disjunction in the divine prophecy, the unnecessary affirmation that this Olympian mode of address does indeed come from the goddess helps to sustain the persona of 'Byron' as earnest messenger from the gods. Such a dextrous use of parenthesis occurs throughout Byron's early verse, and it illustrates the ways in which he was able to exploit rapid changes of tone for satirical effects from the very start of his poetic career.

An early use of parentheses to sustain the conversational mode which would be perfected in Byron's later *ottava rima* work can be seen in 'A Parody Upon "The Little Grey Man" in Lewis' *Tales of Wonder*' (CPW only<sup>35</sup>). In this poem Byron borrows the bracketed asides of his source to suggest the intimate, incisive commentary of a gossiping narrator. As well as sustaining the urgent pace of the narrative, the asides work to draw attention to the act of narration:

One evening so gloomy when only the owl  
(A tempest impending) would venture to prowl,  
Mary Ann who by chance had walk'd out in the gloom,  
By a newly made grave squatted down on a tomb. (l. 31-34)

The first two lines of this stanza are lifted verbatim from the source poem by 'H. Bunbury'. McGann notes that the parenthesis here echoes Matthew Prior's 'The Lady's Looking Glass' and that in one draft the quotation is marked by quotation marks (CPW, I, 14; 358):

But, oh the Change! the Winds grow high:

<sup>34</sup>I have not been able to consult the MSS. (locations: Kent; New York; Yale). The rare 1812 edition of the poem (location: British Library) does contain the parenthesis as given in CPW.

<sup>35</sup>I have not been able to consult the MS. (location: Texas).

Impending Tempests charge the Sky.  
(*'The Lady's Looking-Glass'*, l.13-14)

By reversing the order of the phrase and using an indefinite article, Bunbury and Byron familiarise the tempest and include the owl's response to the weather as one of the obligatory ingredients of the gothic plot. The humour, however, remains latent in the original: Byron's parody exposes the necessity of accident in gothic fiction. For readers aware of the context of the allusion, the emotional turbulence of Prior's Celia is reflected in that of Byron's Mary Ann. The poem's second use of parenthesis contains another jest about the necessity of a plot:

For from thence though red groups (by the Chapter imposed)  
Of raised brick and mortar are daily exposed. (l.79-80)

This parodies the original scene of horror on 'Sombermond's heath':

For there, in black groups (by the law 'tis imposed),  
Are the bodies of fell malefactors exposed.<sup>36</sup>

Byron transfers the heroine's isolation to a suburban setting and substitutes the evidence of parish prosperity for the relics of feudal sadism. The pun on 'Chapter' (portion of fiction or ecclesiastical edict) simultaneously recalls the mechanisms of plot and the hurried supply of local information. The reference to a particular person energises the third parenthetical aside which is not derived from the original model:

In a well-acted rage, she continued to rail  
(For Mary Ann's tongue hardly ever can fail). (l.103-104)

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<sup>36</sup>Matthew Lewis, *Tales of Terror and Wonder* (London: George Routledge, 1887), pp.193-201; 1.85-86

The pointed observation on a character who has failed to sustain a minimal conversation with the 'Dealer in Rhyme' and whose words are revealed as wishful fiction, only adding to her eventual humiliation, signals a malicious alliance between the reader and the speaker of the poem.<sup>37</sup> This poem was uncollected (CPW, I, p.358) but we may surmise that its intended audience was one which would have been aware of the biographical attack of the narrative. The parenthetical asides, however, interrupt the tale and delay its moment of triumph to insist on its status as narrative. To this extent, it becomes an exercise in self-conscious presentation. Whereas Bunbury's tale ends with a celebration of legendary story-telling, Byron's parody incorporates scepticism about the art of narration:

Away then she went, and my tale must conclude.  
Oh may such reports maids no longer delude,  
Some people will laugh at such legends I fear,  
For we must not believe every word which we hear. (l.133-36)

The parody, however, is a skilful one and Byron's art of keeping as many lines as possible intact whilst changing the contextual frame of reference for comic effect anticipates his mode of literary allusion in later works. Another example of this manipulation of precursor texts occurs in the 1811 'Parody on Sir William Jones's Translation from Hafiz - "Sweet Maid etc."' (CPW only<sup>38</sup>). In this poem, Byron retains a high proportion of Jones's rhymes and phrases but subverts Jones's translation of exotic sentiment by applying these cadences to a lamentable attempt at seduction in a tavern. Whereas Jones's speaker uses his aside to woo a coy mistress:

But ah, sweet maid! my counsel hear, -

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<sup>37</sup>I am in agreement on this point with Beaty who reads the poem as an 'acrimonious' example of Byron's 'predisposition to imitate specific poems as vehicles for expressing personal aversion' (*Byron the Satirist*, p.21).

<sup>38</sup>MS. in the Murray Archive. The parenthesis is present at l.35 and there is also a deleted parenthesis at l.39, '(for I'm in haste)'.



(Youth should attend when those advise  
Whom long experience renders sage). (l.37-39)<sup>39</sup>

Byron's speaker is undone by the only parenthesis in the poem:

Yet say, why be so damned absurd  
As box my ears - (unpaid my Bill). (l.34-35)

In this case, the parenthesis offers a voice which is at odds with the main speaker's interests and which works to undermine his rhetoric of self-presentation. The dissident voice is part of a wider parodic version of Jones's Persian world which substitutes material specificity and British referents for the abstracts of sentiment and oriental scenery. For example,

Each glance my tender breast invades,  
And robs my wounded soul of rest. (l.16-17)

is replaced by:

Each glance my dwindling cash invades  
And robs my purse of half a crown. (l.16-17)

And 'Beauty has such resistless power' (l.31) becomes in Byron's revision, 'Brown Stout has such resistless power' (l.25). Obviously enough, the effect of Byron's version is to deflate the idealised idiom of the original, but also to give the sceptical female presence more weight.

There is a similar opposition of sentiment and scepticism in 'The Edinburgh Ladies' Petition to Doctor Moyes, and his Reply' (CPW only).<sup>40</sup> In this poem, Byron constructs a caricatured 'Blue' voice to catalogue questions about 'The Natural History of Love' and to petition for a scientific

<sup>39</sup>Sir William Jones. *The Works of Sir William Jones*, ed. by Anna Maria Jones, 6 vols. (London, 1799), IV, 449-52

<sup>40</sup>I have not been able to consult the MS. (location: New York).

lecture on the art of love. 'The Reply' is prefaced by the poet's apology for assuming 'the Task':

...I have endeavoured in the following lines to give such answers to the questions, as my own *trifling* experience suggested, more from my dislike to refuse *any* request of a *female*, than the most distant hope of affording a perspicuous or Satisfactory *Solution* of the different *queries*. (CPW, I, 195)

Here, Byron is again inflecting a traditional eighteenth-century mode of address with an additional layer of irony. This arch mock-solicitude signals the invasion of a dominant satirical male voice. Having set up a female request for scientific knowledge as the means to sexual conquest, Byron uses a male voice to circumlocute a discussion of human sexuality. In the poet's apology, the italicisation of '*trifling*', '*Solution*', and '*queries*' signal the *double-entendre* which invites translation into sexual terms. By contrast, the poet's scholarly persona takes over 40 lines to reach the topic of love, ironising females' pseudo-scientific interest. By juxtaposing the idioms of Erasmus Darwin, the Bible, Pre-Socratic philosophy and classical mythology, Byron the speaker delays the practical information sought by his fictional audience of Edinburgh Ladies:

And hence in fable allegorical,  
The Bards of Yore most Metaphorical,  
Have drawn (the simile must strike Ye)  
The *Pretty Tale of Love and Psyche*.  
Thus *Form* is the first I heard of,  
(Or rather ever *read* a word of)  
If *he*, as I *have stated*, be Male,  
Who talk'd on Love, or kiss'd a Female.  
We'll therefore call *him Love*, or rather,  
Of *Love* at least the mighty Father. (l.91-100)

The parentheses here function as trivial after-thoughts which emphasise a comically pedantic progress around the subject of Love. The bibliographic

apparatus of 'The Reply' works to withhold information by giving lots of it. Humour is produced for an assumed male audience (see CPW, I, 386) because the caricatured 'Blues' have been undone by their 'Petition' for a scholarly investigation when it is understood that their only real interest is to gratify an appetite for romance:

But why should I Romances tell,  
Which every damsel knows so well.  
To these just now I shan't recall 'em-  
But may the very same befall 'em! (l.55-58)

In 'The Reply', the parenthetical asides also foreground linguistic devices (simile; the difference between spoken and written communication) whilst the speaker draws attention to the process of composition and discusses his readers' responses:

I'm therefore almost doubtful whether  
I'd best be silent altogether,  
Or with a Compliment conclude,  
Since all *before* is downright *rude*. (l.189-192)

The conversational tone of the poem is part of its satirical purpose, for in place of the introspection which sustains sentimental literature, the poem foregrounds the difficulty of composition. The nominal subject of courtship is therefore displaced by textual instability. Direct quotations from 'The Petition' (built up by the author in order to be destroyed) ramify its complexities of voice.

Similar techniques of direct allusion and parenthetical aside had been used and were to be used by Thomas Moore for satirical effects in 'Corruption, and Intolerance' (1808), *The Twopenny Post Bag* (1814), and *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818). Moore's early sentimental lyric work was clearly an influence on Byron's *Hours of Idleness* but the more satirical vein of

Moore's talent developed alongside Byron's.<sup>41</sup> In order to be able to assess Byron's development of existing modes of textual disruption, it is helpful to place his writing in the context of other satirical models. Moore's relationship with Byron's satire has been considered in the context of his comments on Byron in the 1830 *Life of Lord Byron* (see p. 63 and note 68 above). The next section of this chapter begins with the poet to whom Byron paid respects before he left England.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.4 Byron and Charles Churchill

Peter J. Manning has discussed the importance of Charles Churchill's satirical poetry for Byron in 'Byron's English Bards and Scotch Reviewers: the Art of Allusion'.<sup>43</sup> This article notes the echo of Churchill's *Dedication* in Byron's salutation to Jeffrey, as well as the strategic allusion to Churchill's *The Prophecy of Famine* in the account of the duel between Jeffrey and Moore. Manning reads Byron's deliberate echoes of Churchill as a way of appealing to a sense of literary tradition in an audience which could no longer be relied upon to recognise classical allusion. I would like to build on this point by suggesting that Churchill also made available to Byron the satirical potential

<sup>41</sup>Beaty argues that Byron imitated *The Poetical Works of Thomas Little* (1801) in his sentimental lyrics but that Byron's early satiric pieces 'indicate [...] the [...] impact [...] of the English Augustan tradition.' (*Byron the Satirist*, p.18).

<sup>42</sup>For a detailed discussion of the poem 'Churchill's Grave', see Richard Lansdown, *Byron's Historical Dramas*, pp. 59-77. Lansdown concentrates on the poem's relation to *Hamlet*, arguing that, 'the relation of 'Churchill's Grave' to Wordsworth's poetry is an important one, but it remains a parodic relation' (p.62). Without denying the force of Lansdown's attention to Shakespearean allusion, I think it is important to keep the apposition of Wordsworth and Churchill in the foreground as evidence that the conflict between the Lakers and the School of Pope was alive in 1816 and waiting for the moment of the Pope/Bowles controversy. In my discussion of the importance of Churchill for Byron, I differ from the position of Beaty who suggests 'there is no evidence that Byron was ever a disciple of Churchill, as Horace actually was of Lucilius.' (*Byron the Satirist*, p.12). Beaty draws this conclusion from a focus on Roman satirical technique, although he later lists five of Churchill's works as part of the tradition 'from which [Byron] learned much' (*Byron the Satirist*, p.24).

<sup>43</sup>Peter J. Manning, 'Byron's English Bards and Scotch Reviewers: The Art of Allusion', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, 21 (1970), 7-11

of a disrupted verse narrative, even though one of Churchill's most influential editors perceived the disruptions as aesthetic flaws.

In the two-volume edition of Churchill's poetry produced by William Tooke (first published in 1804), Tooke's notes suggest that digressive asides were likely to have been an accident of composition:

Churchill wrote with great rapidity, and generally published his compositions directly they were finished. This may account for the involved sentences and lengthy parentheses, which are the most obvious, if not the worst, blemishes of his style.<sup>44</sup>

The main 'blemish' of Churchill's style, according to Tooke, was his personal, abusive censure of individuals. Tooke classed Churchill as a Juvenalian satirist and made it clear that it was his 'roughness' and 'commonplace' qualities (I, p.xxx) which kept him 'below the first rank' (I, p.xxxi). These personal allusions were regarded as flaws, whereas classical allusions were accepted as the currency of 'every writer of taste':

Though not unacquainted with the poets of ancient and modern times, the Editor has seldom presumed to notice the passages of preceding writers, which his author has occasionally imitated or borrowed; to every reader of taste they will readily suggest themselves, and thus an idle accumulation of notes will have been avoided [...] [the Editor] will be better pleased with being reproached for the scantiness of information than for the admission of one superfluous note.<sup>45</sup>

Tooke's Preface suggests that he regarded 'superfluous' prose notes as stylistic imperfections just as he disapproved of the 'general irregularity' of

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<sup>44</sup>*The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill, With a Memoir by James L. Hannay and Copious Notes by W. Tooke*, 2 vols. (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866), I, 219

<sup>45</sup>*The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill with Explanatory Notes and An Authentic Account of His Life*, [ed. by William Tooke], 2 vols. (London: C. & R. Baldwin, 1804), I, 4-5. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the poetry of Churchill will be from this edition. There are differences between this edition and the 1866 Tooke edition, particularly in the way that literary allusions are signalled, suggesting that the reception of allusion changed in the course of the nineteenth century.

Churchill's conduct and Churchill's 'indulgence' in the 'license of digression'.<sup>46</sup> Byron held the poet in higher esteem and I intend to examine various examples of what Tooke referred to as 'the most obvious [...] blemishes' to show how Churchill may have imparted more than circumstantial parallels to Byron's satire.

Churchill's literary career spanned only four years (1761-64) but it is possible to mark changes of direction within that period. In Churchill's earlier writing, his parenthetical asides were mainly generalising reflections with a satirical slant or rhetorical outbursts. For example, the portrayal of Wedderburn in *The Rosciad*:

'At Friendship's call' (thus off', with trait'rous aim,  
Men void of faith usurp faith's sacred name). (l.79-80)

Twice (curs'd remembrance!) twice I strove to gain  
Admittance 'mongst the law-instructed train. (l.91-92)

Byron skilfully incorporates a more colloquial sort of parenthetical 'curs'd remembrance' in *Hints from Horace*:

Dogs blink their covey, flints with-hold the spark,  
And double-barrels (damn them) miss their mark! (l.547-48)

And the type of parenthetical moral dictum exemplified by the first extract from *The Rosciad* also emerges in Byron's early verse: for example, in 'To a Youthful Friend',

Alas! whenever folly calls  
Where parasites and princes meet,  
(For cherish'd first in royal halls,  
The welcome vices kindly greet). (l.53-56)

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<sup>46</sup>*The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill* (1804), I, pp. xxv; xxix

Or in 'Childish Recollections':

Can Stars, or Ermine, Man's maturer Toys,  
(For glittering baubles are not left to Boys,)  
Recall one scene, so much belov'd, to view,  
As those, where Youth her garland twin'd for you? (l.397-400)

Both these extracts have in common with Churchill's verse an emphatic use of personification (a traditional method of gaining universality for satire).

Churchill and Byron, however, share an inclination to more detailed and tangible personifications, suggesting a pull towards the fabric rather than the figurines of didactic poetry.<sup>47</sup> In Churchill's *Gotham* (1764) a more playfully idiosyncratic voice emerged to interrupt the poem before it was properly underway:

Far off (no matter whether east or west,  
A real country, or one made in jest,  
Not yet by modern Mandevilles disgrac'd,  
Nor by map-jobbers wretchedly misplac'd,  
There lies an island, neither great nor small,  
Which, for distinction sake, I Gotham call. (l.1-6)

Compare Churchill's *Independence* (1764) which was also qualified from the first line:

Happy the bard (though few such bards we find)  
Who, 'bove controlment, dares to speak his mind. (l.1-2)

*The Journey*, which was left in manuscript at Churchill's death, exemplified in more exaggerated form the process of the self-interrupting narrator:

Some of my friends, (for friends I must suppose  
All, who, not daring to appear my foes,  
Feign great good will, and, not more full of spite

<sup>47</sup>For the specific nature of Byron's satire (of which quotations from other texts form a significant part), see Fuess, p.71.

Than full of craft, under false colours fight)  
 Some of my friends, (so lavishly I print)  
 As more in sorrow than in anger, hint  
 (Though that indeed will scarce admit a doubt)  
 That I shall run my stock of genius out. (l.1-8)

This passage displays many of the digressive modes later employed by Byron: the repeated beginning of a phrase (or poem), qualification, commentary on the process of composition, use of proverbial expression from *Hamlet*, and reflective after-thought. Churchill used digression self-consciously and in so doing, often invoked the name of Sterne. In the passage in *The Rosciad* where a judge has to be selected (trial scenes occur frequently in Churchill's poems, perhaps offering a paradigm for *The Vision of Judgement*<sup>48</sup>), we are invited to consider:

Who should be judge in such a trial :- who?  
 For Johnson some; but Johnson, it was fear'd,  
 Would be too grave, and Sterne too gay appear'd. (l.61-62)

Tooke's note to the line reminds the reader that, 'Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, published in 1760, was now at the zenith of its popularity.' Churchill was clearly interested in the possibility of a Shandean model for verse:

But though to poets we allow,  
 No matter when acquired or how,  
 From truth unbounded deviation,  
 Which custom calls Imagination,  
 Yet can't they be suppos'd to lie  
 One half so fast as Fame can fly;

<sup>48</sup>Another possible name behind *The Vision of Judgement* is that of John Gay. Byron leaves George III 'practising the hundredth psalm'. In *The Shepherd's Week* towards the end of Bowzybeus's Song (Saturday) we are told, 'Then he was seiz'd with a religious Qualm,/ And on a sudden, sung the hundredth Psalm' (l.113-14). The Clarendon edition of Gay's works notes that the Old Hundredth was very popular amongst the various seventeenth-century sects of dissenters (John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Vinton A. Daring and Charles E. Beckwith, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), I, 112; II, 538-39). If this association continued into Byron's time, it sharpens the humour of the choice of psalm for George III. The literary context of Gay's *The Shepherd's Week* also adds to Byron's portrait of a king known as 'Farmer George'.



Therefore (to solve this Gordian knot,-  
 A point we almost had forgot)  
 To courteous readers be it known,  
 That, fond of verse and falsehood grown,  
 Whilst we in sweet digression sung,  
 Fame check'd her flight, and held her tongue,  
 And now pursues, with double force  
 And double speed, her destin'd course. (*The Ghost* III, 1.503-16)

The reference to Imagination as a sort of deviation, the graphic display of deviation in parenthesis and the adjective 'sweet' to characterise the experience of digression are all Shandean traits. *The Ghost* experiments with Shandean modes of narration and, correspondingly, it is the poem least admired by Tooke:

The metre is rugged, and on the whole inferior to that of 'The Duellist'; and though many fine passages occur, the rambling, digressive manner in which the whole poem is written, seldom invites to a re-perusal. (II, 3)<sup>49</sup>

In spite of the contemporary aesthetic view that digression should be seamless and/ or contribute to the coherence of the long poem (see p.77 and note 13 above) Churchill was clearly trying to develop a self-aware manner that regularly checked the reader's understanding. The interruptions insisted on the non-transparency of language and on an idiosyncratic encounter with words in conjunction with the 'sportive' persona of the poet. A pertinent example appears in *The Ghost* where the poet complicates our progress through the text by attempting to '[lug] in' material from other texts:

Men of sound parts, who, deeply read,

<sup>49</sup>Tooke's negative assessment of *The Ghost* contrasts markedly with contemporary reviews of the poem which he quotes in his edition. The *Monthly Review* applauded 'this heterogeneous production of a sportive, wild, and arbitrary fancy':

Whether we are to have any more of this Shandy in Hudibrastics, we cannot learn from the 4th part. Nevertheless, as in the inimitable work of his brother Sterne, there are a thousand moral, witty, and excellent passages scattered through this rambling performance. (II, 143)

O'erload the storehouse of the head  
 With furniture they ne'er can use  
 Cannot forgive our rambling Muse  
 This wild excursion; cannot see  
 Why Physic and Divinity,  
 To the surprise of all beholders,  
 Are lugged in by the head and shoulders;  
 Or how, in any point of view,  
 Oxford hath any thing to do:  
 But men of nice and subtle learning,  
 Remarkable for quick discerning,  
 Through spectacles of critic mould,  
 Without instruction, will behold  
 That we a method here have got  
 To shew what is, by what is not;  
 And that our drift (parenthesis  
 For once apart) is briefly this. (*The Ghost* IV, l.107-24)<sup>50</sup>

Of course, the next section is by no means brief. Churchill versified recurrent apologies for his digressions and cultivated the association with the hapless Shandean narrator who is constitutionally unable to follow a linear narrative:

After my promise made in rhyme,  
 And meant in earnest at that time,  
 To jog, according to the mode,  
 In one dull pace, in one dull road.  
 What but that curse of heart and head  
 To this digression could have lead?  
 Where plung'd, in vain I look about,  
 And can't stay in, nor well get out.  
     Could I, whilst Humour held the quill,  
 Could I digress with half that skill;  
 Could I with half that skill return,  
 Which we so much admire in Sterne,

<sup>50</sup>Byron draws attention to his use of parenthesis in *Don Juan* Canto VI, stanza 56:

Kind reader! pass

This long parenthesis: I could not shut

It sooner for the soul of me.

In the draft of Canto VI (location: British Museum) there is the suggestion of an opening mark of parenthesis just before 'I could not shut', suggesting the possibility of extensive play with parenthesis. In the MS. for the next stanza, marks of parenthesis emphasise the poet's reflection on his process of composition:

I have one simile (and that's a blunder,)

<For Woman's Silence startles more than>For wordless woman, which is Silent Thunder.

Where each digression, seeming vain,  
 And only fit to entertain,  
 Is found, on better recollection,  
 To have a just and nice connexion,  
 To help the whole with wondrous art,  
 Whence it seems idle to depart;  
 Then should our readers ne'er accuse  
 These wild excursions of the Muse;  
 Ne'er backward turn dull pages o'er  
 To recollect what went before. (*The Ghost* III, 1.959-980)

The reference to the book as a material article and to the reader's experience of turning back pages are self-conscious adaptations of Sterne's running commentary on the course of *Tristram Shandy*:

- We'll not stop two minutes, my dear Sir, - only, as we have got through these five volumes, (do, Sir, sit down upon a set - they are better than nothing) let us just look back upon the country we have passed through. (*Tristram Shandy*, VI, 1, p.397)

By referring to 'the skill [...] which we so much admire in Sterne' Churchill cleverly compounds the reader's experience of digression in *Tristram Shandy* with the experience of digression in his own work. Digression becomes, therefore, a potential space for 'better recollection' and Churchill satirises literary critics as the 'pack' intolerant of imaginative or reflective space:

When loose Digression, like a colt unbroke,  
 Spurning connexion and her formal yoke,  
 Bounds through the forest, wanders far astray  
 From the known path, and loves to lose her way,  
 'Tis a full feast to all the mongrel pack  
 To run the rambler down and bring her back. (*Gotham* II, 1.205-10)

Digression is here a female figure and the hint of sexual promiscuity in 'loose' is emphasised by the traditional association of wantonness in the image of the 'colt'. Churchill draws on Sterne's conception of 'the sporting little filly -

folly which carries you out for the present hour [...] an *any thing*, which a man makes a shift to get a-stride on, to canter it away from the cares and solitudes of life' (*Tristram Shandy*, VIII, 31, pp.557-8), and to Sterne's portrayal of digression as a creature:

no; if it is to be a digression, it must be a good frisky one, and upon a frisky subject too, where neither the horse or his rider are to be caught, but by rebound. ( *Tristram Shandy*, IX, 12, p.585)

Although Sterne does not always characterise digression as feminine, both Churchill and Byron invoke a comparably wayward muse and attribute feminine characteristics to it.<sup>51</sup>

Other modes of digression made available to Byron through the work of Churchill included the unexpected satirical expansion of an insignificant detail of narrative:

Here Trifle cough'd, (for coughing still  
Bears witness to the speaker's skill,  
A necessary piece of art,  
Of rhetoric an essential part,  
And adepts in the speaking trade  
Keep a cough by them ready made,  
Which they successfully dispense  
When at a loss for words or sense)

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<sup>51</sup>Churchill's image of 'the known path' offers another perspective on the debate about how to translate 'Difficile est proprie communia dicere' which Byron used as an epigraph to *Don Juan*. A summary of various possible translations is supplied in E. Kegel-Bringreave, 'Byron and Horace', *English Studies*, 57 (1976), 128-38. As this article points out, debate has centred on the translation of 'communia' (twice-told tale' or 'common things' according to Byron's two glosses in *Hints from Horace*). If, however, we consider the context of the previous lines:

But if a new design you dare essay,  
And freely wander from the beaten way,  
True to your characters till all be past,  
Preserve consistency from first to last (l. 177-80)

- it is possible to read the word 'proprie' as the site of the most tension between Horace and Byron. Like Churchill, Byron was disposed 'to wander from the beaten way' and in the context of the earlier lines in *Hints from Horace*, 'difficile est proprie communia dicere' may hold the sense that 'it is difficult to keep strictly to the beaten track'. But see also McGann's different reading in *Don Juan in Context* (London: John Murray, 1976; hereafter '*Don Juan in Context*'), p.70.

Here Trifle cough'd, here paus'd. (*The Ghost*, II, l.541-549)<sup>52</sup>

Churchill also used the mock-heroic device of stock-piling similes and feigned a difficulty in choosing the most suitable one to carry the narrative forward:

He said, and ceas'd; the chamber rung  
With due applause from ev'ry tongue:  
The mingled sound (now, let me see -  
Something by way of simile)  
Was it more like Strymonian cranes,  
Or winds low murmuring when it rains,  
Or drowsy hum of clust'ring bees,  
Or the hoarse roar of angry seas?  
Or (still to heighten and explain,  
For else our simile is vain)  
Shall we declare it like all four,  
A scream, a murmur, hum, and roar? (*The Ghost*, II, l. 605-16)<sup>53</sup>

Churchill's frequent commentaries on the processes of composition and predilections of his muse allowed him to treat the texture of the poem as a subject of mutual interest to poet and reader:

<sup>52</sup>Byron deploys a similarly acute observation of personal mannerism in *Don Juan* Canto VI, when Baba attempts to evade the direct questions of Gulbeyaz:

But there seemed something that he wished to hide,  
Which hesitation more betrayed than masked;-  
He scratched his ear, the infallible resource  
To which embarrassed people have recourse. (VI. 100)

Byron continues to draw on eighteenth-century observations on human conduct in the following stanza, 'when she saw him stumbling like a steed' (VI. 101) which borrows without acknowledgement an image from Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son:

a man who has *du monde*, seems not to understand what he cannot or ought not to resent. If he makes a slip himself, he recovers it by coolness, instead of plunging deeper by his confusion, like a stumbling horse.

(*Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son and Others*, ed. by Ernest Rhys, (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1929), p. 258.

<sup>53</sup>Byron's well known catalogues of similes from which the reader is invited to choose occur in *The Vision of Judgement* stanzas 57, 58 and 60, culminating in the shifting likenesses of the shadow Junius. In *Don Juan* Canto VI, stanza 68 the reader is given 'similes [...] gathered in a heap' from which to 'pick and chuse' for a description of the sleeping occupant of the harem. England's comments on the range of similes in Byron and Swift is again pertinent: 'The images appear to be gathered into this disorderly sequence essentially for the sake of the varied concreteness that they provide, rather than for the sake of the progressive definition of a subject. Consequently, tenor and vehicle seem to drift further and further apart, until the one comes to look like nothing more than the occasion for the other' (England, p.132).

To higher subjects now she soars,  
 And talks of politics and whores;  
 (If to your nice and chaster ears  
 That term indelicate appears,  
 Scripture politely shall refine  
 And melt it into concubine). (*The Ghost*, III, l.281-86)

In this passage, it is perhaps possible to hear Churchill mocking the recent feat of glossing performed in Dr Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) which was a satirical target for Churchill (friend and supporter of Wilkes) because of Johnson's conservative politics.<sup>54</sup> Current interest in and debate about Johnson's *Dictionary* may be seen to emerge in Churchill's work as a ludic interest in the 'tastefulness' of different words. As well as the games with euphemism, Churchill exploited the conversational resonances of linguistic fashion; for example, in this scene from *The Duellist*:

Old Welcome smiling by his side,  
 A good old servant, often tried  
 And faithful found, who kept in view  
 His lady's fame and int'rest too,  
 Who made each heart with joy rebound,  
 Yet never run her state aground,  
 Was turned off, or (which word I find  
 Is more in modern use) resign'd. (l.179-82)

Not only the etymology of the English language, but also the importation of latinate terms offered Churchill a pretext for digressive asides:

This apparition (with relation  
 To ancient modes of derivation,  
 This we may properly so call,  
 Although it ne'er appears at all,  
 As by the way of innuendo,  
 Lucus is made *a non lucendo*). (*The Ghost*, II, l.253-258)<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Concubine is glossed in Johnson's dictionary as 'a woman kept in fornication; a whore'.

<sup>55</sup> Pratt and McGann note that this '*lucus a non lucendo*' joke is used by Byron in *Don Juan* Canto VI, stanza 55. It also appears at Canto XI, stanza 21.

In this case, the obscurity of language provides the point of departure for the digression but a verbal figure is invoked as a clarifying example to help end the digression. Churchill was skilled at setting various discursive modes in opposition, and this was his approach to intertextual allusion as we shall see.

Churchill frequently used Biblical echoes for apocalyptic effect in his satire as, for example, in his portrait of the Pretender at the end of *The Ghost*; throned in a chariot, crowned with thistles and with a sword in his right hand. He could also draw specifically on a single verse to make his satirical point:

Whilst ignorance in pow'r, and pamper'd pride,  
'Clad like a priest, pass'd by on t'other side'. (*The Candidate*,  
l.561-2)

Churchill's other major source of literary allusion was Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In his 'An Epistle to William Hogarth', Churchill attacked Hogarth's serious composition 'Sigismund' using a borrowed form of address which was unmarked but too famous for his audience to miss:

But, O, how much unlike! how fall'n! how chang'd!  
How much from Nature and herself estrang'd! (l.501-2)

The woeful moment of recognition and alienation is transferred brilliantly from the fallen angels in hell to the public's first viewing of a picture. Churchill conveys both the fall of Hogarth's reputation and the failure of the composition to exhibit the former power of its subject. Dr. Johnson is similarly translated to the realm of the eternally vanquished:

Pomposo with strong sense supplied,  
Supported, and confirm'd by Pride,  
His comrades' terrors to beguile  
'Grinn'd horribly a ghastly smile:'  
Features so horrid, were it light,

Would put the devil himself to flight. (*The Ghost*, II, l.683-88)

The crudeness of Pomposo's attack is advertised by the way the signalled allusion to *Paradise Lost* is glossed with a colloquial reference to the 'devil himself'. The colloquialism offers a parodic gloss on the moment before Death's grin in Milton's text (*Paradise Lost*, II, 846) when Satan encounters his son and is not put to flight but affronted by the 'detestable' sight. Churchill relished the excessive nature of his epic insults; his use of quotation marks suggests that he wanted his audience to recognise sources and experience the shock of the connection. Churchill's desire for readerly participation in the construction of satire, however, coexists with his disdain for the desires of the readership. *The Rosciad* satirises the grotesquerie of audience taste by associating theatrical novelty with the universe of 'created evil' and perverse conception in Milton's hell:

Monsters, with tails of ice and heads of fire;  
Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire.  
Each was bestrode by full as monsrous wight,  
Giant, dwarf, genius, elf, hermaphrodite.  
The Town, as usual, met him in full cry;  
The Town, as usual, knew no reason why. (l.673-78)<sup>56</sup>

As well as literary and Biblical allusions, Churchill made overt use of contemporary scientific terminology to strike general satiric points. In *The Ghost*, Fame is characterised as,

A prattling gossip, on whose tongue  
Proof of perpetual motion hung. (III, l.193-94)<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup>In the 1866 Tooke edition, l.674 is enclosed in quotation marks. In the 1804 edition there are no quotation marks but the reference is given in a footnote.

<sup>57</sup>The words 'perpetual motion' are carried in quotation marks in the 1866 but not the 1804 Tooke editions. Byron uses the association between the mystery of perpetual motion and a woman's speech in the introduction to *Gulbeyaz* in *Don Juan* Canto V, stanza 112: 'Had she but been a Christian, I've a notion / We should have found out the "perpetual motion."'



Churchill also alluded by making condensed references to well-known narratives or dramatic scenes:

Higher than all the rest, see Bransby strut:  
A mighty Gulliver in Lilliput! (*The Rosciad*, 1.517-18)

Methods of disturbing narrative time by drawing attention to the poem as a cultural product, and by foregrounding linguistic devices were therefore available to Byron through Churchill as mechanisms of satire. What enriched Byron's use of the same modes was that he introduced disruptive authorial asides across genres beyond the traditional satiric or comic ones. Often his parenthetical asides form a fracture in the sense *and* in the genre of a poem, allowing the poet a radically different approach to his subject and audience. The small space of the digressive aside in relation to the poem as a whole permits a greater effect of disruption. It is the imbalance of the aside, or the lack of proportion in digression which creates textual instability and which complicates the relationship between poet and reader.

## 2.5 Byron, Sterne and Satirised Sentiment

In Jerome McGann's essay "'My Brain is Feminine": Byron and the Poetry of Deception', a chronological division is suggested between 'feminine' and 'masculine' modes in Byron's work.<sup>58</sup> McGann classifies the early poetry of *Fugitive Pieces* (1806), *Poems Original and Translated* (1807), and *Hours of Idleness* (1807) as 'sentimental poetry'. He further summarises this type of poetry as '[striving] to be both emotionally intense and completely candid' with a 'stylistic index of [...] a peculiar kind of self-conscious fleshliness' (p.31). The generic classification of self-consciousness will be

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<sup>58</sup>Jerome J. McGann, "'My Brain is Feminine": Byron and the Poetry of Deception' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, pp.26-51

examined in this section. The sort of self-consciousness that McGann associates with sentimental poetry is in the poet's heightened mental awareness of the body's spontaneity rather than a self-reflexive consciousness of the work as artifice.<sup>59</sup> This latter variety of self-consciousness, however, is available in sentimental literature. An attentiveness towards the reader was particularly marked in novels of sentiment:

In an age in which narrative fiction was suspected by many, even of its more enthusiastic consumers, of being suggestive, improper, promiscuous, novels were thick with descriptions of how narratives should be attended to and interpreted. They constantly concerned themselves, technically and moralistically, with the effects of telling stories.<sup>60</sup>

Sterne, Fielding and Smollett were all concerned with the moral and emotional effects of their narratives on the reader, and all intervene to address the reader with different voices.<sup>61</sup> The tonal variations of their novels suggest that satire and sentiment may work in parallel ways rather than in opposite directions.<sup>62</sup> Both satire and sentiment are energised by an

<sup>59</sup>McGann's model of sentimental literature is Charlotte Dacre's 'The Kiss'.

<sup>60</sup>John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.159

<sup>61</sup>For further discussion of the influence of eighteenth-century novels on Byron's narrative techniques, see England, pp.148-184; Andras Horn, *Byron's 'Don Juan' and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, Swiss Studies in English No. 51 (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1962; hereafter 'Horn'). England argues that Byron 'is fundamentally unlike Sterne in that he does maintain a clear distinction between the narrative and the digressions' (p.161). Horn agrees with the critics who find organic unity in *Don Juan*, arguing that both Byron and Sterne use an 'all-pervading presence of personality' to create an 'ultimate principle of form' (Horn, p.38). Horn builds on this comparison to suggest that the digressions in *Don Juan* contain both the sentimental subjectivism of the arbitrary will and a palpable presence which 'suffices to preserve *Don Juan* from disintegration' (Horn, p.46). He agrees emphatically with Elizabeth French Boyd's view that the poem is a 'cosmos' rather than a 'chaos' and that 'the unifying force of Byron's consciousness is the fire at the centre of it' (Horn, p.46). Horn also acknowledges that subjectivism is part of the mock-heroic style of Casti and Pulci.

<sup>62</sup>For a more extensive discussion of the complex relationships between satire and sentiment, see Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment 1660-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; hereafter 'Rawson'). One of the starting points for Rawson's study of Byron is an assumption that

the self-conscious or Shandean dimension [of Byron's writing], though derived like *Tristram Shandy* itself from old traditions of 'learned wit' and the parodic fooleries of Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, is either a corrupted or debased form of Augustanism or something else altogether. (Rawson, p.99)

ingenuous voice and it may be that although these modes were perceived to be at odds, there is remarkably little difference between satirical and sentimental addresses to the reader.

Sterne exploited the convention of sentimental instruction to its limit, and in so doing, he satirised the demand for elegant emotional candour. Byron's digressive asides in his early verse build on Sterne's complexities because like Sterne, Byron collides the sentimental novelist's assurances to the reader with a provocative suggestiveness: '(what'er/ I think, is neither here nor there)',<sup>63</sup> It seems, therefore, misleading to suggest a chronological 'turn' in Byron's work 'from "feminine" to "masculine" modes, a turn from Anacreon to Horace and Homer' as in McGann's "'My Brain is Feminine'" essay (p.29). Even in Byron's pre-1808 verse, the sentimental idiom is destabilised with satirical self-reflexiveness whilst a sentimental pulsating intimacy with the reader remains the dominant level of self-consciousness.

In his early work, Byron frequently uses ironic textual self-awareness to get out of a text. The relationship between the sentimental knowing and knowing satirical voices is therefore insecure. In 'To Mary' (from *Fugitive Pieces* 1806, CPW only<sup>64</sup>), the inflamed account of emotional injury in the first nine stanzas falters into something else with:

I hope *you* sometimes will regret me. (l.36)

It is an isolated moment of pathos verging on humour (because the 'sometimes' has the effect of bathos after all the extremity of what has gone

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Rawson later suggests that 'Shandeism was the heir to Richardsonian 'sentiment' as well as to that alternative and antagonistic tradition of 'learned wit' which came to Sterne by way of Fielding and Swift' (Rawson, p.218).

<sup>63</sup>John Lennard argues that 'the dashes and lunulae which spatter each page of the text' of *Tristram Shandy* are the expression of 'extravagant personality' (Lennard, pp.140-41). Lennard, therefore, sees these tropes of digression as contributing more to sentiment than to satire.

<sup>64</sup>No MS. available; see CPW, I, 378. In FP the parenthesis and italics occur as in CPW.

before) but it is only a moment. The poet then turns to a recollection of their former moments of mutual commitment as if present to him now:

Now, by my soul, 'tis most delight  
 To view each other panting, dying,  
 In love's *extatic posture* lying,  
 Grateful to *feeling*, as to *sight*. (l.44-47)

This is sentimental writing about desire without the desired refinement, dangerously close to voyeurism because at the time of the poem:

No more that bosom heaves for me,  
 On it another seeks repose,  
 Another riots on its snows. (l.13-15)

The speaker avoids a collapse into pornography by abruptly shifting perspective to a parodic mythological frame of reference:

And had the glaring God of Day,  
 (As formerly of Mars and Venus)  
 Divulg'd the joys which pass'd between us,  
 Regardless of its *peeping ray*,  
 Of love admiring such a *sample*,  
 The Gods and Goddesses descending,  
 Had never fancied us offending,  
 But *wisely* followed *our example*. (l.44-56)

By substituting the comic mythological scene of illicit love (the parenthesis graphically has the couple caught in a net), Byron shifts from sentimental elegy to comedy: the 'Venus/ between us' rhyme releases the comic excess latent in sentimental writing. At the end of the poem, the pairing-off of the assembled company speaks of continuity not extinction and the festive reversal of roles whereby divinities are schooled by mortals allows the poet to

exit from the poem on the winning side (if only temporarily so) of carnival.<sup>65</sup> When the poem was published, it was considered unorthodox because 'too heated'. Its audience was shocked by the sexual suggestiveness but ignored the parodic reduction of the fabled lovers.<sup>66</sup> Despite its immaturity, the poem allows us to detect the outline of manoeuvres which would be used with far greater poise in Byron's *ottava rima* verse.

In 'Stanzas written in passing the Ambracian Gulph, November 14th, 1809', another farewell is deflected by way of a parenthetical intervention. Having set up the legendary parallel of Antony and Cleopatra:

Where stern Ambition once forsook  
His wavering crown to follow woman. (l.7-8)

Byron moves from lyric meditation on an ageless middle-aged passion to the recognition of his own more transient variety:

Florence! whom I will love as well  
As ever yet was said or sung,  
(Since Orpheus sang his spouse from hell)  
Whilst thou art fair and I am young. (l.9-12)<sup>67</sup>

The parenthesis calls attention to a technicality, allowing the poet to rhyme 'sung' with 'young', but in so doing, it alerts the reader to another

<sup>65</sup>I am using this word with its Bakhtinian sense of the temporary dominance of bodily appetite over 'the hierarchical system and all the connected forms of fear, awe, piety, etiquette' (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, transl. by R.W. Rotsel (USA: Ardis, 1973; hereafter '*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*'), p.101) See also Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, transl. by Helene Iswolsky (Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1968; hereafter '*Rabelais and His World*'), pp. 195; 246-75. Bakhtin suggests that the patterns of radical change and renewal in Shakespearean drama suggest an 'essential carnival element in the organization' of his plays (*Rabelais and His World*, p.275). Bakhtin's identification of carnivalesque aspects in Shakespearean drama allows us to see a continuation of carnival in Byron's allusions to Shakespearean scenes and speeches.

<sup>66</sup>For a detailed account of the reception of the poem, see Willis W. Pratt, *Byron at Southwell*, pp. 36-43.

<sup>67</sup>In MS. M (location: John Murray Archive) l.10-11 are enclosed by parenthesis as noted in CPW. In MS. M 'woman'(l.8); 'thou', 'fair', 'I', 'young'(l.12); 'lose', 'world', 'thee'(l.19); 'lose', 'thee', 'world'(l.20) are underlined as indicated in Coleridge.

technicality; namely, that Orpheus did not recover Eurydice. As soon as the reader questions Byron's version of the myth, the lyric becomes full of duplicities. The reader's recognition that Eurydice stayed behind works to undermine the poet's protestation of devotion and to draw out the limitation implicit in the line, 'Whilst thou art fair and I am young'.

The intrusion of a mis-reported myth, therefore, destabilises the poem. By repeating the action of the myth in a different context, parody releases humour which was suppressed in the original. We realise the full implication of the title 'written in passing' is that Florence has been relinquished already. Like Eurydice, Florence is receding into the distance. The parodic allusion of the parenthesis, therefore, works to emphasise the past-tense of commitment:

Sweet Florence! those were pleasant times,  
                     When worlds were staked for ladies' eyes:  
 Had bards as many realms as rhymes,  
                     Thy charms might raise new Anthonies.

Though Fate forbids such things to be,  
                     Yet, by thine eyes and ringlets curl'd!  
 I cannot lose a world for thee,  
                     But would not lose thee for a world! (l.13-20)

Although the main body of the farewell pleads the poet's shortage of 'worlds' (l.14), the allusive aside suggests that a short-fall in the ability to 'stake' prevents him from rising to the devotion of an 'Anthony'. This undercuts the sentimental genre which would claim that only names have changed between heroic romantic love and contemporary romantic love. Byron's poem follows the convention, focusing on nouns until the digressive parenthesis suggests that verbs have changed as well. The 'ladies' eyes/ Anthonies' rhyme uses the reader's visual forecast of a disastrous rhyme to loom over the sense of the stanza. With reference to McGann's observation on Byron's sentimental portrayal of himself 'at the hands of lying and unfaithful women' ("My Brain is Feminine", p. 36), it is noteworthy that the early poems using

digressive asides are ones which present the male speaker as being at least as mutable or fickle in love as the female partner.

In 'To a Lady Who Presented to the Author a Lock of Hair, Braided with his Own, and Appointed a Night in December, To Meet him in the Garden', a parenthetical aside (Coleridge only<sup>68</sup>) is used to qualify the 'unmeaning protestations' (l.3). Again, Byron collides sentimental idiom with sceptical materialism. The poem places discursive allusions to drama to frustrate the conventional urgency of a lover's communication. As 'the Author' is led into a discussion of theatrical history, he presents himself as the passive spectator to his partner's performance:

Why should you weep, like *Lydia Languish*,  
And fret with self-created anguish?  
Or doom the lover you have chosen,  
On winter nights, to sigh half-frozen;  
In leafless shades, to sue for pardon,  
Only because the scene's a garden?  
For gardens seem, by one consent,  
(Since SHAKESPEARE set the precedent;  
Since Juliet first declar'd her passion)  
To form the place of assignation. (l.11-20)

The address to 'a Lady' is interrupted to consider artistic precedent. The introduction of Lydia Languish deposits us firmly in the world of comedy of manners but this is juxtaposed with the subsequent reference to Juliet's tragedy. Importantly, the tragic allusion is slightly askew as Shakespeare's Juliet appears (famously) on the balcony above an orchard not in a garden.

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<sup>68</sup>No MS. available. Quoted from Coleridge. Published in FP, POVO: CPW uses FP as copy text, collated with POVO. In FP l.18 and l.19 are each enclosed in parentheses:

(Since SHAKESPEARE set the precedent)

(Since Juliet first declar'd her passion.)

FP also has italics as given in Coleridge. In POVO there are no parentheses or italics at all; both editions, however, present the prose notes as footnotes on the same page as the text of the poem.

By mis-remembering the scene, the speaker parodies not only the conventions of sentiment, but also the conventions of allusion.<sup>69</sup>

The adoption of a paraphrase of the scene instead of direct quotation, incorporates Shakespeare as visual performance, not as verbal text. This difference is significant as it heightens the accidental quality of the interruption. The poem alludes to a (flawed) stage-production of *Romeo and Juliet*; to the physical attributes of the scene, not to the substance of Juliet's declaration. The effect is a foregrounding of the accident-prone, material world over the realm of abstract ideals. This accidental quality is emphasised with the Hudibrastic rhymes: 'we sigh, and whine, / jealousy repine' (l.7-8); 'you have chosen / sigh half frozen' (l.13-14).<sup>70</sup> The torturous efforts the reader has to make to hear the rhymes has the same effect of displacement as the parenthetical allusion: in both manoeuvres, the poem mocks the authoritative precision of a 'precedent'.<sup>71</sup>

Turning now from Byron's early lyrical verse to his verse satires, the incorporation of parenthetical aside and quotations from other texts may appear less worthy of comment. Topical literary satire such as *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* relies on direct and identifiable allusion to contemporary people and events and extensive intertextuality is predictable. What is

<sup>69</sup>Beatty's view that this poem 'ridicules false notions of courtship' does not admit this questioning of a precursor text: 'Though a nocturnal garden assignation might have served for *Romeo and Juliet* in December, it can do nothing but hinder the progress of love in a cold climate.' (*Byron the Satirist*, p.19). I would argue that the invocation of Juliet is an example of the parodic relationship with another text which Beatty identifies as a residual trait from Byron's classical schooling. See *Byron the Satirist*, pp.20-21.

<sup>70</sup>Fuess classifies this poem as 'possibly the earliest in which evidence may be found of a sportive mood in Byron's work. Their tone is both ironic and comic, and possible romance is turned into something ridiculous by a satiric use of realism' (Fuess, p.44).

<sup>71</sup>The destabilising effect of Hudibrastic rhyme was curiously captured by Dryden when he distinguished it from 'manly' satire and described the way 'the quick returns of rhyme, had debased the dignity of the style [...] it turns earnest too much to jest, and gives us a boyish kind of pleasure. It tickles awkwardly with a kind of pain, to the best sort of readers: we are pleased ungratefully, and [...] against our liking. We thank him not for giving us that unseasonable delight, when we know he could have given us a better, and more solid' ('A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire', *The Essays of John Dryden*, ed. by W.P. Ker, 2 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961; hereafter '*The Essays of John Dryden*'), II, 105. The identification of Hudibrastic rhymes as a flaw in Byron's verse is exemplified by the *Eclectic's* review of *The Siege of Corinth* (RR, B: II, 733).



striking, however, about the texture of Byron's verse satire is the discontinuous mode of signalled allusion. By 'signalled allusion', I mean quotation from or echoic paraphrase of another work which is marked by inverted commas, or italics, often with direct authorial notification of the reference. I regard these as explicit signals and here differ with the system of classification describing inverted commas, pauses, and italics as 'implicit markers' because they can also signal irony.<sup>72</sup>

McGann's Clarendon edition reveals frequent instances of quotation marks signalling allusion in Byron's verse written before *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.<sup>73</sup> The effect of this form of signalled allusion has already been discussed briefly with reference to 'To Miss E[lizabeth] P[igot] and 'To a Knot of Ungenerous Critics'. Before considering in further detail Byron's use of signalled allusion, I shall attempt to place this mode of allusion in a literary context.

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<sup>72</sup>See *Intertextuality: Research in Text Theory*, ed. by Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991; hereafter 'Plett, *Intertextuality*'), pp.11-12

<sup>73</sup>I am grateful to Professor Peter Isaac for confirming that house styles and printers' grammars usually determined how quotation marks were used in printed verse but that there was no fixed generic rule to control the signalling of literary or topical allusion or the positioning of prose notes.

## 2.6 Allusion and the Theatre

One mode of allusion in satirical verse has been explored in Charles Churchill's juxtaposition of Miltonic sublimity with contemporary figures to create a satiric grotesque. Laurence Sterne, Byron's most significant precursor in digressive narrative, used a variety of allusive modes in *Tristram Shandy*: for example, the entrance of Dr. Slop after his encounter with Obadiah on the coach-horse:

Obadiah had led him in as he was, *unwiped, unappointed, unannealed*, with all his stains and blotches on him.- He stood like Hamlet's ghost, motionless and speechless, for a full minute and a half, at the parlour door (Obadiah still holding his hand) with all the majesty of mud. (II, 10, pp.125-26)

This is a parodic version of the Ghost's account of his murder in *Hamlet*: 'Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin, / Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd, / [...] With all my imperfections on my head.' (I. 5. 76-79). The allusion is signalled by italicisation and by overt reference to the scene. It is humorous because the figurative 'stains' of sin on the 'majesty of buried Denmark' (I. 1. 51) have - *Dunciad*-like - recovered their literal status as muddy 'blotches'. As well as the echo of the Ghost's words, Sterne's exact depiction of Dr. Slop's posture recalls the first appearance of the Ghost in *Hamlet* when we see it 'motionless and speechless', and the guards disagree about the length of time it stayed (I. 2. 236-38).

Sterne's usual mode of allusion in *Tristram Shandy*, however, is unsignalled by quotation or reference as in the following extract from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*:

Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another? (V, i, p.339)

Of course, the humour of this, as editors of *Tristram Shandy* point out, is that Sterne laments the lack of originality in literature by plagiarising another author. Sterne's frequent unacknowledged borrowings from other works were documented by John Ferriar in the 1790's, and Ferriar's research had a significant negative impact on Sterne's reputation in Britain. This response demonstrates a new emphasis on the value of originality for the reading public and may help to account for some of the negative responses to Byron's experiments with different allusive techniques.<sup>74</sup>

One mode of literary allusion which was available to Byron and which holds striking similarities with his parodic manipulation of precursor texts is the conscious invocation of dramatic works in eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century stage comedy. Sign-posted allusions are particularly obvious in the prologues and epilogues to comic plays when dramatic illusion (as such) is abandoned to allow the playwright to address the audience directly. In these addresses, the physical conditions of the theatre and the actors are juxtaposed with the literary legacy of the theatre.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup>John Ferriar's articles are gathered in Alan B. Howes' edition of *Sterne: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974). Plagiarism was, and continues to be, important in discussions of Byron's reputation as his art of signalled quotation coexists with an ability to transfer large chunks of other people's prose into his verse without acknowledgement. See, for example, BIJ, VIII, 166: 'They call me "Plagiary"'; Odoherly on Werner in *Blackwood's Magazine* (December 1822: RR, B: I, 186-95); and Peter Cochran, 'Byron's *Don Juan*, Canto II, stanza 95: A previously unnoted source in the *Medusa* narrative', *Notes and Queries*, 228 (1992), 172-73. Byron's playfulness with the concepts of authorial originality may be said to allow a more generous role to the reader:

Both a mode of imitation and an act of apparent appropriation, quotation mobilises the reader's creative performance by alerting her/him to the fact that originality may not be the best way of regarding a work [...] meaning and significance are to be constructed rather than extracted. In other words, hermeneutic activity must give way to semiotic, intertextual analysis.

(*Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. by Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990; hereafter 'Worton and Still'), p.12).

<sup>75</sup>Thomas Warton's 'Prologue on the Old Winchester Playhouse over the Butcher's Shambles' (1789) offers a wonderful example of this physical jostling of body and text:

Then kindly listen, while the Prologue rambles  
From wit to beef, from Shakespeare to the shambles!  
[...]  
Here Juliet listens to the gentle lark,  
There in harsh chorus hungry bull-dogs bark.

Byron's knowledge of dramatic works was extensive. His enthusiasm for the theatre can be traced to his time at Southwell when amateur theatricals were a regular form of entertainment for his circle of friends. In a letter to Elizabeth Pigot in 1806, telling of the imminent arrival of Mrs. Byron, Byron appropriated Shakespeare to dramatise his situation:

& since like Macbeth, 'they've tied me to a Stake, I cannot fly' I shall imitate that *valourous* Tyrant, & 'Bear-like fight the Course' all escape being precluded. I can engage now at less disadvantage, having drawn the Enemy from her *Intrenchments*, though like the *prototype*, to whom I have compared myself, with an *excellent* chance of being knocked on the head, however, 'lay on Macduff & d--n--d be he who first cries hold, Enough.' - I shall remain fixed in Town for at least a Week, & expect to hear from *you*, before its expiration. (BLJ, I, 96)

The use of *Macbeth* is not a single act of self-dramatisation on Byron's part. He intersperses quotation from the play with swift pragmatic assessments of his position, and a travestied gloss on Macbeth's exit (his head is severed rather than 'knocked'), turning from the rallying cry, 'lay on', to the bathos of 'I shall remain fixed in Town for at least a Week'. It is this experience of disruption and juxtaposition which compounds the mode of allusion in Byron's verse.

Byron's familiarity from a young age not only with Shakespeare, but also with eighteenth-century drama is suggested by his choice of an extract from Young's *The Revenge* for a speech day at Harrow in 1805. At a similar occasion later that year, he selected Lear's speech to the storm and told Augusta that he was 'so overcome by the exertion' of giving the speech that he was 'obliged to quit the room' (BLJ, I, 63; 69; 73). In April 1805 Byron

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Cleavers and scymitars give blow for blow,  
And Heroes bleed above, and Sheep below!  
[...]

With weeping lovers, dying calves complain,  
Confusion reigns - chaos is come again!

(1.3-4; 11-14; 21-22. *The Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Warton*, ed. by Richard Mant, 2 vols., (Oxford, 1802), II, 179-80).

I am grateful to Dr David Fairer for providing me with a copy of this prologue.

replied to Augusta's enquiries about the child actor William Henry West Betty with the information that he had seen 'this young Roscius several times' (BLJ, I, 67) which, together with his other references to performances attended, confirms an active interest in the contemporary London Stage. Byron's first literary mentor, Charles Dallas, dabbled in the theatre, and in a letter from Patras in 1810, Byron dwelt on memories of Drury Lane:

[Dallas] had a farce ready for the stage before I left England, and asked me for a prologue, which I promised, but sailed in such a hurry I never penned a couplet. - I am afraid to ask after his drama for fear it should be damned, Lord forgive me for using such a word, but the pit, Sir, you know the pit, they will do those things in spite of merit. (BLJ, II, 20)

It is clear, therefore, that Byron was immersed in dramatic idiom even before his appointment to the managerial committee of Drury Lane and his responsibility for the theatre library.<sup>76</sup> His reference to a prologue that should have been in couplets points to the tradition of Goldsmith and Sheridan (the writers, according to Marchand, who with Shakespeare, Scott, and Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatists were Byron's favourite sources for quotation (BLJ, I, 2)). A brief discussion of their modes of allusion may help to place the voice that emerges in Byron's digressive literary allusions.

Oliver Goldsmith frequently incorporated lines from Shakespeare's drama into his own work. These are not simply echoes, but signalled quotations: for example, in the Epilogue to *She Stoops to Conquer*:

Our life is all a play, composed to please:  
'We have our exits and our entrances'.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup>For a full account of Byron's involvement with the Drury Lane Theatre, see Richard Lansdown, pp.11-58.

<sup>77</sup>*The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (London: Longman, 1969; repr. 1976; hereafter 'Lonsdale'), p.730, l.7-8

The marked allusion to *As You Like It* alerts the audience to the way that Jacques's speech on the seven ages of man is about to be turned to talk about the five acts of the barmaid. By signalling allusion, Goldsmith also signals departure from the original. The difference or incongruity between the two versions is a source of comedy. In the Epilogue to *The Good-Natured Man*, Goldsmith compares the discomfort of the author watching his play from the pit to the suffering in the storm scene of *King Lear*:

While oft, with many a smile and many a shrug,  
He eyes the centre, where his friends sit snug;  
His simpering friends, with pleasure in their eyes,  
Sink as he sinks and as he rises rise;  
He nods, they nod; he cringes, they grimace;  
But not a soul will budge to give him place.  
Since then, unhelped, our bard must now conform  
'To bide the pelting of this pitiless storm'. (Lonsdale, p.666, l.25-32)

The audience is pointed towards the unexpected similarity of the comparison (as in metaphor) but also recognises the ludicrous aspect of the comparison (the dimension which is suppressed in metaphor).<sup>78</sup> It is not clear how the speaker of the epilogue conveyed the presence of quotation marks to the audience; presumably a pregnant pause would have helped to emphasise allusion, although the well-known speeches from Shakespeare would be as instantly recognisable as they are today. The effect of the intertextuality, therefore, comprises both familiarity and estrangement.

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<sup>78</sup>For the argument that allusion is a more 'powerful' figure than metaphor, see Michael Riffaterre, 'Compulsory reader response: the intertextual drive' in Worton and Still, pp.57-76. Riffaterre argues that the text controls closely the reader's response but that the 'lure' of transgressing the distance between the two texts of intertextuality offers the reader 'an enormous return for a modest investment' (p.72). He identifies the 'lexical Janus' which holds the distance between the two texts by the figure of 'syllepsis': a word which has two mutually incompatible meanings (one in the context and the other in the intertext). It is this paradoxical force, according to Riffaterre, which allows allusion to outweigh metaphor. Metaphor cannot generate an equal dynamic of incongruity as it relies on something being in common to both tenor and vehicle (p.71).

It is likely that eighteenth-century dramatists drew, similarly, on a common stock of Shakespearean allusions that were kept in the public ear by continual and competitive efforts of allusion. Goldsmith's Epilogue to *She Stoops to Conquer* (performed for Lewes's Benefit) allowed the actor playing Harlequin to experiment with the roles of Lear and Richard III:

Shakespeare himself shall feel my tragic rage.  
 'Off! off! vile trappings!': a new passion reigns!  
 The maddening monarch revels in my veins.  
 Oh! for a Richard's voice to catch the theme:  
 'Give me another horse! bind up my wounds! -soft-  
       'twas but a dream.'  
 Aye, 'twas but a dream, for now there's no retreating;  
 If I cease Harlequin, I cease from eating. (Lonsdale, p.734, l.20-26)

The edited highlights of Shakespearean tragedy work to satirise a popular perception of tragic theatre, but they also reinforce the canons of popular taste. The same moment from Richard III is evoked in the prologue to Sheridan's *The Camp*:

She starts, she wakes, she quivers, kneels, and prays,  
 'Side saddle, my Horse! ah! lace up my Stays!  
 Soft, soft; 'twas but a Dream...' <sup>79</sup>

This prologue was written by Richard Tickell and the allusion to *Richard III* is to satirise the George Colman's revival of *Bonduca*, a tragedy by Beaumont and Fletcher about Boadicea (see Price's editorial notes in the Clarendon edition: II, 723).

In his comedies, Sheridan placed prominent allusions to Milton and Shakespeare for comic effect (see, for example Mrs Malaprop's mangling of *Hamlet* in *The Rivals* and Puff's plagiarism of *Othello* in *The Critic*), but it is in the

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<sup>79</sup>The *Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, ed. by Cecil Price, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973; hereafter '*Dramatic Works*'), II, 723, l.17-19)

prologues and epilogues to the plays that signalled allusion comes as direct address to the audience from either the author or one of the actors. These addresses occur outside the play and make particular reference to material concerns of the production; personalities of the cast, rival productions, special effects, finance. The Epilogue to Sheridan's *School for Scandal* written by George Colman the Elder deploys an extended parody of *Othello*:

The Transient Hour of Fashion too soon spent,  
 'Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell Content!  
 Farewell the plum'd Head - the cushion'd Tete,  
 That takes the Cushion from its proper seat!  
 The spirit stirring Drum! - Card Drums I mean -  
 Spadille, odd Trick, Pam, Basto, King and Queen!  
 And you, ye knockers, that with Brazen Throat  
 The Welcome Visitor's Approach denote,  
 Farewell!- all Quality of high Renown,  
 Pride Pomp, and Circumstance of glorious Town!  
 Farewell! your revels I partake no more,  
 And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er!  
 - All this I told our Bard - he smil'd and said 'twas clear  
 I ought to play deep Tragedy next year: (*Dramatic Works*, I, 443,  
 1.7-20)

Here is a pattern for the intermittent encounter with a Shakespearean source which Byron used in his letter to Elizabeth Pigot (see above). Heinrich F. Plett's study has classified this sort of fragmentation of a precursor text as 'permutation' (Plett, *Intertextuality*, p.22). Plett's models draw on mathematical and linguistic categorisations but I would like to draw on other resonances of his terminology and to foreground the sense of things being changed thoroughly (OED) or, to borrow Yeats, 'changed utterly'.

Whereas the direct allusions in Churchill's verse usually involved the substitution of one satiric target for another, the self-reflexiveness of the dramatic prologue was available to Byron as an important, performative conversational voice. The association with performance will be especially significant in the construction of the Byronic narrator of the *ottava rima*



poems. The appeal of cultivating an audience around a public persona was also of interest to Byron, and in this context, it is interesting to note that the transmission of the theatrical medium into verse was also achieved by Matthew Gregory Lewis, one of Byron's theatre-going companions.<sup>80</sup>

In 1796, Lewis had produced his dramatic romance *The Castle Spectre*. This was followed by other melodramas and in 1801 he published *Tales of Terror and Wonder* (from which Byron parodied 'The Little Grey Man').<sup>81</sup> *Tales of Terror* was preceded by an 'Introductory Dialogue' in which a Johnsonian 'friend' upbraids the 'author' for joining the 'active panders to perverted taste':

No- I have hopes you'll find this rage decreased,  
And send a dish too much to Terror's feast;  
The vicious taste, with such a rich supply  
Quite surfeited, 'will sicken, and so die.'  
(*Tales of Terror and Wonder*, p.10)

The marked allusion to Orsino in *Twelfth Night* underscores the self-indulgence of the 'author' as seen by the 'friend'. The 'author', however, argues that imaginative power, not fashion, dictates his choice of material:

My mind unaltered views, with fixed delight,  
The wreck of learning snatched from Gothic night;  
[....]  
Yet still the soul for various pleasure formed,  
By Pity melted, and by Terror stormed,  
Loves to roam largely through each distant clime,

<sup>80</sup>For the theatrical context of Byron's friendship with Lewis, see, for example, BLJ, III, 4-5: My dear [Lewi]s - I will call about 6 - we have *both* an offer of places from Ly. M[elbourn]e in Ld. Egremont's box - but I think we shall have more of the audience (always more amusing than the performers on a *first* night) in the seats you have taken. . . . BIRON.'

<sup>81</sup>Lewis's gothic novel *The Monk* is remarkable, amongst other things, for its dense textuality. A startling example of Lewis's juxtaposition of two texts occurs in Vol. III, chapter IV after the death of Antonia. Lorenzo is distraught: 'His Attendants expressed serious apprehensions for his life; But the Uncle entertained not the same fears. He was of the opinion, and not unwisely, that "Men have died, and worms have eaten them; but not for Love!"' (Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. by Howard Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973; repr. 1980)), p.399. Here, Lewis collides Shakespearean pastoral romance with a jaded outlook on violence and terror.

And 'leap the flaming bounds of space and time!' (p.11)<sup>82</sup>

Signalled allusion here completes the couplet and therefore emphasises the 'author's' command of his medium. It is also interesting that Lewis cites 'variation' as a prerogative for his style: this term was invoked by Byron in the Preface to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Cantos I and II but disputed by his critics (see Chapter I and appendix). By summoning a Shakespearean (nationalist) tradition for his voice, the 'author' establishes a literary pedigree for his work:

The tourney's knights, the tyrant baron's crimes,  
'Pomp, pride, and circumstance,' of feudal times! (p.12)

The quotation in this case is from *Othello*, and it works to startle the friend into a realisation of 'Europe's barbarous night' (p.12) as fit matter for composition. This leads to a catalogue of gothic delights, constructed to overwhelm the voice of the 'friend'. The final flourish of the 'author' is a precisely signalled allusion to gothic 'unutterableness':

Pale Terror trembling guards the fountain's head,  
And rouses Fancy on her wakeful bed;  
'From realms of viewless spirits tears the veil,  
And half reveals the unutterable tale!' (p.13)

Lewis's use of couplets and his incorporation of direct quotation to argue for what is to follow is reminiscent of the technique of dramatic prologue, and supplies a further context for Byron's use of signalled allusions in his verse.

Byron was familiar with various modes of dramatic composition, including the work of George Colman, whose work he cited as a model for prologue writing:

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<sup>82</sup>The signalled allusion is to Gray's 'The Progress of Poesy. A Pindaric Ode': 'He passed the flaming bounds of place and time' (See Lonsdale, p.174, l.98 and note on Lucretius).

- There are but two decent prologues in our tongue - Pope's to Cato - Johnson's to Drury Lane, this with the Epilogue to the 'Distrest Mother' & I think one of Goldsmith's, and a prologue of Old Colman's to Beaumont & Fletcher's Philaster are the best things of the kind we have. (BLJ, II, 210)

Byron's comments on the art of the prologue come in a letter to Lord Holland written whilst Byron was working on the Prologue for the opening of the Drury-Lane Theatre. This commission was undertaken at the request of Lord Holland and (as with the revision of *Childe Harold* I and II at the request of Dallas and Murray), political pressure is reflected in the way that satirical allusions were expunged.<sup>83</sup>

A more playful use of allusion which entered the public domain in an unexpurgated condition was the composition 'Parenthetical Address, by Dr. Plagiarist' (published in the *Morning Chronicle*, and referring to an incident at Drury Lane (see CPW, III, 403-4)). This can be read as the twin of the 'Opening Address' and takes to an extreme the allusive mode which Byron had already employed in his satires. The poem is of particular interest because its preface introduces the reader to the poem's use of signalled allusion:

Half stolen, with<out> acknowledgements, to be spoken in an inarticulate voice, by Master P\_\_ at the opening of the next new theatre. (Stolen parts marked with the inverted commas of quotation, thus, "\_\_\_\_\_") (MS. M, location: John Murray Archive)<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup>For the modifications to Byron's 'Address, Spoken at the Opening of Drury-Lane Theatre', see CPW, III, 17-21 and notes and Lansdown, p.19. For the argument that Holland actually 'goaded' Byron into writing satire in 1812, see William Childers, 'Byron's Waltz: The Germans and their Georges', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 18 (1969), 81-95.

<sup>84</sup>Coleridge and CPW differ in their use of parenthesis at l.28 where CPW encloses, '(or I'm a fool and Fame's a liar),' and Coleridge uses dashes, '- or I'm a fool - and Fame's a liar,'; MS.M appears as in Coleridge.

This precedent allows us to see Byron drawing attention to his 'stolen' sources to make the parody irresistible.<sup>85</sup> The original formal address is cited and undercut relentlessly by its juxtaposition with a conversational, sceptical voice. This process begins as mock-translation:

'When energizing objects men pursue',  
Then Lord knows what - is writ by Lord knows who. (l.1-2)

and the critique is sustained by compressing a pseudo-scholarly gloss into the second half of the couplet:

'Flame! fire! and flame!!' (words borrowed from LUCRETIUS)  
'Dread Metaphors which open wounds' like issues!  
'And sleeping pangs awake - and- but away',  
(Confound me if I know what next to say).  
[...]  
'If mighty things with small we may compare',  
(Translated from the Grammar for the fair!). (l.11-14; 17-18)

As well as the bogus attribution, the parenthesis provides the bathos of a random encounter at odds with the purposiveness of the original. By dislocating Busby's address from its context, Byron thwarts its meaning and reproduces it as an eccentric collection of words.

The satire is, therefore, linguistically self-aware, interrogating the associations that certain sounds accrue in the context of a certain discourse. Through the use of parenthesis, Byron allows sexual innuendo to obtrude where it was not before:

'These we invoke - your sister arts implore',  
With 'smiles', and 'lyres', and 'pencils', and much more.  
'These if we win, the Graces too we gain';

<sup>85</sup>The use of quotation marks to signal allusion makes a choice about allusion obligatory for the reader. If we see allusion in general as a threshold to another text, Byron's art of digressive allusion leads the reader over that threshold. This of course qualifies the extent of free-play associated with allusive activity.

Disgraces too! 'inseparable train!' <sup>86</sup>  
 'Three who have stolen their witching airs from Cupid',  
 (You all know what I mean unless you're stupid). (l.29-34)

After the parenthetical '(or I'm a fool and Fame's a liar)' (l.28), the invocation of 'lyres' two lines later is inevitably complicated. The effect of Byron's apparently random interventions in Busby's address is to suggest an 'inseparable train' of 'much more'. This, for example, entails the association of 'disgraces' with 'the Graces', and insists on the exact sum of 'twenty guineas' (l.50) in place of the more abstract 'prizes' and 'rewards' mentioned in Busby's speech:

"Tis ours to look on you- you hold the prize',  
 'Tis *twenty guineas*, as they advertize!  
 'A double blessing your rewards impart',  
 I wish I had them then with all my heart.  
 [...]  
 'When in your fostering beams you bid us live',  
 My next subscription list shall say how much you give! (l.49-52;  
 55-56)

Byron, therefore, subverts the theatrical rhetoric of the original with sexual innuendo and commercial explicitness. Digressive asides and direct allusion work to intrude on the reader's consciousness associations which are usually suspended in public addresses. In this way, they might be said to disturb the reader's generic 'competence'. <sup>87</sup> Drawing attention to the act of reading by constantly interrupting and restarting it, Byronic digression also

<sup>86</sup>In MS. M 'Disgraces' is underlined and prefaced by a cancelled opening mark of parenthesis.

<sup>87</sup>Stuart Curran has discussed the importance of the reader's preconceptions and expectations of genre in *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; hereafter 'Curran'). Curran describes genre as 'the most consistent conceptual syntax informing literature' (Curran, p.4), adding that genre is not an abstraction but is always 'recreated in a particularized time and place' (Curran, p.8). Whilst keeping Curran's sensitivity to cultural and historical context in mind, I would like to stress the conservativeness of many reviewers' concepts of genre. Byron's work was measured by reviewers against the formal standards of the eighteenth century, and the moral standards of the nineteenth century.

foregrounds what Peter Manning has called the 'politics of physical presentation, of dedications, appendices, prices, sizes of volumes, illustrations, and other contextual matters.'<sup>88</sup> Byron's first extended use of signalled literary allusion contributed to a sustained discussion of one of these 'contextual matters'; the authority of the critical reviews. There is a nice self-reflexiveness in this since critical reviews were another form of discourse loaded with Shakespearean (and other) allusions:

'The evil that men do, does indeed live after them,' in another sense than the poet's; and when Lord Byron shall long have ceased to be in this world, there will be thousands who may have cause to rue the day, that ever he was born. (RR, B: I, 313-14)<sup>89</sup>

This is an extract from the review of *Sardanapalus* in the *British Critic* (May 1822). It indicates the free use of allusion made by Byron's contemporary critics. Literary quotation was a familiar game for educated readers in the early nineteenth century and as Jonathan Bate has pointed out, books of Shakespearean extracts then played an important part in a child's schooling.<sup>90</sup> There is, however, a much greater frequency of allusion in Byron's poetry than in other poetry of the same period.<sup>91</sup> As I also hope to

<sup>88</sup>Peter J. Manning, *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; hereafter '*Reading Romantics*'), p.195

<sup>89</sup>A more complex example is provided by the integration of *Hamlet* into the 'Letter to the Author of *Beppo*' in *Blackwood's Magazine*:

You decked yourself in the sable trappings of a Hamlet, and like him, you were free to confess that 'the earth seemed to you only a sterile promontory, and the goodly canopy of heaven a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. You had no pleasure in Man, no! nor, for all our smiling in woman neither.' You stood like another Niobe, a cold and marble statue, frozen by despair amidst the ruin of your hopes' (3 (1818), 323-29 (327)).

<sup>90</sup>Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986; hereafter '*Bate*'), pp.30; 33-34; 75. Bate discusses the currency of Shakespearean allusion in the visual arts in 'Shakespearean Allusion in English Caricature in the Age of Gillray', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 49 (1986), 196-210.

<sup>91</sup>Other Romantic prose writers like Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt did sustain a high frequency of signalled allusion. George L. Barnett discusses Lamb's art of allusion in *Charles Lamb: The Evolution of Elia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp.216-30. Barnett shows how 'usually', in Lamb's prose, 'the quotation is introduced naturally into the context [...] Often the quotation is, in part or in whole, a repetition of the same thought' (p.219).

show, Byron's technique of digressive allusion is different in kind and effect from the didactic or imitative type of allusion typified by the *British Critic*.

## 2.7 Allusion in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

### 'pilfers...perverts...purloins'

The paradigm of literary allusion above is taken from Byron's caricature of James Grahame in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*:

Sepulchral GRAHAME, pours his notes sublime,  
In mangled prose, nor e'en aspires to rhyme,  
Breaks into blank the Gospel of St. Luke,  
And boldly pilfers from the Pentateuch;  
And, undisturbed by conscientious qualms,  
Perverts the prophets, and purloins the Psalms. (l.321-26)

This process is an apt description, not just of allusion in general, but of Byron's art of allusion in particular. *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* is a literary satire and reference to other texts is, therefore, to be expected. Byron's mode of allusion, however, works to confuse the strict 'sorting' of texts that the theme of the satire would seem to imply.<sup>92</sup>

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Occasionally, however, Lamb is seen to exemplify what I have referred to as digressive allusion: 'Another liberty Lamb took in quoting was frequently to employ lines in entirely different contexts from those originally used [...] At such times a new meaning and a new emotion are given to the original; where this occurs, Lamb is so far from being a copier that he himself becomes the creator' (p.221). Hazlitt's intertextual writing is discussed by Jonathan Bate in 'Hazlitt's Shakespearean Quotations', *Prose Studies*, 7 (1984), 26-37. Romantic intertextuality (excluding Byron) is discussed by James K. Chandler, 'Romantic Allusiveness', *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1981-2), 461-87.

<sup>92</sup>In my discussion of this poem I differ from Jonathan Bate who argues that, 'In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Byron is himself neo-classical: one element of his homage to Pope is his use of allusion to strengthen his satiric argument. [referring to l.1053-60] The educated reader of *English Bards* will see that Byron imagines himself to be hardened by harsh reviews and literary isolation, as Macbeth is hardened by familiarity and literal isolation' (Bate, pp.231-32). Bate goes on to argue that Byron's satire uses 'neo-classical allusion [...] it works towards the idea of poetry as cultivated discourse, conversation between educated writer and educated reader' (Bate, p.232). I am suggesting that the tropes of allusion in this early poem are less stable than Bate finds them to be although I would agree with the general point that

In the Preface for the second edition, Byron drew on *Much Ado About Nothing* and adapted the words of Benedick to back-up his decision to publish the satire against friends' advice:

If I were to be 'turn'd from the career of my humour by quibbles quick, and paper bullets of the brain', I should have complied with their counsel. But I am not to be terrified with abuse, or bullied by reviewers, with or without arms. (CPW, I, 227-28)

The allusion is eloquent but different from the original, for Benedick's words turn a display of individual inconsistency into an act of social continuity:

Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour? No, the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. (I. 3. 231-35)

Byron, on the other hand, has inflected the words literally: the 'paper bullets' were actual pages from the *Edinburgh Review* and the 'career of his humour' was Byron's career as a writer. Whereas Benedick is turning from raillery to love, Byron applies the words to a turn from sentimental lyrics to satiric raillery. Shakespearean drama is 'purloined', therefore, because it has been 'turned' as it is invoked.

Describing the *Edinburgh Review* as a 'Hydra' towards the end of the Preface, Byron suggested:

it would, indeed, require a Hercules to crush the Hydra; but if the Author succeeds in merely 'bruising one of the heads of the serpent', though his own hand should suffer in the encounter, he will be amply satisfied. (CPW, I, 229)

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the arch tone of high culture in Byron's early poems is different from the modes of allusion in the later *ottava rima* verse in *Don Juan*.



The elision of classical and Biblical allusion has a mildly disturbing effect. In Genesis, the curse on the serpent is, 'he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel'. Byron has collided this Old Testament curse with one of the labours of Hercules, but he has also incorporated a human awareness of the suffering which might result from approaching a snake. Again, it is a literal approach to allusion which distorts the original(s).

The wrenching of conceptual frames in the signalled allusions of the Preface is continued in the text of the poem. One of the immediate problems of discussing Byronic allusion is the variety of modes employed by the poet.<sup>93</sup> In his article on 'The Art of Allusion' cited above, Manning traces three Shakespearean reference points in the final paragraph of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. One comprises an unsignalled quotation from *Henry IV*, another is direct quotation from *Hamlet*, and the third is a much more distant verbal echo of *Macbeth*. Manning (like Jonathan Bate) refers to all of these as 'allusions' (pp.10-11) but the effect on the page and on the poem is different in all cases. Why did Byron signal the quotation from *Hamlet* but not the extract from *Henry IV*? Another misquotation from *Hamlet* earlier in the poem goes unmarked: 'Oh! what a noble heart was here undone,' (l.835), whilst Byron signals the smaller appropriation from *Macbeth* placing it in direct speech:

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<sup>93</sup>Among the various accounts of different modes of allusion, I have found work by the following critics helpful: Herman Meyer, *The Poetics of Quotation in the European Novel*, translated by Theodore and Yelta Ziolkowski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968; hereafter 'Meyer'). Meyer locates the 'charm' of the quotation 'in a unique tension between assimilation and dissimulation: it links itself closely with its new environment, but at the same time detaches itself from it, thus permitting another world to radiate into the self-contained world of the novel' (Meyer, p.6). Meyer's comments on the difference between the parodies of Immermann and Hoffmann are also highly suggestive: 'we sense that the quotation is dragged in much more at random and that, very much in contrast to Hoffmann, it accomplishes little or nothing functionally' (Meyer, p.156). This sense of disturbing arbitrary use of quotation is very close to my reading of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. See also Carmela Perri, 'On Alluding' *Poetics*, 7 (1978), 289-307. Perri builds on Meyer's work to offer a list of conventions used in literary allusion, stressing that the source text must be 'some discrete, recoverable property'. Although this idea is not developed in the article, the physicality of the other text is an important feature of Byron's digressive allusion. See also Lucy Newlyn, *'Paradise Lost' and the Romantic Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Newlyn's work on allusion as a 'focus for indeterminacy' (p.5), qualifying the stability of the source text (in this case, *Paradise Lost*) has contributed to my understanding of the way allusion invites choice on the part of the reader.

“‘hold, enough!’” (l.735), and in the Postscript, Byron uses quotation marks at every opportunity.

One effect of this uneven distribution of acknowledgement is to question the idea of literary reputation and memorability. Whilst calling on one generic hierarchy to support his satire, Byron disrupts the received record of literary fame and worth:

A Book's a Book, altho' there's nothing in't. (l.52)

It is this sentiment which provokes the first digression of the satire. Having instructed the reader, ‘you can still proceed;/ Go on,’ (l.95-96), Byron the satirist stages an immediate hold-up:

But hold! exclaims a friend, - here's some neglect:  
This - that - and th'other line seem incorrect.  
What then? the self-same blunder Pope has got,  
And careless Dryden - aye - but Pye has not, -  
Indeed! - 'tis granted faith! - but what care I?  
Better to err with POPE, than shine with PYE. (l.97-102)

As McGann has pointed out, the final line echoes Milton's *Paradise Lost*, (‘Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.’ (l. 263)). The borrowed Satanic cadence works to define Byron's position as one set against the dominant culture. The echo endorses the prevalent view of tradition that has emerged in the digression; Pye had been cited as an authority by the ‘friend’ with ‘MILTON, DRYDEN, POPE, alike forgot’ (l.187).<sup>94</sup>

*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* thematises the fear of the indiscriminating ‘alike’; the collapse of literary tradition under the weight of contemporary ‘trifling’ publications:

<sup>94</sup>For a discussion of Byron's satire, particularly its affinity with Gifford's criticism, see Mary Clearman, ‘A Blueprint for *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: The First Satire of Juvenal’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 19 (1970), 87-99.

But why these names, or greater still, retrace,  
 When all to feeble Bards resign their place?  
 Yet to such times our lingering looks are cast,  
 When taste and reason with those times are past.  
 Now look around, and turn each trifling page,  
 Survey the precious works that please the age. (l.117-22)

Two verse paragraphs beginning with 'But...' delay the commencement of the satire proper. These digressions follow the relativity of literary values in the present day whereby 'trifling' is received as something 'precious'. In spite of the theme of the satire, however, Byron's unstable mode of allusion has the effect of deconstructing the canonical hierarchy of prior texts. The 'lingering looks' which constitute allusions to the literary past are juxtaposed with 'looks around' to contemporary culture. The allusive texture of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* incorporates the 'works of taste and reason' with the 'swoln bubble' (l.134) of new schools of poetry inviting the reader into the 'jostle' (l.148) which the satire purports to condemn.

The contradictory forces surrounding Byron's signalled allusions can be seen in his Biblical quotations:

Thus saith the Preacher; 'nought beneath the sun  
 Is new', yet still from change to change we run.  
 What varied wonders tempt us as they pass!  
 The Cow-pox, Tractors, Galvanism, and Gas  
 In turns appear to make the vulgar stare,  
 Till the swoln bubble bursts - and all is air! (l.129-34)

All of the first line could be in quotation marks as the first chapter of Ecclesiastes resounds with the initial attribution, 'saith the Preacher', but Byron fragments the allusion and juxtaposes it with the contradictory assertion, 'yet still from change to change we run.' There is then a shift of perspective as the speaker suggests that 'we' are stationary whilst other

things move.<sup>95</sup> The effect of these 'turns' is to unsettle the marked source of authority.

In another Biblical allusion in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Byron admonishes the work of Thomas Moore whom he calls the 'young Catullus of his day' (l.287):

Griev'd to condemn, the Muse must still be just,  
Nor spare melodious advocates of lust.  
Pure is the flame which o'er her altar burns;  
From grosser incense with disgust she turns:  
Yet, kind to youth, this expiation o'er,  
She bids thee, 'mend thy line, and sin no more.' (l.289-94)

Again the allusion is attached to an image of 'turning': Byron changes the female Muse/priestess figure with a repetition of the 'yet...' construction, into a transvestite Christ. The signalled allusion refers the reader to Christ and the woman taken in adultery, 'go, and sin no more' but also, weirdly, to Christ amongst fishermen 'mending their nets'. The effect of the compound image and allusion is to distort the original: Moore takes the woman's place in the scene, but is addressed by a female Christ.<sup>96</sup>

The shifting grammar of Byronic allusion may be assessed by looking at the first names to be satirised in detail. In the first eight instances of signalled allusion, Byron uses direct quotation from Scott ('and bid a long,

<sup>95</sup>The inclusion of other 'things' will form a vital part of Byron's digressive allusions. For the difference between 'things' in Byron and Pope see England; '[Pope's] juxtapositions reach beyond the chaotic surfaces he describes to suggest that there is clarity, distinction, coherence in the nature of things [...] Byron's juxtapositions offer no reassuring access to a fundamental coherence in the nature of things. They mimic the only reality that the poet knows; they do not ironically define failures to perceive a real hierarchy behind the confusion of immediate particulars,' (England, p.112).

<sup>96</sup>The allusion is to Thomas Moore's poem, 'Charity' which is a versified response to the story from St. John, Chapter 8. The final stanza of the poem is:

Go go - be innocent, and live -  
The tongues of men may wound thee sore;  
But Heaven in pity can forgive,  
And bids thee 'go, and sin no more!'

(This intertext has been missed by CPW where the commentary refers the reader straight to St. John).

"good night to Marmion" (l.184)); direct quotation from the *AntiJacobin* on Southey ("God help thee", SOUTHEY, and thy readers too' (l.234)); paraphrase of Wordsworth ('Who warns his friend "to shake off toil and trouble,/ And quit his books, for fear of growing double"' (l.239-40)); misquotation of Wordsworth ('That all who view the "idiot in his glory",/ Conceive the Bard the hero of the story' (l.253-54)); and unreliable citation of the titles from Lewis's collection of Tales:

At whose command, 'grim women' throng in crouds,  
And kings of fire, of water, and of clouds,  
With 'small grey men', 'wild yagers', and what-not. (l.275-77)<sup>97</sup>

The marking of the allusions works to defamiliarize the content, but the effect of the various degrees of faithfulness to source is to level all references to a condition of dubiety. Byron places direct quotation of a Bowles 'dwarf Epic' in inverted commas (perhaps inviting a distant recollection of Virgil):

The lofty numbers of a harp like thine:  
'Awake a louder and a loftier strain.' (l.350-51)

but the same treatment is accorded to the offerings of the critic:

While REYNOLDS vents his 'dammes, poohs', and 'zounds',  
And common place, and common sense confounds. (l.568-69)<sup>98</sup>

The satirical point that emerges from this is that in contemporary criticism, the same weight has been given to works of widely differing qualities and

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<sup>97</sup>Byron's suggestion that gothic literature is debasing the public taste is itself a popular literary trope and may be compared, for example, with Wordsworth's remarks in the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* about 'frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse' (*Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by R.L.Brett and A.R. Jones (London: Methuen, 1963; repr. 1978), p.249).

<sup>98</sup>The inclusion of verbal but non-linguistic registers of disgust anticipates the appearance of 'pooh' in *Don Juan* Canto XV, stanza 1: 'All present life is but an Interjection,/ [...] a "Hal Hal" or "Bah!" - a yawn, or "Pooh!"'

that the ability to distinguish between the literary and the non-literary (ie critical) forms of expression has been lost.<sup>99</sup> The effect of the texture of the poem is, however, more radically destabilising, for the arbitrary emphasis which falls on certain words begins to defamiliarize all words:

Triumphant first see 'Temper's Triumphs' shine!  
At least I'm sure they triumph'd over mine.  
Of 'Music's Triumphs' all who read may swear  
That luckless Music never triumph'd there. (l.315-18)

The emphatic repetition of grammatical variations on 'triumph' overwhelm the accepted meaning of the word with its sound. The double placement of the word in a title suggests formulaic writing but it also reproduces the effect of repetitive clamour which threatens to engulf all the texts in the poem.<sup>100</sup>

Another example of the competitive jostling of texts occurs in the two versions of the question below:

'Why slumbers GIFFORD?' once was asked in vain:  
Why slumbers GIFFORD? let us ask again. (l.819-820)<sup>101</sup>

The first question acknowledges a source ('New Morality' in the *AntiJacobin*), but the reiteration (without marks of quotation) can neither wholly discard this context nor wholly belong to it. The repetition is perplexing as it forces the reader to confront the difference between a line with a marked source, and the same line without acknowledgement. If we are led into reflection on

<sup>99</sup>For a sympathetic discussion of Coleridge's fears about his readership and its capacity for literary critical judgements, see Lucy Newlyn, 'Coleridge and the Anxiety of Reception', *Romanticism*, 1.2 (1995), 46-78.

<sup>100</sup>Paul Elledge suggests the risk involved in the reception of allusion which may be 'mistaken or ignored as foreign language or impenetrable code' or which may constitute 'privileged argot for a cultured literati'. See 'Never Say(ing) Goodbye: Mediated Valediction in Byron's *Don Juan* XI', *Byron Journal* 20 (1992), 17-26 (p.19).

<sup>101</sup>Fuess traces the allusive history of these lines from Young on Pope to Canning, Hodgson, and Byron on Gifford (Fuess, pp.53-54).

the differences, the allusion has taken us away from the content of the question and into contemplation of its form.

In a discussion of Byron's allusions in *Don Juan*, Manning suggests that the 'shadowy presences' of alluded-to texts 'augment Byron's voice by locating him within his tradition [...] through him a whole tradition is summoned and renovated' (*Reading Romantics*, p.135). In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, however, allusion is a less reassuring figure because the authority of 'a whole tradition' is constantly interrogated. Byron's intertextuality pre-empts a Barthesian paradigm of the fictional:

It is the instability of the placing of the quotation marks that decisively constitutes the fictional and renders it unrecuperable. The ideal text would be 'a text with uncertain quotation marks, with floating parentheses' [...] in which each undecidable component would work like a mouthful of good wine [...] where 'the mouthful swallowed does not have quite the same taste as the next mouthful taken'.<sup>102</sup>

In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, though, the thematic concern with quality means that the reader has to pay for every dubious mouthful. Each allusion, therefore, becomes a troubling digression in which the reader is asked to risk his or her perspective on tradition: is "'en masque'" (l.655) as significant as "'penetrable stuff'" (l.1050)? What separates remembered words from an invitation and remembered words from *Hamlet*? This radical challenge to poetic diction is voiced for the rest of Byron's career through a digressiveness we can call both 'novelistic' and 'carnavalesque'.

A reciprocal relationship between allusion and digression has been assumed for most of this chapter and it now requires further examination. The link between configurations of allusion and digression immediately suggests Harold Bloom's paradigm of influence. In Bloom's model of conflict between authorial forefather and son, intertextual tension is eventually

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<sup>102</sup>Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes* cited in Worton and Judith Still, p.114

resolved.<sup>103</sup> Byron's digressive allusions, however, may be said to resist resettlement, keeping the whole work at the stages of swerve (or digression) away from precursor text and antithetical reading of it ('Clinamen' and 'Tessera' in Bloom's terms).<sup>104</sup> Bloom's paradigm directs the poet towards the achievement of unity and self-sufficiency: 'the attainment of a state of solitude' (*The Anxiety of Influence*, p.15). This is clearly inappropriate in the case of Byron's poetry where precursor texts are not subsumed but emerge, waving a flag to draw attention to their presence as destabilising influences. Indeed, Bloom has comparatively little to say about Byron's varying modes of allusion.<sup>105</sup> In my next chapter, I shall examine the complex surface of Byron's intertextuality, particularly in the way that literary tradition and contemporary debate are related.

<sup>103</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973; repr. 1975; hereafter '*Anxiety of Influence*')  
<sup>104</sup> The relevant stages of Bloom's revisionary ratios were summarised by him as follows:

*Clinamen*, which is poetic misreading or misprision proper; I take the word from Lucretius, where it means a 'swerve' of the atoms so as to make change possible in the universe. A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute a *clinamen* in relation to it. This appears as a corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves.

*Tessera*, which is completion and antithesis; I take the word not from mosaic-making, where it is still used, but from the ancient mystery cults, where it meant a token of recognition, the fragment say of a small pot which with other fragments would reconstitute the vessel. A poet antithetically 'completes' his precursor, by so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough. (*Anxiety of Influence*, p.14)

Jonathan Bate suggests 'revising' Bloom's 'Revisionary Ratios' and removing the final clause ('with its antagonistic overtones') from *Tessera* to describe 'the Romantics' allusive relationship with Shakespeare' (Bate, p.4). I would like to distinguish Byron's allusive relationship with Shakespeare from 'the Romantics' more generally and to this end, I believe that Byron's digressive allusion does evoke the final clause of *Tessera*.

<sup>105</sup> Bloom concentrates on Byron's Prometheism and, following Ridenour, emphasises the metaphor of the Fall in Byron's poetry. Bloom is less concerned with the signalled allusions on the surface of Byron's verse than with the moments where he believes that Byron is '[moving] in the poetic world of Wordsworth and Shelley' (Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971; repr. 1983; hereafter '*The Visionary Company*'), p.258. At such moments, Bloom italicises the verse he is quoting.



## CHAPTER THREE: HINTS OF INTERTEXTUALITY

3.1 The Reception of Horace

A review of *Tristram Shandy* in the *Journal Encyclopédique* 15 April 1760 warned:

This is Horace's monster [...] The author has neither plan nor principles, nor system: he only wishes to talk on and unfortunately one listens to him with pleasure [...]. Moreover, that irregular progression of ideas, so far removed from the spirit of this age, passes for intentional subtlety. The English find mystery in it and all join in admiring it.<sup>1</sup>

This reference to Horace exemplifies the way that Horace's *Ars Poetica* represented aesthetic orthodoxy for eighteenth-century France.<sup>2</sup> As has been shown in Chapter One, 'monstrous' terminology, inflected by the political language of Burke, would recur in English reviews of Byronic juxtaposition. Before examining Byron's *Hints from Horace*, I would like to emphasise the way that Horace had become a cultural force antipathetic to the trope of digression.<sup>3</sup>

Sterne wrote to an early reader of the manuscript of volumes I and II of *Tristram Shandy*:

<sup>1</sup>Sterne: *The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Alan B. Howes (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974; hereafter 'Sterne: *The Critical Heritage*'), p.382

<sup>2</sup>For the eighteenth-century criticism of English mixed or monstrous genres, see Tave, *The Amiable Humorist*, pp.182-85 and notes.

<sup>3</sup>For Horace's influence on the eighteenth century see, R.M. Ogilvie, *Latin and Greek: The History of the Influence of the Classics on English Life from 1600-1918*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp.34-73. A less iconic eighteenth-century view of Horace as time-serving court poet has been explored by Howard D. Weinbrot in 'History, Horace, and Augustus Caesar: Some Implications for Eighteenth-Century Satire', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 7 (1974), 391-414. Byron's relation to Horace has been reconsidered in E. Kegel-Bringreave, 'Byron and Horace', *English Studies*, 57 (1976), 128-38. I have examined *Hints from Horace* as a problematic translation in 'The Genesis of Byron's *Hints from Horace*', *Translation & Literature* 3 (1994), 47-65 (hereafter 'The Genesis of Byron's *Hints from Horace*').

I like Your Caution of the Ambitiosa recidet ornamenta - as I  
revise My book, I will shrive My conscience upon that sin.  
(Sterne: *The Critical Heritage*, p. 40)

This comment elaborates the link previously discussed in Chapter Two between digression and transgression.<sup>4</sup> Like Sterne's novel, Byron's writing was also criticised for transgressing classical aesthetic propriety. It is significant, therefore, that Byron's renewed interest in Horatian aesthetics in 1820-1821 came whilst he was working on the fifth canto of *Don Juan*, his 'poetical T[r]istram Shandy' (BLJ, X, 150). Byron's other model for his poem at this stage was Montaigne's *Essays*. Montaigne himself had invoked a negative example from Horace's *Ars Poetica* to account for the digressive progress of his mind:

And in truth what are these *Essays* if not monstrosities and  
*grotesques* botched together from a variety of limbs having no  
defined shape, with an order, sequence and proportion which  
are purely fortuitous?

*Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne.*<sup>5</sup>

Awareness of Horatian critical orthodoxy and a desire to exceed its limitations coexist in Byron's letters as well as his poetry. This complex of theoretical allegiance to traditional forms, and practical subversion of them, is evidenced in Byron's letter to Moore of 1 June 1818. Responding to Moore's criticisms of the enjambement between stanzas in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto IV, Byron claimed:

The fact is, that the terza rima of the Italians, which always runs  
on and in, may have led me into experiments, and carelessness  
into conceit - or conceit into carelessness - in either of which  
events failure will be probable, and my fair woman, 'superne,'  
end in a fish; so that Childe Harold will be like the mermaid,

<sup>4</sup>See discussion of Black, pp. 78-9 above.

<sup>5</sup>Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and transl. by M.A. Screech (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991; repr. 1993), p.206

my family crest, with the Fourth Canto for a tail thereunto. (BLJ, VI, 46)

As Leslie Marchand and R.E. Prothero have pointed out, "superne" is an allusion to the image of artistic short-coming in Horace's *Ars Poetica*: 'desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne' (l.4). Horace's grotesque tail-piece was a familiar image: Hobhouse had invoked it in a letter to Byron of 11 September 1814 to describe the public response to *Lara*:

I have heard of one who prefers Lara to your last, but that all are scandalised at the possibility that such a fine fellow as Conrad could be thought to terminate in such a devil's tail as your present hero. (*Byron's Bulldog*, p.133)

Again, an Horatian allusion hovers behind the lines, suggesting the shock of disrupted expectations. The letters between Hobhouse and Byron play with an *argot* of classical allusions as well as favourite references to the stage and to novels. The bond of a Cambridge education was important to them and they seemed to take particular pleasure in declaring their shared commitment to classical ideals. Hobhouse, for example, based his admiration for *Childe Harold* Canto IV in a respect for Popean satire. Writing to Murray from Venice on 7 December 1817, Hobhouse claimed:

Your new acquisition is a very fine finish to the three cantos already published, and, if I may trust to a taste vitiated - I say it without affectation - by an exclusive attention and attachment to that school of ancient and obsolete poetry of which your friend Mr. Gifford furnished us with the last specimen in his 'Baviad,' it is the best of all his lordship's productions. (Smiles, I, 390)

This letter exemplifies the appreciation of eighteenth-century satire which had play and would play an important role in the context of *Hints from Horace*, not only because of the thematic content of the poem but also because

of the way that the relationships of Byron, Hobhouse, Murray and Gifford influenced the texture of the poem.

The contradictory pulls of 'monstrosity' and restraint in Byron's writing were latent in the 1811 version of *Hints from Horace* and complicate the emphasis on decorum which Bernard Blackstone has seen as the leading characteristic of the work.<sup>6</sup> *Hints from Horace* occupies a unique position in the Byronic oeuvre in that it belongs to Byron's early career and also to the period of his mature *ottava rima* poetry. Previous chapters have explored the extent to which textual disruption was present and recognised as present in Byron's early writing. We have seen, however, that Byron's use of the effects of textual instability during this period was frequently laboured - a technique for shrugging-off trivial verses. It is not possible to document exactly when Byron's writing turned eighteenth-century idioms of satire and sentiment into a more modern awareness of the materiality of language but this chapter examines *Hints from Horace* (in both of its contexts) as an index of that change.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.2 The First *Hints from Horace* (1811)

*Hints from Horace* dates from March 1811: Byron thought of it as a sequel to *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* and as a poem to Hobhouse (BLJ, II, 43). By a strange coincidence, Hobhouse attempted a 'litteral [sic] verse rhyme translation of the same poem with learned notes' (*Byron's Bulldog*, p.66) in the same year whilst he too was away from England. Byron expressed

<sup>6</sup>Bernard Blackstone, *Byron: A Survey* (London: Longman, 1975), pp.54-56. See also *Byron the Satirist*, pp.51-59 and Mary Rebecca Thayer, *The Influence of Horace on the Chief English Poets of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916; hereafter 'Thayer').

<sup>7</sup>The revision of *Hints from Horace* has been documented by both Jerome McGann and Andrew Nicholson in the context of their editorial work on Byron's poetry and prose respectively. Both these accounts are necessarily condensed. See CPW, I, 426; V, 697. Nicholson, pp.359-60. This chapter aims to recover some of the contexts of Byron's writing and revision of *Hints from Horace*, in particular the personal dynamics which energised and frustrated the publication of the poem.

pride in the closeness of his imitation, but he also described his work as deviation, adaptation, variation, and subjunction, highlighting the difference between his own poem and Horace's.<sup>8</sup> In the earlier version of the preface he announced:

The Latin text is printed with the Imitation, not only to show where I have left Horace, but where Horace has left me. (CPW, I, 428)

The tradition of imitation in English poetry allowed the use of contemporary referents.<sup>9</sup> The distinctive quality of Byron's poetry is its frequency of topical and literary allusions and the multiplicity of these variables. Gifford's translations of Juvenal, for example, included use of a Shakespearean phrase to gloss Juvenal's sense:

one manor is too small,  
Another must be bought, house, lands, and all;  
Still 'cribb'd, confin'd' he spurns the narrow bounds  
And turns an eye on every neighbour's grounds. (Satire XIV)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>These comments are drawn from Byron's letters in 1811. See, BLJ, II, 42; 43; 45; 112.

<sup>9</sup>Byron changed his mind about the nature of the relationship between his *Hints* and Horace's *Ars Poetica* referring to his work as both 'imitation' and 'allusion' (see subtitle CPW, I, 288 and Preface CPW, I, 427). A distinction between the various forms of translation was established by Dryden in his 'Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles' (1680). In Dryden's classification, 'metaphrase' consisted of 'turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another'. 'Paraphrase' was defined as 'translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered.' Finally, 'imitation' is the method of the writer who 'assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original, to run the division and the ground work, as he pleases' (*The Essays of John Dryden*, I, 237). Hobhouse attempted to translate the *Ars Poetica* literally, and Byron with both liberty and latitude. 'Allusion' was a looser form of translation than imitation; so by modifying his subtitle, Byron was progressively scaling-down the degree of proximity to Horace's text. See also, Fuess, pp.79-82 and Allen R. Benham, 'Horace and his *Ars Poetica* in English: A Bibliography', *Classical Weekly*, 49 (1955), 1-5. Eighteenth-century English translations of the *Ars Poetica* generally extended to over one hundred lines more than the Latin original. Only two out of fourteen translations published during the eighteenth century exceed Byron's total number of lines in the 1811 text.

<sup>10</sup>*The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis Translated into English Verse by William Gifford Esq., With Notes and Illustrations* (London 1802; hereafter, 'Gifford'), p.450.

Hobhouses's imitations of Juvenal incorporated signalled borrowings and contemporary satirical allusions:

If cruel cholic, or as cruel cough  
Should keep for once the youthful Douglas off.  
Heavens! what a sea of tears and world of groans  
'Would stir to mutiny the very stones.'  
All would be sad, as when the city gap'd  
At Wellesley's vic'try, and the foe escaped.<sup>11</sup>

The differences between these examples and the deviations made by Byron from Horace's text are in tone and manner: Gifford's signalled borrowing is a solitary occurrence which does not destabilise Juvenal's satire because it appears as an isolated, imitative icon.<sup>12</sup> Hobhouse's gibes at contemporary targets in *Imitations and Translations* are pitched in a voice consistent with the genial editor who addresses Byron within a coterie collection of poems:<sup>13</sup>

And you, dear Byron! if with all your taste,  
And many hours of school, not idly past;  
If you, who dare to taste the sacred springs,  
And boast some knowledge both of men and things;  
If you, who give to every dunce his due,  
And measure merit with a line so true;  
If you will live the bubble of the town,  
How must I smile! ah! how I ought to frown!  
Or great or mean the purpose of thy life,  
To rule a senate, or to rule a wife  
To rise a lord of peers, or lord of pelf;  
O mortal, hear this counsel - 'know thyself!'  
This came from heaven; to this mankind must owe

<sup>11</sup>John Cam Hobhouse, *Imitations and Translations Together With Original Poems* (London: Longman, 1809; hereafter '*Imitations and Translations*'), p.37

<sup>12</sup>Gifford advertised the fact that his translation offered 'no allusions, covert or open, to the follies and vices of modern times; nor has the dignity of the original been prostituted, in a single instance, to the gratification of private spleen' (Gifford, p.lxiv).

<sup>13</sup>For the sexually coded language of classical allusion used by Byron and his Cambridge contemporaries, see Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England*. Crompton shows that 'Horatian' in Byron's Cambridge circle 'became a code word for "bisexual"' (Crompton, p.11).

More than to all thy maxims, Rochefoucault! (*Imitations and Translations*, p.7)<sup>14</sup>

Both Gifford and Hobhouse are secure in addressing their verse to a particular audience and secure in the eighteenth-century tradition from which their words are addressed. *Hints from Horace*, however, displays fractures of voice and authority:

Of all the monstrous things I'd fain forbid,  
I loathe an Opera worse than Dennis did;<sup>15</sup>  
Where good and evil persons, right or wrong,  
Rage, love, and aught- but moralise in song.-  
Hail, last memorial of our foreign friends!  
Which Gaul allows, and still Hesperia lends,  
Napoleon's edicts no embargo lay  
On whores, spies, singers, wisely shipped away. (l.293-300)<sup>16</sup>

This passage intermixes an assumed conservative distaste for opera (Byron himself was a frequenter of Covent Garden<sup>17</sup>) with a satirical thrust at the event Hobhouse referred to as 'Wellesley's vict'ry, and the foe escaped'. The nationalistic tenor of the adaptation sounds like the Horace who narrates *The Waltz*. What I want to emphasise is the mixture of different voices which emerge from the poem. The jostling of various registers has been heard by earlier critics who have attempted to identify the sound of Byron's voice in particular digressions from the Horatian original:

<sup>14</sup>In *Imitations and Translations*, Hobhouse's verses display a high frequency of comic double rhymes ('virgin'/'scourging'; 'thief and whore/ *nomme de guerre*') which is akin to Byron's writing elsewhere but unlike the lyrics Byron supplied for this volume.

<sup>15</sup>For Byron's inconsistency in attacking opera for immorality and Methodism for prudishness, see Fuess, p.84.

<sup>16</sup>For consistency, I am using CPW here although CPW prints the 1820 text for all the parts of the poem for which an 1820 text exists. The substantial differences between the two versions are manifest mainly in the prose notes which will be discussed in the next section.

<sup>17</sup>See *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1.608-17 and the accompanying prose note (which is at the foot of the page in MS.) in which Byron accentuates the physical immediacy of his operatic experience: 'we are still black and blue from the squeeze of the first night of the lady's appearance in trowsers' (CPW, I, 411).

Dogs blink their covey, flints with-hold the spark,  
And double-barrels (damn them) miss their mark! (l.553-54)

Andrew Rutherford has commented on this as one of the poem's 'occasional felicities' and in a note he refers the reader to Moore's appreciation of the same lines:

This couplet is amusingly characteristic of that mixture of fun and bitterness with which their author sometimes spoke in conversation; so much so, that those who knew him might almost fancy they hear him utter the words. (Moore, IX, 86)<sup>18</sup>

But it is possible that rather than the voice of the author (who, as Anne Barton observes, loathed bloodsports<sup>19</sup>), this is an echo of the "'Mob of Gentlemen'":

Shall I, whose fathers with the quorum sate,  
And lived in freedom on a fair estate,  
Who left me heir, with stables, kennels, packs,  
To *all* their *income*, and to - *twice* its *tax*!  
Whose form and pedigree have scarce a fault-  
Shall I, I say, suppress my Attic Salt? (l.605-10)

Moore was not to know that the voice of the thwarted huntsman was a substitute for an earlier gibe at Jeffrey and himself: 'Revenge defeats its object in the dark,/ And pistols (courage <Jeffrey> <bullies> duellists!) miss their mark' (l.553-54; see CPW, I, 309).

The narrator of *Hints from Horace* is not, like the fictional 'Horace' of the original, a stable persona. Instead, we hear the mingled voices of various characters from Byron's London social circle and from his experience of the theatre. As in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, these voices rise out of the poem and the form the allusion takes makes no distinction between them.

<sup>18</sup> Rutherford, p.24

<sup>19</sup> Anne Barton, *Byron: Don Juan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; hereafter 'Barton'), p.74.



This dramatic frame of reference can be seen in Byron's adaptation of the wandering poet of the *Ars Poetica* who falls into a well:

If by some chance he walks into a well,  
And shouts for succour with Stentorian yell,  
'A rope! help, Christians, as ye hope for grace!'  
Nor woman, man, or child will stir a pace. (l.775-78)

It is a close rendering of Horace's sense but the marked speech echoes the dramatic climax (rather than the precise words) of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* where Barabas falls into his own pit and appeals in vain to the Christians for assistance.<sup>20</sup> It is an example of Byron's allusive sense of dramatic situation where a visual reminiscence of a scene simultaneously supplies the dialogue. In this case, the effect is that of digressive allusion because the reference to 'Christians' and 'grace' is juxtaposed with the allusion to Stentor; Greek warrior in the Trojan war with a voice as powerful as the shout of fifty men.

The incorporation of voices other than the poet's does not always follow a predictable pattern and, as in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Byron allows theatrical characters to exist on the same plane as contemporary politicians and hypothetical suggestions.<sup>21</sup> Mary Rebecca Thayer has observed that Byron's interruptions to the Horatian text

constitute a large part of the poem, and make it rather a piece of bitter satirical verse than an epistle about literature, with only an incidental element of mild satire, as is the original. The *Hints*

<sup>20</sup>'Help, help me, Christians, help!' (*The Jew of Malta*, V. 5. 69). Byron clearly knew the works of Marlowe, but the extent to which the dramas were acted in the early nineteenth century is debatable. In the MS. preface to *Marino Faliero*, Byron lists Marlowe amongst several English writers whose stage works were rarely or never performed: 'With the exception of Shakespeare [...] not one in fifty plays of our dramatists is ever acted - <although, however much they may be read. -- Only one of Massinger - none of Ford- none of Marlow (sic) - one of Ben Jonson - none of Webster - none of Heywood' (CPW, VI, 713). An edition of *The Rich Jew of Malta* was published by W. Oxberry, Comedian, in 1818. The text for the line quoted above is the same.

<sup>21</sup>For the juxtaposition of different voices and political or critical stances, see 'The Genesis of Byron's *Hints from Horace*', pp.51-56.

*from Horace*, therefore, so far from being really Horatian in tone, rather serves to accentuate Byron's lack of sympathy with Horace.<sup>22</sup>

By stressing Byron's 'bitter' tone and his 'lack of sympathy with Horace', Thayer has over-simplified the complex, shifting tones and registers of *Hints from Horace*. Not only is the poem 'an epistle about literature', it is also textured with different literatures whose texts are modified and carnivalized (in the Bakhtinian sense) as they form interpolations in the *Ars Poetica*.<sup>23</sup>

It is in the prose notes in particular that we can see this carnivalesque intrusion as Byron veers away from the Latin text into contemporary quarrels. Byron's colourful contemporary examples acquire an autonomous energy and threaten to subvert the ideal unity of the Horatian cultural icon.

In the proofs of the poem that were set up by Cawthorne in 1811, Byron's notes appear at the foot of the page. As the Latin text is printed on facing pages, it is possible to see the way that Byron's English version overruns the Latin original in spatial terms: the prose notes emphasise this tendency.<sup>24</sup> The voice of the prose notes is digressive, colloquial, witty and personal.<sup>25</sup> As with the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the composition of some of the notes occurred during the first drafts of the verse - Byron's prose comments on his verse are therefore radically different from,

<sup>22</sup>Thayer, *The Influence of Horace*, p.39

<sup>23</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin characterises Horatian satirical and epistolary genres as 'novelistic' discourse but also links Horace with Aristotle and Boileau as the main advocates of 'organic poetics', writers who were 'permeated with a deep sense of the wholeness of literature and of the harmonious interaction of all genres contained within this whole. It is as if they literally hear this harmony of the genres' (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, transl. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), p.5). One of the striking elements of this passage is the way that the classical theorists begin to resemble exponents of a Coleridgean Romanticism. For the sources of 'carnival' terminology, see Chapter Two note 65.

<sup>24</sup>I acknowledge, with gratitude, the permission of the Earl of Lytton to view the proofs of Byron's *Hints from Horace* which form part of the Lovelace Papers deposited in the Bodleian Library.

<sup>25</sup>Here, I disagree with McGann's view of the poem's form as 'the perfection of modesty' and his claim that in the *Hints*, Byron '[effaces] himself' (*Don Juan in Context*, pp.16-17).

for example, Wordsworth's 'Fenwick Notes' or Coleridge's marginal glosses to 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'.

Byron's prose notes are distinctive because they foreground the immediacy of interchange between poet and reader. Whilst discussing the role of the 'atrocious reader' in *Don Juan*, Anne Barton points out that the noun 'reader' is 'entirely absent from *Childe Harold*' (Barton, p.79). This applies, however, only to the text of the verse, not to the volume as a whole. The prose preface to Cantos I and II states that the reception of the poem 'will determine whether the author may venture to conduct his readers to the capital of the East, through Ionia and Phrygia' (CPW, II, 3), and 'readers of romances' are teased in the notes to Canto II, stanza 73, which also contain advice to 'the reader' to turn to Byron's appendix.<sup>26</sup> The role of the reader is similarly at issue in the notes to *Hints from Horace*, as is the process of composition.

The 1811 *Hints from Horace* shows how a prose voice insistently punctuates the verse with additional material detail. Horace's original text is interrupted with historically specific information on Byron's contemporaries and on the circumstances of composition:

Of "John Joshua, Earl of Carysfort", I know nothing at present, but from an advertisement - in an old newspaper of certain Poems & Tragedies by his Lordship, which I saw by accident in the Morea - (Being a poet - he will readily excuse the liberty I take with his name since he must see how very commodious it is for my rhyme [...])<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III, references to the act of reading are frequent because of the poem's central concern with ruin and inscription, but see the note to stanza 91 on 'the difference between what we read of the emotions then and there produced, and those we ourselves experience in the perusal in the closet. It is one thing to read the *Iliad* at Sigaeum [...] and another to trim your taper over it in a snug library - *this* I know' (CPW, II, 310). In Canto IV, see Hobhouse's note to stanza 12, 'The reader will recollect the exclamation of the highlander, *Oh for one hour of Dundee!*' (CPW, II, 225).

<sup>27</sup>Lovelace Deposit 158, fol. 209

This note to the first versions of 1.722 emphasises the contingencies of composition - including the stringent demands of form. Byron's awareness of words as things was advertised in the epigraph to *Hints*, where the longer earlier quotation from Fielding's *Amelia* contrasted the exigencies of politics and poetry:

"Rimes are difficult things, they are stubborn  
 "things, Sir - I have been sometimes longer  
 "in tagging a couplet, than writing a speech  
 "on the side of the opposition, which hath  
 "been read with great applause all over the  
 "kingdom. -<sup>28</sup>

As early as 1811, therefore, it is possible to see Byron digressing to comment on the technicalities and triumphs of poetic artifice, a process that would become more pronounced in *Don Juan*:

(The rhyme obliges me to this; sometimes  
 Monarchs are less imperative than rhymes). (V. 77)

Byron's preoccupation with the constraints of his form (particularly the rhyme) energised his moments of discontinuity with the original Horatian model. Letting form dictate the direction of the poem was a contravention of aesthetic propriety for which Keats was chastised when John Wilson Croker reviewed *Endymion* in the *Quarterly*:

At first it appeared to us, that Mr Keats had been amusing himself and wearying his readers with an immeasurable game at *bouts-rimés*; but, if we recollect rightly, it is an indispensable condition at his play, that the rhymes when filled up shall have a meaning; and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning. He seems to us to write a line at random, and then he follows not the thought excited by this line, but that suggested by the *rhyme* with which it concludes. There is hardly a complete couplet inclosing a complete idea in the whole book. He wanders from one subject to another, from the association, not of ideas but of sounds, and the work is composed of

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<sup>28</sup>Lovelace Deposit 158, fol. 176; second epigraph

hemistichs which, it is quite evident, have forced themselves upon the author by the mere force of the catchwords on which they turn. (RR, C: II, 767-70)

Byron also responded to 'the mere force of the catchwords' but his ability to turn and reflect on his process of association, although equally unpopular with contemporary reviewers, separates Byronic randomness from the wayward narrative of *Endymion*.<sup>29</sup>

As I have mentioned in Chapter Two, *Hints from Horace* contains a greater frequency of parenthetical asides than most of Byron's poetry composed before 1812. Parentheses were, of course, a familiar device of translators who were attempting to turn an inflected language like Latin into English verse.<sup>30</sup> Byron's parenthetical asides are, however, usually independent of the Horatian original. Their occurrence is arguably, therefore, an indication of the way in which Byron's translation checked and qualified the voice of neo-classical critical orthodoxy. Like the parenthetical asides, instances of signalled allusion appear in the first draft of the *Hints* and are retained in the fair copy. An examination of some of the manuscript drafts reveals how Byron's composition deviated from *Ars Poetica*.

Two compositional moments where digression is generated may be seen to occur in the *Hints*: the first is a reflex action which qualifies the translation as it is made, in order to sustain the rhythm of the line. For example:

If West or Lawrence, (take which e'er you will).

A laboured, long Exordium, sometimes tends  
(Like Wardle's speeches) but to paltry ends.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>See the discussion of randomness and chance in *Don Juan* in Chapter Four.

<sup>30</sup>For an example of parentheses in eighteenth-century translation, see Pope's 'Imitations of Horace', Book II, Satire II, l.49-72; Satire VI, l.179-93.

<sup>31</sup>Lovelace Deposit 158, fol. 93

The second is an expansive impulse occurring as a second thought, or at a later stage of revision, for example:

(Unlucky Tavell, doomed to daily cares  
By pugilistic freshmen, and by bears).

A haltered heroine Johnson sought to slay -  
We saved Irene, but half damned the play.<sup>32</sup>

The digressions in *Hints* follow various patterns of association. The most obvious of these is a biographical preoccupation which uses but modifies the sentimental writer's awareness of his or her immediate physical and emotional responses:

And old Tyrtaeus, when the Spartans warred,  
(As lame as I am, but a better bard).<sup>33</sup>

This aside which appeared in the first drafts was altered in the 1811 printer's copy to '(A limping leader, but a lofty bard)', suppressing the line's acute personal consciousness. A more general pattern of satirical association is displayed in the lines:

Orpheus, we learn from Ovid and Lempriere,  
Led all wild beasts, but women, by the ear. (l.623-24)

The misogynistic side-swipe occurred to Byron as a way of filling out the line he had begun '<Led men and beasts and...>' (CPW, I, 312). The Orpheus myth, however, hovered in Byron's consciousness and resurfaced in l.679-80:

Not all the living only, but the dead,  
Fool on - as fluent as an Orpheus' Head!

<sup>32</sup>Lovelace Deposit 158, fol. 105; 108; written crosswise on MS. in both cases

<sup>33</sup>Lovelace Deposit 158, fol. 139

These lines were added during a later stage of revision when meditation on the fate of Orpheus in the context of Byron's experience in Malta triggered the digression on 'The Muse, like mortal females' (l.649-656).<sup>34</sup> What happens in the process of digression is a turning of the mythic allusion towards Byron's contemporary circumstances. This expansion tends to emphasise copious material detail and inclines towards comedy. Byron's attraction towards additional texture and detail suggests an amused acceptance of physical mass and activity which is more generously inclusive than the Popean satire of fascinated repulsion. The Thracian Bacchantes who dismembered Orpheus appear in modern dress to image the Muse:

Wild as the wife of alderman or peer,  
Now for his Grace, and now a grenadier !(l.655-56)

And Bacchante-like bands of women lead the assault on contemporary publishing houses and book-sellers:

They storm the types, they publish, one and all,  
They leap the counter, and they leave the stall.  
Provincial maidens, men of high command,  
Yea! baronets have ink'd the bloody hand! (l.673-76)

Precisely because Byron had advertised the closeness of his poem to the original, his digressions from that original constitute significant modifications or challenges to the Horatian model. *Hints from Horace* may therefore be read as a carnivalesque text after the models of Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva where prohibition and transgression coexist and enter into dialogue.<sup>35</sup> In the *Hints* of 1811, Horace's *Ars Poetica* is present, but the ideas

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<sup>34</sup>For the comparison between one of Byron's Maltese loves and Eurydice and his comparison of himself with Orpheus, see discussion of 'Stanzas Written in passing the Ambracian Gulph, November 14th, 1809' in Chapter Two.

<sup>35</sup>See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, transl. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

of generic unity which have accrued to it through cultural tradition are challenged and redressed.<sup>36</sup> In theoretical terms all imitations and translations may be read as 'performative acts of criticism and interpretation' or, in a Lacanian view, as 'textual modalities of recognition and transgression of the Law'.<sup>37</sup> Byron's prose and verse 'subjunctions' to the *Ars Poetica*, however, appear to us more transgressive than Gifford's translations of Juvenal partly because of the canonical status of the *Ars Poetica* and partly because of the graphic extent of Byron's meanderings away from the Latin. This changing relationship with the Horatian precursor text is hospitable to a reading in terms of a recent theory of intertextuality:

Intertextuality is born with the recognition that a given text uncannily refuses to obey the principle of organic form by assuming the shape of a unified whole, however fissured by irony, tension and paradox. From this beginning, intertextuality extends through the recognition of dialogic voices of other texts echoing within every text. Once the defining circumference of the text previously thought of as a work collapses, the world and the text interpenetrate each other in a vision of all encompassing textuality.<sup>38</sup>

This postmodern paradigm of intertextuality is a helpful starting point for analysis of *Hints from Horace*, because the poem's many and various influences meant that it curiously resisted publication as a unified whole.

The idea of an organic work (a perfect whole given birth by a single author) is challenged in the opening lines of *Hints from Horace* by the image of the monster. Horace's monster is a creation which has been mutilated (the defaced painting) or which has mutated by itself (the delirious dream), although the figure has usually been understood as an example of

<sup>36</sup>The instability of the poem is suggested by Fuess who finds the *Hints* 'muddled and formless' and subject to 'haphazard [...] detached thoughts' (Fuess, p.83).

<sup>37</sup>See the discussion of texts on Plato in the introduction to *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. by Worton and Still, p.9.

<sup>38</sup>*Criticism, History, and Intertextuality*, ed. by Richard Fleming and Michael Payne (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1988), p.12



unconscious absurdity.<sup>39</sup> From the beginning of *Hints from Horace* this wayward, transgressive element is embodied formally by digression. The association of digression and unlawful birth was popularised by Sterne's characterisation of digression as 'bastardly'.<sup>40</sup> There is a hint of Sterne's presence when, in a flagrant deviation from Horace's advice, Byron inserts a requiem for Samuel Foote:

Farce followed Comedy, and reached her prime  
In ever-laughing Foote's fantastic time,  
Mad Wag! who pardoned none, nor spared the best,  
And turned some very serious things to jest.  
Nor Church nor State escaped his public sneers,  
Arms nor the Gown, Priests, Lawyers, Volunteers:  
'Alas, poor Yorick!' now for ever mute!  
Whoever loves a laugh must sigh for Foote. (l.327-34)

To compound the generic disruption, Byron incorporates a signalled borrowing from *Hamlet* which is, of course, also associated with the black page from *Tristram Shandy*. Horace's text at this point warns of the dangers of sudden turns and transitions:

uerum ita risores, ita commendare dicaces  
conueniet Satyros, ita uertere seria ludo,  
ne quicumque deus, quicumque adhibebitur heros,  
regali conspectus in auro nuper et ostro,  
migret in obscuras humili sermone tabernas,  
aut, dum uitat humum, nubes et inania captet. (l.225-30)<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup>See Tave, *The Amiable Humorist*, p.5

<sup>40</sup>The relevant passage from *Tristram Shandy* is:

for in these sportive plains, and under this genial sun, where at this instant all flesh is running out piping, fiddling, and dancing to the vintage, and every step that's taken, the judgment is surprised by the imagination. I defy [...] the best cabbage planter that ever existed[...] to go on coolly, critically, and canonically, planting his cabbages one by one, in straight lines, and stoical distances, especially if slits in petticoats are unsewed up - without ever and anon straddling out, or sidling into some bastardly digression (*Tristram Shandy*, VIII, 1, p.515).

<sup>41</sup>C.O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The Ars Poetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971). All quotations of the *Ars Poetica* are taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.

The effect of the remembrance of Foote is to unsettle Horatian wisdom by juxtaposing fragments of other cultures, so that both the contemporary reference and the method of inserting it conflict with the original material.

The authority of the unified organic work is also challenged by Byron's insistence on the failure and decomposition of another 'organic' production, the son and heir. Byron's most extensive digression (in linear terms) from the discussion of drama and literature compares the cycle of human life with the circulation and duration of books. In the *Ars Poetica*, the description of a boy's career contributes to an artistic debate about the appropriate delineation of character: in Byron's version, the rake's progress acquires a momentum of its own:

Behold him freshman! forced no more to groan  
O'er Virgil's devilish verses, and - his own;  
Prayers are too tedious, lectures too abstruse,  
He flies from T[a]v[e]ll's frown to 'Fordham's Mews';<sup>42</sup>  
(Unlucky T[a]v[e]ll! doom'd to daily cares  
By pugilistic pupils, and by bears!)  
Fines, tutors, tasks, conventions threat in vain,  
Before hounds, hunters, and Newmarket Plain.  
Rough with his elders, with his equals rash,  
Civil to sharpeners, prodigal of cash,  
Constant to nought - save hazard and a whore,  
Yet cursing both, for both have made him sore:  
Unread (unless since books beguile disease,  
The p[o]x becomes his passage to degrees);  
Fool'd, pillaged, dunn'd, he wastes his terms away,  
And unexpell'd, *perhaps*, retires M.A.;  
Master of Arts! as *hells* and *clubs* proclaim,  
Where scarce a blackleg bears a brighter name! (l.223-40)<sup>43</sup>

The parentheses within this digression (and the prose notes without) interrupt the passage to remind the reader firstly, of Byron's own career and

<sup>42</sup>Possibly an establishment connected to George Fordham (1837-87), the famous nineteenth-century jockey.

<sup>43</sup>Fuess finds this passage '[t]he single striking feature of *Hints from Horace* [...] The tone of the lines is bitter, unrelieved by sympathy or humour, paralleled in Byron's work only in the *Inscription on the Monument of a Newfoundland Dog*' (Fuess, p.85).

secondly, of an unsavoury connection between the cyclical production of books and the human cycle of birth and decay.<sup>44</sup> The freshman bears a strong resemblance to the young author who is 'rough with his elders' ('It will not do to call our Fathers - Fools!' (l.430)) and whom 'conventions threat in vain' (l.229). There is also a connection between the term-wasting of the freshman and the time-wasting of the poet in digression. Horace, it is true, displayed his consciousness of the passage of time in his conversational meanderings ('brevis esse laboro' (l.25)), but Byron draws-out and loads the consciousness that speech marks the passage of time.

Repetition in *Hints from Horace* (as in *Don Juan*) disrupts the illusion of an orderly composition and it becomes a thematic concern, too, as human reproduction images the endless consumption and regurgitation of texts:

Launch'd into life, extinct his early fire,  
He apes the selfish prudence of his sire;<sup>45</sup>  
Marries for money, chooses friends for rank,  
Buys land, and shrewdly trusts not to the Bank!  
Sits in the senate, gets a son and heir,  
Sends him to Harrow, for himself was there;  
Mute, though he votes, unless when call'd to cheer,  
His son's so sharp - he'll see the dog a peer! (l.241-48)

Here, the tedious cycle of life is stressed by the proximity of 'launched' and 'extinct': Byron emphasises the pre-scripted behaviour of 'apes the selfish prudence' and 'sends him to Harrow - for himself was there'. *Hints from Horace* suggests a link between the hireling nature of the peer ('Mute [...] unless when call'd to cheer') and the dependent poetic coterie:

Yet, since 'tis promised at the rector's death,

<sup>44</sup>The appearance of the word 'pox' is an index of the increasing prudishness of Byron's time. Complete in MS., it was altered to 'p-x' in the 1811 proof of *Hints from Horace*. In spite of his defence of 'plain words' in the Preface to *Imitations and Translations* (1809), Hobhouse objected to 'one rhyme with the word, and a whole stanza on the origin of the pox' In the first cantos of *Don Juan* (*Byron's Bulldog*, p.258)

<sup>45</sup>Byron may be drawing on Gifford's translation of Juvenal Satire XIV: 'Aping his bigot Sire' (Gifford, p.447).

He'll risk no living for a little breath;  
 Then spouts and foams, and cries at every line,  
 (The Lord forgive him) Bravo! Grand! Divine! (l.729-32)

The literary satire is not only directed at Byron's contemporaries: as the reference to Harrow (above) suggests, Byron can envisage his own involvement in the cycle of corruption. 'Pulchre! Bene! Recte!' was one of Byron's marginal annotations to Hobhouses's *Imitations of Juvenal* (1811) (Nicholson, p.209).

In a letter to James Cawthorne of 25 August 1811, in which Byron considered delaying the publication of *Hints from Horace* the first time round, he reflected that he and his friends might 'appear such pestilent scribblers':

Why, we shall want a press to ourselves, & if we go on with 'Weeks at Bath' & Travels, & Satires, & Imitations, & poems descriptive & what not, your Neighbor Mr. Eyre the trunk-maker will thrive prodigiously. (BLJ, II ,81)

Byron's (affected) distaste for 'this volley of Quarto's & Foolscap Octavos' was one of the satiric legacies of Pope. In *The Dunciad*, Pope had attacked the physical mass of sub-literary productions making the connection between bodily waste and the fate of failed poetry.<sup>46</sup> Byron's references to pastry chefs and trunk-makers in his notes to the poem were a continuation of this eighteenth-century satirical trope but it is important to note that by including them, Byron was both augmenting the scope of the *Ars Poetica* and colliding a Popean and an Horatian tone with the idiom of his own time.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup>For a sophisticated discussion of the continuities between Pope and Byron, see Bernard Beatty, 'Continuities and Discontinuities of Language and Voice in Dryden, Pope, and Byron' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, pp.117-133.

<sup>47</sup>The prose note on Capel Lofft which was a late addition to the 1811 printer's copy of the poem is a robust example of Byron's use of eighteenth-century satirical tropes,

What does it signify whether a poor dear dead Dunce is to be stuck up in a Surgeon's or in a Stationer's Hall? is it so bad to unearth his Bones as his Blunders? <It> is it not better to gibbet his body on a Heath, than his Soul in an Octavo? - - (MS. Zweig 138, location: British Library).

The 1811 version of *Hints from Horace* may, therefore, be seen in its entirety as a digressive allusion from Horace. Byron's use of encyclopaedic prose notes is in this poem, as in other early work, on a threshold between an eighteenth-century obsessive attention to generic particularity and a more modern awareness of the peculiar materiality of language. The initial subject of the prose notes is ostensibly traditional (a reference; a disputed source; a literary precedent; a note on a local antiquity) but the manner of Byron's prose notation tends to create further digressions from the verse. This is exaggerated by Byron's method of introducing conversational digressive allusions within his digressive prose notes:

I beg Nathaniel's pardon: he is not a cobbler; *it is a tailor*, but begged Capel Lofft to sink the profession in his preface to two pair of panta- pshal - of cantos, which he wished the public to try on. (CPW, I, 442)<sup>48</sup>

This is a game with the reader who is expected to enjoy the serendipity of error and slips of the pen. Another form of digression occurs when Byron offers extraneous information in parenthesis such as the reference to 'No. 31 of the Edinburgh Review (given to me the other day by the captain of an English frigate off Salamis)' (CPW, I, 438). The parenthesis is not a necessary piece of documentation: 'the other day' is hardly a serious attempt at exactitude, but the half-forgetful record of a trail of association is a recognisably modern characteristic.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>The evidence of this note alone allows us to question Fuess's claim that 'Byron's instinctive good taste kept him from blotting his pages with the language of the streets' (Fuess, p.73).

<sup>49</sup>The modern conversational drift through quotidian or exotic memories is one of Byron's tropes which influenced the development of twentieth-century modernist poetics. In a letter to H.J.C. Grierson (21 February 1926), W. B. Yeats described the way his verse had adopted the 'the syntax and vocabulary of common personal speech': this 'momentum' he claimed to have found in Byron's poetry more than in any other writer (*The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, ed. by Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p.710). Twentieth-century use of 'perfect personal speech' is perhaps best exemplified by poets from the North of Ireland. See, for example Louis MacNeice, *Autumn Journal* (1938) and Paul Muldoon, 'Something Else' in *Meeting the British* (1987), 'Cows' in *The Annals of Chile* (1994).

These pulls away from Horace's text were augmented as Byron revised the poem back in England in 1811. In 1821, however, many of the digressive notes were cancelled or radically cut-down.<sup>50</sup> Rather than seeing the later version of the poem as one in which the digressive element has been curbed, I would like to suggest that the modernity of the 1820-1821 *Hints from Horace* may be located in Byron's renewed defence of Pope and in a collateral reassessment of the role of the reader.

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<sup>50</sup>The long prose note incorporating the "alacrity of sinking" of Southey's latest work, a trial of Southey and the *Edinburgh Annual Register* (CPW, I, 439-40), was much reduced in 1821, probably because Byron had already attacked Southey in the first cantos of *Don Juan*. In September-October 1821, he wrote *The Vision of Judgement* which famously uses an extended trial scene.

### 3.3 The Return to *Hints from Horace* (1820)

On 28 March 1820 Byron sent Murray 'a Screed of Doctrine' from Ravenna and added as a postscript:

I have some thoughts of publishing the 'hints from Horace' written ten years ago - if Hobhouse can rummage them out of my papers left at his father's - with some omissions and alterations previously to be made - when I see the proofs. - - (BLJ, VII, 60)

Since Thomas Moore's editorial work on Byron's poetry, we have known that the reappearance of *Hints from Horace* was associated with Byron's involvement in the Pope/Bowles controversy. As Jerome McGann observes, 'B[yron]'s renewed interest in the poem in 1820 is significant, for it occurred in the context of his prose defences of Pope and his own *Don Juan*, and also at the time he was seriously renewing his attack upon contemporary English social and literary culture' (CPW, I, 427).<sup>51</sup> In this section, I wish to re-open the correspondence surrounding Byron's attempt to publish the *Hints from Horace*, and to use hitherto unpublished letters from John Murray to Byron to suggest ways in which a personal dynamic inflects the texture of the poem.

On 29 March 1820, the day after the new possibility of publishing the *Hints* was raised, Byron dispatched to Murray a note on Pope which was to be attached to the 'Screed of Doctrine'.<sup>52</sup> The accompanying letter answered Murray's letter of 7 March and was couched in terms of a battle to uphold taste in English writing:

I have at last lost all patience with the atrocious cant and nonsense about Pope, with which our present blackguards are overflowing, and am determined to make such head against it,

<sup>51</sup> Byron's interest in *Hints from Horace* resurfaced in March 1820 (not June 1820 as in CPW, I, 426).

<sup>52</sup> BLJ, VII, 60. Andrew Nicholson provides an abbreviated and concise account of these exchanges in Nicholson, pp. 358-60; 393.

as an Individual can by prose or verse - and I will at least do it with good will. - - There is no bearing it any longer, and if it goes on, it will destroy what little good writing or taste remains amongst us. - - I hope there are still a few men of taste to second me, but if not, I'll battle it alone - convinced that it is in the best cause of English literature. (BLJ, VII, 61)

The use of the effluent metaphor ('overflowing'), which appeared in *Hints from Horace*, connects Byron's low estimate of his contemporaries with his own contribution to the decline of literature.<sup>53</sup> We can see in the 'overflow' figure the different sedimentary layers of aesthetic theory which were rising and settling in Byron's time; from the eighteenth-century satirical characterisation of bad verse as sewage to the often-abused Wordsworthian appreciation of an 'overflow of powerful feelings'.<sup>54</sup> On 7 March 1820, Murray had written to advise Byron of the change he perceived in English sensibilities:

With regard to what your Lordship says as to what was permitted in a Catholic & bigotted age to a Clergyman - I humbly concede & am surprised that you do not perceive that religion had nothing to do with it - it was Manners - and they have changed - a man might as well appear without cloaths - and quote our Saxon Ancestors - The comedies of Charles Seconds days are not tolerated now - and even in my own time I have gradually seen my favourite Love for Love absolutely pushed by public feeling from the stage - It is not affectation of moralitic but the real progress and result of refinement - and our minds can no more undergo the moral & religious grossness of our predecessors than our bodies can sustain the heavy armour which they wore. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Byron's merging of Southey's writing with the effluent trope is exemplified in 'Some Observations Upon an Article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1820) where Byron refers to Southey's 'quarterly overflowings political and literary' (Nicholson, p.104).

<sup>54</sup>'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* 1800: Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones, 2nd edn. (London: Methuen, 1963; repr. 1978), p.266

<sup>55</sup>For the reference to religion see BLJ, VII, 35: 'I think my translation of Pulci will make you stare [...] you will see what was permitted in a Catholic country and a bigotted age to a Churchman on the score of religion'.



Byron's answer of 29 March 1820 turned into a tirade against the taste of the day and the effect of 'refinement' on the English stage:

You have given me a screed of Metaphor and what not about *Pulci* - & manners, 'and going *without clothes*'[...] I differ from you about the 'refinement' which has banished the comedies of Congreve - are not the comedies of *Sheridan* acted to the thinnest houses? - I know (as *ex-Committed*) that the 'School for Scandal' was the *worst Stock piece* upon record. - I also know that Congreve gave up writing because Mrs. Centlivre's balderdash drove his comedies off - so it is not *decency* but Stupidity that does all this - for *Sheridan* is as *decent* a writer as needs be - and Congreve no worse than Mrs Centlivre [...]

But last and most to the purpose - *Pulci* is *not* an *indecent* writer - at least in his first Canto as you will have perceived by this time. - - You talk of *refinement*, are you all *more* moral? are you *so* moral? - No such thing, - I know what the World is in England by my own proper experience. (BLJ, VII, 61)

In 1820, there is an interesting and unexplored confrontation between the advisors of Murray who called on what they believed to be Horatian standards of taste to oppose the publication of *Don Juan*, and Byron's own revision of Horace into an attack on the 'niceness' of the times. In a letter to Murray of 26 March 1820, J.W. Croker advised Murray to 'get Lord Byron to revise these two cantos [*Don Juan* III and IV], and not to make another step in the odious path which Hobhouse beckons him to pursue' (Hobhouse had, in fact, suggested a total suppression of *Don Juan* but Croker's comments show how the poem was associated with radical politics). Croker expounded his view to Murray:

in poetry I should think it an excellent plan - to pour out, as Lord Byron says, his whole mind in the intoxication of the moment, but to revise and condense in the sobriety of the morrow [...] experience shows that the Pulcian style is very easily written [...] it therefore behoves Lord Byron to distinguish his use of this measure by superior and peculiar beauties. He

should refine and polish; and by *limae labor et mora*, attain the perfection of ease. (Smiles, I, 416)<sup>56</sup>

Croker cited the *Ars Poetica* (l.291) to urge for restraint on *Don Juan*, whereas at the same time, Byron was re-reading his translation of that text as another reason for enlarging the scope of *Don Juan*.

Byron's intimations to Murray of a kind of battle against public opinion are significant as in a letter to Hobhouse written on the same day (29 March 1820), Byron warned him against 'violent' involvement with associates of the Cato Street Conspirators. One of Byron's objections to Radical politics was a class-based disdain of the Radical leaders' lack of a classical education:

I perceive you talk *Tacitus* to them sometimes - what do they make of it? (BLJ, VII, 63)<sup>57</sup>

Byron went on to suggest wryly that his own *literary* battle was of greater consequence:

You will see that I have taken up the *Pope* question (in prose) with a high hand, and *you* (when you can spare yourself from the *Party* to Mankind) must help me:- You know how often under the *Mira* elms, and by the *Adriatic* on the *Lido* - we have discussed that question and lamented the villainous *Cant* which at present would decry him. - - It is my intention to give battle to the blackguards - and try if the 'little *Nightingale*' can't be heard again. - - But at present you are on the hustings - or in the *Chair*. - Success go with you. (BLJ, VII, 63)

<sup>56</sup>Croker is subduing a raw Romantic doctrine of spontaneous composition to the Horatian advice on rigorous revision.

<sup>57</sup>Malcolm Kelsall discusses Byron's response to the Cato Street Conspiracy in the context of Byron's fluctuating regard for 'the people' or 'the mob'. See Kelsall, pp.13-14; 86-87; 104-17. Kelsall argues that Byron's classicism is one manifestation of his patrician outlook: 'In addressing "the people" Faliero at once adopts the language of classicism. One need only imagine Orator Hunt using words like "sybarite", "helot" or "Lacedaemon" on Peterloo field to perceive how little of the common touch the Doge possesses' (Kelsall, p.98).

But there was more than a literary skirmish going on at the time. Byron had written a lampoon on Hobhouse's progress from brief imprisonment in Newgate to a seat in the House of Commons. He had sent the verses to Hobhouse via Murray who had shown them to several other amused friends before Hobhouse.<sup>58</sup> On 21 April 1820 Hobhouse replied:

I am delighted with your intelligence about Pope. I do recollect the Mira elms & the Lido sands, and wish I was there with you now, that is if you had not written your ballad. (*Byron's Bulldog* p.291)

Whereas Byron was wielding classical authors to draw Hobhouse away from people he regarded as political thugs, Hobhouse was using the classical defence of Pope as an allusion to his friend's former integrity and as a challenge to Byron to participate in reform:

No man but you has force & influence enough for such an undertaking - Do not let your purpose cool. You are a fine fellow (damn that ballad though) and have already done wonders, but if you recover Pope will deserve, if possible, more nobly of your country than ever. (*Byron's Bulldog*, p.291)

Byron wrote to Hobhouse on 22 April 1820 to extricate himself from the derogatory remarks about Radicals. Again, Byron appealed to their shared experience of the classics:

I do not think the man who would overthrow all laws - should have the benefit of any, he who plays the Tyler or Cade might find the Walworth or Iden - he who enacts the Clodius - the Milo - and what is there in Bristol Hunt and Cobbett - so honest

<sup>58</sup>Murray shared Byron's reservations about Hobhouse's political affiliations. In an undated MS. letter of this period (discussing *Don Juan* Cantos III and IV), Murray wrote to Byron:

There is apprehension of Revolution I assure you - Reforms of various kinds we ought & must have - & Ministers can not stand more in their own light than by opposing themselves to the March of Intellect - the progress of Society - Hobhouse will make nothing of his politics I am afraid [...] (MS., location: John Murray Archive).

as the former - or *more* patriotic than the latter? - 'Arcades Ambo' blackguards both. - - Why our classical education alone - should teach us to trample on such unredeemed dirt as the dishonest bluntness - the ignorant brutality, the unblushing baseness of these two miscreants; - and all who believe in them. (BLJ, VII, 81)<sup>59</sup>

In the same letter, Byron defensively asked Hobhouse what 'radical' meant:

Upon reform you have long known my opinion - but *radical* is a new word since my time - it was not in the political vocabulary in 1816 - when I left England - and I don't know what it means - is it uprooting? (BLJ, VII, 81)

The sense of cultural dislocation implicit in the phrase 'since my time' is partly designed to win over Hobhouse by placing him, however ironically, in the role of teacher. The difference between the two men on the central question of political reform had clearly shaken Byron.

On 23 April 1820, Byron told Murray that the 'prose observations in answer to Wilson' were not to be published 'at present' (BLJ, VII, 83). This may have been because he had decided to forward his battle in verse (the emphasis on the 'prose' nature of the composition would be in keeping with this). However, it appears that Byron neglected to ask Hobhouse to look out the *Hints* because of embarrassments surrounding the different courses of their politics. Writing to Hobhouse on 11 May 1820, Byron was still trying to clarify his principles:

<sup>59</sup> 'Arcades Ambo' is one of Byron's more frequent classical interjections. It occurs, for example, in *Hints from Horace* (1811) in the prose note on Capel Lofft:

The 'Della Cruscans' were people of some education, and no profession; but these Arcadians ('Arcades ambo' - bumpkins both) send out their native nonsense without the smallest alloy, and leave all the shoes and the small-clothes in the parish unrepaired, to patch up Elegies on Enclosures, and Paeans to Gunpowder. (CPW, I, 442)

See also *Don Juan* IV. 93: "'Arcades ambo,' *id est* - blackguards both' and *Don Juan* XIII. 45: 'They and their bills, "Arcadians both," are left'.

And pray don't *mistake* me - it is not against the *pure* principle of reform - that I protest, but against low designing dirty levellers who would pioneer their way to a democratical tyranny; <it is against such men> putting these fellows in a parenthesis - I think as I have ever thought - on that point - as it *used* to be defined - but things have changed their sense probably - as they have their names - since my time. (BLJ, VII, 99)

Byron's awareness of the altered tone of the parenthesis is interesting from a textual point of view, but the element of this extract that I would like to emphasise is the crucial admission of insecurity with regard to contemporary references about England. The use of the phrase 'since my time', and his sense of names changing anticipate the difficulty that Byron would experience in the revision of his satire.

On 20 May Byron gave Murray permission to publish the prose 'Edin. Mag. answer':

The prose [...] looks better than I thought it would - & *you may publish it* - there will be a row - but I'll fight it out - one way or another. (BLJ, VII, 102)

The word 'row' was the one Byron had been using to describe the political events in Italy and its use here suggests the way he was wavering between literary and political causes. In the 'Letter to John Murray Esqre.' (1821), Byron extends the range of his critique of Bowles with the following words:

It is no affair of mine - but having once begun - (certainly not by my own wish but called upon by the frequent recurrence to my name in the pamphlets) I am like an Irishman in a 'row' 'anybody's Customer'. (Nicholson, p.129)<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>For an exploration of the philosophical background to Byron's desire to 'war in words', see L.E. Marshall "'Words are things": Byron and the Prophetic Efficacy of language', *Studies in English Literature*, 25 (1985), 801-22.

Byron's register in both these cases is interesting because the Regency connotations of the word 'row' (as used by Johnson in *Don Juan* V. 47) suggest a physical, personal involvement (OED: (1818) a very low expression). Byron was, I think, playing up the idea that his immersion in this literary contest was equivalent to active engagement (or mingling) with the readership.

By 8 June, the politics of publication exerted a different influence and Byron had changed his mind again (ostentatiously) in deferential response to a letter from Hobhouse:

My dear Hobhouse - You are right - the *prose* must not be published - at least the merely *personal part*; - and how the portion on Pope may be divided I do not know. - I wish you would ferret out at Whitton - the 'Hints from Horace'. I think it (the Pope part) might be appended to that Popean poem - for publication or no - as you decide. I care not a damn. (BLJ, VII, 114)

Byron's submission to his friend's critical judgement is conciliatory and as an act of confidence, he includes a reflection on the melancholy passing of existence where the personal tenor adopted is as important as sentiments expressed:

Surely you agree with me about the real *vacuum* of human pursuits, but one must force an object of attainment - not to rust in the Scabbard altogether. (BLJ, VII, 116)<sup>61</sup>

On 22 June 1820, Byron wrote to Hobhouse and questioned his and Murray's 'continuing silence':

I am aware of the pettiness of such things to a man who is arraigning judges, and preparing constitutions - but trust to a spare moment from debate and legislation to an arrangement

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<sup>61</sup>Byron continued to emphasise his agreement with Hobhouse in letters to Kinnaird (8 and 19 June 1820): 'Tell Hobhouse he is *right* - the *prose* [...] must not be published (BLJ, VII, 116); 'I do not mean on any account to publish the prose letter at least for the present. -- Give my regards to Hobhouse. (BLJ, VII, 120).

with a bookseller on the part of an absent friend - who has written a ballad upon you [...] put the M.S.S. into Longman's hands or in those of any respectable publisher who will undertake them - on their *own* terms [...] of course the *prose* (on Blackwood &c.) is not to be published except that part which refers to *Pope* - & that *not* unless you please - perhaps the best way to do with it - would be to print in some periodical publication as an '*extract* from a letter &c. containing some opinion on the poetry of the day.' (BLJ, VII, 121)<sup>62</sup>

The possibility of pursuing a battle against the English poetry of the day was then shelved. Byron did not mention the literary Pope debate in his letters throughout July and August, being preoccupied with the decisions of the Holy see on the Guiccioli marriage, with political turmoil in Italy and his dramatic writing.<sup>63</sup> He continued, however, to include contemptuous references to Wordsworth and in a letter to Murray of 11 September 1820, Byron released a surge of irritation at the state of English literature:

Oh! if ever I *do* come amongst you again I will give you such a 'Baviad and Maeviad' not as *good* as the old - but even *better* *merited*. - There never was such a *Set* as your ragamuffins - (I mean *not* yours only but every body's) what with the Cockneys and the Lakers - and the *followers* of Scott and Moore and Byron - you are in the very uttermost decline and degradation of Literature. - I can't think of it without all the remorse of a murderer - I wish that Johnson were alive again to crush them. (BLJ, VII, 175)

This letter emphasises the strength of Byron's determination to publish *Hints from Horace*, associated as it was with a commitment to a cause for literary

<sup>62</sup>In a letter of 13 June 1820, Murray advised Byron that the translation of Pulci will not be popular in England - Blackwoods is not worth your notice - which would be seen to raise the reputation of the Magazine [...] All that your Lordship says about Pope is excellent indeed & I wish you could be induced to enlarge it & I would print it with anything else in the Shape of Notes that you would make for a new Edition of Popes Poetical Works which I am very anxious to rescue from Mr Bowles. (MS., location: John Murray Archive).

<sup>63</sup>For the presence of the Italian Revolution in Byron's dramatic writing as a form of historical self-consciousness, see Lansdown, pp.42-77.

reform in England and what he considered to be his best writing.<sup>64</sup> The Italian Revolution (one of Byron's reasons for not returning to England) had lost its momentum by the beginning of September and Byron discussed the possibility of returning to England with Hobhouse who, in a letter of 31 August 1820, had finally recovered the *Hints from Horace* and wrote to ask Byron to return to support the Queen:

...come over there's a good fellow - I have looked out your *hints from Horace* - very good, I think, but you will not like to attack friends who are hitched into the rhymes there. (*Byron's Bulldog*, p.299)

Very gently, Hobhouse was reminding Byron of the shifting nature of his personal allegiances. Byron responded to this close intermingling of personal and public concerns in kind:

Here at Ravenna - nobody believes the evidence against the Queen - they say - that for half the money they could have any testimony they please - this is the public talk. - - The 'Hints &c.' are good are they? As to the friends we can change their names unless they rhyme well - in that case they must stand. Except Scott and Jeffrey and Moore - Sir B. Burgess and a few more I know no friends who need be left out of a good poem. (BLJ, VII, 178)

Suddenly energised by the favourable communication from Hobhouse, Byron wrote to Murray on 23 September 1820 and demanded 'a proof (with the Latin) of my Hints from H[orace] &c.':

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<sup>64</sup>In *Don Juan* Canto III, Byron had forwarded his campaign against the Lake School's revolution in poetic language especially in stanzas 97-100 which were a late addition to the draft Canto III (see Steffan, 1,302). On 23 April 1820, however, Byron claimed to have erased 'the six stanzas about those two imposters Southey and Wordsworth' from the Canto. This removal, he supposed, would give Murray 'great pleasure' (BLJ, VII, 82). The stanzas appeared in the first edition, nevertheless, but the difficulty Byron experienced in getting his literary satire into print (criticism of Wordsworth and Southey was also lost when the Dedication of *Marino Faliero* to Goethe went astray) must have fuelled Byron's desire to counter a contemporary literary phase by publishing *Hints from Horace*.



I have a notion that with some omissions of names and passages it will do - and I could put my late observations for Pope among the notes with the date of 1820, and so on. - As far as the versification goes it is good - and looking back to what I wrote about that period - I am astonished to see how *little* I have trained on - I wrote better then than now - but that comes from my having fallen into the atrocious bad taste of the times - partly. (BLJ, VII, 179)<sup>65</sup>

Byron's renewed interest in English society and culture and the exigencies of the dispute with Hobhouse coincided in the desire to work on the *Hints*. The overlap of concerns is suggested by shared terminology: Byron wrote to Hobhouse on 25 September 1820 enclosing 'some hints which may be useful to Queeney - and her orators' (BLJ, VII, 180)<sup>66</sup>

Byron was then, however, frustrated by a delay in England. On 28 September he sent a satirical portrait of Rogers to Murray who received it enthusiastically:

As to the satire it is one of the most superlative things that ever was written - I hastened with it the next morning to Mr. Gifford I put it into his hand without saying a word - and I thought he would have died with extacy. He thinks that if it do not surpass it at least equals anything that you have written & that

<sup>65</sup>The word 'atrocious' is one which recurs in Byron's writing in connection with his readership. The 'atrocious reader' appears in *Don Juan* (l. 54 as Donna Inez and more generally in VIV. 97) and may have been initiated by Byron's memory of 'the atrocious cant and nonsense about Pope, with which our present blackguards are overflowing' (BLJ, VII, 61).

<sup>66</sup>On 8 September 1820, Murray wrote to Byron promising that 'Pulci [...] & Don Juan shall also appear & the latter in the way your Lordship desires - as soon as the public are in the humour to read anything but about the *Queen*' (MS., location: John Murray Archive). Murray's letter draws to a conclusion with the observation that 'The times are sadly out of joint', an allusion to *Hamlet* which Byron picks up and uses in *Don Juan* Canto IX, stanza 41: 'The time is out of joint, - and so am I; / I quite forget this poem's merely quizzical, / And deviate into matters rather dry.' On 15 September 1820 Murray sent Byron an account of the trial of the Queen ('How it is to terminate the Devil alone who instigated it - can tell') and closed his letter with reflections on the different desirability of Revolution in Italy and England:

I confess I join in all yr. regrets that [page torn] certain very important Revolution has [not] [?page torn] taken place - for never was there [more] [?page torn] necessity for one - but a Revolution here were madness - It is utterly impossible in the nature of Mankind - that he could create a new one that has baffled ages & is yet the admiration of all mankind. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

there is nothing more perfect of its kind in the language - he knew the portrait as readily as if the person had been before him. This is certainly your natural talent and you should improve it into a classical standard series of satires - & be at once Persius, Juvenal - Boileau & our own Pope - it betrays a knowledge of human nature as well as identity of character that is amazing - if you could do this upon a plan not of selecting individuals but general character manners etc you would do a national service. (24 October 1820. MS., location: John Murray Archive)<sup>67</sup>

The extravagant praise by Murray and Gifford for this satire and Murray's attempt to steer Byron into 'general character manners' suggest how keen they were *not* to publish *Don Juan*. For a time, Byron's involvement in the Pope/Bowles controversy appealed to Murray as a way of channelling Byron's talents into a non-political, non-sexual controversy. On 27 October, Murray replied to Byron's complaints about the new publications which were sent out to him:

What you say as to the worst of selection in the books which I send to you is true - but it has not been occasioned by my bad taste - the poems are all of them - at least Keates Croly &c a set of fellows who are everlastingly blowing themselves into notoriety & you will find in the last Edinb. Review that Jeffrey has allowed some of them to be praised there - and the fact is I sent these to you on purpose to provoke your contempt & give you memoranda for a new Baviad which we very much need to flap away a nest of pretenders - I have written to Mr Hobhouse for the 'Hints from Horace' which with the novelty which you will probably throw into it will make a very servisable as well as a very interesting poem - There is the English Bards printing over and over again in Dublin & circulating in a way by poor wretches in the country that prevents the law from stopping it -- I much approve of your intention to preserve in notes to the Hints all that you have so manfully & judiciously said about Pope - It will serve a purpose for there is a great discussion upon his merits going on now - & Bowles who in his own edition of Pope so shamefully abused him is now furious at an article upon this subject which appeared in the last Quarterly - Gifford is very warmly on your side - by way he a little resembles Pope in character - I wish you

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<sup>67</sup>See CPW, IV, 165-67.

may have Bowles edition by you that you may see fairly what he there said & to prevent you from judging merely from his pamphlet to Campbell. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)<sup>68</sup>

On 6 November, Hobhouse wrote at last to say that he had located the *Hints from Horace*. He noted at once that it was out of joint with 'the present state' of Byron's friendships and he even suggested that there might be little point in publishing the poem:

I have looked out the *Hints* - by heavens we must have some 'cutting and slashing' in order to qualify them for the present state of your friendships literary & others - but as I said before the hints are good - good to give though not likely to be taken - Prose & all shall be overhauled. (*Byron's Bulldog*, p.302)

Byron continued to ask for the proofs throughout September, October, November, December 1820 and January 1821.<sup>69</sup> Finally, on 11 January 1821 Byron's journal entry records that he had corrected the *Hints from Horace* (just after reading Campbell's defence of Pope) (BLJ, VIII, 21) and he wrote letters to Murray on the same day which offered a new preface and informed Murray that a portion of the *Hints* had not yet arrived from England:

<sup>68</sup>In a letter of 3 November 1820, Murray told Byron that he had not yet received the *Hints* from Hobhouse, who was he believed, 'radicalizing at Battle Abbey'. Murray proposed that *Hints* could be published with Byron's translation of Pulci and the original 'Italian'. Another volume would hold 'The Doge, Dante, Po, Rimini'.

<sup>69</sup>On 19 December 1820, Murray wrote to Byron, 'if you can't furbish - omit & vary largely add to the Hints - which is mostly excellent. I send it under another cover as Gifford has made no correction on any but the sheet now sent' (MS., location: John Murray Archive). On 5 January 1821, Murray acknowledged Byron's letter of 14 December including the account of the assassination of the commandant. He advised Byron to avoid embroilment in Italian politics:

Italy is in a sad state but a foreigner never fares well in foreign trouble, & it is a great comfort to your friends here to know that you are too wise to interfere. Every letter that I receive and every poem that you compose, renders your life more valuable to this country, and I trust that you will not put it to uncalled for or thankless hopeless hazard - It is as you say a strange people - most absurdly and barbarously governed - This Nation will take no part in either side.

I have sent your Lordship every sheet upon which Mr Gifford had made his marks and as your corrections in all the others have been carefully attended to by him, I hope when I receive the last proof sent you back that we may instantly publish. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

See Chapter Four for a discussion of the hazard of publishing *Don Juan*.

I [...] have made the few corrections I shall make in what I have seen at least. - I will omit nothing and alter little; - the fact is (as I perceive) - that I wrote a good deal better in 1811 - than I have ever done since. - I care not a sixpence whether the work is popular or not. (BLJ, VIII, 60)

In a note at the end of the galley proof of *Hints from Horace* (probably dated 11 January (BLJ, VIII p.61)), Byron protested against 'cutting and slashing' and gave Murray further instructions about appending the prose on Pope:

- - I will allow none of you to *dock*; except *Gifford*. - - Will you have the goodness also to put all that regards *Pope* (in the prose letter to B[lackwood's] Editor sent last Spring to you) as a *note* under the name of *Pope* [where it?] first occurs in this Essay (which it does [begin?]) as that part of the letter was in fact distinct from the rest of it, it will do as well here. When you talk of altering and omitting you should remember that all the English *refers* to passages in the Latin - and that the merit in this kind of writing consists in the *adaptation* - *now* - to omit or alter much would destroy the closeness of the allusions. (BLJ, VIII, 61)

Throughout February 1821, Byron sent impatient reminders to Murray about the missing portion of proofs. Meanwhile, the Pope/Bowles controversy which had started in November 1820 was underway: Byron wrote his 'Letter to John Murray Esqre' on 7 February 1821.<sup>70</sup> On 26 February the Ravenna Journal records that two notes on the Pope/Bowles controversy were dispatched to Murray (BLJ, VIII, 50). On 1 March 1821 Byron wrote to Murray acknowledging receipt of another proof of the *Hints* but complaining that it was without the Latin and without the note on Pope (but with the passage on Jeffrey which Byron had instructed Murray to remove).<sup>71</sup> On 2 March 1821, Murray wrote to tell Byron that

<sup>70</sup>See Nicholson, pp.399-410 for analysis of the literary background to the publication.

<sup>71</sup>Byron acted to prevent the publication of the anti-Jeffrey passage before he left England in 1816. See Nicholson, p.218.

The Letter about Pope was read yesterday by Mr. Gifford to whom I took it the moment after it arrived - he likes it very much and told me to print it immediately & Mr Gifford will take care to see it carefully through the press. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

Interestingly, in a letter of 20 March, Murray reported that Gifford had recommended the suppression of the note on Lady Montague which dealt with Pope in the context of English sexual mores (Smiles, I, 420). We can here detect Gifford's resistance to Byron's distinctive allusive particularity. In fact, it appears that Gifford was responsible for the non-publication of the *Hints from Horace* during Byron's lifetime.

On 27 March 1821, Murray wrote to tell Byron that the 'Letter' on the Pope/Bowles controversy had been well received:

I sent your additions to the Letter without reading it to the printer for the Letter was advertised for publication this day & was on the point of issuing - It is very gratifying to me to be able to say that Gifford, Scott, Merivale, Sotheby, Morritt & other few who have seen it consider it admirably done - Your prose is in the very happiest and most original taste & style & you have in the most lively & convincing & gentlemanly manner compleatly proved your point - Indeed yr prose is excellent - the Preface to the Doge equally in good taste [...] I believe I told you that Gifford desired me to tell you how very highly he esteems your Prose - & he always dwells with delight upon the unrivalled purity of the Blank Verse of the Tragedy -

Gifford does not agree in your estimation of the <English> Hints from Horace - but I will print it - Don Juan 3.4.5 - in one vol - & Pulci- Dante- Horace in another - & let them float on the waters of public experience. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

This is the first indication we have that Gifford held some reservations about the *Hints from Horace*. Although Murray is here offering to go ahead with publication regardless of Gifford's view, he must have known that Byron's

This is the first indication we have that Gifford held some reservations about the *Hints from Horace*. Although Murray is here offering to go ahead with publication regardless of Gifford's view, he must have known that Byron's immense respect for Gifford as an editor and mentor would have caused him to hesitate.

Murray's brief report of Gifford's negative response to the *Hints* supplies a reason for what had been an unaccountably sudden loss of interest on Byron's part.<sup>72</sup> Byron's next mention of *Hints from Horace* is in a letter of 13 August 1821 when he reminded Murray to omit 'all the part which regards Jeffrey & the E[dinburgh] R[evue]' (BLJ, VIII, 178).<sup>73</sup> This is a response to Murray's enquiry of 24 July 1821:

Shall I now print the Hints & Pulci anonymously - Gifford does not like the Hints & so let them take their chance. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Byron pursued his defence of Pope in prose but Gifford began to express reservations about the continuation of the Pope/Bowles controversy. On 11 May 1821 Murray wrote to Byron to acknowledge safe receipt of

the second Letter on Pope which I immediately sent to Mr. Gifford - upon whom I called this morning and he told me he thought it interesting & exceedingly clever - There were parts certainly wch could not be published, but he desired me to get it set up instantly in print & then he would go over it with great care & give your Lordship his opinion. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

Gifford wrote his response to Murray from Pimlico on 26 May. On 29 May 1821, Murray extracted a passage in a letter to Byron:

I have added a copy of the Second Letter with Mr. Gifford's remarks - he says "I hope however Lord B. will not continue to squander himself away thus - when will he resume his majestic march & shake the earth again". (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

The fuller context of Gifford's remarks are as follows:

I send Lord B. with a good deal to cut out - but it will be unsafe to publish it - a little now may yet be spared, but that he must probably see himself. The <letter> prose is not very refined, but it is vigorous & to the purpose. Bowles requires checking. I hope however Lord B. will not continue to squander himself away there. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

I am grateful to Professor Jonathan Cutmore for his advice about Gifford's correspondence and for the information that Gifford did not impose a house-style on the *Quarterly* and does not mention the positioning of prose notes or the signalling of allusion in his letters.

<sup>73</sup>On 6 September 1821 Murray's letter to Byron included a brief reference to the revisions of the *Hints* which Murray said he would send back to Byron 'for fear of error' (MS., location: John Murray Archive).

<sup>74</sup>Another complicating factor was that Keats's death (and Shelley's response to it) led Byron to instruct Murray to 'omit all that is said about him in any M.S.S. of mine - or publication' (BLJ, VIII, 163). The extended defence of Pope in the *Hints* relied on material from 'Some

In September, Byron referred to the *Hints* as an unpublished asset of over 700 lines but by March 1822, a year after Byron had received the new proofs, the poem remained unpublished. By this time, Byron was expressing reservations about the gap between the poem's composition and its appearance. He wrote to Moore on 4 March 1822, listing his unpublished works which included the *Hints* - 'written in 1811, but a great deal, *since*, to be omitted' and 'several prose things, which may, perhaps, as well remain unpublished' (BLJ, IX, 118).

These periods of uncertainty and delay had blocked the publication of *Hints from Horace* and after the break with Murray, Byron realised that the poem would not fit well in the *Liberal* (BLJ, X, 39). The difficulty Byron experienced in recovering the *Hints* from his friend and later from his publisher, and his failure in getting them to support both this and the *Don Juan* publishing venture, became part of the fabric of both poems.<sup>75</sup> Horatian irony became inflected with the irony of a poet writing to a dwindling audience and struggling to get his work into print. Byron's commitment to

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Observations on an Article in *Blackwood's Magazine* which criticised Keats's dismissal of Pope.

<sup>75</sup>The *Hints* were caught up in the row between Byron, Murray and John Hunt over the publication of *The Vision of Judgement*. On 25 September 1822, Murray wrote an agitated letter to Byron about Hunt's conduct over the handover of Byron's unpublished work:

After so long an interval it is not very extraordinary that some of the Slips of Letters to Pope, Blackwoods &c should have been mislaid - but this man can make no allowances but conceives that mystery, deceit or fraud cumber the [page torn] - There have now been sent to him

- 1 The Blues
- 2-Pulci- origl & Eng
- 3-Francesca
- 4 Hints from Horace
- 5 Part of Letter to Blackwood
- yet wanting
- I Armenian Epistles
- II Lines on the Po (which Mr. Kinnaird has)
- III Remainder of Letter to Blackwood

All these, I know I have & my papers are undergoing diligent investigations to find them - The inclosed notice has been just put into circulation - the association which it unfolds, thus publicly - your friends will view with regret. (MS., location: John Murray Archive).

So it appears that the *Hints* were sent to Hunt where sections of the 1820 proofs were lost.

the cause of form and rhyme also led him to recast the role of Pope in the poem and these pressures on the text constitute the main difference between the 1821 and 1811 versions of *Hints from Horace*.

### 3.4 The Inflection of *Hints from Horace*

The first 1821 textual emendation of the verse occurs in the opening couplet:

Who would not laugh if Lawrence, hired to grace  
His costly canvass with each flatter'd face,

was adjusted to remove the mercantile element of both lines and to introduce the concept of the 'classic' work of art:

Who would not laugh, if Lawrence, skilled to grace  
His classic canvass with each flatter'd face. (CPW, I, 289)

The correction shows a shift towards the term of aesthetic evaluation in Byron's 'Letter to John Murray Esqre.' (1821). The second verse emendation was the cancellation of the couplet:

Satiric rhyme first sprang from selfish spleen.  
You doubt - see Dryden, Pope, St. Patrick's dean. (114a-b. CPW I, 293)

In 1811 this had been a digression from the Latin accompanied by a prose note:

*MacFlecknoe*, and the *Dunciad*, and all Swift's lampooning ballads. Whatever their other works may be, these originated in personal feelings, and angry retort on unworthy rivals; and though the ability of these satires elevates the poetical, their



poignancy detracts from the personal character of the writers.  
(CPW, I, 432)

The lightly self-ironic note was cancelled with its couplet by Byron in 1821 for the obvious reason that it detracted from the wholly positive view of Pope which he was then attempting to uphold. Following the 'Remarks on *Don Juan*' in *Blackwood's*, Byron was again engaged in 'angry retort on unworthy rivals' and determined to use 'satiric rhyme' to combat a national malaise which he felt as a personal affront.

The note that should have been added in 1821 to L82 (the first mention of Pope) is missing from all published versions of the poem including CPW.<sup>76</sup> If we follow Byron's instructions and assume this prose note to have been 'all that regards Pope' (BLJ, VIII, 61) from the 'Observations Upon an Article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*', the appearance of *Hints from Horace* would have been radically different. If we agree that the note was intended to begin with the paragraph opening 'The great cause of the present deplorable state of English Poetry is to be attributed - to that absurd and systematic depreciation of Pope [...]' and to end with the sentence 'But the term of his Ostracism - will expire, [...]' (Nicholson, pp.104-118), the note would extend to over 400 lines. This would be a formidable prose counterbalance to the verse of *Hints from Horace*, and would redirect much of the general satire of the poem to the supporters of Bowles and the Lake School.<sup>77</sup>

The identification of Bowles and the 'bad poet' of the *Ars Poetica* is made clear in the conclusion of Byron's 1821 'Observations Upon Observations' which holds an allusion to the end of the *Ars Poetica*:

<sup>76</sup>See Nicholson, p.360 for the printer's query on P.1 of the 1820 proofs about incorporating 'all that relates to Pope' from the Letter to Blackwood as a Note at the first place where Pope is mentioned; 'must this be accepted?' is the printer's question, to which Byron appears to have capitulated.

<sup>77</sup>Thomas Moore seems to have been aware of Byron's Popean dynamic, see 'The Genesis of Byron's *Hints from Horace*', p.65.

But to sit down 'Mingere in patrios cineres' - as Mr. B. has done - merits a reprobation so strong that I am as incapable of expressing, as of ceasing to feel it. (Nicholson, p.183)<sup>78</sup>

It is, however, a new focus on the importance of rhyme which is imparted by the prose defence of Pope that I would like to consider as crucial to the 1821 *Hints from Horace*.<sup>79</sup>

The technical challenge of adapting the *Ars Poetica* in rhyme was advertised in the 1811 drafts of *Hints from Horace* (see p. 156 above). In the 1821 corrected proof, Byron made a minor emendation to l.120 but otherwise kept unaltered the discussion of the ascendancy of blank verse over rhyme (l.115-124):

Blank verse is now with one consent allied  
To Tragedy, and rarely quits her side. (l.115-16)

Unfortunately, Byron's 1821 corrected proof of sections which treat the role of rhyme is no longer extant, but the intended prose note from the 'Observations' shows that Byron was reacting against the 'one consent' of contemporary preference:

The attorneys' clerks, and other self-educated Genii found it easier to distort themselves to the new Models - than to toil after the symmetry of him who had enchanted their fathers [...]  
Blank Verse - which unless in the Drama - no one except Milton ever wrote who could rhyme - became the order of the day, or

<sup>78</sup>Another strong candidate for the classification of Horace's 'bad poet' is Leigh Hunt. In 1823, Byron described the experience of assisting Hunt as a thankless task: 'It is like pulling a man out of a river who directly throws himself in again' (BLJ, X, 138). This echoes the picture of the poet at the end of the *Ars Poetica* who deliberately casts himself into deep water:

si curet quis opem ferre et demittere funem,  
'qui scis an prudens huc se proiecerit atque  
seruari nolit?' dicam. (l.461-63).

<sup>79</sup>For another discussion of Byron's technical criticism of his contemporaries, see, Hermann Fischer 'Byron's "Wrong Revolutionary Poetical System" and Romanticism' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, pp.221-39.

else such rhyme as looked still blanker than the verse without it.  
(Nicholson, p.112)

Byron followed these comments with the startling suggestion that even *Paradise Lost* might have been 'more nobly conveyed to Posterity' in Spenserian stanza form or in *terza rima*. One of the reasons for advocating rhyme appears to be that its difficulty would restore prestige to poetry; another reason is that renewed discipline would retard the publication of work by the 'New School':

Mr Southey's Joan of Arc [...] might then have taken up six months instead of weeks in the composition. (Nicholson, p.112)

It is Byron's conviction that good verse ought to be difficult that leads to his ridicule of Keats's *Sleep and Poetry*.<sup>80</sup> The extracts Byron selects for criticism include Keats's derision of Popean 'musty laws lined out with wretched rule' and his account of the process of composition:

The Silence when some rhymes are coming out,  
And when they're come the *very pleasant rout*. [Byron's italics]

Keats's account of the anticipation and disturbance of rhyme is close to the effect of reading Byron's own *ottava rima* rhymes, but Byron chose to highlight Keats's slackness of expression: 'Now what does this mean? - - - - -' (Nicholson, p.114), and to hint at the sexual connotation of 'rout'. Byron set

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<sup>80</sup>Some of the lines from *Sleep and Poetry* which gave Byron greatest offence came from Keats's description of the School of Pope:

...*Easy was the task*:  
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask  
Of Poesy. (Byron's emphasis, Nicholson, p.114)

Byron commented on these lines:

He says 'Easy was the task' of imitating Pope, or it may be of equalling him - I presume; I recommend him to try - before he is so positive on the subject. (Nicholson, pp.116-7)

Byron's insistence that 'difficulty' was an important component of good verse anticipates the modernist arguments of, for example, T.S. Eliot.

these extracts against passages from *Windsor Forest*, *The Temple of Fame*, and the *Essay on Criticism*. Whereas Pope's couplets are quoted completely, Byron abandons Keats's couplets mid-line three times with dashes or '&c &c', and he punctuates the extracts with his own footnotes. The effect of this is, of course, to amplify the weaknesses of Keats's versification.

Byron's preoccupation with *Hints from Horace* coincided with a directionless stage in the composition of *Don Juan*: he had been dissatisfied with Cantos III and IV and pronounced the first draft of III,

very decent [...] and as dull 'as the last new Comedy'. (BLJ, VII, 35)<sup>81</sup>

Canto V was drafted and revised between October and December 1820 (see CPW, V, 693-95). Although McGann states that Canto V was written 'in the context of [Byron's] own revived interest in *Hints from Horace* [...] which seemed, in late 1820, to reproach him from the past' (CPW, V, 697), it is worth stressing that Byron had all but completed Canto V before the long-awaited proofs of *Hints* arrived in Ravenna. The last addition to the Canto, stanza 158, was sent to Murray on 1 March 1821, in the same letter in which Byron acknowledged the arrival of the (still imperfect) second instalment of proofs for the *Hints*. How, then, are we to read the effect of the *Hints* on *Don Juan* Canto V?<sup>82</sup>

### 3.5 *Hints from Horace* and *Don Juan*

<sup>81</sup>in a letter to Byron of 29 December 1820, Murray wrote, 'A Fifth Canto of *Don Juan* if it be equal to the Fourth will be grand - if you would but let us cut up the Third - for we all think it dull (hear hear hear)' (MS., location: John Murray Archive).

<sup>82</sup>It is possible that the image of the centaur in l.4 of *Hints from Horace* recurred to Byron as a way of describing British marriages, 'That moral centaur, man and wife' (*Don Juan*, V, 158). There are 3 allusions to Horace in Canto V (stanzas 63; 100-101; 159). Frederick L. Beaty has seen particular stanzas of Canto V as classical imitations, although he regards the models as Juvenal and Persius rather than Horace. See, 'Byron's Imitations of Juvenal and Persius', *Studies in English Literature*, 15 (1976), 333-355.

I would like to posit a two-stage modification of *Don Juan* affected by Byron's return to *Hints from Horace*. The first stage is Byron's composition of Canto V in the anticipation that Horatian and Popean satire could make a difference to the 'very uttermost decline and degradation of Literature' (BLJ, VII, 175) which Byron perceived to be led by the 'Lake School'. The second stage is his composition of Cantos VI, VII, and VIII after the re-encounter with *Hints* and his realisation that a great deal had altered 'since', especially in the poet's relationship with his readers.

*Hints from Horace* (1811) assumed that the reader would be able to follow the 'closeness of the allusion' and Byron's deviations from the Horatian text. The later encounter with the poem in 1821 introduces different sort of literary tension in that the 'Epistle to Hobhouse' attempts to recover a relationship with its addressee but simultaneously admits that it is alienated from Hobhouse and almost every other English reader as well.

This anxiety is legible in the preface to *Marino Faliero* (written between 17-24 August 1820):

I cannot conceive any man of irritable feeling putting himself at the mercies of an audience: - the sneering reader, and the loud critic, and the tart review, are scattered and distant calamities; but the trampling of an intelligent or of an ignorant audience on a production which [...] has been a mental labour to the writer, is a palpable and immediate grievance, heightened by a man's doubt of their competency to judge, and his certainty of his own imprudence in electing them his judges

Then there is a telling echo of Johnson's verdict on marriage and celibacy:

Were I capable of writing a play which could be deemed stageworthy, success would give me no pleasure, and failure great pain. (CPW, IV, 305)<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> 'Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures' (*The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, ed. by D.J. Enright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976; repr. 1985), p.95.)

In Canto V the reader is also, like Byron the speaker, a victim of the scribbler who, 'spawns his quarto, and demands your praise' (V. 52); and together poet and reader confront the infinite recession of quotation marks which constitutes their poetic tradition:

'Not to admire is all the art I know  
     (Plain truth, dear Murray, needs few flowers of speech)  
 To make men happy, or to keep them so;  
     (So take it in the very words of Creech).'  
 Thus Horace wrote we all know long ago;  
     And thus Pope quotes the precept to re-teach  
 From his translation; but had *none admired*,  
 Would Pope have sung, or Horace been inspired? (V.101).<sup>84</sup>

The inclusive 'Thus [...] we all know' is an invitation to the reader: its easy intimacy fosters the community of the poem, and encourages the reader to enjoy the serendipity of 'dear Murray' as an aside to Byron's publisher. In a Bloomian sense, it is an example of '*Clinamen*' and '*Tessera*': Byron has swerved away from Pope by alternating the lines to fit into *ottava rima*, and by hijacking the '*Nil admirandi*' dictat and antithetically completing it to invite admiration. Cantos III, IV, and V sold well when they were published in August 1821. But, between this volume and the subsequent instalment of *Don Juan*, there was a change in the poet's attitude to his readers.

The epigraph to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII, intimated this change of tone:

'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no  
 more Cakes and Ale?' - 'Yes, by St. Anne; and Ginger shall be  
 hot i' the mouth too!' -

<sup>84</sup>Peter Graham argues that Byron 'makes [the Horatian matter] peculiarly English, and peculiarly his own, by pinning a particular British identity (that of his publisher) on his reader, casting the matter in terms of English literature, and transforming the translation.' (Peter W. Graham, *Don Juan and Regency England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990; hereafter '*Don Juan and Regency England*'), p.147).

The motto from *Twelfth Night* constructs Byron's ex-readers and his ex-publisher as Malvolio, a figure outside the community of the poem. This had been anticipated by the 1821 'Letter to John Murray Esqre.', where several reviewers picked up Byron's reference to England as 'your country'.<sup>85</sup> Byron's flaunted sense of alienation was a response to several betrayals and was no doubt also adopted to rile his critics. Both the epigraph for the new volume and the prose preface appear in Mary Shelley's fair copy of the Canto dated 1822 (CPW, V, 714; Coleridge, VI, 268). It was in this preface to Canto VI that Byron adopted a more judgemental approach towards the opponents of his poem who (according to Byron) were also the supporters of a discredited Tory government:

This is the real fact, as applicable to the degraded and hypocritical mass which leavens the present English generation, and is the only answer they deserve. (CPW, V, 296-7)<sup>86</sup>

The Canto on the harem was calculated to offend prudish English sensibilities as was the aside 'God is love, they say' (VI. 6) which offers doubt where contemporary critical orthodoxy would allow none. McGann characterises the seraglio narrative as 'largely a comic work marked by a tone of light, even genial, irony' (CPW, V, 717). Canto VI, however, has its darker

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<sup>85</sup>See, for example, *Blackwood's Magazine* (May 1821). The reviewer italicised 'your' and added '(it is by this pronoun that Lord B designated the country of himself and his fathers)' (RR, B: I, 165). An interesting response to the pamphlet was published in *Galighani's Literary Gazette* on 22 April 1821 when the reviewer located 'a good deal of prose Beppoism in this brochure'. For further discussion of *Galighani's Literary Gazette* and *Galighani's Messenger* see Chapter Five of this thesis.

<sup>86</sup>Murray attempted in vain to dissociate himself from the Tories in a letter to Byron of 6 September 1821:

in what occasion have I identified myself with a party - I have studiously avoided every party publication & this more strenuously every year and my connexions are I believe even more numerous amongst the Whigs than the Tories - Indeed the Whigs have nearly driven away the Tories from my room - and Jeffrey said "if you wish to meet the most respectable of the Whigs you must be introduced to Mr. Murrays rooms" (MS., location: John Murray Archive).

moments: Byron could joke about scrutinising the faces of his female readers in Canto IV:

But times are alter'd since, a rhyming lover,  
You read my stanzas, and I read your features. (IV. 111)

But in Canto VI, it is difficult to smile as the narrator contemplates the 'lady of a certain age':

-what her years might be  
I know not, never counting past their teens;  
But there she slept, not quite so fair to see,  
As ere that awful period intervenes  
Which lays both men and women on the shelf,  
To meditate upon their sins and self. (VI. 69)

The gaze is anything but 'genial' and I would argue that it is directed out at female readers of the poem, suggesting that a mutual rejection, a loss of 'kindness' has occurred 'since'.<sup>87</sup>

Canto VII continues this tendency and admits much less that can be shared between poet and English public, including a critique of the senseless patriotic sentiments of Englishmen. Whereas Byron had invoked the familiar aesthetic rivalry between England and France in *Hints from Horace*: 'True Briton all beside, I here am French/ Bloodshed 'tis surely better to retrench' (l.269-70), in Canto VII of *Don Juan*, anti-French nationalism is turned against the English audience:

Then there were Frenchmen, gallant, young and gay:  
But I'm too great a patriot to record  
Their Gallic names upon a glorious day;  
I'd rather tell ten lies than say a word  
Of truth;- such truths are treason; they betray

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<sup>87</sup>Anne Barton argues that for *Don Juan*, Byron 'had a predominantly male audience in mind' (Barton, p.81). I would like to adjust the emphasis of her argument to stress the way that Byron was aware of the female readers (as was Murray), and foregrounded in the poem the tension between poet and (ex) readers.



Their country; and as traitors are abhorred  
 Who name the French in English, save to shew  
 How Peace should make John Bull the Frenchman's foe. (VII. 22)

The clipped military clauses, 'such truths are treason; they betray/ Their country' parody the language of the English officers' mess. In the Siege Cantos, the loyalties of the reader are continually tested by ironised references to shared culture: 'despising those *we* combat with'; 'One of the valourous "Smiths" whom *we* shall miss' (VII. 25); 'There's Fortune even in fame, *we* must allow' (VII. 33) '*our* friends, the Turks' (VII. 42); '*our* modern battles' (VII. 34); '*we* Moderns' (VII. 80); 'when *we* come to sum up the totality' (VII. 83; emphases mine). These bleak estimates of 'what fame is' (VII. 33), I would like to argue, derive in part from Byron's revision of his relationship with the reader.<sup>88</sup>

In 'Some Observations Upon an Article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*' (1820), Byron listed the disciples of Pope and added that there were 'others who have not had their full fame [...] because there is a Fortune in Fame as in all other things' (Nicholson, p.117). Byron's realisation of the way that names were made in the literary world informed his view of the way that history (like the outcome of the Siege of Ismail) was written in the political world. *Hints from Horace* (1811) had considered the swings of popular fashion by playing with the idiom of Popean satire. By the time that the Popean idiom itself came under attack, Byron himself was experiencing the vagaries of 'the order of the day' in the changed currency of his own name.

Byron emphasised the nine years between the original composition of the *Hints* and their second preparation for publication (BLJ, VII, 179). The appeal of the nine years was that it coincided with Horace's dictum:

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<sup>88</sup>Compare with the lighter irony of references in *Hints from Horace* to 'our island', 'Our life and language', 'our days', 'our plays', 'our Pope' (l.86; 104; 343; 354; 386).

'nonumque prematur in annum', but the passage of time haunted Byron in other ways too:

'Where is the world,' cries Young, 'at eighty? Where  
The world in which a man was born?' Alas!  
Where is the world of *eight* years past? 'Twas there -  
I look for it - 'tis gone, a Globe of Glass!  
Cracked, shivered, vanished, scarcely gazed on, ere  
A silent change dissolves the glittering mass.  
Statesmen, chiefs, orators, queens, patriots, kings,  
And dandies, all are gone on the wind's wings. (XI. 76)<sup>89</sup>

This stanza dates from 1822 and I would like to argue that it expresses the 'silent change' of which Byron became aware when he received his proof of *Hints*. Not only did Byron find that some of his specific references had been transformed ('written in 1811, but a good deal *since*, to be omitted' (BLJ, IX, 118)), but his relationship with the English reading public had 'vanished' as well.

In a digression from Horace in the 1811 *Hints*, Byron had attacked the 'Methodistic men' (l.369) who opposed the theatre on moral grounds. In the *Ars Poetica* Horace had divided his audience by social rank, but Byron digressed onto the difference between previous generations and 'this nice age, when all aspire to Taste',

The dirty language, and the noisome jest,  
Which pleased in Swift of yore, we now detest. (l.393-94)

<sup>89</sup>For a detailed discussion of the relationship between *Don Juan* XI. 75-6 and Popean satire, see Bernard Beatty, 'Continuities and Discontinuities of Language and Voice in Dryden, Pope, and Byron' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, pp.126-27. See also Barton, pp.67-69. Barton suggests that in the image of a 'Globe of Glass', Byron 'was almost certainly remembering Merlin's 'glassie globe' in Book III of *The Faerie Queene*' (Barton, p.69). See also 'Statues of glass - all shiver'd' in CHP, IV. 15. It is also possible that, after living in Venice, Byron was drawing on memories of Venetian glass craftsmanship. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has a collection of glass globes (originally from India) which were fashionable, expensive ornaments in eighteenth-century English society drawing rooms.

The observation that morality was really a matter of fashion resurfaced in Byron's prose defence of Pope when he referred scathingly to 'this immaculate period, this Moral Millennium of expurgated editions in books, manners - and royal trials for divorce. - - - -' (Nicholson, p.170). Byron attempted to defend Pope from Bowles's charge of 'the strange mixture of indecent and sometimes *profane* levity which his conduct and language *often* exhibited' (Nicholson, p.169).<sup>90</sup> In 1821, this was as much a defence of Byron's own writing as Pope's, and having referred the reader to the comedies of Congreve and others 'which naturally attempted to represent the manners & conversation of private life', Byron attacked

The refinement of latter days - which is perhaps the consequence of Vice which wishes to mask & soften itself [...]  
The *Delicacy* of the day is exactly in all it's circumstances like that of this respectable foreigner [a famous French 'Entremetteuse'] - - 'It ensures every '*Succes*' & is not a whit more moral - than, & not half so honourable - *as* - the coarser candour of our less polished ancestors. (Nicholson, pp.169-70)

The plethora of quotation marks which appear in the 'Observations Upon Observations' may provide some explanation of the increased frequency of signalled allusion in *Don Juan* Cantos VI, VII, and VIII. Innuendo and legal allegations breed quotation marks and since Byron was expecting his readership to read him warily, he cultivated a method of heightened self-consciousness and maximum qualification. By signalling certain instances of intertextuality, he played with the possibility that the allusion might be 'indelicate'.

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<sup>90</sup>Speaking of the 'abominably gross - and elaborately coarse' letters of Robert Burns, Byron added:

What is more strange is - that some of these are couched as *postscripts* to his serious and sentimental letters - to which are tacked either a piece of prose - or some verses - of the most hyperbolic indecency. (Nicholson, pp.126-27)

It has often been remarked before that Byron's celebration of Burns's 'antithetical mind' approximates to our own experience of Byron's writing. This passage offers another example of Byron responding to an aspect of Burns's writing which is reminiscent of Byron's own processes of composition.

Byron's lack of faith in the taste of his contemporary readership has already been suggested in the discussion of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. In 1820-21, this became more acute, approximating to a crisis of readership, realised through the re-encounter with the *Hints from Horace*. Juxtaposing Byron's responses to English 'taste' in 1811 and 1820-21, this poem offers an experience of literature 'Cracked, shivered, vanished'. Further than this, however, Byron's second revision of *Hints* seems to have prompted an urgent sense that his readers constituted the main locus of meaning, but could not be relied upon. This awareness led to a change of tone in *Don Juan* Cantos VI to the end of the poem. In the approach to the audience in these later cantos of *Don Juan*, the poem alerts its readers to the relativity governing their reception of the work:

Because all gentle readers have the gift  
Of closing 'gainst the light their orbs of vision. (VI. 88)

Dogs, or Men! (for I flatter you in saying  
That ye are dogs - your betters far) ye may  
Read, or read not, what I am now essaying. (VII. 7)

*Don Juan* as a whole constantly addresses the way that it is read. Awareness of the responses of the reader had always been present in Byron's work as a legacy of eighteenth-century literature of sentiment, but the impulse towards active reform (of literature in lieu of society) drove this awareness into a textual dynamic. The shift between presenting the audience as unstable and tasteless (a familiar eighteenth-century trope) and leading the reader into moments of textual instability is most apparent in the Siege Cantos of *Don Juan*. There, for the sake of the satire, we might expect the number of textual disruptions to decrease, but Byron's response to a sceptical audience was to give it more to be sceptical about.

We can see this change in the increased frequency of signalled allusion (material other than direct speech enclosed in inverted commas). In CPW Cantos III, IV, and V hold 21, 12, and 20 instances of signalled allusion respectively, whereas Cantos VI, VII, and VIII carry 29, 29 and 38 signalled allusions respectively. To support the view that this allusive technique was disruptive, we can cite Thomas De Quincey who characterised the use of quotation marks as disagreeable for the reader:

There is a good reason for rejecting the typographical marks of quotation: they break the continuity of the passion by reminding the reader of a printed book.<sup>91</sup>

Byronic discontinuity invites the reader to encounter another, different voice and to bear in mind the conventions of the printed book. By breaking the continuity of the passion, Byron was advancing what he conceived to be the 'right line, [...] the more Classical models of the language' (Nicholson, p.113).

### 3.6 The Art of the 'Superartificial'

In the 1821 'Letter to John Murray Esqre.', Byron stressed the role of art, the 'exquisitely artificial' and the 'superartificial'.<sup>92</sup> Two examples will serve to show how Byron's prose criticism adumbrates the process of his own technique of textual instability. In the discussion of Campbell's 'Ship', Byron asks his reader:

Is the Sea itself - a more attractive - a more moral a more poetical - object with or without a vessel - breaking it's vast but fatiguing monotony? (Nicholson, pp.130-31)

<sup>91</sup>Thomas De Quincey, *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*, ed. by David Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970; repr. 1985), p.38. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* also assumes that quotation inserted in the text 'makes the stile more harsh' (Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. by Thomas C. Falkner, Nicholas K. Kiessling and Rhonda L. Blair, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989-1994), I, 19.

<sup>92</sup>Nicholson, pp.146-157.

It is the idea of the 'break' allowing or admitting a space for human ingenuity which appeals to Byron, as also for example in his recollection of the anchorage off Cape Sigeum:

The Sight of these little scudding vessels darting over the foam in the twilight - now appearing - and now disappearing between the waves in the cloud of night [...] all struck me as something far more 'poetical' than the mere broad - brawling - shipless Sea & the sullen winds could possibly have been without them. (Nicholson, pp.131-32)<sup>93</sup>

In both cases, Byron is arguing for a discontinuous awareness of human design and form.<sup>94</sup> His attraction towards discontinuity in writing may be read with Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text*:

It is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance. (*The Pleasure of the Text*, p.10)<sup>95</sup>

The difference between Barthes and Byron, at this point, would be that Byron is more interested in a continuum, in the rest of the ravelled sleeve or indeed,

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<sup>93</sup>See Henry Fielding's discussion of his 'little spaces' or 'resting-places' between chapters where the reader is advised to pause and take refreshment:

I would not advise him to travel through these pages too fast: for if he doth, he may probably miss the seeing some curious productions of nature which will be observed by the slower and more accurate reader. A volume without any such places of rest resembles the opening of wilds or the seas, which tires the eye and fatigues the spirit when entered upon (*Joseph Andrews* ed. by R.F. Brissenden (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977; repr. 1984), Book II, chapter 1, pp.99-100).

Byron develops this eighteenth-century narrative convention by foregrounding the human activity which is creating the 'little spaces'.

<sup>94</sup>See also Byron's anecdote about Johnson, Garrick and the samphire gatherer in *King Lear* (Nicholson, p.138). Byron seizes on the interruption of human activity, 'I am speaking of a description in which nothing is introduced from life to break the effect' (Nicholson, p.138).

<sup>95</sup>Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry* suggests that intermittence is productive of the sublime when it occurs in the medium of sound or light (*A Philosophical Enquiry*, section XIX, pp.76-77). Burkean categories offer an interesting context for the discussion of digressive allusion because suddenness and uncertainty are sources of Burke's sublime and features of Byron's digressive allusions.

the skin uncovered underneath: Byron's poem is involved in what Michael Cooke calls 'the universe of the unpredictable'. Barthes, however, is happy to regard the 'flash' as an occurrence which appears among so many other isolated 'stagings'. Byron's classical insistence that works of human art are worth more as 'direct manifestations of the mind' than 'inanimate nature' (Nicholson, p.134) anticipates, and offers a dialogue with twentieth century forms of narrative disruption.

\* \* \*

To attempt to pull together these issues of classical ethos and versification, and modernist textual disruption, a return to some of the verse may be helpful.

It is an awful topic - but 'tis not  
     My cue for any time to be terrific:  
 For chequered as is seen our human lot  
     With good, and bad, and worse, alike prolific  
 Of melancholy merriment, to quote  
     Too much of one sort would be soporific; -  
 Without, or with, offence to friends or foes,  
 I sketch your world exactly as it goes.

And one good action in the midst of crimes  
     Is 'quite refreshing,' in the affected phrase  
 Of these ambrosial, Pharisaic times,  
     With all their pretty milk-and-water ways,  
 And may serve therefore to bedew these rhymes,  
     A little scorched at present with the blaze  
 Of conquest and its consequences, which  
 Make Epic poesy so rare and rich. (VIII. 89-90)<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup>Steffan and Pratt show that in the variants for VIII. 90, Byron was again remembering the vagaries of the literary critical world. 'Quite refreshing', according to Coleridge first appeared in a notice of Samuel Rogers's *Human Life* (1818) (Pratt, IV, 181). Byron's versions of the rhyme for 'in the affected phrase' included 'when some Pert Pretender deals his praise' (Steffan and Pratt, III, 156). This is strongly reminiscent of the portrait of the professional praiser in *Hints from Horace* 1.721-740.

Stanza 89 forwards the view that to break the monotony of 'one sort' of writing is an act of mimetic representation. The rhyme between 'prolific' and 'soporific' predicts the inevitability of human boredom. The couplet stands apart as the poet declares his independence from his audience: his disinterest is emphasised by the repetition of 'or [...] or'.<sup>97</sup>

Stanza 90 disconcerts the reader by offering Juan's rescue of the Moslem orphan as an intermission of '*Delicacy*', suggesting that the arbitrary decision of the poet to include this incident corresponds with an equally random demand from his audience. The 'ambrosial' reader wants the 'crimes' to be bedewed in place of the rhymes. The quotation marks around 'quite refreshing', however, force us to take 'milk-and-water ways' more literally than we might have done. The effect of rhyming 'milk-and-water ways' with 'blaze' is to evaporate the force of 'one good action' before it has occurred. As well as the idea of a refined and heady atmosphere in 'Epic poesy so rare and rich', 'rare' offers a troubling suggestion of burning meat. By literalising quotation in this way, Byron fragments the concept of 'invariable principles' and opens the way for multiple exercises of artifice.

Unlike other Romantic allusive practices, Byron does not echo to catch a reflection of himself: the signals around the allusion prevent it from being absorbed and assimilated (in a Bloomian way) into the new text. Instead, the uncertain presence of another text is an invitation to the reader to digress momentarily and to take a risk with the texture of another voice. In the context of debates about refinement, Byron's process of signalled allusion has a palpable design on its readers. In this way the difference between the *Ars Poetica* and Byron's 1820-21 *Hints from Horace* could be read as the difference between Barthes's text of pleasure and the unpredictable text of bliss:

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<sup>97</sup>It is precisely this self-consciousness which stops the Leila episode from being an 'antidote' as certain critics have suggested. See Charles J. Clancy, 'Lava, Hock, and Soda Water: Byron's *Don Juan*' *Romantic Reassessment* No. 41 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1974), p.157.



Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (*The Pleasure of the Text*, p.14)

## CHAPTER FOUR: UNCERTAIN BLISSES

4.1 Modes of Digressive Allusion

The tension between Barthian textures of pleasure and bliss in *Don Juan* may be examined through the patterns and frequency of discursive interruption across the poem as a whole. Establishing a standard of comparison is difficult - especially in the case of allusions which are signalled not by quotation marks but by other forms of reference, for example:

If fallen in evil days on evil tongues,  
Milton appeal'd to the Avenger, Time. (Dedication, 10)

Here, Byron's allusion to *Paradise Lost* Book VII. 25-6 is overt but not separated from the speech of the Dedication. In a similar way, the authorial comment on Juan's father, 'Yes José was an honourable man,' (l. 35) recalls the reader to Antony's oration in *Julius Caesar* (with all the implicit reservation about the subject's 'honour'), but the echo is left to its own devices and is not marked off as material from another text. Other texts frequently appear in *Don Juan* as part of the plot, for example in the discussion of Juan's education:

His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,  
And for their Aeneids, Iliads, and Odysseys,  
Were forced to make an odd sort of apology,  
For Donna Inez dreaded the mythology. (l. 41)

This sort of allusion which renders other texts as a list is different in tone from the stanza which follows where the narrator interposes his own assessment of the classics:

Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,  
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,  
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,

I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,  
 Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn  
 Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample;  
 But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one  
 Beginning with '*Formosum Pastor Corydon*.' (I. 42)

Here we can detect the familiar tactics of Byron's allusive transmission: the other authors are considered as conversational contemporaries, ('a rake', 'decent'), and bodily presence intrudes into the realm of abstraction or emotion: 'the sublime soars forth on wings more ample'. The multiple nuances of such allusions, however, would demand an extensive number of categories. I have decided, therefore, in the first instance to limit the count of digressive allusions to those signalled by quotation marks and marks of parenthesis. By concentrating on these modes of digressive allusion, an accountable basis for discussion will be provided. When specific areas of the text are considered, the other forms of digressive allusion which are present may qualify the results of the primary research.

Overall percentage figures for signalled discursive interruption in each Canto have been calculated by counting the total number of such interruptions as a percentage of the total number of stanzas.<sup>1</sup> This calculation has been made on the grounds that the beginning of each stanza constitutes a regular break for the reader and that every use of signalled allusion or bracketed aside creates a hesitation for the reader outside the pattern of regularly recurring pauses in the verse. A complete table of the results of the count is given as an appendix. The general conclusions which

<sup>1</sup>For M.K. Joseph's tabulation of digression in *Don Juan*, see Joseph, Appendix c (p. 334). Joseph prefaces his table with the warning that 'the following figures can only be tentative: it is not always easy to [...] distinguish comment (which remains attached to the narrative) from digression (which departs from it). Joseph adds that he has 'tried to divide them consistently'. Joseph counts the Dedication as 100% digression and his following six most digressive Cantos are: XVII, IX, XI, XIV, III, XII. Counting signalled allusions and parenthetical asides as the basic units of digression, the seven most digressive Cantos are as follows: XI, XII, IX, XVII, Dedication, X, XV/XVI. See appendix for full statistical table.

may be drawn from those results form the starting point for this discussion of *Don Juan*.

After the Dedication, the frequency of signalled allusions and bracketed asides in Cantos I and II falls. This is interesting because it suggests that Byron is adhering to a conventional eighteenth-century compositional pattern of allusion whereby the dedication or prologue to a work is densely and self-consciously allusive (see my discussion in Chapter Two), but the main body of the text works to assimilate the voices of other literary texts. By way of comparison, we can see this pattern in the work of two of Byron's contemporaries, Shelley and Wordsworth. *The Witch of Atlas* (written August 1820) is prefaced by six stanzas 'To Mary' which culminate in a critique of Wordsworth:

Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years  
 Considering and retouching Peter Bell;  
 Watering his laurels with the killing tears  
 Of slow, dull care, so that their roots to hell  
 Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the spheres  
 Of Heaven, with dewy leaves and flowers; this well  
 May be, for Heaven and Earth conspire to foil  
 The over busy gardener's blundering toil.

My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature  
 As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise  
 Clothes for our grandsons - but she matches Peter  
 Though he took nineteen years, and she three days  
 In dressing. Light the vest of flowing metre  
 She wears: he, proud as dandy with his stays,  
 Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress  
 Like King Lear's 'looped and windowed raggedness.' (l.25-40)<sup>2</sup>

Allusion in these stanzas uses the same carnivalesque forms of disruption as those noted in Chapters Two and Three. In particular, we see emphasis on the physical presence of conventional metaphors: the laurels acquire downward

<sup>2</sup>The text of Shelley used unless otherwise stated is *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, selected and ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977; hereafter '*Shelley's Poetry and Prose*').

pushing roots and an abundance of thick undergrowth. Wordsworthian metre is imaged as a corset for controlling the flesh whilst a signalled Shakespearean allusion stresses the nakedness of Peter Bell's body. Once we are inside the poem itself, however, the frequency and type of allusion changes into a quieter, more assimilative echoing.

Shelley's preface was not published with the rest of the poem in 1824 because Mary Shelley was wary of the controversy such an overt attack on Wordsworth might arouse.<sup>3</sup> Byron was also acutely conscious of Wordsworth's public status as we can see in his 1820 critique of Wordsworth's signalled allusions. In 1814, the 'Prospectus' to *The Excursion* was printed in italics and inside inverted commas: within this formal invocation was a signalled allusion to *Paradise Lost*:

*I sing: - 'fit audience let me find though few'*

*So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard,  
Holist of Men. - Urania I shall need  
Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such  
Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven! (The Excursion, p.xi)<sup>4</sup>*

This allusion to Milton is made in the traditional spirit of the prologue: a self-conscious announcement of 'the design and scope of the whole Poem' (p.x), invoking other writers in order to situate the new work. Byron's response to *The Excursion*, and to its 'Prospectus' in particular, is telling because he focuses on Wordsworth's art of allusion:

I will venture to assert that the Sale of the *Paradise lost* was greater in the first four years after it's publication than that of 'the *Excursion*' in the same number - with the difference of nearly a Century & a half between them of time, & of thousands in point of general readers notwithstanding Mr. Wordsworth's having pressed Milton into his Service as one of those not

<sup>3</sup>See Shelley's *Poetry and Prose*, pp. 347-48.

<sup>4</sup>William Wordsworth, *The Excursion* (1814); facsimile of first edition (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1991)

presently popular, to favour his own purpose of proving that our Grand- Children will read *him* - the said William Wordsworth [...] he may have a sect, but he will never have a public, and his 'audience' will always be 'few' without being 'fit', except for Bedlam. (Nicholson, p.109)

Byron's point is that Wordsworth has 'pressed Milton into his service' to shore up personal reputation despite the fact that the reason for Milton's alienation was his loyalty to a lost political cause. Wordsworth's politically disingenuous comparison turns allusion not for textual play, but for personal gain. Byron applies his own transformative process to the allusion, insisting on the literalness of "'few'", and on the bodily connotation of "'fit'", and introducing a carnivalesque inversion of propriety by locating Wordsworth's audience in Bedlam.

Whilst the relative decline in frequency of allusion after the Dedication to *Don Juan* follows eighteenth-century precedent, it must be obvious that even at its lowest frequency of interruptions the texture of *Don Juan* is more radically destabilised than its precursors. This has to do with the multiplicity of the variables of Byronic allusion as well as their quantity. Whereas eighteenth-century allusions tend to endorse existing hierarchies and authorities, Byron's use of allusion relativises and so questions that authority. Although we can see all allusion as a crossing over from one conceptual frame to another so that each context modifies the other, I would argue that the conjunction of textures in Byron's writing is rendered in a more disruptive manner.<sup>5</sup> Canto IV has the smallest total of parenthetical asides and signalled allusions, yet it was still criticised by contemporary reviewers for its instability. In August 1821 the reviewer of the *Literary Gazette* grieved that 'we

<sup>5</sup>See Lucy Newlyn, 'Paradise Lost' and the Romantic Reader, especially Chapter Two. Interestingly, in its review of *Don Juan* III, IV, and V, the *Literary Gazette* equated 'beauty' with 'absence of obscene allusion' in Byron's poetry (RR, B: IV, 1428). This suggests a Burkean preference for smoothness which is at odds with allusion's potential for the suddenness and uncertainty of sublimity.

cannot stop the infection' (RR, B: IV, 1424) whilst the following month brought this criticism from the *Monthly Magazine*:

As in the former cantos he pours out a singular mixture of pathos, doggerel, wit and satire, taking a strange and almost malignant delight in dashing the laughter he has raised with tears, and crossing his finest and most affecting passages with burlesque ideas, against which no gravity is proof. (RR, B: IV, 1680)

After a brief rise in the frequency of digressive allusion in Canto III (indicative of the return to the anti-Lake School satire of the Dedication), a substantial and sustained increase in textual disruption occurs in Cantos VI, VII, and VIII. Thereafter, peaks of parenthetical and allusive activity are found in Canto IX, Cantos XI and XII, and Cantos XV, XVI, and XVII. In general terms, we may note that these peaks occur when the narrative is working to establish a new scene, especially those dominated by a woman. Canto III revolves around Haidée's court, Canto IX depends on Catherine's, Canto XII is preoccupied with the London marriage market controlled by women, and Cantos XV and XVI explore Adeline's sphere of influence. The relationship between the digressive asides of the narrator and its narrative context of feminine influence will be explored in Chapter Five.

In analysing the frequency of narrative interruption in *Don Juan* it has been necessary to consider how Byron sustains a high degree of textual instability without allowing his readers to become inured to its disruptive effect. Byron was aware of the process of over-familiarisation:

'One gets tired of every thing, my angel,' says Valmont. (BLJ, III, 220)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>As Leslie Marchand points out, Byron attributes the quotation from the Marquise de Merteuil to the Vicomte de Valmont. This shift is interesting as Byron appropriates an expression of sexual *ennui* from the woman to the man. The quotation comes from Letter CXLI of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* where the Marquise de Merteuil invites Valmont to discard Madame de Tourvel by telling him a story. She introduces her theme disarmingly:

This comment comes from Byron's 1813 journal and it advertises his own sense of boredom with authorship. Its source in the Marquise de Merteuil's letter, however, also reflects on the process of reading. No literary texture can be totally disruptive or its readers would cease to perceive disruption. Arguably poststructuralist theory needs to create a pre-existent totality which it can then break down. Barthes voiced this need in his observation in *The Pleasure of the Text*:

There are those who want a text (an art, a painting) without a shadow, without the 'dominant ideology'; but this is to want a text without fecundity, without productivity, a sterile text [...] The text needs its shadow: this shadow is *a bit* of ideology, *a bit* of representation, *a bit* of subject: ghosts, pockets, traces, necessary clouds: subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro. (*The Pleasure of the Text*, p.32)

This chapter will examine the way that *Don Juan* produces 'its own chiaroscuro'. Critics who have located unity in *Don Juan* have usually been at pains to explain the way that chiaroscuro creates an overall unity: Bernard Beatty, for example, focuses on Aurora and the poem's composition of a new Eden.<sup>7</sup> The relationship of light and shade, however, was not always so clearly-cut, as Francis Cohen's observations on the first Cantos illustrated:

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I have nothing more to say, but to tell you a trifling story; perhaps you will not have leisure to read it, or to give so much attention to it as to understand it properly? At worst, it will be only a tale thrown away.

(*Dangerous Connections: or, Letters Collected in a Society, and Published for the Instruction of other Societies*, by M. C\*\*\*\* de L\*\*\*, 4 vols. (London, T.Hookham, 1784), IV, 101).

This is a possible source for Byron's beguiling aside on the probable fate of what he 'meant to say' in *Don Juan*, IX. 36:

Certes it would have been but thrown away.

<sup>7</sup>I am here closer to Barthes than to Bernard Beatty who argues that the 'gaps in *Don Juan*, [...] are a device for rendering fiction "true"' (Bernard Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan* (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1985; hereafter 'Beatty'), p.121. Beatty's emphasis on Aurora at the end of his study does away with chiaroscuro altogether: 'Aurora is untainted and the terminus of Byron's comedy, whatever happens to it in the future, because she alone can again connect Juan and the poem trustingly to their existence and restore what has been lost' (Beatty, pp.198-99). Her radiance in this reading extinguishes shadow.



If we stand on a mountain we gladly view a storm breaking on one side of the horizon & dark clouds impending & the sun shining bright & calm in the other quarter of the heavens, but we are never drenched & scorched at the same instant whilst standing in one spot. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

Like Cohen, Moore registered the reader's divided experience of Byron's genius and his comments in the *Life* influenced the way that later nineteenth-century readers received Byron's digressive allusions. Defending the duplication of anecdotes in Byron's letters, Moore noted that

where the same facts and reflections are, for the second time, introduced, it is with such new touches, both of thought and expression, as render them, even a second time, interesting; - what is wanting in the novelty of the matter being made up by the new aspect given to it. (Moore, IV, 163)

'Novelty' in this passage is a quality as desirable as originality and genius: we can sense Moore working hard to extract Byron from a charge which would not have been levelled by a writer in the era of the postmodern novel. Moore also felt bound to defend Byron against the charge of plagiarism:

it was, I am inclined to think, his practice, when engaged in the composition of any work, to excite thus his vein by the perusal of others, on the same subject or plan, from which the slightest hint caught by his imagination, as he read, was sufficient to kindle there such a train of thought as, but for that spark, had never been awakened, and of which he himself soon forgot the source. (Moore, IV, 236-37)

With reference to the shipwreck stanzas in Canto II, Moore answered the charge of plagiarism by invoking classical precedents:

So little was Tasso ashamed of those casual imitations of other poets which are so often branded as plagiarisms, that, in his Commentary on his *Rime*, he takes pains to point out whatever

coincidences of this kind occur in his own verses. (Moore, XV, 211)<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, what mattered to Moore was that allusive 'coincidences' should be assimilated with a 'new aspect' into an original 'train of thought'. However, Byron's 'retentive' mind was closely linked by Moore to the quality of 'mobility' which threatened his genius with 'incursion' and 'intrusion' (Moore, VI, 240):

flowing from this abuse of his great versatile powers [...] it will be found that even the strength and impressiveness of his poetry is sometimes not a little injured by the capricious and desultory flights into which this pliancy of wing allures him. (Moore, VI, 239)

Moore recognised, therefore, that one of Byron's habits of composition; the hints from 'others on the same subject', was also the source of 'the suddenness with which he passes from one strain of sentiment to another' (Moore, VI, 239).

What Moore termed Byron's 'active versatility' (Moore, VI, 240) continued to be perceived by readers into the twentieth century.

For example Paul West referred to the poetry of Eliot, Carlos Williams and Pound when he stated:

poetry needs objects which are inserted as exempla [...] But it is the context that decides the quality of the insertion [...] Of course, if you want to be accurate, sooner or later you have to

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<sup>8</sup>For the importance of Tasso's incorporation of other texts in his verse, see Peter Vassallo, *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1984; hereafter 'Vassallo'), pp.100; 132-33. See also Byron's appendix to *The Two Foscari*: 'I am reproached for having formed the description of a shipwreck in verse from the narratives of many *actual* shipwrecks in *prose*, selecting such materials as were most striking. Gibbon makes it a merit in Tasso "to have copied the minutest details of the Siege of Jerusalem from the Chronicles." In *me* it may be a demerit, I presume; let it remain so' (CPW, VI, 222).

steal, import and quote. But the obligation remains: to integrate or transmute.<sup>9</sup>

'In this respect,' West continues, 'Byron falls sadly short' (p.73), making an identical complaint to the one made by Moore and Byron's contemporary reviewers. Poststructuralist theory, however, which has been incorporated into the composition of postmodern literature, offers aesthetic and political criteria for resisting integration.<sup>10</sup>

'Imagine someone,' Barthes suggests,

who abolishes within himself all barriers, all classes, all exclusions, not by syncretism but by simple discard of that old specter: *logical contradiction*; who mixes every language, even those said to be incompatible; who silently accepts every charge of illogicality, of incongruity; who remains passive in the face of Socratic irony (leading the interlocutor to the supreme disgrace: *self-contradiction*) and legal terrorism (how much penal evidence is based on a psychology of consistency!). Such a man would be the mockery of our society: court, school, asylum, polite conversation would cast him out: who endures contradiction without shame? Now this anti-hero exists: he is the reader of the text at the moment he takes his pleasure. ( *The Pleasure of the Text*, p.3)<sup>11</sup>

Barthes's observations focus on the cultural reception of disruption within the text and within a wider social scene. His 'anti-hero' (who is surely 'blissful' at the moment in question) offers a model for the working of digressive allusion in *Don Juan*.

<sup>9</sup>Paul West, *Byron And the Spoiler's Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960; hereafter 'West'), p.73

<sup>10</sup>A startling example of the presence of theorists within postmodern writing is Paul Muldoon's long narrative poem *Madoc, A Mystery* (1990) in which fragments of texts by and about Coleridge, Southey, and Byron jostle with texts and references to a range of philosophers and critics including Derrida and Kristeva.

<sup>11</sup>Jerome McGann's reading of contradiction in *Don Juan* suggests that the poem works by 'a symmetry' rather than 'dialectic': 'the contradictions do not typically emerge out of a structure of their own internal logic. Rather, contradictions come to the work at odd angles - for instance, through the structures of the unforeseen and the haphazard' (Jerome J. McGann, *Towards a Literature of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; hereafter '*Towards a Literature of Knowledge*'), p.60. This chapter of the thesis aims to develop analysis of some of the forms of haphazardness in *Don Juan*.

Although the reception of disruptive contradiction is culturally determined, it is also able to modify culture.<sup>12</sup> In miniature, a process of cultural familiarisation occurs in any reading of a text: the reader becomes rapidly accustomed to the voice of each digressive allusion in *Don Juan*, but the next will still have the ability to disturb because the inverted quotation mark is such a potent signal of difference.<sup>13</sup> Interruptions signalled on the surface of the text, keep their ability to disturb because only when they are broached and entered can they form part of the continuity of past reading experience.

Analysis of this process of familiarisation has been approached by M.K. Joseph in his discussion of simile in *Don Juan* where he observes that 'the varied images, instead of being simply accumulated, modulate one into the other' (Joseph, p.213), although his preferred term 'modulate' rather underplays the force of the initial collision of new material. Similarly, Anne Barton perceives acutely how 'the poem steadily thickens in texture':

Byron was always acutely conscious of what he had *already* written, and of the need to take this into account when devising further episodes. (Barton, p.54)

What Barton calls 'retrospective awareness' (Barton, p.54) applies to the relationship between the reader and the digressive allusions of the text. The woven texture is disturbed as it is added to but becomes recognisable texture immediately behind the raw edge.<sup>14</sup> I intend to examine these compound,

<sup>12</sup>The 1913 production of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* offers an extreme example of audience disruption although it is now most unlikely that any performance of this work would provoke such a violent response.

<sup>13</sup>For the history of the quotation mark in English printing, especially the fascinating role of this form of punctuation in Samuel Richardson's epistolary novels, see M.B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992).

<sup>14</sup>The difference between the effect described by Barthes and the one produced by reading *Don Juan* is that the reader of *Don Juan* gathers a cumulative experience of the text. As Michael G. Cooke argues, 'mobility, while it involves a lively response to each new stimulus, does not mean that each new stimulus drives out the previous one(s)' (*The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, p.45). Similarly, Drummond Bone reminds the reader of the context of Byron's note on 'mobilité': 'susceptibility to the overriding impressions of the passing moment does not

shifting effects of digressive allusion with reference to *Don Juan's* use of Shakespeare.

#### 4.2 Shakespeare in *Don Juan*

In the Siege Cantos (VII and VIII), we might expect the frequency of textual interruptions to decrease for the sake of the satire. Instead, as we saw in Chapter Three, the number of parenthetical asides and signalled quotations increases. I have already explored the way that Byron's satire is directed specifically at the expectations and responses of his audience, and the poem's use of Shakespeare constitutes part of this challenge. After the epigraph to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII which constructs the (ex) readership of *Don Juan* as Malvolio, Byron rallies his remaining readers with an appeal culled from *Julius Caesar*:

'There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which taken at the flood' - you know the rest. (VI. 1)

This signalled allusion may recall the reader to Brutus's sense of a doomed campaign before Philippi:

The enemy increaseth every day;  
We, at the height, are ready to decline.  
There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries. (IV. 3. 215-20)

The continuation of the stanza: 'And most of us have found it', encourages the reader to interpolate Byron's personal circumstances and the well-

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mean that one loses the past' ('Byron's Ravenna Diary Entry: What is Poetry?', *Byron Journal*, 6 (1978), 78-89, (86).

publicised decline in his reputation which was associated with the publication of *Don Juan*.<sup>15</sup> Certainly this is one signification available to the reader, but Byron eschews an easy identification between his fall and that of Brutus by repeating the allusion and inflecting it with a carnivalesque intonation:

There is a tide in the affairs of women  
     'Which taken at the flood leads' - God knows where:  
 Those navigators must be able seamen  
     Whose charts lay down its currents to a hair. (VI. 2)

Sexual innuendo here fleshes out the 'affairs', whilst 'taken', 'flood', 'seamen', 'lay' and 'hair' all acquire physical (specifically genital) emphasis. This exemplifies the way that digressive allusion functions: the first allusion offers a clash of contexts as the campaign of *Don Juan* is transported to the tent of Brutus. The reader adjusts his or her frame of reference to pick up the signal of Byron's career and the wry reflection, 'But no doubt every thing is for the best' (VI. 1). This mood may then be unsettled by the subsequent variation on *Julius Caesar* which juxtaposes a perspective of biological particularity, and prompts doubt about the previous philosophical generality of 'in the end' (VI. 1).

Yet the memory of *Julius Caesar* is not obliterated: Byron seems to return to Shakespeare's rendition of Roman history in stanzas 4-5:

If Anthony be well remembered yet,  
     'Tis not his conquests keep his name in fashion,  
 But Actium, lost - for Cleopatra's eyes  
 Outbalance all the Caesar's victories. (VI. 4)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>The variant for Canto VI, stanza 3, line 21, 'Like to a comet's tail' (CPW, V, 299), suggests a link in Byron's imagination between 'headstrong' women and his own 'that there' style of writing and reputation for vagary. The simile may have been suggested to him by a letter from Murray of 16 July 1819, warning Byron about the effect of publishing *Don Juan*. Byron's claim to greatness, Murray argues, would be strengthened, 'if you will not entirely break the feelings of a nation which are yet entirely with you - as to tow me though the most minute particle of the Comets Tale - yet I rise & fall with it - & my interest in your towering above other Stars - & continuing to create wonder even in your aberrations - is past calculation.' (MS., location: John Murray Archive). The 'downright she' of VI. 3 may well have been inspired by Desdemona's spirited defence of her marriage choice: 'My downright violence and scorn of fortunes, / May trumpet to the world' (*Othello*, I. 3. 249-50).

<sup>16</sup>The text behind this stanza is not exclusively Shakespearean, as Dryden's play *All for Love, or the World Well Lost* shows, the outbalancing of public achievement by force of personal attachment is a well-known dramatic resource.

This exemplum offers a familiar literary reconciliation of the worlds of military campaigning and sexual passion. The physical specificity of 'Cleopatra's eyes' and what was lost for them does indeed outweigh 'the Caesar's victories' in terms of the syllabic count of the lines whilst the definite article renders 'the Caesar' as a distant and abstract entity against the closeness of her 'eyes'. The recollection of Cleopatra also lingers on in the text. Stanza 6 advertises its Biblical allusions to the 'widow's mite' and the Christian tenet 'God is love' which Byron undercuts by adding attribution: 'God is love, they say'. Having set up this frame of reference, the world of *Antony and Cleopatra* returns to challenge the Christian framework:

And Love's a God, or was before the brow<sup>17</sup>  
Of Earth was wrinkled by the sins and tears  
Of - but Chronology best knows the years. (VI. 6)

The 'wrinkled' image draws on Cleopatra's description of herself as 'wrinkled deep in time' (I. 5. 29), while its evocation of sexual wear and tear is juxtaposed with the New Testament language of divine charity at the beginning of the stanza.

The disturbance which can be felt by the unsignalled recurrence of a Shakespearean motif has been described by Jonathan Bate in his study *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*. In his chapter on Byron he remarks that

The occurrence of two allusions in quick succession, the second usually quieter than the first, is very frequent in *Don Juan*; once the mind is sent to Shakespeare, it dwells there for a moment and picks up a second treasure<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>I have indented this line which appears aligned with the couplet in CPW.

<sup>18</sup>Bate, p.242

Bate concentrates on the way that Byron 'proclaims difference, in contrast to the usual Romantic striving for similarity with Shakespeare' (Bate, p.243). However, his emphasis on 'Byron's Pose' (the title of his chapter) leads to the over-simplified conclusion that in *Don Juan*, Byron achieves an 'untroubled and unselfconscious [relationship] with Shakespeare' (Bate, p.246). Bate closes his exploration of this relationship with the assertion that

The robust use of quotation in *Don Juan* suits Byron's public persona. His appropriations of Shakespeare are so brazen that they are not problematic. (Bate, p.246)

As I have indicated, I believe this to be a limited account of the relationship between Byron's and Shakespeare's texts. Bate focuses on examples of signalled allusion in *Don Juan* because it fits the Bloomian trajectory he has drawn of an evolving use of Shakespeare by the Romantics from early anxious echoing to mature stylistic resolution of rivalry: 'the retention of quotations on the surface of the text led to [Byron's] implied attack on the Coleridgean ideal of a unified, organic work of art' (Bate, p.240). In Bate's view, Byron's rejection of 'Bardolatry' (Bate, p.224) undercuts both the aesthetic credo of his contemporaries, and the iconographic status of Shakespeare:

As *Don Juan* as a whole is an accumulative, disparate, unorganic work, so its quotations are not integrated. Byron makes a virtue of the incidental, the momentary, the superficial. Overt quotations and adaptations could also be used to demonstrate the vulnerability of the English classics. Comic, bantering quotations are a form of affectionate mockery that render their subjects human and approachable. Byron is able simultaneously to mock Romantic awe in the face of Shakespeare and to overcome that sense of his own inferiority which was discerned by Goethe. (Bate, p.240)



This paradigm is reductive to the extent that it suggests signalled quotations are symptoms of a 'disparate, unorganic work' rather than examining the ways in which such quotations question the nature of the organic. Each canto of *Don Juan* also uses quotations which are integrated and which also rely on the reader to disinter them. Another reading of the poem might explore the way that 'overt' allusions are rendered more complex by a network of unsignalled allusions working to repair and prepare the texture of the poem for each intrusion. Bate's paradigm is most obviously reductive in the way that it relies on a sense of 'inferiority' as the dynamic of Byron's text.

Anne Barton has gone a long way towards explaining the function of allusion in her studies of the relationship between *Don Juan* and Byron's late dramatic writing:

Quotations from Shakespeare, half-remembered or precise, had always been a feature of Byron's poetry and prose. What emerges, however, in *Don Juan* is a tendency to invoke recognisably Shakespearean situations, without necessarily using their words, in order to complicate or add resonance to relationships or attitudes.<sup>19</sup>

This level of allusion dramatically alters the impact of the signalled allusion on the reader. Canto VI demonstrates how the relationship between the poet and the reader is both secured and destabilised by different levels of Shakespearean allusion.

Canto VI was the first Canto of *Don Juan* not to be published by John Murray, since the political and sexual innuendoes of this later part of the poem caused consternation in Murray's 'Synod'. Their reaction is now assumed to be part of the public prudishness of the nineteenth century, and twentieth-century critics like McGann and Barton describe Canto VI as

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<sup>19</sup>Anne Barton, 'Don Juan Transformed' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, pp.199-220 (p.214)

'genial' and applaud Byron's 'comic sparkle and *élan*'.<sup>20</sup> Steffan was less enthusiastic, assuming that the seraglio narrative constituted deliberate provocation of Murray's 'Synod' but finding the digressions 'excessively diffuse and often flaccid [...] the improvisation is so free and so trifling that it becomes tedious' (Steffan, I, 219). It is interesting that Barton's study which pays close attention to allusion produces a positive assessment of the Canto, whereas Steffan's analysis of 'associational license' discloses a 'hodgepodge' moving by 'whimsical and centrifugal jerks' (Steffan, I, 219). Steffan notes Shakespearean allusion ('a snatch from Shakespeare's Cassio'; 'Shakespearean worms') but does not consider the way that Shakespearean texts are deployed throughout the Canto. By extending Barton's method to examine Canto VI, we can see how various readings of the intertexts of the poem determine the range of responses given above.

Anne Barton has commented on the theatrical activity of the Pisan circle early in February 1822 when Byron played Iago in rehearsals of *Othello*.<sup>21</sup> McGann has established that Byron's work on Canto VI began as early as January 1822 and extended into April. Barton's discovery of situations from *Othello* in *The Deformed Transformed* may lead to a reconsideration of the role of that Shakespearean play in Canto VI - particularly as the narrative process of that Canto relies on suspicion and innuendo.

A signalled allusion to *Othello* occurs early in the Canto at stanza 9:

I am not like Cassio, 'an arithmetician,'  
                     But by 'the bookish theoric' it appears,  
 If 'tis summed up with feminine precision,

<sup>20</sup>See McGann's commentary: 'Byron's aggressive and engag  resolution seems not to have crystallized into a programme for his new beginning until he finished writing Canto VII. Canto VI, dominated by the scenes in the harem, is largely a comic work marked by a tone of light, even genial, irony' (CPW, V, 717). See also Barton's study of *Don Juan* which is more sensitive to the unsettling nuances of the harem scenes: 'Byron writes with comic sparkle and * lan* about the sympathies and little rivalries of the seraglio, without forgetting its underlying sadness' (Barton, p.55).

<sup>21</sup>Anne Barton, 'Don Juan Transformed' in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, pp.216-17.

That, adding to the account his Highness' years,  
The fair Sultana erred from inanition.

The quotation is of Iago's words (not Cassio's, as Steffan suggests (Steffan, I, 219)), and turns Iago's disparaging assessment of Cassio's career into a 'feminine' enumeration of grievances. The allusion is carnivalized by its shift from the context of troop formation and battle strategy to bodily appetite:

For were the Sultan just to all his dears,  
She could but claim the fifteenth hundred part  
Of what should be monopoly - the heart. (VI. 9)<sup>22</sup>

This emergence of Shakespeare's *Othello* in the texture of Canto VI allows us to hear the voice of Iago ('part') and his fascination with literal details of sexuality competing with the voice of Othello ('heart') and his vain attempts to make sexual betrayal into something more dignified. The narrator's sentimental reflection on his boyish devotion uses the voice of Othello:

I  
Gave what was worth a world; for worlds could never  
Restore me those pure feelings, gone forever. (VI. 5)

This combines Othello's farewell to his occupation ('O now forever/ Farewell the tranquil mind'), his relinquishing of his love for Desdemona ('Tis gone.'), and his estimation of her value ('If heaven would make me such another world/ of one entire and perfect chrysolite,/ I'd not have sold her for it').<sup>23</sup> Three stanzas later, however, we hear the narrator as Iago, '[persuading himself] to speak the truth' (to secure the dismissal of Cassio (II. 3. 214)):

I know Gulbeyaz was extremely wrong;  
I own it, I deplore it, I condemn it;

<sup>22</sup>As in Chapter Two I am invoking Bakhtin's appreciation of carnival literature with the use of this word

<sup>23</sup>See *Othello* III. 3. 353-54; III. 3. 452; V. 2. 145-46.

But I detest all fiction even in song,  
And so must tell the truth, howe'er you blame it. (VI. 8)

The narrator's reluctance to impart details of reprehensible behaviour incites the imagination of the reader to supply those details instead. This technique duplicates Iago's manipulation of Othello but the complicating factor in Canto VI is that Byron will not allow the identities of characters from the play to become settled. Stanza 11 invokes the framework of Othello's world:

Now if this hold good in a Christian land,  
The heathen also, though with lesser latitude,  
Are apt to carry things with a high hand,  
And take what kings call 'an imposing attitude'.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout *Othello* 'Christian' and 'heathen' are polarities which are reiterated but which ultimately fail to account for any character's actions.<sup>25</sup> Three stanzas later we are offered Iago's voice of sexual experience as the basis for knowledge:

Now here we should distinguish; for howe'er  
Kisses, sweet words, embraces, and all that,  
May look like what is - neither here nor there,  
They are put on as easily as a hat,  
Or rather bonnet, which the fair sex wear,  
Trimmed either heads or hearts to decorate,  
Which form an ornament, but no more part  
Of heads, than their caresses of the heart. (VI. 14)

<sup>24</sup>It is interesting to consider exactly which kings Byron had in mind at this point. The fact that there were not very many obviously tyrannical kings in the Europe of 1822 suggests that the texture of the poem here is literary rather than topical. A certain oppressive awareness of monarchy, however, may have been created by the newspaper reports of coronation preparations in 1821 for George IV, and for his regal tours around Britain for example, the pageantry surrounding the Scottish tour of Autumn 1822 (organised by Sir Walter Scott).  
<sup>25</sup>See *Othello* I.1. 30; V. 2. 313; II. 3. 172; IV. 2. 82.

This warning about women is closely patterned after Iago's words warning about himself in the first scene of the play:

others there are,  
Who trimm'd in forms, and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves. (I.1.49-51)<sup>26</sup>

And the knowing tone again recalls the way in which Iago instructs Othello in female duplicity during the central temptation scene: 'I know our country disposition well;/ In Venice they do let God see the pranks/ They dare not show their husbands: their best conscience/ Is not to leave undone, but keep unknown' (III. 3. 205-8). Iago's words are picked up in the next stanza with the narrator's observation that 'feminine delight' is 'resigned/ Rather to hide what pleases most unknown' (VI. 15) and in the choice of 'tokens' of love: the recurring 'token' in Othello is the handkerchief. The contiguity between the narrator of *Don Juan* and Iago is disturbing because it hints at the way the reader's responses are being directed. Byron the narrator comments on this process directly in stanza 18 as he draws attention to the exigencies of metrical composition:

I own no prosody can ever rate it  
As a rule, but *Truth* may, if you translate it. (VI. 18)

The variants for this couplet demonstrate Byron's insistence on the conditional nature of experience: he corrected 'but Truth will' to 'but Truth may' (CPW, V,304). The lines invite the reader to draw a conclusion from the evidence offered, just as Iago induces Othello to translate his love to hate.

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<sup>26</sup>OED shows that the nautical sense of preparation and balance for the verb 'trim' coexists in Shakespearean English with the sense of adornment, decoration, or guise.

A link between the unreliability of language and sexual mutability prompts Byron's use of innuendo in the same way that Iago plants unfinished ideas for Othello to complete:

OTH.               What hath he said?  
 IAGO. Faith, that he did...I know not what he did.  
 OTH. But what?  
 IAGO. Lie.  
 OTH.    With her?  
 IAGO.       With her, on her, what you will.  
 OTH. Lie with her, lie on her? - We say lie on her, when they  
 belie her, - lie with her, zounds, that's fulsome! (IV. 1. 31-36)

We can compare this with the movement in stanza 19 when Byron the narrator shifts from discussion of Gulbeyaz overacting her welcome for the Sultan to a more general failure of honesty in sexual relationships:

Self-love in man too beats all female art;  
 They lie, we lie, all lie, but love no less.

We might have passed over the Shakespearean lie/lie pun if it were not for the concluding couplet which directs the reader to make that translation:

And no one virtue yet, except Starvation,  
 Could stop that worst of vices - Propagation. (VI. 19)

Repeatedly throughout Canto VI, the reader is led to construct meaning in this way. The narrator teaches a preoccupation with beds and sheets 'white as what bards call "driven/Snow"' (VI. 25) which juxtaposes the voices of Iago and Othello with the contemporary divorce trial of Queen Caroline.<sup>27</sup> Stanza 24 relating the sleeplessness of Gulbeyaz is a representative example:

<sup>27</sup>For the newspaper defences of Caroline as 'driven snow' in 1820, see McGann's commentary, CPW, V, 722. The 'driven snow' image recalls (ironically) Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* where Autolycus's song begins, 'Lawn as white as driven snow' (IV. 4. 220), anticipating the snow white hand of Perdita which will be given to Florizel (IV. 4. 364-66).

Oh the heavy night!  
 When wicked wives who love some bachelor  
 Lie down in dudgeon to sigh for the light  
 [...]
 'To toss, to tumble, doze revive, and quake  
 Lest their too lawful bed-fellow should wake.

This recalls Othello's lament 'O heavy hour!' (V. 2. 99), together with one of the scenes which prompts it - Iago's fictitious account of Cassio's rough night ('...and sigh'd, and kiss'd, and then/ Cried 'Cursed fate, that gave thee to the Moor!' (III. 3. 431-32)). The texture of the poem is being prepared for the spectacle of the harem at night, but the reader does not know whether to adopt the perspective of Iago or Othello. Echoes from Shakespeare's tragedy unsettle the 'genial' mood of the seraglio narrative. When we are told that the office of "the Mother of the Maids" was 'to keep aloof or smother/ All bad propensities' (VI. 30-31), we receive a flickering reminiscence of Desdemona's death. But Byron disrupts the mood of Canto VI still further by interrupting and interfering with the chronology of *Othello* in the process of alluding to it.

Having used the rhythms of the tragedy to prepare the reader for a decisive outcome once Juan enters the harem, Byron suddenly puts Shakespeare's play into reverse and takes us back to the earlier (potentially comic) material of obstacles to marriage. The scrutiny of Juan casts him as a stranger,

Though differing in stature and degree,  
 And clime and time, and country and complexion;  
 They all alike admired their new connexion. (VI. 40)

But this description of the concubines uses Iago's hints about Desdemona's wilfulness from the central temptation scene when Othello's wonder at Desdemona's love for him is turned by Iago into a sense of incredulity and then disbelief:





shroud' (VI. 66) takes us back to Desdemona's request for her wedding sheets to be her shroud. In a similar way, the simile of one maiden who,

as the fruit  
Nods from the tree, was slumbering with soft breath  
And lips apart, which showed the pearls beneath. (VI. 65)

- also refigures the last moments of Desdemona's life as Othello compares her to a rose and kisses her: 'I'll smell it on the tree,/ A balmy breath...' (V. 2. 14-15).

The effect of using tragedy to underpin comedy is complex. How much the reader picks-up of the *Othello* compositional trellis is debatable. The signalled allusions to *Julius Caesar* and *Othello* in the first nine stanzas of Canto VI do alert the reader to Shakespearean contexts but it is more likely that the reader gleans a mixture of cynical and sentimental voices across the Canto as a whole than particular recollections of an individual tragedy. This mixed mode is, however, different from the tonal variety of Shakespearean drama because the presence of several speakers in a dramatic work legitimises the multiplicity of perspectives and moods: in *Don Juan* the agent of transformation is a single speaker and however theoretically prepared we are for novelistic discourse, the sudden transitions come as a shock.<sup>28</sup>

At the very least in Canto VI, the reader senses a mixture of genres, and this is destabilising in itself but another crucial effect is that the reader's role in constructing the narrative is heightened: being aware of the other frame of reference means that the reader has to assume responsibility for a new formulation of the same words. The reader's responsibility at precisely this point is emphasised by the self-referentiality of the narrative:

-or what you will;-

<sup>28</sup>For the source of the 'novelistic' terminology, see the discussion of Bakhtin and Horace in Chapter Three, note 23.

My similes are gathered in a heap,  
So pick and chuse - perhaps you'll be content. (VI. 68)

'What you will' is a fleeting reminder of the source of the epigraph to Canto VI and borrows the wry awareness of an audience that is suggested by the subtitle to *Twelfth Night*. 'Perhaps you'll be content' offers an uneasy shadow of Iago's advice to Othello as he watches Othello's trust in Desdemona disintegrate, 'Pray be content' (III. 3. 458). What Byron's narrative achieves here is to draw the reader into being an accessory to 'the supreme disgrace: self contradiction' (*The Pleasure of the Text*, p.3). As the reader recognises the voice of Shakespearean tragedy and co-produces its metamorphosis into sexual comedy, the act of reading becomes an act of complicity with generic disruption.

The 'general commotion' caused by Dudù's scream abruptly interrupts the mood of the bedchamber scene and sends the reader back to Iago's stage-management of the disgrace of Cassio. Byron reworks 'the clamour', transposing the action from a dispute among soldiers to a sexual skirmish amongst women. The setting of the scene at the moment 'ere the middle watch was hardly over' (VI. 70) echoes the timing of Shakespearean precedent ('here's a goodly watch indeed' (II. 3. 151)), and the narrator's closure of the events

And so good night to them, - or, if you will,  
Good morrow - for the cock had crown, and light  
Began to clothe each Asiatic hill. (VI. 86) -

- reminds us of Iago's satisfied survey having bid goodnight to Cassio: 'by the mass 'tis morning;/ Pleasure and action, make the hours seem short' (II. 3. 368-69). The lyrical evocation of morning ('light/Began to clothe each Asiatic hill') is disturbed by the sexual pun, 'cock had crown' ('crown' being slang for the top of the erect penis rather than the unusual 'northern' form of

'crowed' suggested by McGann (CPW, V, 722)). The pun is incongruous in the register of the aubade but is entirely congruous with the thought patterns of Iago. The main signal of commotion in Shakespeare's scene is the ringing of the bell ('Who's that that rings the bell?'...'Silence that dreadful bell, it frights the isle' (II. 3. 152; 166)). Byron refigures this significant stage direction as a description of the women:

And here Juanna kindly interposed,  
                     And said she felt herself extremely well  
 Where she then was, as her sound sleep disclosed  
                     When all around rang like a tocsin bell. (VI. 84)

The response to Dudù's scream, 'that upstartèd all/ The Oda' (VI. 71) translates the scene of Cassio's brawl into feminine clamour. The 'strict investigation' (VI. 74) replays Othello's demands for an explanation: 'give me to know/How this foul rout began' (II. 3. 200-1). Cassio's mortification: 'I pray you pardon me, I cannot speak' (II. 3. 180), is mirrored in Dudù's embarrassment:

Dudù had never passed for wanting sense,  
 But being 'no orator as Brutus is,'  
 Could not at first expound what was amiss. (VI. 74)

This signalled allusion exemplifies the way in which Byron deploys more than one level of allusion to create his effects. The reference to *Julius Caesar* juxtaposes a masculine, public, frame of reference with a more intimate, feminine realm of experience; the topic of Antony's speech was male honour and Roman virtue - here, Byron turns the words to apply to a sexual encounter or loss of honour (because Juan was not 'a miss'). Whilst this subversive jostling of references takes place, the underlying allusion to a scene in *Othello* is by now suggesting the similarity between sexual and military encounters.

Throughout this scene, Byron plays down his own responsibility for the narrative:

without the least notion,  
More than I have myself, of what could make  
The calm Dudù so turbulently wake. (VI. 71)

I can't tell why she blushed, nor can expound  
The mystery of this rupture of their rest;  
All that I know is, that the facts I state  
Are true as truth has ever been of late. (VI. 85)

This deploys the earnest ('honest') puzzlement of Iago: 'More of this matter can I not report' (II. 3. 231), and the burden of interpretation is left to the reader:

And that's the moral of this composition,  
If people would but see its real drift;-  
But *that* they will not do without suspicion,  
Because all gentle readers have the gift  
Of closing 'gainst the light their orbs of vision;  
While gentle writers also love to lift  
Their voices 'gainst each other, which is natural,  
The numbers are too great for them to flatter all. (VI. 88)

The mention of 'suspicion' in this context constructs the reader as Iago and that accusation is arguably the one which Byron's readers sensed and resented most of all.

As Byron never tired of pointing out, his readers had to construct the innuendoes to which they took exception. Canto VI plays with the way that suspicious perception shapes response. The parenthetical asides continually stress the 'honesty' and 'modesty' of the narrator as opposed, we understand, to the designs of the reader:

(as I said) (VI. 12)  
(to a modest mind) (VI. 15)  
(I think) (VI. 16)

- how/ Could you ask such a question? but we will/  
Continue. (VI. 33)

Scenes of interrogation and critical scrutiny also recur throughout the Canto as the shifts in the narrative necessitate the reappraisal of expectations. We are invited to share the misery of Gulbeyaz's jealousy: her 'catechism of questions' (VI. 100) and the description of her 'convulsion' (stanzas 106-111) invoke the memory of Othello, whilst Baba's behaviour is another reflection of Iago's temptation:

But there seemed something that he wished to hide,  
Which hesitation more betrayed than masqued. (VI. 100)

By the time we reach this refiguration of *Othello*, however, we realise that Gulbeyaz's 'Enquiries' (VI. 118) about 'where and how/ [Juan] had passed the night' (VI. 99) reflect the reader's own curiosity. The narrative process figures not only Gulbeyaz, but also Byron's contemporary audience as a creature of 'sensual phantasy' (V. 126).

Part of the basis for Byron's attack on 'moral England' (VL 29) was the newspaper coverage of Queen Caroline's trial for divorce. This event becomes part of the fabric of Canto VI when Byron invokes:

'A strange coincidence,' to use a phrase  
By which such things are settled now-a-days. (VI. 78) <sup>29</sup>

This intrusion of contemporary factual material disturbs the texture of the dream narrative (which had already been ruffled by an unsignalled swipe at Wordsworth's 'vain and visionary gleams' in the 'Intimations' Ode (VI. 78)). The role of the reader as imaged in the Caroline trial has been considered in

<sup>29</sup>For the defence of Caroline hinging on 'odd instances of strange coincidence', see McGann's commentary, CPW, V, 722.

the previous chapter so I will not dwell on it here. It is, however, interesting to remark that the process Byron identifies at work in his readers - that ability to be shocked by every trace of sexuality - offers a model for the allusive practice of *Don Juan* itself. As opposed to the process of sexual *ennui* inscribed by Laclos, the narrative of digressive allusion potentially allows the reader to be taken by surprise each time, to be like Dudù:

one who had no sin to show  
Save that of dreaming once 'mal-à-propos.' (VI. 84)

But instead of risking affirmation, and sharing with Dudù the responsibility of 'continuous seduction', the majority of English readers unconsciously followed Gulbeyaz and opted to be offended by what they themselves had planted in the poem.<sup>30</sup>

Whilst the public reaction to *Don Juan* took the form of perpetual affront, Byron pointed out that eighteenth-century and earlier writers had not provoked the same moral outrage:

I say no more than has been said in Dante's  
Verse, and by Solomon and by Cervantes;

By Swift, by Machiavel, by Rochefoucault,  
By Fenelon, by Luther, and by Plato;  
By Tillotson, and Wesley, and Rousseau,  
Who knew this life was not worth a potato. (VII. 3-4)

<sup>30</sup>For a reading of seduction as technique in *Don Juan* see Charles Eric Reeves, 'Continual Seduction: The Reading of *Don Juan*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 17 (1978), 453-63. Reeves argues that the length and the self-consciousness of *Don Juan* 'all work to effect a distinctive familiarization - confidence on the reader's part' (p.455). I agree with this but wish to focus on the ways in which Byron responds to his readers choosing not to be drawn into familiarity. I disagree, however, with Reeves's assertion that, 'the ontology informing *Don Juan* seems finally to work toward dissolving the dialectic of identity and difference' (p.456), especially when this is read in the context of his conclusion: 'Mobility is the highest goal of poet and reader because it must inevitably bring about the encounter with *difference* - valued for its own sake' (p.463). I don't think that familiarization need be equated with dissolution; mobility, I would argue, is generated by distinctions between identity and difference.

Somehow, nineteenth-century society had covered its traces and now chose to be outraged by what once had been so familiar. To a certain extent, the poem relies on our sense of peculiarity in encounters with the past. The recurrent intrusion of the estranged familiar is a digressive technique in *Don Juan*. Byron renders each return unexpected not by 'closing 'gainst the light [our] orbs of vision', but by engaging the reader in the creation and discovery of unpredictability or 'things the turning of a hair or feather/ May settle':

far be't from me to anticipate  
In what way feminine Caprice may dissipate. (VI. 119)

Coming at the end of Canto VI, 'feminine Caprice' encompasses our immediate awareness of Gulbeyaz, our guesses about Teresa Guiccioli, our suppositions about nineteenth-century English readers, and our anticipation of Catherine of Russia. Byron foregrounds the risks of 'feminine Caprice' in the action of *Don Juan*, but the poem itself is a risky venture and the hazards of publishing are inscribed in its texture. The next section of the thesis will approach the vagaries of chance in *Don Juan* through the anomalous rescue of Leila which occurs towards the end of Byron's 'little touch at warfare' (VI. 120).

### 4.3 The Keats-Shelley Corpus in *Don Juan* Canto VIII

The insistent but elusive hints of Shakespearean dramatic verse in the allusive texture of *Don Juan* Canto VIII fade out for a time at stanza 88 as Byron offers an overview of human waste:

The bayonet pierces and the sabre cleaves,  
     And human lives are lavished every where,  
 As the year closing whirls the scarlet leaves  
     When the stript forest bows to the bleak air,  
 And groans; and thus the peopled City grieves,  
     Shorn of its best and loveliest, and left bare;  
 But still it falls with vast and awful splinters,  
 As Oaks blown down with all their thousand winters. (VIII. 88)

The variant drafts of this stanza yield a closer link between breathing human life and Autumnal winds:

And human <breath is poured upon the air>  
 As <Autumn winds disperse> the <yellow> leaves. (CPW, V,  
 391)

Part of the stanza seems to recollect the first two verses of Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind': 'thou breath of Autumn's being, [...] Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,' (l.1-4), or possibly the similar lines from *Alastor*:

The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,  
 In wanton sport those bright leaves, whose decay,  
 Red, yellow, or etherially pale,  
 Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt  
 Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach  
 The wilds to love tranquillity. (l.583-88)

It is likely that an encounter with human grief at bereavement generated echoes of Shelley in *Don Juan* at this point. 'Shorn of its best and loveliest' recalls Shelley's defence of poetry as 'the record of the best and happiest



moments of the human mind' (*Poetry and Prose*, p.504 ). It also repeats Byron's defence of Shelley when he reported Shelley's drowning (8 July 1822) to John Murray in a letter of 3 August 1822:

You may imagine the state of their families - I never saw such a scene - nor wish to see such another. - You are all brutally mistaken about Shelley who was without exception - the *best* and least selfish man I ever knew. - I never knew one who was not a beast in comparison. (Byron's emphasis. BLJ, IX, 189-90)

Byron worked on Canto VIII, as he put it, 'to occupy [his] mind' (BLJ, IX, 187) in the days and weeks following the disappearance of Shelley and Williams in their boat, the *Don Juan*. It is, perhaps, not surprising that Byron should lament the premature death of 'the best' man he ever knew amongst the dreadful scenes of human waste at Ismail. When writing to friends in England about the shipwreck, Byron did not dwell upon his personal sorrow but remarked on Shelley's drowning as a loss to the wider community:

There is thus another man gone, about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken. It will, perhaps, do him justice *now*, when he can be no better for it. (BLJ, IX, 190)

This comment introduces Shelley's public reputation in the context of other public misjudgements ('another [...] about whom the world was [...] brutally mistaken'). Byron had reason enough to feel that he had himself been treated unfairly by the British periodicals. But it is also possible that Byron was haunted by the 'brutal' (and allegedly fatal) reviewers' hostility to Keats.<sup>31</sup>

One of the details of Shelley's death which Byron repeated in correspondence to England was the matter of Keats's *Lamia, Isabella, the Eve of St. Agnes and Other Poems* being found on the body of the drowned man:

<sup>31</sup>Peter J. Manning has written perceptively on Shelley's echoing of Byron's experience of hostile reviewers in the Preface to *Adonais*. See, 'Byron's "English Bards" and Shelley's "Adonais": A Note', *Notes and Queries*, 215 (1970), 380-81.

Shelley's body has been found and identified (though with difficulty) two days ago - chiefly by a book in his Jacket pocket - the body itself being totally disfigured & in a state of putrefaction. (BLJ, IX, 185)

Byron seems to have been fascinated by the way that a volume of poetry by the dead Keats could survive the mortal dissolution of his friend, although he did not specify what book Shelley had been reading until newspapers reported that he had been carrying a copy of the Bible (see note 36 below). The involvement of Keats in the circumstances of Shelley's death also appears to have encouraged Byron's revaluation of Keats (which had in any case been underway since Keats's death in February 1821) and affected the linguistic texture of *Don Juan*. The reconsideration of Keats by Byron had begun under the influence of Shelley, and it subsequently enters the Siege of Ismail precisely at the moment when Byron incorporates 'one good action in the midst of crimes' and narrates the rescue of the Moslem orphan Leila.

Oddly enough, some verbal and stylistic details of the Leila episode are strikingly reminiscent of the poetry of Keats. In order to analyse these figures, it is necessary to isolate each echo and to refer to possible sources. This slow process of paying attention to individual echoes is unavoidable but it has the effect of limiting the play of allusive activity. I wish to stress the way in which these hitherto unrecognised voices merge with others in the experience of reading *Don Juan*. In focusing on the emergence of Shelley and Keats in the Leila episode, I am tracing one compositional strand of near-private association for Byron. This strand is, however, only one of several which make up the layered texture of *Don Juan* at this point.

There is a well-documented literary-historical source for the rescue of Leila in Castelnau's 'Histoire de la Nouvelle Russie'. Byron refers to this work in his Preface to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII; and stresses that 'the circumstance of [*Don Juan's*] saving the infant [...] was the actual case of the late Duc de

Richelieu' (CPW, V, 295). In her study, *Byron's Don Juan*, Elizabeth French Boyd has explored the reference and comments on the way that 'Byron versified this incident, using almost the same words and faithfully detailing the facts' (Boyd, pp.130-32). McGann and Pratt give excerpts from Castelnau's 'Essai' in their notes, and from this it is possible to see which words occur in Castelnau's narration and in Byron's versification. I shall refer to these overlaps in my examination of the episode, concentrating on linguistic echoes rather than parallels of action as my concern here is with the literary texture of the rendering rather than the factual (or fictitious) precedents to the event.

Byron's echoing of Keats in Canto VIII has been recognised by McGann at two points; stanza 95, where Leila 'gazed on Juan with a wild surprise' and stanza 118 where the old Khan dashes onto the Russian swords and 'in one wide wound poured forth his soul at once.' McGann identifies these respectively as 'an echo' of 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' and 'perhaps an echo' of *Ode to a Nightingale* (CPW, V, 734-35). It is possible, however, to trace an extended, but discontinuous pattern of Keatsian murmurs throughout the entire Leila episode. Furthermore, the altered mood of this passage (Boyd refers to it as a 'tender episode' (p.130)), provides an authorial intervention in which the narrator rescues not only a Moslem orphan, but Byron the sea-changed remains of Shelley and Keats.

If we return to stanza 88, in the lines following Byron's reminder of the gusts of Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind',

When the stript forest bows to the bleak air,  
And groans; and thus the peopled City grieves,

- it is possible to detect a distinctly Keatsian apprehension of chilly loneliness. The phrase 'bleak air' occurs twice in Keats's poetry; once in *Endymion* III when Glaucus watches Circe's victims amidst 'Shrieks, yells,

and groans' (l.527) pray to be delivered from 'gross, detestable, filthy' (l.555) shapes, 'And merely given to the cold, bleak air' (l.556).<sup>32</sup> The situation of the appalled observer in this passage, and the scene of human deformity and suffering make this a likely source for Byron's echo, but Keats's use of the same phrase elsewhere also provides a compelling context:

Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there  
 Among the bushes half leafless, and dry;  
 The stars look very cold about the sky,  
 And I have many miles on foot to fare.  
 Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air.  
 (Sonnet IX, l.1-5 from *Poems, by John Keats (1817)*)<sup>33</sup>

This is the opening of Sonnet IX from Keats's *Poems* (1817), a volume which appears in the 1827 Sale Catalogue of Byron's library (Nicholson, p.249). Both the Autumnal wind and the line ending with 'cool bleak air' suggest a link with Byron's mood in stanza 88. Keats's sonnet concludes with the comfort the author derives from 'fair-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress,/ And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd'. There is a source here (although I shall argue for another one later) for the detail of Leila's 'fair hair' (VIII. 93); more importantly, however, we are reminded of Lycidas. If Byron did encounter this reference to Milton's elegy in 1822, he would have felt a keen reminder of the deaths of both Shelley and Keats. The fate of Edward King, or 'Lycidas', offered an historical parallel to the drowning of Shelley. Indeed, the pastoral elegy of Lycidas had been the pattern chosen by Shelley to commemorate Keats in *Adonais*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Moreover, Circe's transformations are reminiscent of the metamorphoses of the 'monstrous shapes' in Canto VIII, stanzas 82-85.

<sup>33</sup>Texts of Keats's poems used in this section of the thesis are facsimiles of the first editions: *Poems, by John Keats* (1817) (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1989); *Endymion: A Poetic Romance* (1818) (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1991); *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (1820) (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990).

<sup>34</sup>For Shelley's choices of, and challenges to formal and generic convention, see Richard Cronin, *Shelley's Poetic Thoughts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981).

Written in May-June 1821 and privately printed at Pisa in July 1821, *Adonais* made a strong impression on Byron.<sup>35</sup> In particular, Byron was astonished at Shelley's claim that Keats had died as the result of a 'homicidal article' (BLJ, VIII, 102):

I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats - is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing [...] I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! (BLJ, VIII, 103)

Byron was struck by the possibility that any poet could have been killed by the *Quarterly* ('So savage & Tartarly') 'I do not envy the man - who wrote the article - your review people have no more right to kill than any other foot pads' (BLJ, VIII, 163), and it is likely that the event of Keats's death fuelled Byron's antagonism to British public opinion and reviews in general. Shelley had emphasised the waste of Keats's life and ability in the Preface to *Adonais*:

the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. (*Poetry and Prose*, p.392)

A year later, the drowning of Shelley presented another instance of waste - 'human lives are lavished everywhere' (VIII. 88) - and it reinforced Byron's determination to combat public opinion: 'That \*\*\* Galignani has about ten lies in one paragraph. It was not a Bible that was found in Shelley's pocket, but John Keats's poems.' (BLJ, IX, 198).<sup>36</sup> The Leila episode provided a way

<sup>35</sup>For another account of how Keats's death figures in *Don Juan*, see Guy Steffan, 'Byron and Murder in Ravenna', *Notes and Queries*, 197 (1952), 184-86. Steffan argues that Byron asks the same question as Shelley in *Adonais*, but falls back on the physical aspects of human life, particularly the quotidian mortality of gastric complaints.

<sup>36</sup>I have not been able to locate a copy of *Galignani's Messenger* for the day which produces this distorted report. As mentioned above, it appears that Byron was only prepared to release the information about Keats's poems being the identifying object to counter reports that it was a Bible (journalists were notoriously keen to undercut Shelley's atheism).

for Byron to focus on a conflict between a figure of ethereal vulnerability and the destructive forces of the brutal majority.<sup>37</sup>

The description of Leila's flight and rescue is composed of a series of dramatically framed, frieze-like moments:

Upon a taken bastion where there lay  
 Thousands of slaughtered men, a yet warm group  
 Of murdered women, who had found their way  
 To this vain refuge, made the good heart droop  
 And shudder; - while, as beautiful as May,  
 A female child of ten years tried to stoop  
 And hide her little palpitating breast  
 Amidst the bodies lulled in bloody rest. (VIII. 91)

Byron used several phrases from Castelnau's account in this stanza: 'des enfants palpitant encore sur le sein refroidi de leur mère' is reworked between line 2 and line 7 (CPW, V, 730). The age of the girl is given by Castelnau as "une fille de dix ans, dont l'innocence et la candeur formaient un contraste bien frappant avec la rage de tout ce qui m'environnait" (CPW, V, 731). This is obviously used by Byron in line 6 and the associations of innocence and artlessness to some extent anticipate the 'pure, transparent' face presented in stanza 96. Following the source in which the little girl 'cherchait un asile', Byron depicted her '[trying] to [...] / hide' in lines 6-7. But Castelnau's 'Essai' does not account for all the details. This stanza contains two characteristic elements of Keatsian sensuality: coldness realised in relation to the temperature of a body (for example, in *The Eve of St Agnes*) and the attitudes or reflexes of a body in mortal danger (for example, the 'effigies of pain' in *Hyperion*). Surprisingly, perhaps, 'palpitating' is a word found only here in *Don Juan* (although 'palpitation' occurs in Canto II). Keats uses

<sup>37</sup>Susan J. Wolfson discusses the way in which Shelley's *Adonais* fixes Keats's presentation for the nineteenth-century readership and how Shelley's own reputation merged with that of Keats in the process: 'Keats Enters History: Autopsy, *Adonais*, and the Fame of Keats', in *Keats and History*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; hereafter '*Keats and History*'), pp. 17-45

'palpitating' to describe the snake in *Lamia* whilst 'palpitations' appears in *Endymion* III, l.53 when the moon is invoked, 'kissing dead things to life' (III, l.57):

O Moon! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees  
 Feel palpitations when thou lookest in:  
 O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din  
 The while they feel thine airy fellowship. (III, l.52-5)

The moon in this extract is a female figure and the 'fairness' of her gaze anticipates the one which Leila will turn on Juan. Significantly, at no point in Castelnau's narration does the little girl look at her rescuer: the poetry of Keats, however, contains many moments of transfixing looks:

the nested wren  
 Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,  
 And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf  
 Takes glimpses of thee

[....]                      What far abode  
 Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine  
 Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine  
 For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale  
 For one whose cheek is pale. (*Endymion* III, l.63-66; 72-76)

The associations of purity, pallor and grief combine to make the scenes of watching or visual searching in *Endymion* suggestive intertexts for the sheltering of Leila. The Moslem orphan refigures the qualities of both moon and wren in the passage from *Endymion* above, crouching to hide but then rising to gaze on Juan. A closer configuration of 'palpitating breast [...] lulled in bloody rest' may be located at the end of the same book, when *Endymion* is soothed by the sight of 'forest green' which 'Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast' (III, l.1041-43). Indeed, the political sentiments of *Endymion* Book III, with its polemic against 'crowns, and turbans', 'thrones [...] / And

sudden cannon' (l.12; 16; 19), are close to Byron's design for the Siege Cantos.

Again it is important to stress, however, that these are not fixed but more nebulous pockets of language and tone. The action of the Leila episode is a conscious reworking of the scene from Castelnau: what I am offering here is analysis of a different and more ghostly level of allusion. These echoes may or may not be picked-up by the reader. It makes little difference to my argument whether they are or not: what I wish to concentrate on is the way that beyond the regular patterns of the *ottava rima* verse form, there are other trails which may lead the reader through the poem. I shall now examine in more detail the process by which this recognisably Keatsian lexicon is incorporated with the prose of Castelnau.

*Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (1820) was the book by which Shelley's corpse was identified and *Endymion* (1818), like *Poems, by John Keats* (1817) was in the 1827 Sale Catalogue. We know that Byron based his reassessment of Keats in 1821 on *Hyperion* which had been published as the final poem in the *Lamia* volume. It is possible, too, that the circumstances of Shelley's death reinforced this procedure by encouraging a further (perhaps desultory) re-reading of Keats's poems.<sup>38</sup> This would explain the wide range, but close texture of the echoes which seem to call out of this scene in *Don Juan*.<sup>39</sup>

Composed in July 1822, Leila's threatened position offers a figure for the vulnerability of both Shelley and Keats whose fates at the hands of the homicidal reviewers Byron could do nothing to avert. In *Don Juan*, however, a belated rescue could take place: Juan rescues the silent and sensitive child and deals out to her attackers 'the wounds they richly merited' (VIII. 94). In April

<sup>38</sup>For Byron's own description of his desultory reading habits see BLJ, VII, 141.

<sup>39</sup>For a compelling account of the imaginative proximity of Keats and Byron, see Anne Barton, 'Byron and the Mythology of Fact', Nottingham Byron Foundation Lecture (Nottingham: Hawthorne, 1968).





slaughter Turnus and found Rome, or re-define the course of epic poetry. In this case, Byron self-consciously salvages a “quite refreshing” moment. The action here is significantly different from the source in Castelnau's ‘Essai’. In Richelieu's account, the narrator had to restrain himself from slaying the Cossacques:

‘J’eus bien de la peine à me retenir et à ne pas percer ces misérables du sabre que je tenais suspendu sur leur tête’. (CPW, V, 731)

Richelieu also enfolded the girl in his arms (“et je n’hésitai pas [...] à prendre entre mes bras cette infortunée”), before inflicting any wound on her assailants. Byron's versification extends the reader's experience of Leila's peril, but maintains a distance between her and Juan. This distance allows the intertwining voice of Shelley to echo across the lines. Another potent memory of ‘fair hair’ comes, of course, Shelley's ‘Ode to the West Wind’ with its image of ‘bright hair uplifted from the head’ (l.20).

The satisfaction which is derived from thwarting the Cossacques is evident in Byron's inclusion of their ‘baffled rage and pain’ (VIII. 94) and the way the variant to line 748 shows that he cancelled their right to ‘speak’ and recast it as a ‘shriek’ (CPW, V, 393). Byron's addition heightens the sense of justice which was offered by the source: “les injures qu’ils méritaient”. As well as undergoing physical punishment (‘the wounds they richly merited’), the attackers are also deprived of their ability to wield language - the weapon of the reviewers. With brutality seen off, attention quickly moves to the moment of face-to-face contact between Leila and Juan:

while waxing colder  
As he turned o'er each pale and gory cheek,  
Don Juan raised his little captive from  
The heap a moment more had made her tomb. (VIII. 94)

This description allows the chill of the corpses to be shared by Juan.

Castelnau's account includes the phrase 'ma petite prisonnière' but as I have indicated above, Richelieu simply took the girl in his arms; he did not have to pick through the corpses to find her. The acute sensitivity of Byron's lines to the temperature and mass of the piled bodies may suggest to us Keatsian accounts of the ebb and flow of blood, and his realisation of the physical process of encroaching mortality:

She saw it waxing very pale and dead. (*Isabella*, l.53)

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove [...]  
She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone. (*Isabella*, l.369; 371)

Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.  
'Twas love; cold, - dead indeed, but not dethroned. (*Isabella*,  
l.399-400)

There is an earlier moment in *Don Juan* which uses the vocabulary of 'waxing' pallor; Gulbeyaz droops 'White, waxen, and as alabaster pale' but this does not have the same clammy chill as the encounter with Leila. Juan himself is described with 'pale cheek' which Haidée's 'breast now warms' (II. 195), and Haidée dreams of Juan

wet, and cold, and lifeless at her feet,  
Pale as the foam that froth'd on his dead brow. (IV. 34)

- but neither of these moments have quite the same palpable handling of carnage as the compound of soil and pale flesh which we find in *Isabella* and at this moment in *Don Juan*. Part of the reason for this is that *Isabella* turns upon a single murder while the Siege of Ismail is about murder on a huge scale. The association with criminality makes stanza 95 one of the most resonant in the whole passage:

And she was chill as they, and on her face

A slender streak of blood announced how near  
 Her fate had been to that of all her race;  
 For the same blow which laid her Mother here,  
 Had scarred her brow, and left its crimson trace  
 As the last link with all she had held dear;  
 But else unhurt, she opened her large eyes,  
 And gazed on Juan with a wild surprise.

The appearance of a 'streak' of blood here opens the stanza to memories of an earlier moment in Byron's writing where readers shared the horror of contemplating evidence of Gulnare's guilt:

That spot of blood, that light but guilty streak,  
 Had banished all the beauty from her cheek!  
 Blood he had viewed - could view unmoved - but then  
 It flowed in combat, or was shed by men! (*The Corsair*, 1.426-29)

The blood which marks Leila as a newly-born orphan has both flowed in combat and been 'shed by men'. Castelnau's narrative contains the source of the stain on the girl:

'j'eus le plaisir d'apercevoir que ma petite prisonnière n'avait d'autre mal qu'une coupure légère que lui avait faite au visage le même fer qui avait percé sa mère.' (CPW, V, 731)

In Byron's version, the 'slight but certain pledge of crime' refers us not only to the Cossacques but also to the reviewers of the *Quarterly*. On 16 April 1821 Shelley wrote to Byron about the death of Keats:

Young Keats, whose 'Hyperion' showed so great a promise,  
 died lately at Rome from the consequences of breaking a blood-  
 vessel, in paroxysms of despair at the contemptuous attack on  
 his book in the *Quarterly Review*.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup>*The Complete Works of Shelley*, ed. by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols. (London: Ernest Benn, 1965; hereafter 'Works'), X, 255. The detail of the burst blood-vessel was repeated in a letter of 4 May 1821 in which Shelley dwelt on his own 'happy indifference' to praise or blame (Works, X, 265). In a letter of 16 July 1821, Shelley wrote to tell Byron that *Adonais* had been written 'in defence of the weak - not in conjunction with the powerful' (Works, X, 284).

This account was repeated in the preface to *Adonais* and refigured in the poem itself:

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan  
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band  
Who in another's fate now wept his own;  
As in the accents of an unknown land,  
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned  
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: 'who art thou?'  
He answered not, but with a sudden hand  
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,  
Which was like Cain's or Christ's - Oh! that it should be so!  
(l.298-306)

The scarred brow of Leila recalls the 'ensanguined brow' of the merged Shelley / Keats figure of Adonais. The moment when Leila 'opened her large eyes,/ And gazed on Juan with a wild surprise' recalls not only Keats's depiction of Cortez and his followers,

He stared at the Pacific - and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise -  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.  
(*'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'*, l.12-14)

- but also Shelley's 'Ode to Liberty':

Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,  
Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes. (XI, l.164-65)<sup>42</sup>

We cannot separate the voices of Keats and Shelley in the passage where Leila opens her eyes. Nor can we allocate particular phrases to specific poems: the gaze of Leila (independent of the episode in Castelnau's 'Essai') merges recognition of sonnet, ode, and narrative with the awakening of Madeline:

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<sup>42</sup>The epigraph to this poem is from CHP, IV. 98 offering another instance of dialogue between poems.

Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:  
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,  
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:  
There was a painful change, that night expell'd  
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep. (l.296-301)

And perhaps an earlier Keatsian encounter too:

Young men, and maidens at each other gaz'd  
With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd  
To see the brightness in each others' eyes;  
And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise.  
(I stood tip-toe upon a little hill', from *Poems*, by John Keats  
(1817), p.13)<sup>43</sup>

The intermingled voices of Keats and Shelley are released, but fade away in the exchange of looks between Leila and Juan. Leila is 'raised' from the dead ('a moment more had made her tomb'), but cannot recognise the face which has called her back to life. We realise that their shared, though uncommunicating gaze, will be deflected by events because of the interruption implicit in the opening of stanza 96:

Just at this instant, while their eyes were fixed  
Upon each other, with dilated glance,  
In Juan's look, pain, pleasure, hope, fear, mixed  
With joy to save, and dread of some mischance  
Unto his protégée; while hers, transfixed  
With infant terrors, glared as from a trance,  
A pure, transparent, pale, yet radiant face,  
Like to a lighted alabaster vase;-

<sup>43</sup>See a possible precursor for all these dazed moments in 'Summer' in Thomson's *The Seasons*:

With wild surprise,  
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,  
A stupid moment motionless she stood:  
So stands the statue that enchants the world.

(James Thomson, *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence*, ed. by James Sambrook, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 73-74; l.1344-47).

Up came John Johnson.

This moment of suspension is similar in its effect to the delayed return of Lambro to his court in Canto III-IV.<sup>44</sup> In the same way it makes narrative secondary to the poet's relationship with his readers and gives us time to hear the intertextual echoes which whisper around the narrative encounter. In this case, the 'glare' of Leila seems to come from beyond her, and it reminds us of hellish stares in the Turkish tales which transfixed Byron's earlier public.<sup>45</sup>

But the most urgent echoes in the stanza come not from Shelley and Keats, but (again) from Shakespeare's dramatic verse. Juan's 'dread of some mischance' recalls the foreboding of Gratiano in the closing scenes of *Othello*, 'Tis some mischance; the cry is very direful' (V. 1. 38) and the last glimpse of Leila before Johnson and Juan decide what to do with her draws on Othello's contemplation of Desdemona's fate: 'Yet I'll not shed her blood - Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow, and smooth as monumental alabaster' (V. 2. 3-5) - an echo which holds both Leila's 'scarred brow' and her cold purity together.

Willis W. Pratt supplies another well-known source for the 'alabaster vase' image. In 'Detached Thoughts', Byron noted, 'I have seen myself compared [...] to [...] "an Alabaster Vase lighted up within!"' (Pratt, IV, 182). The personal recollection embodied in Leila is convincing, and several critics have concentrated on Leila as Juan's/ the narrator's orphan double. David Punter, for example, suggests that 'Leila is next in the scale to Juan: as the

<sup>44</sup>This moment of suspension is analysed by Anne Barton in 'Don Juan Reconsidered: The Haidée Episode', *Byron Journal*, 15 (1987), 11-20.

<sup>45</sup>Glare's feature most noticeably in *The Giaour* 1. 594; 833; 890. The 'glare' for Byron seems to be associated with frozen moments of heightened emotion in art, see his comments on Rubens in a letter to Hobhouse 1 May 1816:

as for his works - and his superb 'tableaux' - he seems to me (who by the way know nothing of the matter) the most glaring - flaring - staring - harlotry imposter that ever passed a trick upon the sense of mankind - it is not nature - it is not art [...] I never saw such an assemblage of florid night-mares as his canvas contains. (BLJ, V, 73).

narrator is to Juan, so Juan can be to Leila.<sup>46</sup> There is also a case for seeing Leila as an anticipation of Aurora, another orphan, similarly 'radiant' (XV. 58), 'cold' (XV. 49), 'pale' (XVI. 94), whose gaze fixes on Juan, and whose 'indifference' (XV. 77), is so disturbing. These possibilities, however, are only admitted after the rescue. The swirling, compound identity of Leila is not arrested by the stasis of the moment of rescue. Instead, the disturbing artificiality of the scene invites the reader to realise her as a focus of multiple yearnings. As David Punter remarks, the rescue itself poses different questions:

What, in the saving of the 'sweet child' Leila (IX:33), is being said about the ability to hold the contradictions of the human personality together against the frequent assaults of incoherence (rhyme not reason) and against the continual tug of the ocean of blood in which frail innocence would disappear ('Deferral of Decapitation', pp.146-47)<sup>47</sup>

The Leila episode is calculated to 'bedew' the rhymes of Ismail (VIII. 90), but as the final echoes of *Othello* suggest, the linguistic texture of the rescue produces a mood of loss rather than gain. The textual richness of the episode serves to emphasise the destructive energies of its context. Many different processes of allusion are at work in the episode. One is Byron's conscious re-working of Castelnau's narrative which serves as a running challenge to his readers to assess what their demands as readers have imparted to the construction of history.<sup>48</sup> Another is the hauntingly pervasive pressure of Keats and Shelley on the verse which, as I've

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<sup>46</sup>David Punter, 'Don Juan, or, the Deferral of Decapitation', in *Don Juan*, ed. by Nigel Wood (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), pp.124-49; hereafter 'Deferral of Decapitation' (p.144)

<sup>47</sup>See also Michael G. Cooke on the significance of the Leila episode as 'an anomaly' not an example (*The Blind Man Traces the Circle: On the Patterns and Philosophy of Byron's Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969; hereafter '*The Blind Man Traces the Circle*'), p.196).

<sup>48</sup>For another discussion of Byron's use of Castelnau, see Vassallo, pp.107-39.



suggested, betrays a sub-conscious and belated attempt to save them from the brutal assaults of public reputation.<sup>49</sup>

Byron's inability to avert the death of his friend, Shelley, and his complicity in the assault on Shelley's friend Keats are re-experienced in the unnerving 'glare' of Leila. The dramatic suspension of time at this point constitutes a digressive allusion as the reader becomes aware of fathomless layering of texts and contexts. This period of narrative suspension has to be interrupted by Johnson and his more pragmatic (economic) style of friendship:

But Juan was immoveable; until  
     Johnson, who really loved him in his way,  
 Picked out amongst his followers with some skill  
     Such as he thought the least given up to prey;  
 And swearing if the infant came to ill  
     That they should all be shot on the next day;  
 But, if she were delivered safe and sound,  
 They should at least have fifty roubles round. (VIII. 102)

This disposes of Leila, but does not remove the unsettling effect of her gaze.

In narrating the deaths of the older and younger Khans, Byron does, however, reapproach the terrifying glare from Hades to resolve the disruption caused by the flickering shadows of Shelley/Keats. The young Khan, we are told, 'bravely rushed on his first heavenly night' (VIII. 114):

So fully flashed the phantom on his eyes,  
     That when the very lance was in his heart,

<sup>49</sup>Peter Manning discusses Byron's art of allusion in the context of 'regressive impulses' of *Don Juan*: 'Don Juan alleviates the difficulty inherent in trying to summon 'the past' into the present as if it were a closed, self-contained code of meaning. Through parody, fragmentation, doubt, and exaggerated disharmonies Byron lightens the burden of the past while yet building upon its foundation' (*Byron and His Fictions*, p.203). I agree with Manning that Byron's allusive play in *Don Juan* is part of his attempt to create a public identity but I would differ from his approach when he sees the poem as a continuous search for the mother in which 'basic drives and situations are forever assuming new shapes yet remain recognizably continuous' (*Byron and His Fictions*, p.210). This approach would seem to homogenise the texture of *Don Juan* even as Manning argues that the 'forward movement of the poem tends to unsettle what has passed' (*Byron and His Fictions*, p.220).

He shouted 'Allah!' and saw Paradise  
 With all its veil of mystery drawn apart,  
 And bright Eternity without disguise  
 On his soul, like a ceaseless sunrise, dart; -  
 With Prophets, Houris, Angels, Saints, descried  
 In one voluptuous blaze, - and then he died:

But, with a heavenly rapture on his face. (VIII. 115-16)

Shelley's writing glimmers on the surface at this moment. We can hear echoes of *Epipsychidion*: 'An image of some bright Eternity' (l.115). In the same poem, the speaker's vision 'Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's (l.324) (elsewhere, Byron tends to use the word 'flash' or 'flashed' to describe the physical attributes of eyes or armour). The description of Paradise 'With all its veil of mystery drawn apart' also recalls *Epipsychidion*:

Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,  
 Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside. (l.472-3)

The death of the younger Khan is an instant of qualified loss: 'and then he died:/ But...'. It is the death of someone who believes in an afterlife. The death of his father 'who long had ceased to see/ Houris' (VIII. 116), is a more desolate response to the destruction around him:

As he looked down upon his children gone,  
 And felt - though done with life - he was alone. (VIII. 117)

The pessimism of the compensatory qualification 'though done with life' underlines this as a bleak moment for the narrator, voicing the isolation of Byron in the summer of 1822 (it follows an unsignalled, but unmissable use of Shakespeare: 'his heart was out of joint'). The resolution which is written into *Don Juan* at this point has very little to do with the narrative of Castelnau.

But 'twas a transient tremor; - with a spring  
 Upon the Russian steel his breast he flung,  
 As carelessly as hurls the moth her wing  
 Against the light wherein she dies: he clung  
 Closer, that all the deadlier he might wring,  
 Unto the bayonets which had pierced his young;  
 And throwing back a dim look on his sons,  
 In one wide wound poured forth his soul at once. (VIII. 118)

McGann suggests that the final line might hold an echo of Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, 'while thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad / In such an ecstasy'. If we hear this, the stanza briefly becomes a vessel of the blent voices of Shelley and Keats, as elusive as the song of Keats's nightingale.<sup>50</sup> The 'spring' of the old Khan to meet his death is not Byron's normal use of the word but we can trace this description of human movement to *Epipsychidion*:

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth  
 I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,  
 And towards the loadstar of my one desire,  
 I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight  
 Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,  
 When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere  
 A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,  
 As if it were a lamp of earthly flame. -  
 (l.217-24)

With these echoes dancing between the lines, the 'dim look' which is thrown back to the reader softens the unsettling 'glare' of Leila and fades out of the text.

In the individualised encounters with Leila and the Khans in the otherwise anonymous slaughter of Ismail, therefore, we can see how Byron's

<sup>50</sup>In a letter of 15 April 1819, Keats describes the effect of Coleridge's conversation, 'I heard his voice as he came towards me - I heard it as he moved away' (*The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958; repr. 1972), II, 89. Keats's listing of the subjects broached by Coleridge, and his evocation of the voice surging up and fading away before the letter passes on to other things suggest Byron's encounters with other voices in *Don Juan*.

overt manipulation of his source in Castelnau's narrative represents only one level of allusion whilst ghostlier intonations from the poetry of Shakespeare, Shelley and Keats offer an intermittent and more private requiem within the public and epic frames of reference.<sup>51</sup> Whether the reader follows this shadowy trail of allusion or not is open to chance. The next section of the thesis will examine figures of contingency in the poem and its historical context.

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<sup>51</sup>It is difficult to find terminology to describe the shifting surface of Byron's text, particularly to convey the delicacy and strength of Byron's perceptible and almost imperceptible hints to the reader. I have relied on the idea of a layered surface throughout this chapter. The notion of a palimpsest does not quite capture the 'mobility' of the texts modifying each other as they emerge and submerge in different readings. The image of glazed ceramic or varnished oil paint has been suggested to me and this is helpful as it suggests a highly finished work of art which will, however, yield differing perceptions of light and shade. Musical analogies have been considered in Chapter One and in the subsequent appendix. In the end, I have found myself returning to Wallace Stevens's 'Woman Looking at a Vase of Flowers' and I feel that the reader's experience of digressive allusion in *Don Juan* is at times close to this layered, changing act of perception, 'Without clairvoyance, close' (*The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Vintage, 1954; repr. 1982)).

#### 4.4 Risk and Return in *Don Juan*

On 16 July 1819 John Murray began a letter to Byron:

My Lord

*La Sort est jetté* - *Don Juan* was published yesterday, and having fired the Bomb - here I am out of the way of its explosion - its publication has excited a very great degree of interest - public <opinion be> expectation having risen up like the surrounding boats on the Thames when a first rate is struck from its Stocks - as yet my Scouts and dispatches afford little idea to public opinion - it certainly does not appear to be what they had chosen to anticipate (MS., location: John Murray Archive).<sup>52</sup>

Murray and Byron continually referred to the publication of *Don Juan* in terms of a shared military campaign against public opinion: Murray was here using a French version of 'the die is cast' - words Plutarch attributes to Caesar on crossing the Rubicon.<sup>53</sup> The image of casting lots may well have been suggested to Murray by *Don Juan* itself:

Alas! the love of women! it is known  
 To be a lovely and a fearful thing;  
 For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,  
 And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring  
 To them but mockeries of the past alone,  
 And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,  
 Deadly, and quick, and crushing; yet, as real  
 Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel. (ll. 199)

<sup>52</sup>I am grateful to Dr. Peter Cochran for his help in transcribing this manuscript.

<sup>53</sup>*Le sort en est jeté* is a phrase appearing in French classical tragedy, for example, Corneille *Andromache*, 1, 3: 'Allons jeter le sort pour la dernière fois' (*Dictionnaire de la Langue Française*, 5 vols. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1885-86). I suspect that the phrase was used in Regency casinos but I have been unable to locate documentary evidence to support this. I am indebted to John Kerrigan's essay, 'Keats, Hopkins, and the History of Chance' in *Keats and History*, pp. 280-308 for alerting me to the connections between figures of insurance and gambling in nineteenth-century writing. See also Robert F. Gleckner, 'Gambling and Byron's Poetics', *Nineteenth-Century Studies*, 1 (1987), 1-11.

There is a correspondence here between Byron's description of feminine revenge and the simile he provided to describe his own writing: 'I am like the tyger (in poesy) if I miss my first Spring - I go growling back to my jungle' (BLJ, VII, 229). The writing and the plot of *Don Juan* were frequently deflected by chance and by women: Byron the narrator drew attention to the similarity between 'feminine Caprice' (VI. 119) and 'Chance, Providence, or Fate' (VII. 76), and it is to this historical and gendered nexus of digressive allusion that I will now turn.

John Murray's inscription of *Don Juan* as a hazardous publishing venture seems to have recurred to Byron during the period of fraught financial dealing in 1820. Between April and July 1820, Murray delayed the publication of Cantos III and IV unsure of how they would affect his reputation. Meanwhile, Byron was preoccupied with mortgage, funds, insurance and conflicting advice from Kinnaird and Hanson:

Between the devil and deep Sea,  
Between the Lawyer and Trustee? -

[....] I am at my wits' end betwixt your contrary opinions [....] I prefer higher Interest for my Money (like everyone else I believe) and shall be glad to make as much as I can at the least risk possible. (BLJ, VII, 69)

Byron's epigram on indecision was replaced in a later letter about the same financial dilemma with a quotation from Gay's *Beggar's Opera*:

'Or this way, or that way, or which way I will -  
Whate'er I decide, t'other bride will take ill. - ['].  
(BLJ, VII, 72)

As Byron's finances were bound up in a marriage settlement with Lady Byron it is perhaps unsurprising that the fluctuations of funds and rates of interest were imaginatively associated by him with sexual mutability. In June Byron

wrote that he would 'make no further limitation about the price of Stocks - and must take [his] chance' (BLJ, VII, 116). These arrangements ran into those for the official separation of Teresa Guiccioli from her husband ('committing [herself], forever' (BLJ, VII, 110)). The uncertainties of risk and return were inevitably refigured in Byron's writing at the same time as, for example *Marino Faliero*:

DOGE. The die is cast. (I. 2. 564)

DOGE.                    I have set my little left  
Of life upon this cast: the die was thrown.  
(III. 1. 54-55)

DOGE. The die is thrown [...]  
I am settled and bound up, and being so,  
The very effort which it cost me to  
Resolve to cleanse this commonwealth with fire,  
Now leaves my mind more steady. (IV. 2. 32; 73-76)

Part of the material included by Byron to make an appendix for *Marino Faliero* dealt with the history of casinos in Venice:

'It was a strange sight to see persons of either sex masked, or grave in their magisterial robes, round a table, invoking chance, and giving way at one instant to the agonies of despair, at the next to the illusion of hope, and that without uttering a single word.' (CPW, IV, 541-42))

The dramatic potential of this scene is evident but it would also have appealed to Byron as an exploration of the contingencies which shaped his career. *Marino Faliero* was written during a period of suspension in the composition of *Don Juan* as Murray delayed over publication of Cantos III and IV. Canto V was written between October and December 1820 but Canto VI was not begun until early in 1822 - the well-recorded cause of the

interruption being Teresa Guiccioli.<sup>54</sup> 1822 has been established as a turning-point in the history of *Don Juan* and in Cantos VII and VIII we can see a heightened frequency of images of risk and financial calculation as Byron counted the cost of divorce with his publisher and his readership.

Canto VII is framed by invocations of chance: in stanza 1 Byron invokes 'Love' and 'Glory':

we lift on high  
Our eyes in search of either lovely light.

And in stanza 87, we pass through 'that awful pause, dividing life from death,' alerted to 'the shouts of either faith'. The use of the word 'either' has a reductive effect as it attributes the differences between faiths and the choices involved in decision-making to chance. This effacement of difference continued in the image of Suwarrow as a 'dancing Light,/ Which all who saw it followed, wrong or right' (VII. 46). In this case, the word 'or' renders moral judgement meaningless in the same way that Barnadine's appearance in *Measure for Measure* upsets Duke Vincentio's scales of justice and disrupts his measures of verse:

BARNADINE. Friar, not I. I have been drinking hard all night, and I will have more time to prepare me, or they shall beat out my brains with billets. I will not consent to die this day, that's certain.

DUKE. O sir, you must; and therefore I beseech you

Look forward on the journey you shall go.

BARNADINE. I swear I will not die today for any man's persuasion.

DUKE. But hear you -

BARNADINE. Not a word. If you have anything to say to me, come to my ward: for thence will not I today. Exit.

<sup>54</sup>For discussion of Teresa Guiccioli's interruption of *Don Juan*, see Steffan, I, 38-40. For a more theoretical discussion of the importance of gender as the dynamic of *Don Juan*'s narrative, see Susan J. Wolfson, "'Their She Condition': Cross-dressing and the Politics of Gender in *Don Juan*," *English Literary History*, 54 (1987), 585-617.



DUKE. Unfit to live or die! O gravel heart. (IV. 3. 52-63)<sup>55</sup>

But while Byron the narrator refuses to endorse any single course of action (having been accused of '[under-rating...] human power and virtue' (VII. 3)), the digressive narration persistently reassesses the risks and liabilities of Ismail. One of the effects of intermittent allusions is to give the reader multiple perspectives on the subject of warfare. Castelnau is versified so that historical narrative may be juxtaposed with classical battle scenes.<sup>56</sup>

The mixture of Castelnau, Homer and Shakespeare allows the reader to weigh the rhetorical designs of ancient with more contemporary ones, for example, the inscriptions of Waterloo as an epic with Wellington as epic hero.<sup>57</sup> *Don Juan* weaves the stock phrases of warfare with the vocabulary of gaming and financial dealing so that heroic action is inextricably bound up with the speculative economic base of Regency England:

The second object was to profit by  
     The moment of the general consternation,  
 To attack the Turk's flotilla, which lay nigh  
     Extremely tranquil, anchored at its station:  
 But a third motive was as probably  
     To frighten them into capitulation;  
 A phantasy which sometimes seizes warriors,  
 Unless they are game as Bull-dogs and Fox-terriers. (VII. 24)

<sup>55</sup>Barnadine is a wonderful manifestation of the recalcitrance of the body before abstract ideals. Many stage productions choose to present Barnadine naked to emphasise this point - so that he appears as both unaccommodated and unaccommodating man. Barnadine offers a model for the disconcerting physical phenomenon of Byron's digressive allusions.

<sup>56</sup>See Peter J. Manning, *Byron and His Fictions*, pp.207-10. Manning refers to Byron's 'free raiding of the past' in his use of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the Siege of Ismail episode, see also Peter Cochran, 'Byron and Castelnau's *History of New Russia*', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 8 (1993-94), 48-70.

<sup>57</sup>For detailed investigations of Waterloo as text, see Philip Shaw, 'Commemorating Waterloo: Wordsworth, Southey and the "Muse's Page of State"', and Simon Bainbridge, 'To "Sing it Rather Better": Byron, The Bards, and Waterloo' in *Romanticism* 1.1 (1995), 50-67; 68-81. See also Timothy Webb, 'Byron and the Heroic Syllables', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 5 (1990), 41-74.

'Le second objet était de profiter' was suggested by Castelnau, but Byron emphasised the chanciness of gaming by using 'probably' for 'le plus plausible' and by introducing the image of the gaming ring in the last line of the stanza. The mixture of registers is suggestive of the way that Byron introduces a market frame of reference into the battle scene highlighting the double sense of 'heavy losses'. 'A sad miscalculation' (VII. 28) uses a gentleman's expression for an unexpected outcome to account for a huge military blunder. By intermittently picking up this thread of sporting vocabulary, Byron maximises the reader's sense of incongruity and also alerts us to different ways of counting (and accounting). The sporting register suggests the insouciance of the class of society which, like the Duke of Wellington in Canto IX, would always gain from battle:

Whether it was their engineer's stupidity,  
     Their haste, or waste, I neither know nor care,  
 Or some contractor's personal cupidity,  
     Saving his soul by cheating in the ware  
 Of homicide, but there was no solidity  
     In the new batteries erected there;  
 They either missed, or they were never missed,  
 And added greatly to the missing list. (VII. 27)

The word-play on 'missed/missing' uses the language of gamesmanship (emphasised by 'cheating') to infer that certain parties had only a casual interest in what was at stake. In this way, the allusive texture of *Don Juan* persistently links Ismail with Regency London.<sup>58</sup> The narrator makes obsessive use of the language of finance, betting and risk: the casino of institutional finance recurs in stanza 29 when Byron describes a cannonade 'which was returned with interest'; Suwarrow, we are told, 'could afford to squander/ His time' (VII. 52). This frequency of reference to market forces suggests that as well as investing literary sources in the war cantos, Byron has

<sup>58</sup>For Malcolm Kelsall's analysis of the way that the Ismail satire also turns on Regency London, see Kelsall, pp.160-80.

inscribed the narration of *Don Juan* with the fluctuating funds whose degrees of risk so preoccupied him in 1820. By drawing attention to the economic basis for fighting or writing, *Don Juan* insists on the link between commerce and the consumption of literature. The process of risk and return is actually experienced by the reader in the allusive texture of the poem.

When Ismail is compared with hell in Canto VIII, the narrative becomes almost overwhelmed with intertextual games of chance:

The statesman, hero, harlot, lawyer - ward  
 Off each attack, when people are in quest  
 Of their designs, by saying they *meant well*;  
 'Tis pity 'that such meaning should pave Hell.'

I almost lately have begun to doubt  
 Whether Hell's pavement - if it be *so paved* -  
 Must not have latterly been quite worn out,  
 Not by the numbers Good Intent hath saved,  
 But by the mass who go below without  
 Those ancient good intentions, which once shaved  
 And smoothed the brimstone of that street of Hell  
 Which bears the greatest likeness to Pall Mall. (VIII. 25-6)

As McGann points out 'hell', is slang for a gambling club; Byron had already used this term in *Hints from Horace* (l.239; CPW, V, 733).<sup>59</sup> In *Don Juan*, however, an obstacle is thrown into the path of the reader when Byron supplies one of his dead-pan footnotes: 'The Portuguese proverb says that 'Hell is paved with good intentions.' (CPW, V, 732). The authorial intrusion serves both to remind the reader that Byron is widely travelled and to alert us to another pun on 'hell' which lies under the stanzas: Shakespeare's sonnet 129 ends:

All this the world well knows, yet none knows well  
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

<sup>59</sup>Reports in *Galignani's Messenger* throughout July 1822 described how 'prodigious sums have been lost in the H-lls lately' (No. 2309). For the relationship between Byron's verse and this newspaper, see Chapter Five, pp.288-303.

'Hell' in this couplet carries the slang sense of pudendum. This biological association reminds us that Catherine of Russia's caprice is behind the Siege of Ismail. In the stanza immediately following the ones on 'Hell' we encounter the 'strange chance' of Juan being separated from the rest of his side. Byron overtly alludes to the working of circumstance in his own career when he likens this to 'one of those odd turns of Fortune's tides' such as the division of 'chastest wives from constant husbands' sides/ Just at the close of the first bridal year' (VIII. 27). His allusion takes the chance that readers will interpolate the personal frame of reference.

The narrator's own interest in the workings of 'Chance, Providence, or Fate' (VII. 76) becomes evident in the discussion of the 'roll of Fame' (VII. 32):

Renown's all hit or miss;  
There's Fortune even in fame, we must allow. (VII. 33)

As Chapter Three of this thesis has suggested, Byron's sense of having the odds stacked against him led him to use the same motif in his prose (self) defence of Pope in 'Some Observations upon an Article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*' (1820). Speaking of the disciples of Pope 'who have not had their full fame', Byron observed, 'there is a Fortune in Fame as in all other things' (Nicholson, p.117). The 'artillery's hits or misses' at Ismail therefore dramatise in graphic form the random chances of survival and success which Byron felt also applied to the literary world and his own reception. In stanza 34, he speaks of men whose names are 'buried in the heap of such transactions', again using a market metaphor to figure the loss of personal identity as an occlusion by bills and receipts.

The satire of the Siege Cantos is directed, in part, at the rulers who equate human with financial loss: Suwarrow, we are told, 'calculated life as so

much dross' (VII. 77) and the cheapness of life is inscribed in the orders he follows:

'You will take Ismail at whatever price.' (VII. 40)

Potemkin's letter to Suwarrow turns Ismail into an auction and also spurs Byron the narrator into a further reflection on public finances in England. The vehemence of the attack on English delusion in stanzas 44 and 45 anticipates the tone of the Wellington stanzas and is similarly focused on the mismanagement of 'his purse' (VII. 44):

Debt he calls wealth, and taxes, Paradise. (VII. 45)<sup>60</sup>

The reference to England's economic mismanagement seems to have been triggered by the image of celebration at Suwarrow's approach - 'all presaged Good Fortune to their cause' (VII. 47).

As is well known Byron detested the way that Wellington had been credited with success ('And Waterloo has made the world your debtor' (IX. 3)). In terms of the 'Fortune in fame', Wellington's career was the inverse of Byron's.<sup>61</sup> *Don Juan*, however, makes the most of the idea of fortune not only as a plot device (as in the lots which are made from Julia's letter or the London marriage market which turns out to be a sort of 'gaming' (XIV. 18)), but as a process in which the reader takes part in the hazard of digression.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup>See the overlap between this stanza, Scott's letter to Byron, and one of the poems published in *Galvani's Messenger* in Chapter Five, pp. 293-94.

<sup>61</sup>Insofar as 1815 was a threshold after which Byron's reputation fell in England whilst Wellington's rose. See also *Lady Blessington's Conversations of Lord Byron*, ed. by Ernest J. Lovell Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p.204: "It was the exaggerated praises of the people in England [...] that indisposed me to the Duke of Wellington."

<sup>62</sup>The image of writing as a sort of gambling occurs in Prior's 'An Epistle to Fleetwood Shepherd Esq.':

'That writing is but just like dice,  
And lucky mains make people wise;  
That jumbled words, if fortune throw 'em,  
Shall, well as Dryden, form a poem (l. 71-74).

(*The Poetical Works of Matthew Prior* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1858))

And then with tears, and sighs, and some slight kisses,  
 They parted for the present, these to await,  
 According to the artillery's hits or misses,  
 What Sages call Chance, Providence, or Fate -  
 Uncertainty is one of many blisses,  
 A mortgage on Humanity's estate -  
 While their beloved friends began to arm,  
 To burn a town which never did them harm. (VII. 76)

The choice of 'blisses' is predictable in terms of the rhyme, but unexpected in that it locates heightened delight, even sexual pleasure (with the echo of 'kisses') in 'uncertainty'. The 'mortgage' metaphor supplies a negative financial frame of reference of disturbing proximity but it cannot cancel the sudden openness to chance which we sense in the third rhyme. In this stanza we can hear Byron undercutting a universal acceptance of 'Chance, Providence, or Fate', but on the level of the individual, Byron embraces small scale unpredictability - the 'beloved' sexual irresponsibility of Juan and Dudù. This small instance of (unsafe) sexual waywardness seems to offer resistance to the large scale (wholesale) chance of arming 'to burn a town which never did them harm'.<sup>63</sup>

Byron used the idea of uncertainty as a pleasure in *Sardanapalus*:

SARDANAPALUS. There's something sweet in my uncertainty  
 I would not change for your Chaldean lore. (II. 1. 263-4)

It is interesting that this positive sense of 'uncertainty' is not found in Byron's verse before 1821. *Sardanapalus* was written during the period of suspension in the composition of *Don Juan*. Werner, too, dates from this time and here also Byron dramatised moments of uncertainty.<sup>64</sup> It is not until he

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<sup>63</sup>See the conclusion of this discussion p. 272 below.

<sup>64</sup>The word 'uncertain' appears before 1820 in Byron's poetry in *Beppo* to characterise 'the most uncertain age' (22), and in *Don Juan* Canto I to describe 'the end of fame': "'tis but to fill / A certain portion of uncertain paper' (I. 218). It is interesting that the word enters Byron's verse with the comic use of *ottava rima*.

returned to *Don Juan*, however, that variability could be inscribed as texture. Digressive allusion plays a major role in the construction of this 'bliss' as the reader is teased by the possibility of multiple echoes and different sorts of allusion.

Byron's games with allusion are games with predictability and chance because the reader's response is an unknown quantity. Bernard Beatty has observed that a characteristically Byronic technique is to offer a mode, subvert it, but then endorse it in an unexpected fashion. Beatty, however, does not elaborate on the crucial role of the reader in fashioning unexpectedness.<sup>65</sup> We can sample the multiple layers of allusion in Byron's use of Shakespeare in Cantos VII and VIII: our gaze is prefigured by the 'two poor girls', transported from the harem to the field of Ismail, who 'with swimming eyes,/ Looked on as if in doubt if they could trust' (VII. 73). Their uncertainty, delicately rendered by the two 'ifs', offers an image for the way we see the surface of the poem 'swimming'. Byron's digressive allusions appear leading us to more submerged allusions, or not: sometimes the trail of other texts will offer an extensive digressive labyrinth whilst at other times, an allusion will only offer a single *fons et origo*.

One of the less obtrusive ways in which Shakespearean dramas are embedded in *Don Juan* is when they appear to set a scene. We can hear echoes of the Henry plays in the preparation for warfare, for example in the image of Suwarrow training the soldiers, 'Just as you'd break a sucking salamander/ To swallow flame, and never take it ill' and in the mention of the 'sucking hero' (VII. 52; 83).<sup>66</sup> The penultimate stanza of Canto VII is a compound of Shakespearean pre-battle moments:

<sup>65</sup>See Bernard Beatty, 'Byron and the Paradoxes of Nationalism' in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. by Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), pp.152-62 (p.154).

<sup>66</sup>The word 'sucking' in Shakespearean drama signals innocent ineptitude: 'any sucking dove' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I. 2. 85), 'the sucking lamb or harmless dove' (*Henry VI*, III. 1. 71); 'every sucking babe' (*Henry V*, III. 1. 197). 'Salamander' appears only once in Shakespeare's plays, but that is in the quasi-military context of one of Falstaff's speeches: 'I

Hark! through the silence of the cold, dull night,  
 The hum of armies gathering rank on rank!  
 Lo! dusky masses steal in dubious sight  
 Along the leaguered wall and bristling bank  
 Of the armed river, while with straggling light  
 The stars peep through the vapours dim and dank  
 Which curl in curious wreaths - How soon the smoke  
 Of Hell shall pall them in a deeper cloak. (VII. 86)

McGann picks up the echo of *Macbeth* (I. 5. 50-53), but we can also hear the chorus of *Henry V* describe the 'hum of either army' before Agincourt in the Prologue to Act IV. The 'dusky masses' offer a resonance from the description of 'smoke and dusky vapours of the night' in I *Henry VI* (II. 2. 27) and the 'straggling light' provides a flickering glimpse of the 'poor straggling soldiers' of *Timon of Athens* (V. 1. 7).

Human battle in *Don Juan* is shown to create a 'Hell' and, with Shakespeare, Byron merges a Miltonic account of mischief in waiting. The 'dusky masses [stealing]' and the 'vapours [...] which curl in curious wreaths' invoke Milton's Satan as he moves towards Eden and Eve in *Paradise Lost* ('Aloft, incumbent on the dusky Air' (I. 226); 'In duskie wreathes, reluctant flames, the signe/ Of wrath awaked' (VI. 58-9); 'Curled many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve' (IX. 517)). It is important that none of these echoes constitute direct or signalled allusions: Milton and Shakespeare form at this point a compound memory of epic warfare; they allow the poet and reader to touch familiar material before the texture is disrupted.

In Canto VIII Shakespearean contexts figure both as familiar background and as estranged moments of foreground. *Othello* rises to the

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have maintained that salamander of yours with fire any time these two and thirty years' (I *Henry IV*, III. 3. 45-6). In the same speech, Falstaff mocks Bardolph's face: 'I never see thy face but I think upon hell-fire [...] When thou ran'st up Gad's Hill in the night to catch my horse, if I did not think thou hadst been an *ignis fatuus*, or a ball of wild fire, there's no purchase in money' (29-39; 36-9). The figures of fire, the *ignis fatuus* and money all recur in the Siege Cantos. Byron uses the 'salamander' image in *Don Juan* XIV and the *Deformed Transformed*.



surface as a source of military images. In stanza 8, 'the roar / Of War's most mortal engines' draws on Othello's willed departure from his occupation:

You mortal engines, whose rude throats  
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit, Farewell.  
(III. 3. 355)

In terms of tone, this echo is entirely congruent with the frame of reference at Ismail as Byron describes the threshold of a new viciousness in the history of warfare. Othello's chaos haunts the evocation of military chaos in stanza 82:

the heat  
Of Carnage, like the Nile's sun-sodden Slime,  
Engendered monstrous shapes of every Crime. (VIII. 82)

McGann's commentary refers the reader to Cuvier at this point, but it seems more likely that Byron is compounding the sexual revels of Antony and Cleopatra ('By the fire/ That quickens Nilus' slime' (I. 3. 69)), with Iago's destructive designs:

I ha't, it is engender'd; Hell and night  
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light. (I. 3. 401-2)

Mingled in this fluid allusive texture is Alexander Pope's creation of the upside-down world in Canto IV of *The Rape of the Lock*:

A constant Vapour o'er the palace flies;  
Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;  
[...]  
Unnumber'd throngs on ev'ry side are seen,  
Of bodies chang'd to various forms by Spleen (IV. 40-1; 47-8)

- offering another disturbingly sexual scene of misshapen bodies.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Alexander Pope, *Poetical Works*, ed. by Herbert Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966; repr.1978).

Again we can see that the Shakespearean echoes are not signalled, and are not against the grain of the narrative. The different threads within the poem's texture may or may not be traced. When Juan finds his 'blood stirred while he found resistance,/ As is the hunter's at the five-bar gate' (VIII. 55), Byron weaves together his unsettling strand of gamesmanship with the changing temperament of the king in *I Henry IV*: 'My blood hath been [...] Unapt to stir' (I. 3. 2); 'O, the blood more stirs/ To rouse a lion than to start a hare' (I. 3. 195-96). Not surprisingly, the sporting register is latent in his Shakespearean material. When Juan is presented 'Flung here by Fate or Circumstance [...], hurried by the time and place,/ Dashed on like a spurred blood-horse in a race' (VIII. 54), we can hear the urgency echoing from a messenger in *Richard II*, 'Bloody with spurring, fiery-red with haste' (II. 3. 58).

Another moment coloured with a Shakespearean register might catch the reader slightly off-balance as Byron considers 'the people':

The veriest jade will wince whose harness wrings  
 So much into the raw as quite to wrong her  
 Beyond the rules of posting, - and the Mob  
 At last fall sick of imitating Job. (VIII. 50)

McGann's commentary identifies this as an echo of Hamlet (III. 2. 245-6):

Let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.

There is, however, another Shakespearean source which carries the sense of 'the people' starting to stir to a recognition of injustice. At the beginning of Act II in *I Henry IV*, two carriers and an ostler converse in an inn yard:

FIRST CARRIER. I prithee, Tom, beat Cut's saddle, put a few  
 flocks in the point; poor jade is wrung in the withers out of all  
 cess.

SECOND CARRIER. Peas and beans are as dank here as a dog,  
and that is the next way to give poor jades the bots: this house is  
turned upside down since Robin Ostler died.

Although the line from *Hamlet* is a closer linguistic echo, it has almost certainly been compounded with the sense of mistreatment ('Beyond the rules of posting') from the scene in *Henry IV*. This allows us to see how Byron responded to Shakespeare's particularity: the wording from *Hamlet* is taken up as a verbally odd catch-phrase, but the emotional dynamic of the stanza comes from a specific dramatic incident.

More of the Shakespearean matrix of Canto VIII can be seen in stanza 43 as the reader is teased with the possibility of multiple allusions, and of the widely differing tone of the allusive process:

They fell as thick as harvests beneath hail,  
Grass before scythes, or corn below the sickle,  
Proving that trite old truth, that life's as frail  
As any other boon for which men stickle.<sup>68</sup>  
The Turkish batteries thrashed them like a flail  
Or a good boxer, into a sad pickle,  
Putting the very bravest, who were knocked  
Upon the head, before their guns were cocked. (VIII. 43)

McGann's commentary informs the reader that the first two lines of this stanza are Biblical (CPW, V, 733). It would be in keeping with the process of *Don Juan* to refer to the Old Testament as 'trite old truth', but it is also one of Byron's characteristic ways of crediting Shakespeare:

I think one Shakespeare puts the same thought in  
The mouth of some one in his plays so doating,  
Which many people pass for wits by quoting. (VII. 21)

<sup>68</sup>'Stickle' is an unusual use of the word as a verb. OED gives it as 'To be busy, stirring, or energetic; to strive or contend pertinaciously to take an active part (in a cause) *Obs*. Most sample uses of the word occur in seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century writers, except, interestingly, for the sense of 'to haggle' where the first recorded use is 1819 Keats *Otho the Great*, IV. 1. 103. The use of 'boon' or 'free gift' seems to suggest this latter sense for 'stickle' in which case, Byron is again introducing an image of financial negotiation into the battle.

The elegiac image of collapsing troops is undercut by a coarser register of haggling ('As any other boon for which men stickle'). Byron also disturbs the harvest simile by introducing the physical labour of agriculture ('thrashed them like a flail'), and then by slipping into the slang of prize fights and eating ('pickle' in OED carries the meanings of preserved food, a sorry plight, and a single grain of wheat or oats).

The battle as harvest occurs several times in Shakespearean drama, most notably in *Henry V*, with Henry's speech before Harfleur:

If I begin the batt'ry once again [...]  
     the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,  
 In liberty of bloody hand shall range  
 With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass  
 Your fresh-fair virgins and your flow'ring infants. (III. 3. 7-14)

This moment from the history plays may be filtered through an account of Macbeth's military achievements:

As thick as hail,  
 Came post with post; and everyone did bear thy  
 Thy praises. (I. 3. 97-8)

Byron's stanza may also be drawing on Shelley's *Hellas*,

the batteries blazed  
 Kneading them down with fire and iron rain:  
 Yet none approached till like a field of corn  
 Under the hook of the swart sickleman  
 The band, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,  
 Grew weak. (l.380-85)

In stanza 43 we can identify 'as thick as [...] hail' from *Macbeth*, the image of about-to-be mown grass from *Henry V*, and the sense of the imminent destruction of 'corn' under the 'sickle' from *Hellas*. It appears here that Byron

is using a compound of other texts creating a dense literary texture of warfare. The stanza resists absorption by tragedy, however, by qualifying the simile with 'Or a good boxer'. This phrase re-introduces the sporting/gambling frame of reference continued in the choice of 'Putting'; a game of gentle contact with cannon- ball shaped objects on a green which offers an ironic reflection of the activity of Ismail from a more leisurely 'time and place' (VIII. 54).

The underlying Shakespearean texture of allusion is built-up in order to be qualified. Byron's use of former battle scenes to describe Ismail offers layers of familiarity against which he can juxtapose Shakespearean scenes wrenched out of context:

Then comes 'the tug of war;' - 'twill come again,  
I rather doubt; and I would fain say 'fie on't,'  
If I had not perceived that Revolution  
Alone can save the Earth from Hell's pollution.

But to continue. (VIII. 51-52)

The signalled allusion to *Hamlet* (I. 2. 135; not noted by CPW) occurs just after the 'veriest jade' image. The juxtaposition of different Shakespearean moments offers the reader conflicting tones of humane pity at the state of the people and a sense of nausea at the way the world goes.

This assemblage of particular instances of conflict undercuts the abstract ideal of the isolated hero - and works to question the generalising tendencies of epic writing. The same process of insistent physical presentation may be seen to occur between VIII. 39 and 41. Here Jonathan Bate has noted that the assimilated allusion to *Hamlet*, 'We shall not see his likeness' (VIII. 39), occurs between two overt references,

they came  
Unto his call, unlike 'the Spirits from  
The vasty deep', to whom you may exclaim,

Says Hotspur, long ere they will leave their home. (VIII.  
38)

and

Unto that rather misty bourn,  
Which Hamlet tells us is a pass of dread. (VIII. 41)

Bate comments that 'the negative comparison, *unlike*, and the shift of tone effected by "rather somewhat" ensure that Byron retains his independence from Shakespeare [...] in contrast to the usual Romantic striving for similarity with Shakespeare' (Bate, pp.242-43).

Rather than proclaiming 'difference' *from* Shakespeare, *Don Juan* allows the reader to perceive difference *in* Shakespeare: familiar quotations are realised in unexpected ways. The reader passes over faint traces of previous texts, or follows them to unfold new vistas. This is directed in part by the surface of the poem which leads us to focus on some layers, but it also leaves us to focus on others. The tendency of digressive allusion to materialise before the reader, offering what has been heard before in varying guise, is figured in stanza 38 in 'that odd impulse'. 'Odd' is a word which recurs throughout Canto VIII: 'some odd angle' (VIII. 20), 'one of those odd turns of Fortune's tides' (VIII. 27), 'Some odd mistakes too happened in the dark' (VIII. 130). It is a word which signals unpredictability or irregularity: the odd one is the surplus or the remainder, 'the third man [...] who gives the casting vote' (OED). The 'odds' represent 'chances' or 'balances of probability in favour of something happening or being the case' (OED).

When Byron incorporates a signalled allusion there is a strong probability that the reader will recognise it; the uncertainty consists in what the new configuration (or the reader's casting vote) will be. When Byron refers to 'that rather somewhat misty bourn' (VIII. 41), he is using a

distancing technique not to demonstrate independence from Shakespeare (that would hardly work anyway), but to allow the reader to re-focus on 'misty bourn' in the light of the 'thickest fire' (VIII. 32), 'Monsoon' (VIII. 39), and Juan who:

knew not where he was, nor greatly cared,  
For he was dizzy, busy, and his veins  
Filled as with lightning. (VIII. 33)

The digressive allusion on *Hamlet* invites the reader to acknowledge its artificiality and then to actualise an image from the play, to work out precisely how misty the bourn was. In the same way, the reference to 'Those who catch cold in "shadows of Death's valley"' (VIII. 36) alerts the reader to the form of words which propose comfort, and then to the temperature and visibility in the 'valley' below the 'bastion, battery, parapet, / Rampart, wall, casement, house' (VIII. 37).

Throughout Cantos VII and VIII we can see digressive allusion functioning as a process of questioning received patterns of language:

'Ashes to ashes' - why not lead to lead? (VIII. 10)

- followed by an insistence on literal reading:

'God save the king!' and kings!  
For if *he* don't, I doubt if *men* will longer. (VIII. 50)

As well as deploying unexpected signalled allusions in the Siege of Ismail Byron also makes use of that other mode of digression, the parenthetical aside. In Canto VIII, parentheses can function as a temporal space in which or during which someone is killed:

He climbed to where the parapet appears;

But there his project reached its utmost pitch,  
 ('Mongst other deaths the General Ribaupierre's  
 Was much regretted) for the Moslem Men  
 Threw them all down into the ditch again. (VIII. 71)

The parenthesis here holds a fragment of official speech, but its insertion in the failed 'joke' of Koutousow (VIII. 70) deprives it of the high value it would have had in a different context. Three stanzas later, the narrator digresses to indulge a minor correction:

The Kozacks, or if so you please, Cossacques -  
 (I don't much pique myself upon orthography,  
 So that I do not grossly err in facts,  
 Statistics, tactics, politics and geography)-  
 Having been used to serve on horses' backs,  
 And no great dilettanti in topography  
 Of fortresses, but fighting where it pleases  
 Their chiefs to order, - were all cut to pieces. (VIII. 74)

The parenthesis here makes an incursion on the territory of the footnote beloved by the Society of Dilettanti, but in the time it takes to suggest the dilettanti's attention to the proper name for 'Cossacques', the whims of the chiefs they work to please have cancelled their existence anyway.

Digressive allusion may therefore be seen as a vehicle of individual uncertainty which stands against (rather than reflecting) the massive uncertainties of Ismail. From a humanist perspective, the digressions of the war cantos affirm the ability of Juan, the narrator, and (crucially) the reader to behave unpredictably in an environment where the scale of 'Fate, or Circumstance' threatens to cancel out the particular.<sup>69</sup> When Shakespearean

<sup>69</sup>The importance of 'uncertainty' in *Don Juan* is illuminated by Michael G. Cooke in 'Byron's *Don Juan*: The Obsession and Self-Discipline of Spontaneity', *Studies in Romanticism*, 14 (1975), 285-302. Cooke focuses on the disconcerting effects of Byron's *ottava rima* in *The Blind Man Traces the Circle*. In this sensitive exploration of the 'protean elusiveness of certitude' Cooke finds that Byron's incessant habit of qualification does not produce 'sheer instability'; rather that the style 'retards definitive conclusions less by changing the mind than by swarming it with variegated data' (*The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, pp.99; 45). The book's chapter on *Don Juan* equates 'sense of incertitude' with 'the exposition of inextricable duality'



texts are overtly signalled, therefore, it is important that they are not easy guarantees of success or artistic 'independence'. By signalling the 'oddness' of allusion, and by not signalling it consistently, Byron demands that the reader makes his or her 'casting vote'. As the Roland Barthes passage with which I began this chapter suggests, however, to recognise oddness, the reader has also to assist in the construction of continuity. What Byron achieves in Cantos VI, VII, and VIII is the construction of a Shakespearean texture in which Shakespearean text can still turn up as a 'trump card' (VIII. 25). In order to examine these literary digressive allusions, however, it has been necessary to neglect the digressive allusions which invite the reader to come to terms with a more public sphere of action. The next chapter of the thesis will consider *Don Juan's* play with the public communication of newspapers.

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but Cooke counters the charge of nihilism with observations about the 'force of analysis' at work in *Don Juan* and more generally to the 'austere sense of responsibility to be principled and humane in action' which Cooke identifies in Byron's thought (*The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, pp.150; 162; 182). The later article develops this approach as Cooke affirms the 'aesthetic discipline and shapeliness underlying the free play of *Don Juan*' (p.299). Cooke places more emphasis on the 'sense of stability' (p.300) in *Don Juan*, than this thesis does. I would argue that the 'shapeliness' of the *ottava rima* verse form offers a stability which is continually put at risk by the surface texture of the language. I would also dispute Cooke's argument that 'there is an affirmative thrust toward reconstitution underlying the overt dissolution of the hero in the poem' (p.291), and that this leads to a 'transcendental' Aurora (pp. 301-302). See also the comparison between Byron and Shelley in John Watkins, 'Byron and the Phenomenology of Negation', *Studies in Romanticism* 29 (1990), 395-411.

## CHAPTER FIVE: 'THE LABYRINTH OF EXTERNAL OBJECTS'

In this chapter, the mode of digressive allusion examined in Chapter Four will be further refined. I will continue to discuss the effects of various Shakespearean traces in the poem, but I will also consider how these are complicated by the incorporation of material from the linguistically less complex source of contemporary newspapers. Digressive allusion is a mode which leads the reader to incorporate journalistic details in the fabric of the poem, but it also opens literary texture of the poem to the random chance of historical particulars. Following the investigation of *Don Juan's* play with the *Gazettes*, the issue of contingency is focused on 'feminine Caprice' which is thematised in the plot of the poem, but which is also closely linked with the digressive mode of the narrator. In the latter sections of the chapter, emphasis falls on the English Cantos and particularly on the way that the reader is drawn into complex allusive play *and* the dynamics of an intricately constructed plot. The discussion of contingency and materiality in Byron's verse is then taken up in a discussion of Byron's modernity which forms my conclusion.

### 5.1 *Macbeth* in *Don Juan* Cantos IX, X, and XI

The context of *Don Juan's* heightened awareness of the *Gazettes* is the circulation of bulletins and dispatches around the battlefield. 'With bloody hands,' we are told, Suwarrow 'wrote his first dispatch' (VIII. 133) and inscribed the Siege of Ismail:

He wrote this Polar melody, and set it,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to OED, 'polar' at this time only has connotations of geographical or mathematical regions or forces. Byron, however, seems to be endowing the word with infernal or nightmarish significance which reminds the reader of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' or *Frankenstein*.

Duly accompanied by shrieks and groans,  
 Which few will sing, I trust, but none forget it -  
     For I will teach, if possible, the stones  
 To raise against Earth's tyrants. Never let it  
     Be said that we still truckle unto thrones;<sup>-2</sup>  
 But ye - our children's children! think how we  
 Showed *what things were* before the world was free! (VIII. 135)

Following the harvest imagery which was discussed in the last chapter, this stanza offers more echoes from *Macbeth*, a play which ghosts the reader across Cantos IX, X, and XI. In the collective associations of 'bloody hands', 'shrieks and groans', 'Earth's tyrants', and the recurrent appearance of children, we recognise fragments of regicide and tyranny as dramatised in *Macbeth*.

The stanza above summons memories of the scene in which Macduff asks after his children, 'The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?', and Rosse describes the condition of Scotland 'Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air/ Are made, not mark'd' (IV. 3. 168-9). This splintered recollection offers another instance of the return of something known made strange by contexts of time and place. *Macbeth* is unloosed into the present and, by being inserted into Shakespearean drama, the Siege of Ismail becomes entwined with the legacy of national British theatre and literary heroes. It is an example of how the texture of *Don Juan* blends historical events and things with literary culture, but conversely opens literary culture to quotidian, physical things.

In treating the political contexts of *Don Juan*, Malcolm Kelsall has discussed the way in which Byron's tirades against absolute monarchs fail to carry absolute conviction.<sup>3</sup> Kelsall quotes stanza 135 (above), and remarks

<sup>2</sup>The verb 'truckle' is not used in Shakespearean drama. OED suggests that the word is associated with constitutional debate and international relations (particularly in the seventeenth century). This would support Kelsall's argument about early nineteenth-century Whigs drawing on the rhetoric of 1688.

<sup>3</sup>Kelsall, pp.146-193. Kelsall argues that 'the political subject of *Don Juan* is the *ancien régime*' (p.146) but he suggests that 'statements of political intent' such as the one in VIII. 135 are

that 'the last thing Juan is doing in Europe is raising stones against tyrants' (Kelsall, p.150). This observation is correct in terms of narrative outline, but I would like to emphasise the effect of the stanza's literary resonances of stones and tyrants from Shakespearean drama. In *Julius Caesar*, for example, we hear how passionate speech 'should move/ The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny' (III. 2. 234); Macbeth draws on the same Biblical/ proverbial expression when he fears that the 'very stones prate of my whereabouts' (II. 1. 58). In all cases, what moves the stones to rise or speak is the felt presence of a bleeding human body.<sup>4</sup>

Inevitably, Byron's political utterances are complicated by literary repetition. The inclusion of 'if possible' in the aim of teaching stones to rise is a rhetorical signal of the gulf between rhetoric and action. *Don Juan's* digressive responses to external objects and actions are knowingly literary. Therefore, the reference to 'our children's children' which Kelsall describes as 'the closest Byron comes to millenarian Shelley' (Kelsall, p.165), is not simply a Whig deferral of action to the indefinite future, but a Shakespearean register of the memory of war in a past which is contiguous with the present. Byron does not abstract an idea of a future epoch, but talks of 'children' (like Leila), whose physical presence is emphasised throughout Canto VIII.<sup>5</sup> The inclusion of future readers as physical beings is another of the means whereby *Don Juan* alerts us to the medium of communication, and to the act of reading.

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undercut by 'the subject matter of the poem' (p.151). I hope to show how the texture of *Macbeth* compounds subject matter and political statements.

<sup>4</sup>In *Macbeth*, Duncan is about to be murdered; in Christ's case, the human body is about to undergo injury. McGarr's commentary asks the reader to 'Compare Matthew 3: 9 and *Julius Caesar*, III. 2. 229-31' (CPW, 735).

<sup>5</sup>See Carlisle's warning about usurping Richard II:

O, if you raise this house against this house,  
It will the woofullest division prove  
That ever fell upon this cursed earth.  
Prevent it, resist it, let it not be so,

Lest child, child's children, cry against you woe. (*Richard II*, IV. 1. 145-49)

and *Henry VIII*, V. 5. 53-54: 'our children's children/ Shall see this and bless'.

As the previous chapter suggests, *Don Juan's* digressive allusions continually shift the contextual frame of reference. The uses of literary and dramatic texts amidst the calls for political freedom complicate the focus on the future by superimposing fictional or mythic texts. This section of the chapter aims to explore the interplay of political and literary texts, continuing analysis of Byron's use of Shakespeare before examining the relationship between *Don Juan* and contemporary journalism.

Jerome McGann has noted two appearances of *Macbeth* in the Wellington stanzas which open Canto IX:

You are 'the best of cut-throats!' - do not start;  
The phrase is Shakespeare's, and not misapplied. (IX. 4)

I am no flatterer - you've supped full of flattery. (IX. 5)

As we have seen before, the signalled allusion alerts the reader to a text which is then reproduced more teasingly without the overt marks of quotation. The first example is more involuted than McGann suggests because after the signalled quotation, the stage direction to Wellington 'do not start' also recalls Banquo's response to Macbeth as he is addressed by the witches:

Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? (I. 3. 51-2)

Wellington's alternative investiture is complicated by the juxtaposition of Macbeth's instructions to Banquo's murderers (Act III) with Banquo's early intimation of Macbeth's sense of guilt (Act I). The discontinuous layering of *Macbeth* allusions in these two stanzas is typical of the fragmentation of Shakespearean texts in *Don Juan*. *Macbeth* swims in and out of focus through signalled allusion, unsignalled echo, parallels of action and scene construction. For the reader, the appearance or occluded presence of another

text disconcerts progress through the stanza but in retrospect consolidates our experience of the poem as we respond (or not) to each textual manoeuvre.

Macbeth, Wellington, and Catherine the Great are all related through images of tyranny and bloodshed, behaviour which is also attributed to Castlereagh in the Preface to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII. The somewhat predictable association of political leaders with military aggression is complicated by the different ways in which Juan and the narrator also borrow the text of the play. At the beginning of Canto IX the situation of Juan 'who had shone in the late slaughter' is akin to that of Macbeth at the beginning of his tragedy and the 'young Hero' Wellington at the beginning of the Canto. Juan's sudden rise to 'a high place, the highest in the nation' follows the career of 'high plac'd Macbeth' (IV. 1. 98) whilst the narrator's reflections on Juan's ambition and the corrupting effects of carnage (sexual havoc in Catherine's case) shadow the thematic preoccupations of Shakespeare's play. The verb 'batter' with which Macduff describes the relentless violence of Macbeth's rule is the one which recurs throughout the Siege of Ismail, set in motion by Catherine ('and why/ To get at thee not batter down a wall' (IX. 56)), linking her with Wellington, 'whose whole life has been assault and battery' (IX. 5).<sup>6</sup>

As we have seen with the use of *Othello* in Canto VI, *Don Juan* can make consecutive references to another text without allowing the identities of Shakespeare's speakers to settle decisively on the personae of the poem. If we see that Juan has potential as the ambitious warrior Macbeth, our awareness of that alignment is challenged by the way Catherine is a compound of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Catherine is introduced to the reader in the

<sup>6</sup>The aggressive and sexual sense of 'batter' is latent in *Troilus and Cressida* :

ULYSSES: They call this bed-work, mapp'ry, closet-war;  
So that the ram that batters down the wall,  
For the great swinge and rudeness of his poise,  
They place before his hand that made the engine. (I. 3. 205-208)

Byron is also making use of the Regency slang connotation of battering as fucking. OED gives the phrase 'on the batter' to mean a debauch (origin obscure).

attitude of Lady Macbeth, reading news of battle, a male-dominated realm of action, but we are quickly propelled forward in the action of the play as Catherine's response to Ismail's fall condenses Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's experiences of murder: 'Blood only serves to wash Ambition's hands' (IX. 59).

This is a composite version of Lady Macbeth's urgent commands to Macbeth to '*Wash your hands*' (V. 1. 68), Macbeth's anticipation of the pattern with his question, 'will all great Neptune's ocean *wash this blood* clean from my *hand*?' (II. 3. 60), and his early apprehension that he has '*only* vaulting *ambition*' to incite him to the deed (I. 7. 27: all italics mine). By concentrating these powerful fragments of the play together, Byron creates aesthetic and political recoil: horror at the sentiment expressed is made more unsettling by the literary medium which carries it.<sup>7</sup>

This medium is not a progressive re-enactment of *Macbeth*; allusions dart back to the early stages of the play and, Lady Macbeth-like, Catherine's 'feminine' responses are acknowledged in order to be overcome: 'to annul/ The shudder which runs naturally through our veins' (IX. 60). Catherine's court, following her mood 'looked immediately most sweet,/ Like flowers' (IX. 61), and strangely fulfils Lady Macbeth's advice to her husband: 'look like th'innocent flower' (I. 5. 65). In the two succeeding stanzas, Catherine's capacity for tyranny, 'she would widow all/ Nations', offers an eerie reminiscence of Macbeth's achievements: 'Each new morn/ New widows howl', whilst the scene of her infatuation with Juan is evoked through images of drinking. The ceremony of drinking with its significance as a gesture of hospitality surrounds the murder of Duncan and Byron similarly exhausts the generosity of the image:

for Cupid's cup

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<sup>7</sup>CPW's commentary refers the reader to Matthew 27: 24

With the first draught intoxicates apace,<sup>8</sup>  
 A quintessential laudanum or 'black drop,'  
 Which makes one drunk at once, without the base  
 Expedient of full bumpers; for the eye  
 In love drinks all life's fountains (save tears) dry. (IX. 67)

This offers the reader who is attuned to the frequency of *Macbeth* within the poem an echo from the speech of the intoxicated Lady Macbeth: 'That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold' (II. 2. 1), mingled with the rhetorical excess of Macbeth's disclosure of Duncan's death:

The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
 Is left this vault to brag of [...]  
 The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood  
 Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd. (II. 2. 93-97)

None of these soundings from *Macbeth* are fixed or permanent effects of the poem: their existence depends on whether or not the individual reading chooses to follow the intermittently sign-posted *Macbeth* trail.<sup>9</sup> As I have suggested, *Macbeth* is not the only Shakespearean text to feature prominently in Canto IX - Anne Barton identifies a different focus for the poem when she finds that *Hamlet* 'controls Canto IX throughout' both by 'particularised references' and, more importantly, by 'the penumbra of concerns they focus' (Barton, p.63).<sup>10</sup> Barton makes the comparison between Hamlet 'overwhelmed by his past' (Barton, p.64) in the graveyard scene, and the way that in Canto X, Byron's 'own past enters the poem for the first time wearing the guise of unabashed nostalgia' (Barton, p.64). Barton then quotes from X. 18

<sup>8</sup>The word 'apace' in the context of a discussion about love carries a haunting echo of Juliet's innocent experience of the suddenness of desire: 'Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds' (*Romeo and Juliet*, III. 2. 1).

<sup>9</sup>Another flicker of *Macbeth* occurs in IX. 16 'Life a mere affair of breath' which reminds us, in this terminal position, of Macbeth's soliloquy: 'my way of life/ Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf [...] Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath, / Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.' (V. 3. 22-28).

<sup>10</sup>I differ from Barton at this point as I do not want to suggest that any single source 'controls' the Canto. Whilst recognising that the density of allusions to particular texts changes throughout the poem, the rhetoric of 'control' is, I think, at odds with the destabilising effect of digressive allusion which *Don Juan* offers.



the lines about Scotland, but does not discuss the signalled *Macbeth* allusion which occurs in the same stanza. I shall explore the link between Byron's 'nostalgia' and *Macbeth* below. The link between the activity in Catherine's court and the preceding action at Ismail, I believe, makes significantly greater use of material from *Macbeth* than *Hamlet*, and in a different sort of way.

At the level of verbal echo, *Macbeth* rises to the surface of the poem's texture in IX. 70:

And Catherine (we must say thus much for Catherine)  
     Though bold and bloody, was the kind of thing  
 Whose temporary passion was quite flattering,  
     Because each lover looked a sort of king.

The phrase 'bold and bloody' takes us to Macbeth's consultation of the witches. The apparition of the bloody child tells him,

Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn  
 The power of man, for none of woman born  
 Shall harm Macbeth. (IV. 1. 79-81)

Following this, Macbeth sees a show of kings which all look 'like the spirit of Banquo' (IV. 1. 112), and once we locate this scene within the stanza, Catherine becomes a female Macbeth with the line of her lovers each of whom 'looked a sort of king' (IX. 70), '[stretching] out to th' crack of doom' (IV. 1. 117). If the reader allows the equivocal prophecies given to Macbeth to seep across into Byron's poem, we can hear the underlying suggestion of *Don Juan* that Catherine '[laughs] to scorn the power of man', but in a sexual rather than a military context.

It is significant that Catherine takes on the roles both of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth for it allows us to experience Byron's feminization of another Shakespearean text. The disruptive possibility of a female Macbeth is suggested again when Juan sickens and Catherine calls in the physician, a

scene which shadows the strange ailment of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth's instructions to the doctor on the subject of 'physic'.<sup>11</sup>

All of these flickering glimpses of Macbeth make the texture of the Russian Cantos more intricate for the reader even as they suggest the growing coarseness of the hero of the poem. This section of *Don Juan* conveys the loss of Juan's sensitivity: 'much flattered by her love, or lust' (IX. 77), and his experience of the laying waste of men through war and sexual exhaustion:

The millions slain by soldiers for their ration,  
The scenes like Catherine's boudoir at three-score,  
With Ismail's storm to soften it the more. (VIII. 68)

- is woven into the texture of the poem through echoes of Macbeth's tragedy, his growing immunity to 'the cry of women'. Sexual experience and murder are merged at the level of metaphor in *Macbeth*, and as Byron points out in a digressive aside, both human activities sound the same:

Oh Catherine! (for of all interjections  
To thee both *oh!* and *ah!* belong of right  
In love and war). (IX. 65)

The analogous corruption of political power and sexual appetite is apparent in *Macbeth* in the scene where Malcolm tests Macduff's offer of political allegiance. Malcolm pretends to possess the sexual craving which Catherine exercises:

there's no bottom, none,

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<sup>11</sup>Both Lady Macbeth and Juan (presumably) are unable to sleep properly. The 'whispers' (X. 40) in Catherine's court about the condition of Juan remind us of the hushed conversation between the doctor of physic and gentlewoman over Lady Macbeth's 'slumb'ry agitation' (V. 1. 11). Macbeth's dismissal of the doctor, 'Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it' (V. 3. 47) receives a distant answer when the narrator of *Don Juan* observes:

This is the way physicians mend or end us,  
Secundum artem: but although we sneer  
In health - when ill, we call them to attend us,  
Without the least propensity to jeer. (X. 42)

In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,  
Your matrons, and your maids, could not fill up  
The cistern of my lust; and my desire  
All continent impediments would o'erbear,  
That did oppose my will. (IV. 3. 60-65)

This uses the same configuration of murder and sexuality as Macbeth's realisation of violence as a loss of virginity:

My strange and self-abuse  
Is the initiate fear, that wants hard use:  
We are but young in deed. (III. 5. 141-43)

Catherine, we learn, 'always used her favourites too well' (IX. 63), and the narrator leaves us in doubt of the physicality of Juan's 'hard use':

And though the duty waxed a little hard,  
Young people at his time of life should be able  
To come off handsomely in that regard. (X. 22)<sup>12</sup>

Blithely shadowing the hardening of Macbeth, the young Juan grows up, 'able/ For love, war, or ambition' (X. 22) where the syntax suggests an amoral parity between such activities so far as Juan is concerned.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Shakespearean tragic heroes, Juan never questions his development: the reader's consciousness of *Macbeth*, instead, works to realise his or her horror of Catherine's butchery in the boudoir and on the battle field. Bernard Beatty has observed that the remorseless *double entendres* which occur in stanzas like IX. 55-57 leave the reader 'very little room for

<sup>12</sup>Byron uses *double-entendre* relentlessly throughout the Catherine episode. As sexual innuendo constitutes a kind of digressive allusion, it is worth pointing out that 'duty [waxing] a little hard' and '[coming] off handsomely' invite the reader to replace the abstract concepts of duty and service with the physical manifestations of male erection and ejaculation.

<sup>13</sup>Michael G. Cooke discusses the effect of 'ambivalence' produced by Byron's '- or -' constructions in *The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, p.102. The *Macbeth* frequency in this Canto hovers around the crux of the Porter's scene which often stands as the *locus classicus* of Shakespearean mixtures of sex and death, or comedy and tragedy.

manoeuvre' (Beatty, p.35). This linguistic helplessness doubles as a textual figure for what happens to Macbeth. The reader has to come to terms with a texture of equivocation in *Don Juan* but like other characters in the poem the reader cannot settle into the identity of any one Shakespearean hero. The reader is confronted by the juxtaposed memories of *Macbeth* from the beginning and end of the tragedy thus disrupting the chronology of the play as theatre of growing moral awareness. The genre of tragedy is therefore fragmented and displaced by the reader's act of recapturing Shakespearean allusions. Established gender roles are also upset by the substitution of a woman's sexual drive for political ambition and the creation of a female Macbeth.<sup>14</sup>

This translation (like the uses of Shakespeare noted in Chapters Two and Four) is a form of carnivalization creating a grotesquely comic version of tyranny in which the protagonists are too occupied with bodily functions to reflect or experience guilt. In this way, *Don Juan* satirises contemporary literary appreciations of *Macbeth* which depicted the hero as a disembodied, spiritual being, 'in a preternatural state [...] inclined to superstition, and faith in the unknown of signs and tokens, and super-human agencies'.<sup>15</sup> Byron's

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<sup>14</sup>Feminist critics have devoted comparatively little time to Catherine perhaps because of the outrageously misogynistic tenor of the Russian Cantos. Caroline Franklin argues that 'the reversal of roles, in both the Turkish and the Russian episodes, works to attack the double standard of sexual morality' (*Byron's Heroines* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; hereafter '*Byron's Heroines*'), p.149) but she emphasises that Byron's viewpoint is fundamentally psychological and essentialist,

the selection of the Siege of Ismail as an image of carnage, in which the warring nations are headed by a male and a female monarch, illustrates that the dynamics of sexuality and power operate in exactly the same way in men and women. This pan-sexual diagnosis of both personal and political aggression is biological in emphasis. It therefore undermines the relativist, cross-cultural format of the poem that Byron has appropriated from his histories of women. (*Byron's Heroines*, p.148)

Franklin sees the comedy of sexual role reversal as demonstrating 'the irrelevance of biological gender to the characteristic deployment of power on the battlefield and in the boudoir' (*Byron's Heroines*, p.154). In my view, the function of digressive allusion is to make the reader more aware of particularity and difference, particularly sexual difference. The flickers of Macbeth in Catherine do not demonstrate the 'irrelevance of biological gender', rather, they insist on the fleshy complexities of biological gender in power play.

<sup>15</sup>Reprinted in *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Penguin, 1992; hereafter '*Bate, The Romantics on Shakespeare*'), p.421. In political terms also, Byron is revising the view of *Macbeth* expounded by Coleridge in his 'Lectures on the Characteristics of

allusions to Shakespeare depend on a sense of the play in performance, an awareness of physical movement, gesture, and delivery of lines more akin to Hazlitt's criticism than the invisible mental theatre of Lamb.<sup>16</sup> Designed to surmount the technical constraints of early nineteenth-century theatres, mental theatre restricts the role of the reader by outlawing the physical experience of texts. *Don Juan*, by contrast, invites choices about the grain of voice and the physical bulk of allusion.

In the Wellington overture to Canto IX, Byron teasingly relinquishes the right to meditate:

I don't mean to reflect - a man so great as  
You, my Lord Duke! is far above reflection. (IX. 7)

But the reflection of rhyme ('full of flattery' / 'assault and battery' / 'more than satire, he...') is an invitation for the reader to assume a meditative prerogative instead. Catherine is untroubled by narrative events - ironically in the literary context of *Macbeth*, the loss of Juan 'Made Catherine taste next night a quiet slumber' (X. 48). The guilt or awareness of loss which results from her tyranny has to be borne by the reader and the narrator. This supplementary awareness (treading the line between an aesthetic appreciation of irony and the social involvement of responsibility) is released in digressive allusion. Catherine merely consumes the ever-

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Shakespear' (1813) as reported by the *Bristol Gazette*. According to this account of the lecture, Coleridge 'drew a comparison between the characters of Macbeth and Bonaparte - both tyrants [...] and he hoped the fate of the latter would be like the former, in failing amidst a host of foes [...] At the conclusion of his Lecture, he alluded to the success of the Allies, and complimented his country on the lead she had taken [...] England, justly proud, as she had a right to be, of a Shakespear, a Milton, a Bacon, and a Newton, could also boast of a Nelson and a Wellington' (Bate, *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, p.137).

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed examination of Hazlitt's distrust of abstraction see, Roy Park, *Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp.161-91. For Lamb's view that 'there is something in the nature of acting which levels all distinctions' and his opposition to the contemporary staging of Shakespeare which 'only materialized' the text, see Bate, *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, pp.113; 119.

extending line of her juvenile lovers; it is for the reader to pause over the flickering reminiscence of the show of kings.

Digressive allusion offers a stage set for the reader's imagination and it invites the reader to move the props and characters about. As the fictional characters and historical names of *Don Juan* swim in and out of different Shakespearean roles, the reader can change the set of each performance to realise any one of a variety of contexts. This unsettles received assessments of character far more effectively than the single realignment of Shakespeare which takes place, for example, in satiric parody.

*Macbeth* is deployed in Canto IX to enable the reader to construct the 'bloodiness' of Wellington through a peculiarly physical suggestion of Wellington as Catherine in drag.<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Bate has discussed the way that Shakespearean drama constituted a focus for anti-French animus in the Napoleonic era, but the familiarity of Shakespearean quotations meant that they could also be used to support the British Radical cause.<sup>18</sup> Bate gives as an example the way *Macbeth* and *Richard III* were used in the famous image of Peterloo by Cruikshank where the banners over the soldiers read 'Be Bloody, Bold & Resolute' and 'Spur your proud Horses and Ride Hard in Blood'. Shakespearean allusions directed against the British Establishment in this way disrupt not only the text of the play, but also the culture of its reception.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, the reversal of audience expectations, in *Don Juan*, is as important as the implicit critique of the Duke. The extent of the political indictment is dependent on the reader, and is therefore indeterminate but this

<sup>17</sup>For the different version of Catherine as Ali Pasha, see Cecil Y. Lang, 'Narcissus Jilted: Byron, *Don Juan*, and the Biographical Imperative', in *Historical Studies and Literary Criticism*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp.143-179, especially pp.162-65.

<sup>18</sup>Jonathan Bate, 'Shakespearean Allusion in English Caricature in the Age of Gillray', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986), 196-210.

<sup>19</sup>The *British Critic* exemplifies the Establishment appropriation of Shakespeare as national shibboleth in its comments on *Don Juan* Cantos XII-XIV: 'From the force of habit, indeed, he still rings the changes of sarcasm on English women, the king, Shakespeare, and the Duke of Wellington' (RR, B: I, 341).

indeterminacy holds and is itself a more radical aesthetic and political potential than previous commentators have allowed.

The instability of Shakespearean allusion in *Don Juan* is exemplified by the way that the same scene recurs in a variety of guises. Macbeth's vision of a line of accusing gazes is only a latent suggestion in Byron's depiction of the queue for Catherine's boudoir in Canto IX, but in Cantos X and XI, the harrowing scene is modified as the narrator watches

all my gentler dreams  
Of what I *then dreamt*, clothed in their own pall,  
Like Banquo's offspring; - floating past me seems  
My childhood in this childishness of mine:  
I care not - 'tis a glimpse of 'Auld Lang Syne.' (X. 18)

The connection between *Macbeth* as a Scottish play, and Byron's nostalgia for his former life is reaffirmed in Canto XI as Juan negotiates the English social round 'without any "flaws or starts,"' (XI. 47), and is admitted to Literary Coteries where

as in Banquo's glass,  
At great assemblies or in parties small,  
He saw ten thousand living authors pass. (XI. 54)

These *Macbeth* allusions merge with the references to Wellington, and filter our consciousness of Byron's public loss of 'honour love, obedience, troops of friends'. In the play, Macbeth's vision is of a future he dreads - Byron the narrator gives us prophecy looking backwards, 'gentler dreams/ Of what I *then dreamt*'. The allusion directs the reader to the beginning of *Don Juan* where Byron '[wants a hero]' and supplies a list of people who have

fill'd their sign-posts then, like Wellesley now;  
Each in their turn like Banquo's monarchs stalk,  
Followers of fame, 'nine farrow' of that sow. (I. 2)

If, in Canto XI, we remember the start of the poem, the return of Banquo's line of descendants juxtaposes Wellington firmly ensconced in posterity with a fleeting glimpse of Byron (as Macbeth) not seeing himself in the future. The presence of another text provides a vehicle for our awareness of historical change. The sense of clashing literary contexts serves to release the acute consciousness between narrator and reader of the cost of past action on Byron's part.

Like Byron's critique of British politics, his nostalgic picture of London and English society is interrupted and mediated by literary allusion. The mixture of literary, historical, and journalistic texts interposes a layer of artifice between narrator, reader, and the ostensible objects of the poem. The high frequency of digressive allusion in the English Cantos offers a continual checking of the medium of communication, qualifying Byron's nostalgia by impeding the construction of an ideal and unified past. By jumping between tropes of sentiment and satire, and by insisting that the narrative is a complex texture, Byron alienates Britain from its own self-presentation, and invites the reader to read home as a series of fragmented texts. The incorporation of newspaper reports along with Shakespearean drama is one of the poem's most brilliant and subversive innovations.

## 5.2 Calignani's Messenger and Don Juan.

In Canto XI when the narrator urges Juan that

'Life's a poor player,' - then 'play out the play,  
Ye villains!' (XI. 86)

he is merging moments from *Macbeth* and I *Henry IV* (taking the lead from the mention of 'To-morrow'), and modifying his list of memories of English



life with a suggestion of the illusory nature of events.<sup>20</sup> The contexts of the two moments bring first denunciation, and then acceptance of masquerade. Byron's ambivalent responses to the artifices of social interchange are realised in the borrowings he made from contemporary journals; borrowings which were made simultaneously with satire about the truth that was to be 'read in the Gazettes'.<sup>21</sup>

Byron foregrounds his quarrel with contemporary British newspapers in the Preface to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII where he points out that Castlereagh's suicide received a privileged literary treatment: the minister made 'a sentimental Suicide', becoming, by virtue of the press, 'the Werther of Politics' (CPW, V, 296). Byron's way of objecting to the sentiment is to make literary allusion comment on journalistic reportage.<sup>22</sup>

He merely cut the 'carotid artery' (blessings on their learning) and lo! the Pageant, and the Abbey! and the 'Syllables of Dolour yelled forth' by the Newspapers - and the harangue of the Coroner in an eulogy over the bleeding body of the deceased - (an Anthony worthy of such a Caesar). (CPW, V, 296)

Byron's source for the notorious detail of the 'carotid artery' was almost certainly the newspaper *Galignani's Messenger* which carried the scrupulously precise and simultaneously evasive account of Castlereagh's death from the *Herald*.<sup>23</sup>

On coming out of his room this morning (Monday), and going into his dressing-room, Dr. Bankhead followed him; and just as

<sup>20</sup>McGann's commentary lists this as 'conflating echoes' (CPW, V, 752).

<sup>21</sup>Claude Rawson describes how Byron's use of "'Gazette'" comes over with reverberations of Scriblerian scorn of journalists' (Rawson, p.121).

<sup>22</sup>Frederick Garber discovers a 'play of semblance' in the harem cantos 'with the nature of language' which continues in the Preface to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII (Frederick Garber, *Self, Text, and Romantic Irony: The Example of Byron* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988; hereafter 'Garber'), pp.269-71).

<sup>23</sup>McGann's commentary supposes that 'Byron seems to have read the account in *Cobbett's Register*' (CPW, V, 719), but the quotation he supplies is not as close to Byron's Preface as the *Galignani* report. Coleridge also notes *Cobbett's Register* as a source for Byron's topical allusions, see, for example, Coleridge, V, 572.

they got in, the Marquis said, 'It is of no use,' and immediately fell into the Doctor's arms, and was a corpse in a moment. It was discovered that he had cut the carotid artery, which leads to the brain, with a small penknife, with the point turned the reverse way to what they usually are, which he had taken out of his writing desk.

[...] Lady Londonderry's sufferings, and the lamentations of the domestics, present a scene of the most heart-rending affliction. (*Galignani's Messenger*, No. 2327, 16 August 1822)<sup>24</sup>

Byron's use of allusion when he referred to the event is likely to have been prompted by the literary texture of this report - even the penknife comes out of a writing desk, and the 'scene of the most heart-rending affliction' stages Castlereagh's suicide as popular theatre. The 'harangue of the Coroner' was reported in *Galignani's* from the *Courier* which again emphasised the dramatic qualities of the scene:

The Coroner addressed the Jury in a speech of much feeling, in which he commented on the excellent qualities of the deceased Marquis in private life. (GM, No. 2328, 17 August 1822)

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<sup>24</sup>*Galignani's Messenger* (motto: 'Bona Collegit, Inania Spernit'; hereafter 'GM') was published daily Monday-Saturday from Paris. It consisted of 4 foolscap pages of news, each page divided into three columns. Information was drawn from a wide variety of sources including British national and regional papers, and a Westminster correspondent. The final page had a section titled 'News from France' which dealt with European affairs not covered in the British papers. The paper concluded with advertisements. On Sunday, *Galignani's Weekly Repertory or Literary Gazette* (hereafter 'GLG') reprinted a selection 'from the most esteemed English Reviews and Magazines' on every subject connected with 'Polite Literature, Scientific Discoveries and Improvements, Philosophical Researches, Rural Economy etc. etc. etc.' Both publications offered 'Original Anecdotes, Letters, Poetry'. Byron referred to the newspaper bitterly as 'that very impartial paper', and in the years I have examined (1821-23), the paper did carry more extracts from Tory papers and journals than others. In the *Literary Gazette*, however, the *Examiner* was represented occasionally and in the *Messenger*, strident editorial rows between the Tory *Courier* and the Whig *Chronicle* featured regularly. Although he objected to the paper's inaccurate reporting of the death of Shelley, Byron was still subscribing to *Galignani's* in April 1823 when he forwarded his copies to the husband of Lady Blessington. For Byron's frustration at 'irregularities' in the delivery of the paper, see Supp, p.56.

Although *Galignani's* newspapers are mentioned in McGann's commentaries occasionally, there has been no detailed research into the relationship between Byron's poetic texts and what was (after personal correspondence) his main source of information about political and cultural events in London. The most complete holdings of the paper are at the Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire in Lille and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. I am grateful to the staff of both these institutions for their assistance in locating the holdings.

Byron engages directly with this report in the Preface to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII,

That he was an amiable man in *private* life, may or may not be true; but with this the Public have nothing to do. (CPW, V, 295)

The Preface shows us that although Byron's information was mediated by Galignani's editorial policy as well as the particular political outlooks of his letter-writing friends, he was closely aware of events in England. This awareness has generally been played down by Byron himself, his friends, and his critics who have all subscribed to the view of a Byron as Regency dandy out of touch with English society.<sup>25</sup> Curiously, Byron was in a position to have a better overview of England than most of his contemporaries but his vehicles of information meant that whilst he was in full possession of all the facts, the transposition of detail proved to be a defamiliarizing process. Byron's use of very topical pieces of news out of context was received by his contemporaries as writing from a dislocated social position rather than as a reflection of the fragmented culture they shared.<sup>26</sup>

Byron referred to the Sunday paper as 'Galignani's pic-nic sort of Gazette' (BLJ, X, 40), and the eclecticism of both publications may be seen as a source for some of *Don Juan's* reflections on English society in particular.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup>This is the view in, for example, E.D.H. Johnson's dissertation, 'Lord Byron in *Don Juan*: A Study in Digression' (especially Chapter Five) and Peter W. Graham's study, *Don Juan and Regency England*. See also, Leslie A. Marchand, 'Narrator and Narration in *Don Juan*', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 25 (1976), 26-42 (pp.36; 39).

<sup>26</sup>The *British Critic* chose to depict Byron's topicality as a sign that he was out of touch with English taste. The reviewer sought to warn him that 'in the lowest deep there is a lower deep,' and that certain allusions still pass for very scurvy jests in England, to say the least of them. We do not choose to quote, but shall only remark that the note to the preface is repeated in the 8th canto. (RR, B: I, 336)

Byron's 'allusion' was to the Bishop of Clogher. Appeals by Byron for more news than he could find in *Galignani's* may be found in his letters, see BLJ, VI, 233 and BLJ, VII, 131.

<sup>27</sup> According to OED, 'picnic' occurs in references to countries outside England from 1748, but not as an English institution before c.1800, so it would appear that Byron is foregrounding its foreign 'fashionable' aspect. Elizabeth French Boyd notes that 'the topics

The newspapers' long-running fascination with the Caroline trial flickers in and out of Canto VI and it is possible that the reference to 'the calumniated Queen Semiramis' in Canto V stanzas 60-61 was culled from an anecdote reprinted in *Galignani's*:

Semiramis, the Queen of Ethiopia, had all the windows of her Palace darkened, that she might the better indulge herself in her amours. - There was at least some sense of decorum in her licentiousness, and the example ought to be held forth to correct the habits of people with similar propensities in every rank and condition (Sun). (GM, No. 1831, 3 January 1821)

According to McGann, Byron had completed his Semiramis stanzas in December 1820, but it is likely that the anecdotal comparison between Caroline and Semiramis was already current. Caroline's amours were a source of Tory jokes (which is why Hobhouse requested Byron to omit the stanzas). *Don Juan* Cantos V and VI, may be seen, therefore, to intermix 'Tory gibes at the liberal Whigs with radical attacks on Tory heroes regardless of context.

This juxtaposition of political modes is also evident in Byron's fluctuating use of the words 'people' and 'mob'. The significance of these changes has been discussed by Malcolm Kelsall. Kelsall maintains that Byron's use of 'the people' and 'mobs' in one stanza (IX. 25), 'totters with insecurity' and he compares the stanza with Byron's lines on Freedom ' [Streaming] like the thunderstorm against the wind', remarking that: 'what was before a positive force of resistance has now become an escapist's wriggle' (Kelsall, p.167). Alternatively, we can read this stanza as a collage of literary and journalistic voices in which the instability is a reflection of Britain's self-projection. In *Galignani's Messenger* for 26 August 1822, a piece

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for discussion in periodicals [...] are a rich source for many of the digressions and allusions in *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. A perusal of the Quarterly List of New Publications in the *Edinburgh Review*, for instance, the issue of January 1820, suggests that here are the points of departure for many of Byron's ramblings on contemporary subjects' (Boyd, p.152).

from the *Times* discussed the way that the press had reported the transportation of Castlereagh's remains to Westminster Abbey. Several Tory papers had expressed horror at the 'coarse exultation of the populace', but the *Times* was more cautious:

Let not the name of 'rabble' be foolishly applied to this unsophisticated class of our fellow subjects. What the rabble feel strongly, it is certain that many of those who are not rabble think. (GM, No. 2334)

This report shows that the naming of political factions is as self-conscious in 1822 as it was in 1812 when Byron drew attention to the different agendas behind the appellations of 'People' and 'Mob'.<sup>28</sup> By assembling opposed editorial perspectives in *Don Juan*, and by the fluidity of his manner of reference (sometimes suppressing and sometimes highlighting the contextual frames), Byron fragments conservative complacency about a unified nation.

In Canto VII, the scathing account of John Bull's 'hallucination',

Debt he calls wealth, and taxes, Paradise;  
And Famine, with her gaunt and bony growth,  
Which stare him in the face, he won't examine,  
Or swears that Ceres hath begotten Famine. (VII. 45)

- sounds like an *ottava rima* recasting of a satirical poem which appeared in *Galvani's Messenger* No. 1920 (19 April 1821):

#### The Wonderful Era

Tho' miracles, ceasing, are now seen by no man  
In the rest of the globe, still in England they're common.  
Ask why there is nothing but starving redundant?  
You're told 'tis because of our *harvests abundant!*  
Why the country's finances are running so taper?  
You're answered because we have gold, and *not* paper!  
And why poverty reigns, when our armaments cease?

<sup>28</sup>See Byron's Frame Work Bill Speech (Nicholson, p.25)

'Tis all through transition from warfare to *peace*!  
 What then places the land in a 'flourishing' station?  
 'Why our *debt*,' replied Van, 'is *the wealth* of the nation'  
 And this being true, without food, without breeches,  
 No country like England for *rolling in* [sic] *riches*!  
*Such miracles* blessing, no perils dare brave us -  
 And *only another* is wanting to save us!

Byron was composing Canto VII in 1822 when the news on England's financial situation was much the same as the year before.<sup>29</sup> In one sense, it is this unchanging condition of the country which lies behind the frustration of 'he won't examine'. Part of the point of Byron's repetition is that because of the British ability to put a self-congratulatory gloss over hard evidence, political satire has an unusually long shelf life.

Throughout Cantos VII, VIII, IX, X, and XI, Byron interrupts his narrative with snatches of current newspaper debate. By mentioning bishops 'taken by the tail' (VIII. 76), 'taxes, Castlereagh, and debt', 'Ireland's present story' (VIII. 125), "Gentlemen Farmers", and the falling price of oats (IX. 32), Byron returns to England the news which he has received out of it.<sup>30</sup> The precision of his reference may be seen in the parting shot of Canto X:

Teach them the decencies of good threescore;  
     Cure them of tours, Hussar and Highland dresses;  
 Tell them that youth once gone returns no more;  
     That hired huzzas redeem no land's distresses;  
 Tell them Sir W[i]ll[i]am C[ur]t[i]s is a bore,  
     Too dull even for the dullest of excesses -  
 The witless Falstaff of a hoary Hal,  
 A fool whose bells have ceased to ring at all. (X. 86)

<sup>29</sup>The condition of Ireland, however, was much worse. Byron's satirical observations on the difference between English decadence and Irish poverty may be contrasted with the tone of Walter Scott's remarks on the subject of 'Paddy': 'He is now I suspect in a piteous condition and crying ab-boo-boo for famine in the very midst of plenty' (letter to Byron 26 June 1822; *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by H.J.C. Grierson, 12 vols. (London: Constable, 1932-37), VII, 199.

<sup>30</sup>These matters are raised in a sequence of issues of GM, see, for example, Nos. 1878, 2178, 2196, 2207, 2208, 2216, 2264-2277 (March 1821-June 1822).

This is a direct answer to a report from Edinburgh on the King's visit to Scotland, reprinted in *Galignani's Messenger* on 26 August 1822:

His Majesty appeared at the levee on Saturday in a full Highland uniform, of what is called the Stuart tartan. It is a dress which requires a tall and robust figure to produce advantageous display, and the general opinion of the levee was, that this martial and picturesque dress was never worn to more advantage: he wore the Highland broad sword, pistols and phileberg, and had quite a martial air. Next appeared in a similar garb Sir Wm. Curtis; but the worthy Baronet's figure was anything but that of the hardy, swarthy Highlander; what it wanted, however, in the air of the soldier, was abundantly supplied in the comfortable and jolly expression of the citizen. The worthy Baronet laughed heartily himself at the merriment his presence excited among the Highland Chieftains, who, for the first time, had to rank such a figure among their clans. Sir Wm., however, makes a better soldier than Falstaff, while he rivals him in the better part of his other gay qualifications. (GM, No. 2334)

Here, we can see how Byron has punctuated the excited report of the Royal Tour ('Highland dresses', 'merriment', 'Sir Wm. Curtis' as 'Falstaff') with an alternative point of view. Byron debases the newspaper's patriotic Falstaff allusion by casting him as an exhibit of senility: Falstaff becomes 'witless' and (sexually) impotent, 'A fool whose bells have ceased to ring at all'.

Two stanzas earlier, in stanza 84, Byron warns his 'gentle countrymen' readers that he is about to 'renew/ Our old acquaintance'. The juxtaposition of 'new' and 'old' in these lines duplicates the mixture of material in the English cantos. By intermingling reminiscence and contemporary journalism, Byron unsettles the tone of nostalgia. To some extent, the Tory reviewers' insistence that Byron was out-of-touch carries a tacit recognition that he was striking home: the narrator of the English cantos may appear as Banquo's ghost, a disruptive presence at a feast, showing how the present is predicated upon the past:

Oh, pardon me digression - or at least  
 Peruse! 'Tis always with a moral end  
 That I dissert, like Grace before a feast. (XII. 39)

The picture of the English Cantos in *Don Juan* has usually been ascribed to Byron's remembered experience of Regency London, but the city which Juan encounters is much closer than has been recognised to the view of London which was still being propagated by the Tory press whilst Byron was composing these cantos (1822-23).

Juan's encounter with the highway robber at the beginning of Canto XI has been likened by Elizabeth French Boyd to an incident in Hope's *Anastasius* but the emphasis on the robber's peculiar vocabulary makes it likely that Byron's reading of newspaper reports also contributed to the episode.<sup>31</sup> *Galignani's Messenger* carried a regular column of crime stories from Bow Street. On 6 January 1821, the *Messenger* gave a lengthy report of the 'Mysterious Death' of a man found shot dead. His killer came forward and gave an account of an attempted highway robbery which had been prevented by the intended victim drawing and firing on his assailant. Two details in particular may have caught Byron's attention: the highway man's melodramatic exclamation 'Oh! I am killed!' (Tom calls out, "'Oh Jack! I'm floored'" (XI. 13), and the reported sentiments of the man who shot him:

The very peculiar and conflicting feelings of the moment -  
 gratitude for my own providential escape - and sorrow for the  
 victim of his own attempted crime, operated powerfully on my  
 mind. (GM, No. 1834)

Juan also 'wished he had been less hasty with his flint' (XI. 14) and went swiftly through the process of the coroner's inquest (a formality which *Galignani's Messenger* always observed although the outcome was

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<sup>31</sup>Boyd, pp.132-35.



predictable). On 10 April 1822 the Bow Street criminal column reported 'the disgraceful scene' of a fight between two women, one of whom was called 'Sall'. This may be the source of the name for 'Sal' who never receives Tom's blood-stained cravat.

The Bow Street column specialised in reproducing the speech of people hauled before magistrates. Most of them, when groping for explanations, would refer to 'something of that 'ere sort' (as Tom gestures to "'that 'ere bloody Frenchman'") and the reports emphasised the communication difficulties between law-enforcers and transgressors.<sup>32</sup> For example, the account of a 'Ball and Rout Extraordinary' on 19 April 1821:

Mr C. '[...]I merely went in for a *lark*'  
 Magistrate '[...] I must say I do not understand your language'  
 Mr C. 'Well, Sir, I suppose you have been a young man yourself, sometime or other, and everybody, now-a-days, knows what a *lark* means.'  
 The magistrate declared himself perfectly unaware of the meaning of the word, and made some severe remarks upon the Rev. Gentleman's manner, but eventually, he was discharged.  
 (GM, No. 1920)

In this way, contemporary slang was reproduced in italics, or underlined, or in inverted commas from which Byron could have drawn his 'flash' vocabulary.<sup>33</sup> The activities of 'diddling', 'flooring', 'smashing', 'catching flats' and 'flash capers' were related, translated, and to some degree sentimentalised for readers of the newspaper.

A different register was employed for the court and social columns. Here, hyperbolic catalogues advertised the sumptuousness of each occasion. An account of a 'Ball and Supper at Chandos House' in *Galignani's Messenger* on 19 April 1821, for example, shows how the splendour of the Regency era was sustained into the 1820's:

<sup>32</sup>See, for example, GM, Nos. 1872, 1970, 2115.

<sup>33</sup>For Byron's use of slang, see William St Clair, 'Bamming and Humming', *Byron Journal* 7 (1979), 38-47.

It would be difficult to describe, adequately, the brilliancy of the scene - the whole interior of the mansion literally blazed with light; costly *or-molu*, and crystal *candelabra*, meeting the eye in every direction. The great saloon, or principal drawing room, was beautifully chalked for the dance. In the noble rooms adjoining, six tables (of twelve each) were laid with services of massive plate for the *élite* of the brilliant circle. (GM, No. 1920)

This description shows that Byron's picture of London society in Canto XI is not just a distant memory of his years of fame:

Then dress, then dinner, then awakes the world!  
     Then glare the lamps, then whirl the wheels, then roar  
 Through street and square fast flashing chariots, hurled  
     Like harnessed meteors; then along the floor  
 Chalk mimics painting; then festoons are twirled;  
     Then roll the brazen thunders of the door,  
 Which opens to the thousand happy few  
 An earthly Paradise of 'Or Molu.' (XI. 67)<sup>34</sup>

An interesting feature of the account of the Ball in *Calignani's Messenger* is the emphasis on the lighting - it suggests that Byron's lines on the 'joy' which met London's 'grand illumination' in Canto VII and the remarks on London's lights in Canto XI. 26-28 are as much a response to immediate circumstances as a memory of past extravagance. Indeed, lighting was still worthy of comment on 15 November 1822 when *Calignani's Messenger* reported a 'Banquet in Guildhall':

The hall was splendidly illuminated with gas-lights, which poured their effulgent beams from immensely large lustres

<sup>34</sup> Peter W. Graham argues that the imported word "Or Molu" (especially when spelled as Byron chooses to spell it) suggests, as *Funui* and the many other French words in the English cantos do, two contradictory truths about the Great World and the culture it epitomises [...] The weakness of the Great World's argot is its shallow cosmopolitanism, but one strength of English is its being a truly cosmopolitan tongue. So although the Great World's frivolous babble mocks a unity lost, it also suggests [...] an integration gained. (*Don Juan and Regency England*, pp.176-77)

suspended from the centre of the Hall [...] From the top of the Gothic pillars, festoons of gas lights were also suspended, which greatly added to the brilliant *coup d'oeil*. (GM, No. 2404)

This extract illustrates the way that certain words in journalistic prose are marked as bearers of special significance. By giving details of social occasions in this way, the newspapers heightened the effect of fragility and transience which surrounded them. The nostalgia, in other words, isn't all Byron's - instead we may see *Don Juan* as an inscription of wider social and cultural dislocation. *Galignani's Messenger* reprinted British newspaper editorial debate about whether Britain had deteriorated as a world economic power and whether the social scene of London was as vibrant as it used to be. In this debate, Tory papers tended to assert unchanging prosperity whilst the opposition papers took a more pessimistic line.

One standard Tory argument in 1822 was that nothing at all had declined over the last ten years:

It is strange to see how foreigners mistake our national character; and indeed how we mistake it ourselves. A dull and plodding people - a despairing and ruined nation! Why, let any man look at the columns of any of our Morning Papers, and they will find them filled with dinners and balls, sumptuous entertainments, quadrilles and cotillons - our fashionables flying from one scene to another with the quickness of magic; seen at every public place the same night - a trip at Almack's, and a squeeze at the Opera. To be sure, we sometimes wish that a little more novelty were given to the scene, for the personages we saw ten years ago we see still. (from the *Courier*, GM, No. 2303, 19 July 1822)

*Galignani's Messenger* reprinted highlights of London society news, and Byron would have been aware that his portrait of the Amundevilles leaving town lived up to the *Courier's* expectations:

Another feature in our character is the delight we take in having every movement, every act, of our lives known; to figure among

the arrivals or departures - to have it published not only where we dance or dine, but whither we go, or when we return  
 'Captain A. goes from London to Kew,' 'Mr and Mrs T. repair from Pall Mall to Hounslow,' - the whole fashionable world must know it. (GM, No. 2303, 19 July 1822)

We can compare this Tory applause of the 'gaities [...] of our capital' with Byron's coverage of the transience of fashion:

A paragraph in every paper told  
 Of their departure: such is modern fame:  
 'Tis pity that it takes no further hold  
 Than an advertisement, or much the same;  
 When, ere the ink be dry, the sound grows cold.  
 The Morning Post was foremost to proclaim -  
 'Departure, for his country seat, to-day,  
 Lord H. Amundeville and Lady A.. (XIII. 51)

Byron's 'ubi sunt' intonation in part voices a national anxiety which seeps out of reports like that in the *Courier* quoted above. To describe the English cantos as 'grounded in Byron's nostalgia for a world he had left behind with equal bitterness and regret', and to claim that 'they are his *Remembrance of Things Past*' (CPW, V, 742) as Jerome McGann does, obscures the way in which Byron was writing of things present but which everyone felt to be in the process of changing.

In the English Cantos, therefore, Byron's style meets with his subject matter. Rapid changes of tone and register had always been a hallmark of his writing: in Canto VII Byron advertised his reputation in the 'versified Aurora Borealis' image. This may have been borrowed from an essay on 'Modern Periodical Literature' which appeared in *Galignani's Literary Gazette* in the issue for 3 and 10 September 1820. The essay was a survey of contemporary periodicals and after discussing the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the writer remarked:

Yet we must turn from this gentle work to gaze on the bright  
Aurora Borealis - the new and ever-varying Northern Light -  
BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE. ( GLG, Nos. 123-24)

When Byron called *Don Juan* an 'ever-varying rhyme,/ A versified Aurora Borealis' (VII. 2), he takes over the attributes of one of his most hostile critics and changes the image of change. Although he expresses bewilderment before the alterations in English society, 'change grows too changeable without being new', the texture of *Don Juan* is generated by this juxtaposition of familiarity and estrangement.

One focus of change was the Congress of Verona and its effect on the stock market (as well as the stock market's effect on the Congress). This is one point at which *Don Juan* overlaps with *The Age of Bronze*:

Who hold the balance of the world? Who reign  
O'er Congress, whether royalist or liberal?  
Who rouse the shirtless patriots of Spain?  
(That make old Europe's journals squeak and gibber all.)  
Who keep the world, both old and new, in pain  
Or pleasure? Who make politics run glibber all?  
The shade of Bonaparte's noble daring? -  
Jew Rothschild, and his fellow Christian Baring.

Those, and the truly liberal Lafitte,  
Are the true lords of Europe. Every loan  
Is not a merely speculative hit,  
But seats a nation or upsets a throne.  
Republics also get involved a bit;  
Columbia's stock hath holders not unknown  
On 'Change; and even thy silver soil, Peru,  
Must get itself discounted by a Jew. (XII. 5-6)

These stanzas juxtapose a sense of chance or change ('pain/ Or pleasure', 'seats a nation or upsets a throne', 'Change' for 'Exchange') with the imperatives of those 'not merely [speculating]'. By calling the financial control of Europe 'The shade of Bonaparte's noble daring', Byron foregrounds a sense of loss:

I have seen Napoleon, who seemed quite a Jupiter,  
Shrink to a Saturn

I have seen a Congress doing all that's mean. (XI. 83-84)

But the loss is not experienced as nostalgia for something located in the past, it is an experience of movement, or change in the instant of change. This sense of fluctuation separates Byron from Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley (although it brings him closer to Jack Stillinger's readings of Keats<sup>35</sup> and the textures of poems by some of the women writers of the period like Mary Robinson). In *The Age of Bronze*, it can be felt as satirical dynamic when Byron considers the transformation of Marie Louise:

She comes! - the Andromache (but not Racine's,  
Nor Homer's) Lo! on Pyrrhus' arm she leans!  
Yes! the right arm, yet red from Waterloo,  
Which cut her lord's half shattered sceptre through,  
Is offered and accepted! Could a slave  
Do more? or less? - and *he* in his new grave!  
Her eye, her cheek, betray no inward strife,  
And the *Ex-Empress* grows as *Ex* a wife! (l.757-64)<sup>36</sup>

The present tense commentary of this passage alerts us to its newspaper origin. <sup>37</sup> What Byron sees is a scene described in *Galvani's Messenger* 3 December 1822:

- on her arrival, the Duke of Wellington was in waiting to receive her Imperial Highness, and he led her leaning on his arm to the Grand Salon. What must have been her sensations at that moment! What must she have felt while thus taking the arm that had hurled both her husband and herself from the greatest

<sup>35</sup>Jack Stillinger, *The Hoodwinking of Madeline and Other Essays on Keats's Poems* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971)

<sup>36</sup>For a recent discussion of *The Age of Bronze* which argues that 'concrete events are [...] generalized, sublimated and, as it were, eternalized', see Nina Diakonova, 'The Age of Bronze and the Traditions of Classicism', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 41 (1992), 49-58 (p.53).

<sup>37</sup>McGann's commentary suggests that Byron viewed her as an analogue to his own wife (CPW, VII, 130).

Throne in the universe. Apparently, however, she betrayed not the slightest emotion. (GM, No. 2419)

Byron has supplanted the rhetorical questions with digressive allusion: by intruding to point out that this Andromache was 'not Racine's, / Nor Homer's', he introduces extreme emotion in order to empty it. Byron does not locate Waterloo in the distant past - by pointing to 'the right arm, yet red', he seems to bring Waterloo into the present whilst the reference to Napoleon, 'and *he* in his new grave' has all the scandalised emphasis of a very recent piece of gossip. What the reader is given is a compound scene of (cancelled) classical agony, amputated limbs at Waterloo, the burial of Napoleon, a soirée at Verona and, in place of fortune, the fickleness of women. This matrix leads us to a consideration of the relationship between women, chance, and digressive allusion.

### 5.3 *Don Juan* and 'feminine Caprice'

Byron's voyeuristic map of the harem as 'this labyrinth of females' (VI. 57) might also stand as an image for *Don Juan* as a whole. My research into the frequency of digressive allusions has shown that the narrative is interrupted more often when we are being introduced to a new scene, and hence, to a new woman (see p. 207 above). The next section of the thesis will examine how the digressive windings and turns of narration are related to each female character and to the narrator's reflections on women in general.

From the earliest cantos of *Don Juan*, the narrator's remarks about his female readership sustain an association with digression as transgression:

As for the ladies, I have nought to say,  
A wanderer from the British world of fashion. (II. 166)<sup>38</sup>

Here, the narrator implies that travel has distanced him from British women, and that digression is his prerogative. Later in the English Cantos, the narrator follows a long tradition of English humour and suggests that digression is a female prerogative:

And then he had good looks; - that point was carried  
Nem. con. amongst the women, which I grieve

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<sup>38</sup>McGann's commentary suggests that 'Byron recalls his Years of Fame in London 1812-15' (CPW, V, 691). By introducing the concept of 'wandering' (or erring) from English society, Byron invites readers to reconsider his separation scandal. This autobiographical trace hovers behind the developing relationships of Juan in England. The narrator's claims to be out of date respond to the criticisms made by reviewers about *Mazeppa*, for example:

The author seems to us to have lost much of his large command of the English language; and we should not be surprized that such, to a certain degree, were the effect of a residence abroad, where the ear becomes accustomed to foreign accents, and the imagination to a foreign style; and those fresh and definite impressions in which the essence of poetry consists, become gradually, though imperceptibly, less distinct, till they are entirely defaced. (GLG, No. 65, 25 July 1819)

Reviews such as this are incorporated into the texture of *Don Juan* as Byron foregrounds his difficulties in communication:

(Excuse a foreign slipslop now and then,  
If but to show I've travell'd; and what's travel,  
Unless it teaches one to quote and cavil?). (XIII. 47)



To say leads oft to *crim. con.* with the married -  
 A case which to the Juries we may leave,  
 Since with digressions we too long have tarried. (XV. 84)

The view of the English 'labyrinth of females' around Juan comprehends two functions of digressive aside in *Don Juan* - as a seductive deviation shared by reader and narrator, and as a sexual diversion in the plot.<sup>39</sup>

By foregrounding the sense of sexual transgression latent in digression, we can re-examine the repeated allusions to the myth of the Fall which has been seen as a determining pattern in *Don Juan*.<sup>40</sup> References to Eve's fall and Eden lost occur throughout the poem, but there is a concentration of allusions in Canto XIV when the narrator considers the 'real sufferings of their she condition' and introduces Adeline's plans to intervene in the "*tracasserie*" between Juan and Fitz-Fulke (XIV. 41). The density of Miltonic allusion invites us to compare the marriage of Adeline and Lord Henry with Milton's picture of the relationship between Adam and Eve ('At eighteen [...] She had consented to create again/ That Adam, called "the Happiest of Men."' (XIV. 55)). Unsurprisingly, the division of domestic and political spheres is the same in the English marriage as in Milton's Eden, but we learn that Adeline, like Eve, is intricately involved in the politics of plotting. Eve does not listen to the political debate between Adam and Raphael:

Her husband the relater she preferred  
 Before the angel, and of him to ask

<sup>39</sup>The seductive potential of *Don Juan* was legendary before the first cantos were published. According to a letter printed in the *Examiner* 10 November, 1822, the reputation of the poem was such that 'all ladies of character blush at its very mention' (quoted in Redpath, p.293). Since 1819, the poem had been viewed as one which could prompt 'palpable ill effect' and, as a work which could 'captivate and corrupt' it was officially out of bounds for most women readers although several male reviewers shared the fear of the *Literary Chronicle* that the *Don Juan* was 'abjured by married men and read in secret by their wives' (RR, B: III, 1297).

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, George M. Ridenour, *The Style of 'Don Juan'*, Yale Studies in English vol. 144 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967)

Chose rather; he, she knew would intermix  
 Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute  
 With conjugal caresses, from his lip  
 Not words alone pleased her. (*Paradise Lost*, VIII. 52-57)<sup>41</sup>

The physical intimacy of Milton's couple contrasts with the 'conjugal, but cold' relationship between Henry and Adeline but, in this context, it is Eve's preference for a varied narrative involving mutual participation which is most interesting. Milton identifies rhetorical digression as a human activity but one which is especially appreciated by feminine intellect. In *Paradise Lost*, this is viewed as part of Eve's fallibility but in *Don Juan*, Byron complicates the conventional associations of feminine transgression by locating a positive value in digression of all kinds.

The interview between Adeline and Henry is closed, not intermixed with kisses; Lord Henry 'Had still preserved his perpendicular' (XIV. 71), but the narrator feels, 'Still there was something wanting' (XIV. 72). That something, it is tempting to assume, is a form of digression. In Canto XI a variant for stanza 44 shows Byron returning from asides to the reader to reflect that a 'poem's progress should be perpendicular' (CPW, V, 478). Lord Henry displays that linear purpose which the poem itself eschews. Adeline's act of digression, like Eve's, will be 'fatal' but Byron's attention to feminine sexual misdemeanour is remarkable for the way in which he realises a liberating movement in the fall from social grace.

Juan's lovers in the poem do not, however, possess the conversational facility for digression exemplified by the narrator: Julia's 'voice was lost' early on in her affair with Juan and Haidée and Juan communicate without words although their language barrier prompts the narrator to reflect on his own Eve-like enjoyment of the digressions from instruction:

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<sup>41</sup>For more detailed work on the relationship between Milton and Byron, see McGann, *Don Juan in Context*, pp.23-31 and pp.142-49; Newlyn, 'Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader', pp.182-91; George M. Ridenour, *The Style of Don Juan*, Yale Studies in English, vol. 144 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp.82-152 *passim*.

'Tis pleasing to be school'd in a strange tongue  
 By female lips and eyes - that is, I mean,  
 When both the teacher and the taught are young,  
 As was the case, at least, where I have been;  
 They smile so when one's right, and when one's wrong  
 They smile still more, and then there intervene  
 Pressure of hands, perhaps even a chaste kiss;-  
 I learn'd the little that I know by this. (II. 164)

The hesitation at the end of the second line duplicates someone stumbling 'in a strange tongue' and the verb 'intervene' hangs on the end of the line allowing the reader to pause on the brink of the couplet. In this way, the deviations which the poem celebrates are wrought in the texture of the verse and effect a gentle schooling for the reader.

Unlike the ideal community of the poem, which grows increasingly more receptive to the 'strange tongue' of *Don Juan*, Juan does not learn how to communicate with any lover after Haidée. Conversations between Juan and the women of the poem are limited by a variety of means. Somewhat pressed for time, Gulbeyaz is forced to proposition Juan directly and she is furious with the circumlocutions of Baba, realising that what they actually signify is Juan's sexual dalliance. Dudù '[says] nothing' until her scream and Catherine is not given any speech at all. Only when we reach London does the narrator talk of 'ladies' lucubrations', claiming that an Englishwoman's imagination 'roves/ Into the excursive' (XI. 33). Adeline fulfils this promise; Aurora represents its antithesis.

Although the female characters of the poem do not digress rhetorically themselves, they often initiate digression in the narrator. In Canto II, the narrator deplores 'inconstancy' and proclaims that, 'Love, constant love, has been [his] constant guest,' (II. 209). He then digresses, rupturing both the constancy of his speech and the constancy of his affections:

And yet last night, being at a masquerade,

I saw the prettiest creature, fresh from Milan,  
Which gave me some sensations like a villain. (II. 209)

The 'And yet' is a crucial marker of change as is 'But' which recurs in the following stanza as the feminine figure of Philosophy vies with the physical features of the Milanese girl for attention:

But soon Philosophy came to my aid,  
And whisper'd 'think of every sacred tie!'  
'I will, my dear Philosophy!' I said,  
'But then her teeth, and then, Oh heaven! her eye!  
I'll just inquire if she be wife or maid,  
Or neither - out of curiosity.'  
'Stop!' cried Philosophy, with air so Grecian,  
(Though she was masqued then as a fair Venetian.)

'Stop!' so I stopp'd. - But to return. (II. 210-11)

The parenthetical aside on Philosophy's attire is wonderfully suggestive of the narrator's sudden absorption in the physical details of what we imagined to be an idealised female form, indicating another shift of lascivious curiosity which reaches out to touch the next stanza.<sup>42</sup> As readers, we become so involved in the exchanges of inconstancy that we experience the 'return' as another disruption. This shows how Byron's interruptions alter the reader's expectation of narrative progression. Once we feel that the return to exposition is as contradictory as the break from it, we are co-operating in a new principle of narrative organisation.

The narrator playfully advances his own aesthetics of inconstancy, attributing the continuous swerves of his attention to an appreciation of

<sup>42</sup>McGann provides a detailed reading of the fluctuations of these stanzas in *Don Juan in Context*, pp.105-7. 'The crucial point to be seen', McGann argues, 'is that the responses remain seriatim, and do not accumulate to some more comprehensive or formulative intuition' (p.106). Whilst I would agree that the reader's experience of the poem does not amount to a comprehensive formula, I would argue that the texture of digressive allusion is more complex than a one by one ('seriatim') occurrence

(feminine) 'rich/ Profusion'. Masculine errant behaviour in the sphere of social relations is depicted as a painful, aesthetic obligation:

Yet 'tis a painful feeling, and unwilling,  
 For surely if we always could perceive  
 In the same object graces quite as killing  
 As when she rose upon us like an Eve,  
 'Twould save us many a heart-ache, many a shilling,  
 (For we must get them any how, or grieve,)  
 Whereas if one sole lady pleased for ever,  
 How pleasant for the heart, as well as liver! (II. 213)

The painfulness of change here anticipates Byron's note on 'mobility' as 'a most painful and unhappy attribute' (CPW, V, 769). The stanza suggests that inconstancy is a quest to keep the moment of emergence, 'when she rose upon us like an Eve' but the disruptive effect of the stanza runs back to stanzas 211 and 212 where 'young beauty covers o'er/Some favour'd object'. Byron then suggests that this inconstancy, 'This sort of adoration of the real/Is but a heightening of the "beau ideal"' (II. 211). Through sinuous evasion, the poem claims that transient absorption in different physical (female) surfaces is 'Platonic' (II. 212):

In short, it is the use of our own eyes,  
 With one or two small senses added, just  
 To hint that flesh is form'd of fiery dust. (II. 212)

Inevitably, repeated 'adoration of the real' leads to problems with the liver.

With the exception of Catherine and possibly Fitz-Fulke, repeated sexual transgression is not possible for Juan's women. This is the reason why when feminine acts of digression occur in the poem, they tend to share the liberating valency of the narrator's verbal digression. The libertinism of digression has been discussed in Peter Conrad's study, *Shandyism: The*

*Character of Romantic Irony*.<sup>43</sup> In his study of virtuoso performances, Conrad finds that 'for Byron the picaresque is the promiscuous: Juan's malleable eagerness to slide into any erotic attachment which presents itself answers to Byron's own gleeful irresponsibility with narrative and style' (Conrad, p.57). For Conrad it is the narrator rather than Juan who performs as libertine, the 'essence' of whose character is 'a random, opportunistic willingness to take pleasure wherever he finds it' (Conrad, p.57). This is demonstrated in the way Byron handles his *ottava rima*, 'as unscrupulous in his manipulation of a ductile stanza form, as his hero is meant to be with women' (Conrad, p.60).<sup>44</sup>

Conrad offers what could be described as a phallo-centric view of the process of *Don Juan* which does not do justice to feminine participation in erotic attachment or digressive activity. Bernard Beatty's study of *Don Juan* also detects a 'likeness between poetic and erotic procedures' firstly in 'the co-operation of accident and significance' in the rhyme scheme and then in the 'outrageous gaps' between episodes in the poem which encourage the reader to 'see a connection between them'.<sup>45</sup> This filling of gaps, according to Beatty, presents affinity between love-making and the writing of poetry:

It is in the gaps and jumps of the narrator's artfully mirrored consciousness that we come into closest contact with Lord George Gordon Byron himself for he does not know, yet makes available, the sources on which he relies. He gives himself away [...] The flow of sexual life, when it is not interrupted and self-regarding, involves a similar intensification yet yielding of consciousness and selfhood. (Beatty, p.122)

<sup>43</sup>Peter Conrad, *Shandyism: The Character of Romantic Irony* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978; hereafter 'Conrad').

<sup>44</sup>I would differ from Conrad here as I believe that the stanza form is treated with respect by Byron. Byron is indeed 'audacious with rhymes' but the audacity is locatable in the poem's challenge to the reader to distort his or her pronunciation and to set visual perception against aural reception of the rhyme.

<sup>45</sup>Bernard Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan* (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1985; hereafter 'Beatty'), pp.115; 118.

For Beatty, the reader's experience of *Don Juan* offers an erotics of conversation. Yet Beatty does not consider how the reader is to give him- or herself away in response to Byron's generosity. Indeed, towards the end of his discussion of 'The Amorous Sphere', Beatty seems to withdraw the process of the poem from both narrator and reader:

it is the circumstances themselves, in all their unforeseen contingency, which must carry some natural tendency to produce those kinds of proximity which provoke and promote the glow of conscious union. The forward movement of the poem itself is clearly analogous to this. (Beatty, pp.127-28)

Here, juxtaposition is held to be responsible for erotic tension, calling into question Beatty's earlier emphasis on the synthesising movement of sexual life. His belief that discontinuity affirms the presence of continuity overlooks the reader's part in interruption and deviation. There is an affirmative value in the intermissions created by narrative turns and swerves which is not the same as the value which subsumes all contingencies into 'some natural tendency'. The chapter will now attend to a discussion of the particular effects of feminine digressions in the poem and their relationship with the digressive style of the narrator.

In the early stages of the poem, Byron appears to identify particular sorts of onward movement with 'natural' female tendencies. We can see this in the assemblage of Julia's contrary motives:

She vow'd she never would see Juan more,  
And next day paid a visit to his mother. (I. 76)

Haidée is not exempt from the depiction of female swerving:

She grew to womanhood, and between whiles  
Rejected several suitors, just to learn  
How to accept a better in his turn. (II. 128)

In this extract, the choice of 'whiles' (to rhyme with 'smiles') cannot keep out the sense of 'wiles' - inflecting the idea of 'turn' in the last line with a suggestion of female changeability. In the next stanza as Haidée finds the shipwrecked Juan, she almost duplicates Julia's self deception:

But being naked, she was shock'd, you know,  
                     Yet deem'd herself in common pity bound,  
 As far as in her lay, 'to take him in,  
 A stranger' dying, with so white a skin. (II. 129)

The markers 'But' and 'Yet' alert us to the shifts of intention within Haidée's mind as the nudge to the reader in 'you know' urges a realisation of Christian hospitality ('to take him in') as sexual receptiveness.<sup>46</sup> The signalled allusion to Christian charity first actualises the abstract idea of 'common pity', but is then juxtaposed in rhyme with the physical particularity of 'so white a skin'. The final phrase recasts Haidée's 'shock' as tacit recognition that this potential suitor represents a turn for the better. The juxtaposition of Christian reference and physical description makes the motivation of Julia and Haidée toward Juan very similar. Their mixed motives and responses complicate narrative linearity, producing a series of qualifications for the reader which are highlighted when Byron ironically suggests that the acts of Haidée and Zoe represent single-minded altruism:

Their charity increased about their guest;  
                     And their compassion grew to such a size,  
 It open'd half the turnpike-gates to heaven -  
 (St. Paul says 'tis the toll which must be given.) (II. 131)<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Michael G. Cooke discusses the 'bewildering' effects of the 'but' and 'yet' markers in Byron's poetry in *The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, p.45.

<sup>47</sup>There is a troubling sense of sexual *double entendre* in the description of their 'compassion [growing] to such a size'. The hint is of swelling erectile tissue but it is attributed to two women, offering an unusual instance of a non gender-specific obscene joke. The '[opening]' of 'gates to heaven' is more easily translated into physical action.



This is interesting, for it supplies an early instance of the poem's use of a travel metaphor in the context of female action. As with the view of turnpike roads in England later in *Don Juan*, the sense of onward movement is contingent upon interruption.

Throughout the poem, we can see Byron experimenting with the idea that women are unique indicators of movement, whether by offering an internal geography to be mapped, or, as happens later in the English Cantos, by their own capacity for liberating movement. The similarity which many critics have detected between Adeline's 'mobility' and the narrative style of *Don Juan* is not an isolated point of contact, but part of the texture of the poem.<sup>48</sup> The plot moves forward as Juan's love affairs are interrupted by other men, but masculine activity is interrupted in turn by the narrator's digressions. Lambro's return to his home, for example, is delayed by a series of reflections, one of which juxtaposes the masculine activity of tour, exploration, or Odyssean quest with feminine travel in the domestic sphere:

The approach of home to husbands and to sires,  
 After long travelling by land or water,  
 Most naturally some small doubt inspires -  
     A female family's a serious matter;  
 (None trusts the sex more, or so much admires -  
     But they hate flattery, so I never flatter;)  
 Wives in their husbands' absences grow subtler,  
 And daughters sometimes run off with the butler. (III. 22)<sup>49</sup>

By placing his 'trust' in parenthesis with 'flattery', the narrator suggests that like flattery, trust in women is an ornamental embellishment. This digression offers another space in which to hint at feminine deviation, for, as we emerge from the parenthetical attention on 'the sex' we discover that wives and

<sup>48</sup>See Anne Barton's argument that *Don Juan* 'is itself a type of 'mobility' in that the narrator's mercurial involvement with the emotions and events of the moment never allows him to lose touch with the poem's past, and this is also the way it should be read' (Barton, p.80).

<sup>49</sup>See Barton's account of the 'outrageous delaying tactics' in the narrative before Lambro's return in Barton, pp. 37-40.

daughters have slipped away in the interim. But by locating this sort of female activity in the context of 'husbands' absences', Byron qualifies the cliché of 'the Inconstancy of Woman' allowing that feminine digression may be a different route of escape from the home that men leave for 'long travelling by land or water'.<sup>50</sup>

Connecting his own style with the erring of his characters, the narrator characterises digression as a form of abandonment:

But let me to my story: I must own,  
If I have any fault, it is digression;  
Leaving my people to proceed alone,  
While I soliloquize beyond expression. (III. 96)

This translates the process of the poem into a shared journey in which Byron lags behind the main party. A variant for the stanza has the narrator 'chattering' instead of soliloquising and it could be argued that by trailing behind and talking, leaving others to push the expedition forwards, Byron is adopting a feminine subject position. Jane Austen, for example, makes use of walking parties in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion* where potential lovers linger behind or walk on 'without knowing in what direction'.<sup>51</sup>

As we proceed through the poem, connections between digression and women proliferate. Gulbeyaz is first seen as the framed subject of a painting ('As Venus rose [...] from the wave' (V. 96)), and she is sympathetically portrayed as imprisoned in her marriage to the Sultan. Through digressive allusion, however, she surmounts the restrictions placed on her by rebelling like a masculine hero:

Her form had all the softness of her sex,

<sup>50</sup>For a psychoanalytic view of Byron's treatment of and identification with abandoned women, see Lawrence Lipking, *Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp.32-56.

<sup>51</sup>Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* ed. by Tony Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972; repr. 1978), p.375.

Her features all the sweetness of the devil,  
 When he put on the cherub to perplex  
 Eve, and paved (God knows how) the road to evil;  
 The sun himself was scarce more free from specks  
 Than she from aught at which the eye could cavil;  
 Yet, somehow, there was something somewhere wanting,<sup>52</sup>  
 As if she rather *order'd* than was *granting*. (V. 109)

In his commentary on Canto V, McGann sees this as an amalgam of proverbial wisdom, *Hamlet*, and the conventions of early church painting.<sup>53</sup> There is evidence to suggest, however, that Byron is alluding in a deliberately casual manner to *Paradise Lost*. In the stanza above, Gulbeyaz embodies Satan's trajectory as he alights as a spot on the sun, disguises himself as 'a stripling cherub' (III. 636), and opens the way for Sin and Death to pave a route 'by wondrous art' (X. 311) between hell and the world. Byron's parenthetical gesture to the unaccountable, '(God knows how)', is one of his characteristic responses to literary sublimity.

The hints of *Paradise Lost* enlarge our conception of Gulbeyaz by supplying her with the sort of inner space which we associate with Milton's abyss, and the swift changes of Satan's movement across the universe. Byron addresses her changeability three stanzas further on:

Judge, then, if her caprices e'er stood still;  
 Had she but been a Christian, I've a notion  
 We should have found out the 'perpetual motion.' (V. 112)<sup>54</sup>

In the variants for the next stanza, we can see Byron experimenting with more Miltonic allusion:

<sup>52</sup>For the 'something wanting' as digressive or sexual generosity, see p. 306 above.

<sup>53</sup>CPW, V, 709

<sup>54</sup>In *Galignani's Literary Gazette* Nos. 73-74 (September 1819), there was an article on 'The Most Important Inventions and Discoveries of our Times' which included Sir H. Davy's miners' safety lamp and discussed the way that men of science were 'endeavouring to discover a *perpetuum mobile*'. In GM, No. 2137 (3 January 1822), an extract from the *Yorkshire Gazette* described a piece of mechanism which nearly produced perpetual motion. This stanza is an example of Byron's incorporating topical reference in an unexpected frame of reference.

<Besides forbidden fruits, for She neer paused/ nor would have  
 paused>[...]  
 <Her thirst/ Had Paradise itself to her been shown> / <She  
 would have cut the tree of knowledge down> (CPW, V, 277)

These images of Eden did not appear in the published version of Canto V, but they show us the way in which Byron associates Eve's and subsequent female digressiveness with an impulse towards liberation. As well as being 'the latest of her whims' (V. 114), Juan is a way for Gulbeyaz to '[err] from inanition' (VI. 9).

This association between erring women, whim, and inconstancy fits into a familiar pattern of misogynistic humour - 'constant you are, / But yet a woman' (I *Henry IV*, II. 3. 109-10). When Byron resumed work on *Don Juan* in 1822, he began with the 'affairs of woman':

Not all the reveries of Jacob Behman  
 With its strange whirls and eddies can compare: -  
 Men with their heads reflect on this and that -  
 But women with their hearts or heaven knows what! (VI. 2)

Yet it is difficult to discriminate between feminine 'whirls and eddies' and the 'non-descript and ever varying rhyme' (VII. 2) that is *Don Juan*. It might be possible to suggest that whereas Byron presents his 'ever varying' procedure as a mode of detachment, 'feminine Caprice' is depicted as physical or emotional instability. This, however, would conflict with moments when Byron the narrator also portrays himself as emotionally volatile:

all my fancies whirling like a mill;  
 Which is a signal to my nerves and brain,  
 To take a quiet ride in some green lane. (IX. 85)

Jerome McGann observes that 'when Byron 'contradicts' himself, he is not changing his mind but revealing its ability to see an idea or event in

several different ways at nearly the same time' but McGann compares this process with the way that 'nearly all [Byron's] characters exhibit a similar complexity of thought or response at some time' (*Don Juan in Context*, pp.104-5). McGann specifically aligns Julia with Byron: 'Like Byron, she is a mass of contradictions and of course a very epitome of "inconstancy"' (*Don Juan in Context*, p.105). Byron may have envisaged a difference between 'feminine Caprice' (VI. 119), and his 'old Lunes', but as the poem progresses, it is tempting to follow those who see Byron and the poem embracing a feminine prerogative of change:

The wind shifts and I fly into a rage.

Temperate I am - yet never had a temper;

Modest I am - yet with some slight assurance;

Changeable too - yet somehow '*Idem semper*'<sup>55</sup>

Patient - but not enamoured of endurance;

Cheerful - but, sometimes, rather apt to whimper:

Mild - but at times a sort of '*Hercules furens*':

So that I almost think that the same skin

For one without - has two or three within. (XVII. 10-11)

A gender-oriented reading of the poem would draw attention to the images of inner layers and mutability which might suggest a feminine process of fluidity and change. Stanza 12, however, which immediately follows this one, is crammed with markers of masculinity, referring to 'Our Hero' in a situation 'Such as enables Man to show his strength', but claiming that the narrator will not disclose what happened, 'Unless some Beauty with a kiss should bribe'. If this were not enough to compensate for the unmanly fluidity of stanza 11, the poem continued,

But Oh! that I were dead - for while alive -

Would that I neer had loved - Oh Woman - Woman -

<sup>55</sup> For a view of what changes and what stays resistant to change in the poem, see Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985; hereafter '*The Beauty of Inflections*'), p.293.

<All that I writ> All that I write or wrote can neer revive  
 To paint a sole sensation - though quite common -  
 Of those in which the Body seemed to drive  
 My Soul from out me at thy single summon  
 Expiring in the hope of sensation. (CPW, V, 660)

McGann gives this as a cancelled unfinished stanza following stanza 12 on MS. S. Its sustained expression of the 'drive' of sexual passion for Woman (in general) seems designed to counterbalance the syntactical hesitation of stanza 11. At the point at which *Don Juan* breaks off, therefore, it is not possible to identify a specifically feminine 'mobility' as the dominant voice even if one wanted to. It is important to bear this in mind to avoid imposing a simplistic overview of any progression in the poem.

Canto IX continues the theme of the 'strange whirls and eddies' of 'tide in the affairs of woman':

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  
 Is all the rest about her! Whether wed,  
 Or widow, maid or mother, she can change her  
 Mind like the wind; whatever she has said  
 Or done, is light to what she'll say or do; -  
 The oldest thing on record, and yet new! (IX. 64)

Here, the enjambement pulls forward against a set of triple rhymes (a stranger/ and danger/ can change her) and double rhymes (her head/ -her wed/ has said), emphasising the stanza's grammar of change with repeated turns on 'or'. What is striking about the sequence is that it introduces Catherine's sudden lust for Juan in terms which do not (apart from the whirlpool image) insist on female sexuality as the determining vortex. There is a freedom in the capacity to 'change her / Mind like the wind' which is close to Byron's own boast: 'In the Wind's Eye I have sailed, and sail' (X. 4).

In the next stanza, Byron's savage parenthesis on the 'interjections' of love and war is followed by a more open acknowledgement of 'human' (not only female) changeability:

how odd are the connections  
Of human thoughts, which jostle in their flight! (I. 65)

There is a sociability inherent in the word 'jostle' which lends a sort of generosity to Catherine even though one of the thoughts that is 'jostling' is the mass slaughter at Ismail:

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 hatch;  
And *thirdly*, he who brought you the dispatch! (IX. 65)

At the same time that we see Catherine's inhuman ability to pass over the Siege, we recognise her human capacity for change and movement. Unease about Catherine has been registered by different critics for different reasons. McGann approached the issue of different sorts of changeability in *Don Juan* in his consideration of the Southeyesque bard of the 'Isles of Greece' 'who had seen many changes / And always changed' (III. 80). McGann's conclusion is that the 'sad trimmer' is Byron's 'dark double'.<sup>56</sup>

It may be possible in this context, therefore, to extend the application of McGann's model and see Catherine as another 'dark double' of Byron the narrator; a feminized Macbeth whose voracious sexual appetite epitomises Byron's own Venetian excesses.<sup>57</sup> The increased frequency of signalled

<sup>56</sup> McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections*, pp.271-84. See also Katherine Kernberger, 'Power and Sex: The Implications of Role reversal in Catherine's Russia', *Byron Journal*, 10 (1982), 42-49. I disagree with Kernberger's conclusion that sexual relations are exposed as merely political which obscures the peculiarly physical texture of the sexuality in the Russian episode.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Cochran has pointed out to me the letter from Kinnaid to Byron of 15 October 1822 in which Kinnaid questions Byron's tone on Catherine:

why call Katherine a whore? She hired or whored others - She was never hired or whored herself - why blame her for liking fucking? If she canted as well cunted, then

allusion and parenthetical aside in Canto IX may signal heightened self-awareness as well as seeking to draw the reader into complicity with the rhythms of physical dependence:

Those movements, those improvements in our bodies  
Which make all bodies anxious to get out  
Of their own sand-pits to mix with a Goddess,  
For such all Women are at first no doubt.  
How beautiful that moment! and how odd is  
That fever which precedes the languid rout  
Of our Sensations ! What a curious way  
The whole thing is of clothing souls in clay. (IX. 75)

The particularisation of 'Those movements', 'those improvements', 'that moment', and 'That fever' invite the reader to join in appreciation of the 'oddness' and 'curiousness' of something utterly familiar - 'The oldest thing on record, and yet new!' (IX. 64). In this way sexual activity in *Don Juan* figures the poem's process of digressive allusion. To modify Beatty's erotics of conversation, the encounter with another individual in sexual experience, is likened in *Don Juan* to the meeting of a well-known text in a new frame of reference, an experience both familiar and disturbingly new each time.

#### 5.4 Sexual Landscapes and Female Voyages in *Don Juan*

In the Russian Cantos, sex is aligned with digression as Byron develops the same spacial and temporal vocabulary for female bodies as the one he uses for rhetorical digression. Caroline Franklin has discussed the way that 'woman is [...] associated with the trope of travel' in *Don Juan*:

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call her names as long as you please - But it is hard to blame her for following her natural inclinations - she dared to do it - others are afraid [...] I looked for more liberality from you - You must not turn against rogering - even tho' you practise it seldomer. (MS., location: John Murray Archive)

Byron's own behaviour in Venice (and their enjoyment of his letters) must have hovered as an uneasy intertext for his friends when they read Cantos VI-IX.



The heroines encountered are types, representative of their countries - foreign exotic lands which must be explored, and which constitute a testing-ground for the male protagonist. Woman, and specifically oriental woman, functions as the Lacanian Other, by means of which the (normative) male European protagonist defines his identity. The trope of the journey as the dominant motif of the poem as *Bildungsroman* and its interfusion with confessional, autobiographical authorial asides signify the voyage to the East as simultaneously an interior quest for self-identity.<sup>58</sup>

We can see that this is the case with Dudù who is presented as an Eden - 'a soft Landscape of mild Earth' - within the 'exotic garden' of the harem. (VI. 53; 65) It is interesting, though, that while Byron portrays the occupants of the harem as tourable Asiatic hills, he also supplies them with a different idea of geography. Dudù's dream creates an imaginary landscape, and between them, the women re-define the map of western Europe:

- 'But where *is* Spain?' -  
 'Don't ask such stuff,  
 Nor show your Georgian ignorance - for shame!  
 Said Lolah, with an accent rather rough,  
 To poor Katinka: 'Spain's an island near  
 Morocco, betwixt Egypt and Tangier.' (VI. 44)

While this is partly a joke at the expense of Lolah and Katinka, it offers the reader a perspective on Europe where, if the location of Spain is uncertain, the very existence of Britain is in question. Their snatched conversation presents an oriental view of the West which suddenly challenges the voyeuristic and paternalistic stance of the English male reader. Anticipating Dudù, Gulbeyaz's sentimental response to Juan proves that 'female hearts are such a genial soil' (V.120), although she is also 'a beautiful embodied storm' (V.

<sup>58</sup>Caroline Franklin, 'Juan's Sea Changes: Class, Race and Gender in Byron's *Don Juan*' in *Don Juan*, ed. by Nigel Wood (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 57-85 (p.75). See also Bernard Beatty on the kinship between women, tourism and *Don Juan* in 'Byron and the Paradoxes of Nationalism' in *Literature and Nationalism* ed. by Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), pp.152-62.

135).<sup>59</sup> But the appearance of women as lands to be explored is not limited to the oriental scenes; it is also the case when Juan travels North.

Catherine of Russia's response to the conquest of Ismail is given in terms of oriental travel literature:

Glory and triumph o'er her aspect burst,  
As an East Indian Sunrise on the main.  
These quenched a moment her Ambition's thirst -  
So Arab Deserts drink in Summer's rain:  
In vain! - As fall the dews on quenchless sands,  
Blood only serves to wash Ambition's hands! (IX. 59)

Unlike the harem, Catherine is not explorable or cultivable and she cannot be confined to one geographical region. In Cantos IX and X she appears metonymically as 'quenchless sands', 'thou Sea of Life's dry land' (IX. 56), a 'hill [...] rather high' (IX. 66), 'the lap of the salt Sea' (IX. 69), the Arno's 'wintry brink [...] a rich field [...] new soil' (X. 7). By attributing geographical expanse to her sexual presence, the reader is encouraged to feel like Juan, lost in 'vast arms' (X. 37).

The geographical expanse of Catherine is a physical embodiment of the number of her lovers: the duration of her time spent in sexual activity is translated into spatial terms. For Byron the narrator, Catherine is a disturbing reflection of his own consumption rate, and the reader is unsettled by the uncertain impingement of Byron's biography. Catherine is not, therefore, the picturesque garden prospect of the harem, but a representation of physical exigencies already undergone, '(for we must get them anyhow, or grieve)'. At this point in *Don Juan*, the landscape of the female body also becomes a marker of age and time for the male narrator:

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<sup>59</sup>The overlap between misogynistic discourses and discourses of colonisation in the early nineteenth century can be seen in the proximity of Byron's feminine seascapes and landscapes to Bolivar's comment that governing Latin America was like 'ploughing the sea' (quoted in Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p.xviii).

Oh, thou 'tetrerrima Causa' of all 'belli' -  
 Thou gate of Life and Death - thou nondescript!  
 Whence is our exit and our entrance, - well I  
 May pause in pondering how all Souls are dipt  
 In thy perennial fountain: - how man *fell*, I  
 Know not, since Knowledge saw her branches stript  
 Of her first fruit, but how he falls and rises  
 Since, *thou* hast settled beyond all surmises. (IX. 55)

The crucial word omitted from the allusion which several editors have needed to supply is 'cunnus', but Byron's reference to it as 'nondescript' is of key importance. According to the OED, 'nondescript' was employed in the early nineteenth century mainly in writing on natural history, for example, *Memoirs of Mammoth Bones, of Incognita or Nondescript Animals* (1806). The word was therefore used in accounts of travels and voyages which presented newly discovered species as 'nondescript', or not hitherto described.<sup>60</sup> As well as playing on his own omission, Byron's joke is that his missing word is a 'perennial' cause rather than a new discovery. Fascinatingly, however, 'nondescript' is also the word he chose to characterise his own narration: 'A non-descript and ever varying rhyme' (VII. 2). The word is not used anywhere else in Byron's poetry and it offers a direct link between digressive and sexual activity.

The idea of sexual experience as a journey, 'From thee we come, to thee we go' (X. 56) is not new, but by echoing the prayer-book service of the burial of the dead, Byron makes sexual destination into a physical plot of earth. This place can be an Eden in prospect or a rehearsal of the grave in retrospect. Unlike Shelley's poetry, *Don Juan* does not present human sexual encounter as a way of approaching the transcendent, but inscribes its connection with 'clay' and 'human dust' (IX. 75; 77). The process of coming and going is rendered in physical terms, and aligned with the quotidian nouns of travel:

<sup>60</sup>See the discussion of reactions to *Don Juan* in Chapter One, note 58 where the *British Critic* reviewer referred to *Don Juan* as a 'non-descript goddess'.

Love, that great opener of the heart and all  
 The ways that lead there, be they near or far,  
 Above, below, by turnpikes great or small. (IX. 80)

Byron's memory of tolls is not far from this metaphor and as well as hinting at the divers routes of sexual gratification, the exhaustive mapping of experience suggests a tediously well-trodden path. And yet the turnpike itself, when Juan travels across England, is more than a mundane experience of passage:

Now there is nothing gives a man such spirits,  
 Leavening his blood as Cayenne doth a curry,  
 As going at full speed - no matter where its  
 Direction be, so 'tis but in a hurry,  
 And merely for the sake of its own merits:  
 For the less cause there is for all this flurry,  
 The greater is the pleasure in arriving  
 At the great *end* of travel - which is driving. (X. 72)<sup>61</sup>

The sensation of movement is exalted six stanzas further on as Byron invokes (and outdoes) nature, classical mythology, and Horace to celebrate the technology of road-construction:

What a delightful thing's a turnpike road!  
 So smooth, so level, such a mode of shaving  
 The earth, as scarce the eagle in the broad  
 Air can accomplish, with his wide wings waving.  
 Had such been cut in Phaeton's time, the God  
 Had told his son to satisfy his craving  
 With the York mail; - but onward as we roll,

<sup>61</sup>It is interesting to contrast this stanza with Byron's letter to Augusta of 26 July 1819:  
 - the time passes - I am very fond of riding and always *was out* of England - but I  
 hate your Hyde Park - and your turnpike roads - & must have forests - downs - or  
 deserts to expatiate in - I detest *knowing* the road - one is to go, and being interrupted  
 by your damned fingerposts, or a blackguard roaring for twopence at a turnpike.  
 (BLJ, VI, 186)

The word 'expatiate' relates the pleasures of movement and the pleasure of expansive conversation, suggesting grounds for a geography of digression. See also Byron's letter to Thomas Moore of 31 August 1820: 'A man must travel, and turmoil, or there is no existence' (BLJ, VII, 170).

'Surgit amari aliquid' - the toll! (X. 78)

The speed and lightness of these two stanzas reveal the difference between travelling 'for the sake of its own merits' - and travel which has as its 'great end' the 'languid rout' of sensation. Although both can be construed as digressive activity, they involve crucially different attitudes to time. Women in *Don Juan* mark time as they offer physical space to be traversed and temporal space to be spent. In prospect, the landscape is worth a detour, and in retrospect, the time is wasted. This anti-feminine perspective, however, may be counterbalanced by the way that women figure in the poem as travellers as well as fertile soil or dangerous oceans. If Byron reflects some of his society's anti-feminine prejudices, he is also able to identify with the victims of its social codes. The careful verification of the ages of *Don Juan's* heroines establishes not just their desirability, but a perspective of their own on prospects and retrospects.

Geographical and temporal distance in *Don Juan* converge in the narrator's discussions of age:

But getting nigh grim Dante's 'obscure wood,'  
That horrid equinox, that hateful section  
Of human years, that half-way house, that rude  
Hut, whence wise travellers drive with circumspection  
Life's sad post-horses o'er the dreary frontier  
Of age, and looking back to youth, give *one* tear. (X. 27)

This less than joyful metaphor of travel is an explanation of why the poet will not pause to describe Juan's 'hurry / Of waste, and haste, and glare, and gloss, and glitter' (X. 26). Byron digresses with an image of slow journeying to avoid an account of Juan's 'flurry' with Catherine. The passage, however, is full of traces of past sexual experience: Dante's "obscure wood" reminds us of Dudù's landscape of sexual initiation, the 'half-way house' also appears in

Byron's commentary on Dudù's dream as a place where 'dames [...] / Run much less risk of lovers turning rude' (VI. 75). The 'horrid equinox' suggests Catherine's 'womanhood / In its meridian' (IX. 71) and anticipates the 'equinoctial line' (XIII. 5) of male life which starts with the perception that some women are 'plain', when 'indifference begins', and only claret and Madeira 'irrigate the dryness of decline' (XIII. 4; 5). For the masculine narrator of *Don Juan*, therefore, age is marked by an inability to risk travel because of an awareness of the 'end' of travel, rather than immersion in the process. By implication, the reader of the poem is invited to share the risk of the process rather than calculating what 'the end' might be.

The potential shared by all the women of *Don Juan* (except Catherine and possibly Fitz-Fulke) is an ability to intuit that the 'end' of their digression will be death, incarceration, or humiliated exposure in a red cloak, and yet the capacity to risk everything by committing themselves to err:

'Ye Gods, I grow a talker!' Let us prate.  
     The next of perils, though I place it *sternest*,  
 Is when, without regard to 'Church or State,'  
     A wife makes or takes love in upright earnest.  
 Abroad, such things decide few women's fate -  
     (Such, early traveller! is the truth thou learnest) -  
 But in Old England when a young bride errs,  
 Poor thing! Eve's was a trifling case to hers. (XII. 64)

The stanza is interrupted by two signalled allusions, a parenthetical aside, and the innuendo of 'upright earnest'. McGann traces the first allusion to *The Merchant of Venice* - where Antonio bids farewell to the loquacious Gratiano and Lorenzo, 'Fare you well, I'll grow a talker for this gear' (I. 1. 110) but it seems much more likely that the poem is compounding memories of different plays and in this case, that the disruptive effect of the allusion is to invite sympathy with 'their she condition' (XIV. 24).

Coriolanus greets his mother with the words, 'You Gods! I prate, / And the most noble mother of the world / Leave unsaluted' (V. 3. 48-50). The context of this quotation makes Byron's use of it brilliantly subversive as he turns to pay homage to women who defy "'Church or State'" whereas Volumina is an embodiment of both those values. The women in *Don Juan* who '[make] or [take] love' show the same commitment to digressive action (dismaying public countenance) as the narrator to verbal digression.

Building on eighteenth-century associations of the tour with sexual experience, Byron's responses to feminine sexual digression are inextricably bound with the poem's discussion of travel. The parenthesis, '(Such, early traveller! is the truth thou learnest)' creates an island in the stanza for the reader to discover that truth is different 'Abroad': the parenthesis affords both temporal and geographical space from which the reader too emerges into 'Old England'. The return to England in Byron's process of digression is complicated by the suggestion that sexual mores are stranger at home than they are abroad.<sup>62</sup> This reverses the usual tendency of travel literature to highlight social oddity abroad in order to endorse English codes of behaviour. England's moral climate is made to antedate Eden in terms of its punitive treatment of erring women, 'Eve's was a trifling case to hers'. By referring to Eve's 'case', Byron inserts Biblical and Miltonic history into the context of a contemporary 'law-suit' (XII. 65). The effect of this is to align contemporary English and Old Testament social codes as a continuous patriarchal domination. The detached register of legal vocabulary is, however, interrupted by the interjection, 'Poor thing!' with its sudden opening of tender compassion and disturbance of male authority.

As the narrator of *Childe Harold*, Byron celebrated masculine strife with the world but in the English cantos of *Don Juan*, we are presented with a

<sup>62</sup>The same effect can be experienced in the prose notes and satirical interruptions to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Cantos I and II in which Byron uses the tour to question the morality of, for example, the treatment of 'our Irish Helots' (CPW, II, 211).

feminine perspective on 'what crimes it costs to be a moment free' (CHP, IV, 85). A potential for traversing distance within a sexual relationship is discovered in the way that Juan's experiences of England and English women are juxtaposed. The narrator's catalogue

Of white cliffs, white necks, blue eyes, bluer stockings,  
Tithes, taxes, duns, and doors with double knockings. (XII. 67)

ranges over and levels a number of English institutions. However, by placing 'white necks' just after 'white cliffs', the list yields a feminine landscape. The juxtaposition is an invitation for us to imagine the white curve of a woman's throat as an imposing cliff and (for Juan) a national boundary to be transgressed. The 'lands and scenes romantic' of Juan's travels are associated with affairs 'Where lives not law-suits must be risked for Passion' (XII. 68) but Juan's intimation of greater physical risk for love abroad is gradually questioned by the narrator's transference of earlier images of travel to the limited social circle of the English Cantos.

At its simplest, extensive geographical space is suggested by the use of different languages: Byron manages to convey the distances that can be travelled in a social sphere by importing French terminology and the codes of other societies:

The reason's obvious: if there's an éclât,  
They lose their caste at once, as do the Parias;<sup>63</sup>  
And when the delicacies of the law

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<sup>63</sup>This sympathetic image of the isolation of women in society may have been inspired by Madame De Staël's reflections on women of superior abilities in *De La Littérature*:

She is left to the strength of her own mind, to struggle as she can with her afflictions. The interest usually inspired by females, the power of which is the safeguard of men, all fail her at once: she drags on her isolated existence like the Parias of India, amongst all those distinct classes into none of which she can ever be admitted, and who consider her as fit only to live by herself, as an object of curiosity, perhaps of envy, although, in fact, deserving of the utmost commiseration.

(Madame de Staël-Holstein, *The Influence of Literature Upon Society, Translated from the French*, 2nd edn. 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1812), II, 174).



Have filled their papers with their comments various,  
 Society, that china without flaw,  
 (The hypocrite!) will banish them like Marius,  
 To sit amidst the ruin of their guilt:  
 For Fame's a Carthage not so soon rebuilt. (XII. 78)

In this stanza, feminine exile is extended spatially across the world by the use of foreign words and references, and temporally by inviting the reader to remember Dido. Byron's use of 'the law' in this stanza has all the Lacanian identity of the name of the Father which is inscribed in the 'comments various' of the newspapers (in this way, Byron interrogates Lacanian patriarchy when he isolates fragments from the newspapers in quotation marks). Feminine digression is finally realised as a romantic ruin and the reference to 'Fame' as a 'Carthage' suddenly identifies the figure of the fallen woman with Byron himself.

The place which Byron actualises as a ruined name is both a landscape and a measure of time. The narrator's momentary reflection on the 'glorious Gothic scenes' (X.61) of Juan's passage along the Rhine describes the imaginative movement which is a romantic response to ruins:

A grey wall, a green ruin, rusty pike,  
 Make my soul pass the equinoctial line  
 Between the present and past worlds, and hover  
 Upon their airy confine, half-seas-over. (X. 61)

The image of the equinoctial line is used by the narrator to describe the approaching threshold of middle age and to describe the calm indifference of Adeline's poise 'Which ne'er can pass the equinoctial line / Of anything which Nature would express' (XIII. 34). All the narrator's hints lead us to believe that Adeline will cross the equinox of 'Patrician polish' and that like the journeys of Juan's other women, it will be a digression permitting no return. The potential undoing of the 'splendid mansion' which is Adeline's

heart is likened to 'an Earthquake's ruin' (XIV. 85). As with the satanic abyss in Gulbeyaz, this inner geography offers more risk than the external distance toured by Juan. The distance traversed by women who love 'without regard to "Church or State"' (XII. 64) discovers a kinship between the travelling, quoting, cavilling narrator who has wandered from the British world of fashion and the women who wander within it.

Byron's depiction of English society as another world is in keeping with a satirical perspective, but it also works to recreate a perspective of exile:

Then there was God knows what 'à l'Allemande,'<sup>64</sup>  
     'A l'Espagnole,' 'timballe,' and 'Salpicon' -  
 With things I can't withstand or understand,  
     Though swallow'd with much zest upon the whole; (XV.  
 66)

Don Juan sat next an 'à l'Espagnole'-  
     No damsel, but a dish, as hath been said;  
 But so far like a lady, that 'twas drest  
 Superbly, and contained a world of zest. (XV. 74)

The geography of dinner contributes to the exploration of domestic space. By producing an atlas out of the banqueting table, Byron builds up an alternative tour which will depend on Adeline's contingency rather than the accidents at sea or the fortunes of war. The image of 'a world of zest' in a woman is saved from bathos because it is involved in a shift of scale after its first appearance. The first extract presents people swallowing parts of the world 'with much zest upon the whole' but in the second extract, the experience of 'zest' has become a world itself. Our experience of global distance is modified between the two images and this process is intensified in the presentation of Adeline.

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<sup>64</sup>For Byron's use of French to make a moral point about English spiritual apathy, see Peter Manning, *Byron and His Fictions*, pp.238-39.

### 5.5 Childe Adeline

Canto XII contains an extensive discussion on the comparative attractions of 'foreign dames' and 'fair Britons'. The survey leads the narrator to conclude that 'the whole matter rests upon eye-sight' (XII. 71), and he applies three images to English women which align them with other landscapes of desire in the poem. They are compared to 'Polar summers, *all* sun, and some ice' (XII. 72), to land which 'though the soil may give you time and trouble, / Well cultivated, it will render double' (XII. 76), and their one "*grande passion*" to a 'Tornado' (XII. 77). On the face of it, this makes Byron's depiction of English women indistinguishable from, for example, the 'genial soil' or 'Typhoon' which characterised Gulbeyaz, whilst the image of the Polar summers equates the women at home with yet another new found land. The picture of English women as a landscape to be explored is, however, qualified by the meditation on what happens to them if they explore:

Abroad, though doubtless they do much amiss,  
An erring woman finds an opener door. (XII. 79)

Typically, the narrator '[leaves] the matter where [he] find[s] it' but his use of the travel metaphor initiates questions in the reader rather than terminating discussion. The contiguous references to travel contrast the experience of discovery from the woman explorer's point of view with the fate of the woman whose 'erring' is discovered. In public morality, people 'care but for discoveries and not deeds' (XII. 80). The dual sense of 'discovery' is emphasised when Byron uses Captain Parry's *Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage* to describe Juan's first glimpse of the British Parliament:

whose thunder *roused* (not *rouses*)  
The world to gaze upon those northern lights

Which flashed as far as where the musk-bull browses.  
(XII. 82)

In this discovery, we gaze on the new prospect with Juan and the narrator, but the image alerts us to what it is like to be gazed on - which is the fate of erring women. The use of Polar summers and Captain Parry's voyage form a texture of allusion which slowly brings Adeline and Aurora forward to the reader, twisting together the threads of masculine exploration, feminine exploration, and sexual transgression.

Caroline Franklin sees Adeline as an archetypal Northern 'self-repressed' woman (*Byron's Heroines*, p.117), but allusive play in the English Cantos allows the reader to see and hear much more. From the start, the marriage between Adeline and Lord Henry is placed on difficult terrain:

She loved her lord, or thought so; but *that* love  
Cost her an effort, which is a sad toil,  
The stone of Sysiphus, if once we move  
Our feelings 'gainst the nature of the soil. (XIV. 86)

This introduction to Adeline's emotional life echoes one of the stations of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. In Canto IV, the poet ponders the tomb of Metella:

Was she as those who love their lords, or they  
Who love the lords of others? (IV. 101)

His rather unsympathetic conjectures on her 'lovely form' change, however, into an admission that her inner life is a mystery:

Yet could I seat me by this ivied stone  
Till I had bodied forth the heated mind  
Forms from the floating wreck which Ruin leaves behind. (IV.  
104)

The approach to Adeline follows through the desire to '[body] forth the heated mind', but attributes to a feminine mind what had been the prerogative of a masculine poet. Following the Sisyphus image, Byron returns to the territory of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* to realise the marriage between Adeline and Lord Henry as the same physical location which prompted in the Byron of 1816 an expression of his unique suffering:

They moved like stars united in their spheres,  
Or like the Rhone by Leman's waters wash'd,  
Where mingled and yet separate appears  
The river from the lake, all bluely dash'd  
Through the serene and placid glassy deep,  
Which fain would lull its river-child to sleep. (XIV. 87)

Coleridge, Steffan and McGann note the overlap with the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

Is it not better, then, to be alone,  
And love the Earth only for its earthly sake?  
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,  
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,  
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make  
A fair but froward infant her own care,  
Kissing its cries away as these awake;-  
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,  
Than join the crushing crowd, doom'd to inflict or bear. (III. 71)

Although the *Don Juan* analogy does not allocate parts to Henry and Adeline, we associate the blue movement of the Rhone with 'the dashing and proud air of Adeline' (XV. 56), and the 'imperturbable' Henry with the 'placid' lake. This sense is confirmed in stanza 88 when we are told that Adeline's 'intense intentions [...] run like growing water/ Upon her mind' (XIV. 88).<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup>The allusive links between the marriage of the Amundevilles and the meditations of the narrator in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III are anticipated in the description of the Norman Abbey (XIII. 57-8) where the outlet from the lake 'dash'd into a steep cascade, [...] /until again subsiding/Its shriller echoes - like an infant made/ Quiet'.

Whereas in *Childe Harold*, Byron used the image of river meeting lake to turn from 'the crushing crowd', in *Don Juan*, the scene is a threshold before entrance into this social world. Adeline will be likened to the sparkle of gems and the foam of champagne as *Don Juan* turns from the natural images of *Childe Harold* to a celebration of human society. The distance travelled by Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III is translated firstly to characterise English gothic and then to realise an English marriage.

For the reader who remembers Byron's isolation on the shores of Lake Leman, the recognition of the same scene offers a moment of familiarity, but also strangeness as we have to transfer the experience of *Childe Harold's* voyaging to the internal journey of a woman. In the earlier poem, the speculation by the lake is resolved as the act of speculating supplies a form for consolation. With Adeline, however, speculation is deflected by other matter. Don Juan wonders 'how much of Adeline was *real*' (XVI. 96), but this reflection runs into the discussion of 'mobility', and thence on to 'The Sinking Fund's unfathomable sea' (XVI. 99).

In the return of the scene from *Childe Harold*, Byron has effected a shift of gender: if Adeline is the steep cascade and the blue dash of the Rhone, she assumes what was a masculine role in the earlier poem - 'the swift Rhone cleaves his way between/ Heights which appear as lovers who have parted' (III. 94). The Lake, in both pieces of writing, is presented as a mother and in *Childe Harold* is also associated with 'a sister's voice' (III. 85). Familial confusion in the Amundeville marriage is epitomised as Lord Henry kisses Adeline 'Less like a young wife than an aged sister' (XIV. 69). In both cases, the active spirits of *Childe Harold's* narrator and Adeline are 'reproved' in the moment of contact with the 'placid, glassy deep'.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Adeline is described as '[polished]', but she is frustrated by her encounters with the unfathomable depth of Aurora.

Adeline, therefore, is as close to Byron the narrator as her appreciation of Pope implies. By depicting her in terms of movement and cascade, Byron anticipates her fall (which does not happen in the poem and may not happen), suggesting that the social distance she will traverse will be a version of his own fall, of the romantic questing of Harold, and of the epic voyaging of Juan. Byron's presentation of Adeline as a fellow-traveller emerges in the echoes of *Childe Harold*, traces of the past which haunt the Norman Abbey in *Don Juan* before the ghost appears.

Byron lends to the terrain of Adeline's marriage all the indeterminacy which was presented as a sublime natural experience to the tourist of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The reader also experiences juxtapositions of post-war politics with sublime landscape: just as the narrator of *Childe Harold* was unable to see the Alps without remembering the 'bony heap' at Morat and interpolating contemporary political strife:

While Waterloo with Cannae's carnage vies,  
Morat and Marathon twin names shall stand. (III. 64)

-so the Rhone and Leman simile for conflict in the Amundeville marriage provokes a reference to Waterloo:

Had Bonaparte won at Waterloo,  
It had been firmness; now 'tis pertinacity:  
Must the event decide between the two?  
I leave it to your people of sagacity  
To draw the line between the false and true,  
If such can e'er be drawn by man's capacity:  
My business is with Lady Adeline,  
Who in her way too was a heroine. (XIV. 90)

Once again, the shadow of what might happen to Adeline prompts Byron's questioning of absolute moral judgements. A figurative link between the decisive actions of a sexually disgraced woman, Byron's hero at Waterloo,

and Byron himself creates a territory in the poem where people are allowed their own 'way', leaving it for the community outside the poem to 'draw the line'. This frequency of invitation was not available to the reader of *Childe Harold* Canto III.

By announcing that Adeline 'in her way too was a heroine', Byron re-defines generic conventions more quietly than his earlier challenge, 'I want a hero'. In Adeline's sphere, the re-working of prior convention includes Byron's revision of his earlier work. Some of the echoes of Harold's quest are inevitable overlaps (for example, Juan's journey along the Rhine), but other memories are more disturbing. The changing events of the eve of Waterloo are traced in the countenances of the ladies, with

cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago  
Blush'd at the praise of their own loveliness. (III. 24)

Byron re-deploys the observation in the morning assembly at the Norman Abbey where the ladies

- some rouged, some a little pale -<sup>67</sup>  
Met the morn as they might. (XIII. 104)

The second image is starker because it describes a quotidian occurrence: for the party in the Abbey, facing each day represents the ordeal of a battle. The 'blush' of *Childe Harold* is replaced with the 'rouge' of the English Cantos, and whereas the fading colour of the skin in *Childe Harold* is a response to the sublime, in *Don Juan*, early-morning pallor reveals encroaching age.

The social circle of the Amundevilles epitomises the 'contentious world' which Harold and Byron sought 'to fly from'. In *Don Juan*, however, Byron recasts the isolation of Harold and the narrator so that it is experienced from the very middle of the 'coil' and 'wretched interchange' by a woman.

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<sup>67</sup>In other words, all pale.



Adeline's soul-betraying look of 'weariness or scorn' is given in a parenthesis and it allows us to meet her as a feminine Childe Harold. The connection between Byron's first hero and one of his last heroines is the capacity for swift digressive action. In *Childe Harold*, the narrator recoils from human society because:

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years  
In fatal penitence, and in the blight  
Of our own soul, turn all our blood to tears,  
And colour things to come with hues of Night:  
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight  
To those that walk in darkness: on the sea,  
The boldest steer but where their ports invite,  
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity  
Whose bark drives on, and anchored ne'er shall be. (III. 70)

The main intertext of this stanza is Byron's biography - there was nothing conditional about his own 'plunge'. Reflecting this discovery, the fatal 'moment' or 'turn' in the English Cantos is feminine sexual deviation:

They warm into a scrape, but keep of course,  
As a reserve, a plunge into remorse. (XII. 73)

This 'plunge' is the equivalent of a parenthetical afterthought and is designed to compensate for digressive behaviour but the suddenness of the change recalls the reflexes of thought in *Childe Harold*. Movement in *Don Juan* is realised in physical terms (the 'plunge into remorse' derives from the simile 'Like Russians rushing from hot baths to snows'), and here it offers a multi-layered revision of Byron's earlier writing: from abstract meditation to tangible action and from masculine quest to feminine experience.

Perhaps the most obvious marker of change between *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* is the image of the unanchored bark. It was one of the figures which Walter Scott used to characterise Byron in his famous review of the Third Canto of *Childe Harold* in the *Quarterly Review*. Scott counselled Byron to

heed the advice of his critics observing that, 'the roughest fisherman is an useful pilot when a gallant vessel is near the breakers' (RR, B: II, 2046). Byron returned to this image in *Childe Harold* Canto IV in his wish to build

from the planks, far shattered o'er the rocks  
[...] a little bark of hope, once more  
To battle with the ocean and the shocks  
Of the loud breakers. (IV. 105)

In the text of *Childe Harold* and in Scott's review of it, the solitary pilots and fishermen are men. In *Don Juan*, Byron recalls the image to talk about himself:

But at the least I have shunned the common shore,  
And leaving land far out of sight, would skim  
The Ocean of Eternity: the roar  
Of breakers has not daunted my slight, trim  
But *still* sea-worthy skiff; and she may float  
Where ships have foundered, as doth many a boat. (X. 4)<sup>68</sup>

Coleridge, Pratt and McGann note the echo of *Adonais* (with its source in *Childe Harold* Canto IV) here but none of them trace the link between Byron's allusion to himself and his depiction of feminine questing which occurs later in the English cantos:

A something all-sufficient for the *heart*  
Is that for which the Sex are always seeking;  
But how to fill up that same vacant part?  
There lies the rub - and this they are but weak in.<sup>69</sup>  
Frail mariners afloat without a chart,  
They run before the wind through high seas breaking;  
And when they have made the shore through ev'ry shock,  
'Tis odd, or odds, it may turn out a rock. (XIV. 74)

<sup>68</sup>For Byron's creation of himself as 'the driven outsider', see Vincent Newey, 'Authoring the Self: *Childe Harold* III and IV' in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, ed. by Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey, pp.148-90, especially p.157.

<sup>69</sup>The unsignalled echo of *Hamlet* juxtaposes the moment which '[gives] us pause' in Hamlet's 'To be, or not to be' soliloquy with the reckless hopelessness of 'their she condition'.

This image of women hazarding their lives leads from the sympathetic view of 'something wanting' in Adeline's marriage. Although *Don Juan* provides many images of containment of feminine experience, its mixture of reactionary and emancipated voices unsettle the complacencies of the 'cruizing' language and lead the reader instead to participate in a different mode of encountering and shaping culture.

## 5.6 The Geography of Digression

I want to conclude this section by exploring one particular scene of digressive allusion in *Don Juan* and considering its effects. The passage I wish to examine is the vintage metaphor Byron supplies to counter the 'common place' description of Adeline in Canto XIII:

I'll have another figure in a trice:-  
     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:  
  
 'Tis the whole spirit brought to a quintessence;  
     And thus the chilliest aspects may concentrate  
 A hidden nectar under a cold presence.  
     And such are many - though I only meant her,  
 From whom I now deduce these moral lessons,  
     On which the Muse has always sought to enter:-  
 And your cold people are beyond all price,  
 When once you have broken their confounded ice. (XIII. 37-38)

Byron's selection of the frozen champagne figure in *Don Juan* Canto XIII to express Adeline's 'hidden nectar under a cold presence' has been traced by several scholars to Walter Scott's review of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, in the *Quarterly Review* for April 1818.<sup>70</sup> The layer of intertextuality previously explored may be further extended by considering another possible source for Byron's image of distillation.

<sup>70</sup>William A. Stephenson, 'A Scott Echo in "Don Juan", XIII, 37-38', *Notes and Queries*, 220 (1975), 394; CPW, V, 756; Amanda Gilroy, 'Lord Byron Borrows a Figure' *Byron Journal*, 20 (1992), 89-91. For a different contextualization of the image, see Gerald C. Wood, 'The Metaphor of the Climates and *Don Juan*', *Byron Journal*, 6 (1978), 16-25.

The additional source appears in *Galignani's Messenger*. The section of the *Messenger* which drew most comment from Byron was the reporting of political debate in which Hobhouse carried on a high profile campaign against the Tories, in particular, George Canning, who was the M.P. for Liverpool and had been a senior member of Lord Liverpool's repressive government.<sup>71</sup> On 20 May 1821 Byron wrote to congratulate Hobhouse for his 'pretty [...] piece of invective' against Canning which 'Galignani gave with great accuracy' (BLJ, VIII, 121). Notwithstanding this conflict, Byron admired Canning more than other Tory politicians, and praised him as 'an orator, a wit, a poet, a statesman' in a note to the Preface to Cantos VI, VII, and VIII of *Don Juan*.

*Galignani's Messenger* for Thursday 5 September 1822 (GM, No. 2343) carried a report of a dinner given by the Canning Club in Liverpool to Canning himself prior to his expected departure for India. The speeches made on that occasion were reported at length and Canning's thanks to the assembled Club included the following remarks on their conservation of constitutional principles:

In northern climes, the essence of a generous vintage is often preserved in a small liquid nucleus, which remains unfrozen amidst the surrounding congelation; that nucleus, when the time of thaw comes, diffuses itself through the whole, and communicates to the mass its spirit and its flavour. So, I trust, that in all times - even in times such as the worst that we have seen, and such as, I hope, we are not likely soon to see again - in this club will be constantly preserved the spirit of loyalty and constitutional freedom, to be diffused, when the occasion shall arise, amongst the community with which you are surrounded.

We can compare this with Scott's comments on Byron:

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<sup>71</sup>GM, No. 1926 (27 April 1821) carried a report of Hobhouse's speech on parliamentary reform and an attack on his 'piebald patchwork of rhetoric'.

there was the heart ardent at the call of freedom or of generous feeling, and belying every moment the frozen shrine in which false philosophy had incased it, glowing like the intense and concentrated alcohol, which remains one single but burning drop in the centre of the ice which its more watery particles have formed.<sup>72</sup>

If we examine verbal echoes, the *Galignani* passage is closer to *Don Juan*, XIII. 37-38 than Scott's review in three instances; Canning's speech supplies the words 'essence', 'liquid' and 'spirit': Scott's review, however, contains 'frozen', 'ice', and 'concentrated' (not in GM). Linguistic echoes allow Canning's and Scott's uses of the frozen vintage metaphor equally compelling claims to be Byron's source and this extends to the matter of context as well.<sup>73</sup>

Stephenson and Gilroy have discussed the way in which Scott's review extols the value of originality - a quality which Byron self-consciously advertises in the run up to his offering 'another figure in a trice' (XIII. 37). *Galignani's Messenger*, however, provides material for the stanzas which follow the frozen champagne image.

And your cold people are beyond all price,  
When once you have broken their confounded ice.

But after all they are a North-West Passage  
Unto the glowing India of the soul;  
And as the good ships sent upon that message  
Have not exactly ascertained the Pole  
(Though Parry's efforts look a lucky presage)  
Thus gentlemen may run upon a shoal;  
For if the Pole's not open, but all frost,  
(A chance still) 'tis a voyage or vessel lost. (XIII. 38-39)

Not only were the newspapers of Autumn 1822 full of debate about Canning's imminent departure to take up the governor-generalship of India, but also

<sup>72</sup>RR, B: V, 2048-2055 (2050).

<sup>73</sup>It is interesting that Harold Bloom's discussion of the champagne metaphor freezes the possibility of intertextual play, 'severity and courtliness fuse here into definitive judgment, and bring the spirit of this female archetype to a quintessence' (*The Visionary Company*, p.270).

about the fate of the most recent British Expedition led by William Parry to find the north-west passage. Parry's ships the *Fury* and the *Hecla* were in a strait blocked by ice through the Summers 1822-23 but *Galignani's Messenger* carried optimistic speculative reports about their progress and the chances that a change in weather 'would serve to break up the ice' (GM, No. 2380).

Canto XIII was written in February 1823 which is, of course, much nearer in time to the *Galignani's Messenger* material than the Scott review of 1818.<sup>74</sup> As Stephenson's discussion of the Scott source makes clear, 'Byron was intensely interested in the critical reception of his works' and it is more than likely that he would recall Scott's image from 1818 - in which case the report of the Canning Club dinner might have served as an associative trigger.<sup>75</sup> But there is a more particular reason why Canning's speech, once recovered, becomes an audible murmur in *Don Juan's* metaphoric fluency.

The scene of Canning's farewell dinner befits 'that calm Patrician polish in the address' with which Byron characterises Adeline. Entertaining Lord Henry's political allies around the dinner table is the main theatre for Adeline's display of poise. Beyond thematic proximity, however, we can sense Byron's translation of Canning's politics of thawing. The hints that Adeline's ice will be broken by an affair with Juan are in place in XIII. 12 where we are told that she was 'The fair most fatal Juan ever met':

Although she was not evil, nor meant ill;  
But Destiny and Passion spread the net.

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<sup>74</sup>We can be almost certain that Byron read the *Galignani's* account because Hobhouse was staying with him in Pisa at the time and Hobhouse's journal for 19 September 1822 records: read a speech of Canning's in *Galignani's Messenger* - he cried at taking leave of his Liverpool friends - we shall see if he has taken leave - wrote journal - went out riding with Byron. (BL. Add. MSS. 56546 112v. I am grateful to Peter Cochran for showing me his transcription of this MS).

<sup>75</sup>William Stephenson, *Notes and Queries*, 220 (1975), 394

Following this in stanzas 25-26, Byron used a newspaper convention of replacing names with 'blanks' to disguise the location of Lord Henry's mansion because:

there is scarce a single season  
Which doth not shake some very splendid house  
With some slight heart-quake of domestic treason -  
A topic Scandal doth delight to rouse.

As well as the narrator's innuendo, the *bona fide* manifestation of the family ghost to Juan augments our expectation that the release of Adeline's 'high spirit' (XIII. 31) will result in the ruin of the house of Amundeville.

The promise of access, therefore, to Adeline's liquid 'very centre' (XIII. 37), translates Canning's figure of patriarchal moral values diffusing to sustain the community, into a much more dangerous dissolution. The unfreezing which Byron anticipates depends on feminine passion rather than manly virtue in a 'northern clime' and signals sexual, rather than 'constitutional' freedom.<sup>76</sup> Canning's clubbable image of the spirit of loyalty is infiltrated by Byron's emphasis on the instability of what the Law calls 'domestic treason' and what the poem questions by its disruption of complacent social and political surfaces.

A key word which appears in both the Scott review and the Canning speech, but not at this moment in *Don Juan*, is 'generous'. Scott refers to 'the call of freedom, or of generous feeling', and Canning speaks of 'the essence of a generous vintage'. The word connects the sources outside the poem, completing a triangle of textual relationships so that for just a moment, the reader epitomises that generosity, and holds all three together.<sup>77</sup> Together,

<sup>76</sup>One of the consequences of following this digressive allusion is that the reader's impression of Adeline's superartificial control of the plot is strengthened.

<sup>77</sup>Scott and Canning were friends with a concern in Tory journalism. Scott was intending to attend the farewell dinner for Canning. In a letter to J.B.S. Morritt of 7 September 1822 he wrote:

I had intended for Liverpool to hear Canning's farewell speech, and had my place taken, etc. when lo! I was particularly commanded to Dalkeith, which I could not



Scott's review of Byron and Canning's farewell to England enrich our reading of Adeline, for it suggests the explosive potential and the exquisite artifice of her physical, 'fatal' generosity without solidifying these possibilities into absolutes.

Awareness of this complex texture also enriches our reading of our own role in the poem.<sup>78</sup> *Don Juan* invites receptions which take up digressive allusion with varying degrees of commitment, or none at all. Sometimes we are rewarded by completing the triangle of textual relationships as I have outlined above. Elsewhere, the texture of the poem eludes our grasp, but not our touch. Byron leases the reader about his or her uncertain role:

And, gentle reader! when you gather meaning.  
You may be Boaz, and I - modest Ruth. (XIII. 96)

These lines hold hints of the delicacy of touch required ('gentle', 'gather', 'may be', 'modest') and it is the playful tolerance of the text which sustains the relationship between poet and reader against the odds of 'this vile age' (XIII. 97).

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gracefully disobey (*The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by H.J.C. Grierson, 12 vols. (London: Constable, 1932-37), VII, 233.

There is a slender but enticing possibility that Canning was expecting Scott, and was using his frozen champagne image as a personal gesture of friendship and farewell.

<sup>78</sup>As I have suggested above, we are aware in the English Cantos that our role in the poem is governed by our relationship with its plot: it is less certain, however, whether the plot at this point is being shaped by Byron, the narrator, or by Adeline.

## CHAPTER SIX AND CONCLUSION: BYRON'S MODES OF MODERNITY

'Nowhere is Byron so modern as here...' (Ernest J. Lovell Jr., *Byron: The Record of a Quest: Studies in a Poet's Concept and Treatment of Nature* (Connecticut: Archon, 1966; hereafter '*Byron: The Record of a Quest*'), p.235)

'The leaden weight and despairing movement of line evident in certain modern poems is not here' (*Byron: The Record of a Quest*, p.255)

'Byron is knocking around there too' Paul Muldoon on 'Immram': *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation with John Haffenden* (London: Faber, 1981), p.139)

Discussions of Byron's modernity this century have usually fallen into postscripts or asides such as the 'Critical Postscript' concluding Lovell's study from which the comments above are drawn. It may well appear that this thesis follows the same pattern. Definitions of exactly what constitutes Byron's modernism have changed with the historical context of each critique. Comparisons with twentieth-century writers are various, suggestive, and tend to be readily qualified.<sup>1</sup> An example of this is Paul West's discussion in *Byron And the Spoiler's Art* which urgently offers points of contact between Byron and Auden,<sup>2</sup> Baudelaire,<sup>3</sup> Cummings, Dadaism, Eliot,<sup>4</sup> Gide, Joyce,<sup>5</sup> Hemingway, Malraux, Miller, Pound,<sup>6</sup> William Carlos Williams, and Yeats,

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Geoffrey Ward's comparison of Byron and Frank O'Hara in *Statutes of Liberty: The New York School of Poets* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp.40-50.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the relationship between Auden and Byron, see Victor Luftig, 'Auden and Byron', *Byron Journal*, 12 (1984), 17-30.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the similarities between Byron and Baudelaire, see, Philip F. Clark, 'Baudelaire and Byron: A Premise for Comparison', *Byron Journal*, 9 (1981), 64-73; Geoffrey Ward, 'Byron's Artistry in Deep and Layered Space' in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, pp.196-97; George M. Ridenour, *The Style of Don Juan*, p.39.

<sup>4</sup>For an extended comparison between Byron and T.S. Eliot, see Bernard Blackstone, *Byron: A Survey* (London: Longman, 1975), pp.287-344. Interestingly, an anonymous 1920 review of Eliot heralded 'a new Byronism', which the reviewer seems to have associated with Eliot's 'weariness' or 'anti-romantic reaction' rather than the 'incongruity' of Eliot's use of imagery which was also considered (*Times Literary Supplement* No. 984 (18 March 1920): cited by Graham Clarke, *T.S. Eliot: Critical Assessments*, 2 vols. (London: Helm, 1990), II, 36.

<sup>5</sup>For a more detailed consideration of the mythic relationship between Byron and Joyce, see Hermione de Almeida, *Byron and Joyce Through Homer: Don Juan and Ulysses* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981).

<sup>6</sup>Alan Richardson's study of Romantic drama has a postscript linking *Manfred*, *Cain* and *Heaven and Earth* (with other examples of mental theatre) with Yeats, Eliot, Pound and James Merrill. See Alan Richardson, *A Mental Theater: Poetic Drama and Consciousness in the Romantic Age* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988; hereafter 'Richardson'), pp.175-189.

before setting up (with equal urgency) oppositions between Byron and these writers:

Hemingway suppresses to commend; Byron expresses to disdain. (West, p.21)

For West, the likeness between Byron and Hemingway is to be located in 'the idyll preserving man from complete apathy - an idyll longed for with almost childish purity of hope' (West, p.18). For Ernest J. Lovell, however, Byron and Hemingway intersect in their 'accurate reporting of the facts':

The Byron of *Don Juan* and the letters was no less painfully honest when describing himself than when describing the visible world around him. This respect - even reverence - for fact is essentially that of modern science. (*Byron: The Record of a Quest*, p.230)<sup>7</sup>

These quotations raise a very obvious point; the extent to which the perception of modernism is determined by readings in a particular time and place. In the 1957 *Symposium in Reappraisal* which was looking for meeting points of the Romantic period with its own 'on matters of literary artistry' Ernest J. Lovell, Willis W. Pratt and Leslie Marchand addressed the question of Byron's relationship with twentieth-century modernity.<sup>8</sup> Lovell borrowed the criteria of Seldon Rodman's 1946 *New Anthology of Modern Poetry*, focusing on the difference between Byron's use of imagery and that of Eliot, Auden and MacNeice:

[Byron's] imagery is necessarily so ordered as to cut off any associations, ironical extensions, or ambiguities except those deliberately sought. His imagery is usually thinner, less allusive,

<sup>7</sup>This is the conclusion of L.E. Marshall's article, "'Words are things': Byron and the Prophetic Efficacy of Language", *Studies in English Literature*, 25 (1985), 801-22. Marshall chooses to end with Ruskin's verdict that "Byron never loses sight of absolute fact" (p.822).

<sup>8</sup>*The Major English Romantic Poets: A Symposium in Reappraisal* ed. by Clarence D. Thorpe, Carlos Baker and Bennett Weaver (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957; hereafter 'Symposium 1957'), p.xv

with a slighter degree of intensity or extension and without the depth or density of much twentieth-century verse. (Symposium 1957, p.144)

Above all (and somewhat ironically in the light of the postmodern parallels I will go on to trace), Lovell announced that Byron offered a solution to the 'serious present need for the return of intelligible personality to poetry' (Symposium 1957, p.147).<sup>9</sup>

Lovell's desire for stability (in terms of 'unity' and 'harmony') and 'acceptance' is manifest throughout his essay. The same search for inclusiveness is evident in the essay by Willis W. Pratt. In *Lara*, Pratt identifies 'the same accelerating confusions and attendant moral uncertainties that we are familiar with in W.H. Auden, in Hart Crane, and in the distorted world of the Pisan Cantos of Ezra Pound' (Symposium 1957, p.153). These uncertainties are relieved, however, by Byron's display of 'something of Walt Whitman's exuberant philosophy of acceptance' (Symposium 1957, p.161). Again, Byron is seen to display both entanglement with the modern age, and a transcendence of its most troubling contradictions.

Finally, Leslie Marchand's discussion of 'Byron and the Modern Spirit' suggests that

of all the romantic writers, Byron came the nearest to expressing the modern temper which willingly or perforce is ready to face any of the facts that science can present. His recognition of the disparity between the mind's conception of perfection and what we actually believe is achievable in our personal lives or the life of man brings him closer to the twentieth century than any of his contemporaries. (Symposium 1957, p.163)

<sup>9</sup>Elfenbein has recently suggested a modification to the line of influence which has been drawn between Romantic confessional lyrics and the modern dramatic monologue. At the end of his chapter on Tennyson and Byron he suggests 'Tennyson's engagement with Byron demonstrated for modernism how to secure the artist's presence in the text without making the act of writing equivalent to transparent self-confession' (Elfenbein, p.205). The 'modernism' he has in mind here is specifically T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

Ultimately, Marchand argues, Byron's 'honest realism' makes him 'seem our contemporary [...] It is the essential humanity of Byron that appeals to us' (Symposium 1957, p.166).<sup>10</sup>

We can compare the humanist readings of the late 1950s and early 1960s; Lovell's view that Byron's 'refusal [...] to look through blinkers at the problems of man' was 'peculiarly modern' (*Byron: The Record of a Quest*, p.230), with the more sceptical readings of, for example, Wolfgang Franke who writes in 1978 that 'the refusal to commit himself constitutes Byron's modernity', or with Bernard Blackstone's claim that 'the modernity of *Don Juan* is its refusal to be profound',<sup>11</sup> or with Jorgen Schlaeger's claim that *Don Juan* is 'the epically furnished record of an early modern aesthetic consciousness':

*Don Juan* is not a modern text in the sense that, for example, *Ulysses* is. Its modernity is hidden beneath layers of moral indignation and traditional forms and themes. Experience of modern literature and a certain historical distance were perhaps necessary before this side of the work could fully penetrate the consciousness of the general reader and of literary critics. [...] Only when the claim to illusion was abandoned in modern times did it become possible to see the positive aspects of the text, which had hitherto been judged negatively or classified as pure satire. And only when the story content became completely irrelevant was the modern structure of the aesthetic concept behind the poem disclosed.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>These definitions of modernity are 'contemporary with Georg Lukács's arguments against modernist 'anti-realism'. Lukács saw a 'major tendency in modernist literature' to be 'the attenuation of actuality' and that this was linked with 'dissolution of personality [...] Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experimental fragments; he is as inexplicable to others as to himself' (*Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, ed. by Dennis Walder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.163-64.

<sup>11</sup>Wolfgang Franke, 'Don Juan and the Black Friar: A Byronic Variant of the Ghost Story', *Studies in English Literature*, 80 (1978), 21-37 (p.37). Blackstone's view is quoted in Charles J. Clancy, *A Review of Don Juan Criticism 1900-1973* Salzburg Studies in English Literature 40 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1974), p.331.

<sup>12</sup>Jorgen Schlaeger, 'Some Remarks on the Aesthetic Structure of *Don Juan*', *Romantic Reassessment* 80 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1978; hereafter 'Schlaeger'), p.56; 54-55

In this essay, Schlaeger argues that the concept of 'romantic irony' is not appropriate for the 'peculiarities of the text structure' which he has identified in *Don Juan* (Schlaeger, p.55). Drawing on the theories of Schlegel, Schelling and Solger, Schlaeger argues that distance between the "'I'" of the text and the world presented must be consistently maintained in romantic irony, and that this distance is collapsed in *Don Juan* where, 'the protean narrator [...] is himself drawn into the process of incessant change' (Schlaeger, p.55). In the 1980s, however, there was a resurgence of interest in romantic irony connected with theoretical work on deconstruction which fed into the debate about Byron's forms of modernism.

Anne K. Mellor counters Schlaeger's model by insisting that 'romantic irony itself has more than one mode.'<sup>13</sup> She traces Byron's 'exuberant *mobilité* that acknowledges all the complexities of a constantly changing world' through a period of early twentieth-century history when change meant only deterioration or 'lunatic violence' (Mellor, p.187), to the texts of Yeats, Joyce and Nabokov which 'play between order and chaos' and allow the reader to participate in 'liminality' (Mellor, p.188).

For Mellor, romantic irony is an organic presence, 'born from the upheavals of the French and industrial revolutions, flourished during the early nineteenth century, and seriously weakened by the violence of World War I' (Mellor, pp.186-87). In this reading, romantic ironists are a different species from other writers, and having survived 'the dominant modern attitude to change' (Mellor, p.187), the romantic ironist offers the promise of escape from history: 'Romantic irony, therefore, can potentially free individuals and even entire cultures from totalitarian modes of thought and behaviour' (Mellor, p.188). It is a utopian vision of 'pleasure, psychic health, and intellectual freedom' which evades the question of how to bring

<sup>13</sup>Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980; hereafter 'Mellor'), p.186. See also Frederick Garber, *Self, Text and Romantic Irony: The Example of Byron* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

about a mass 'genuine participation in romantic irony' (Mellor, p.188). We may feel that as far as Byron is concerned, Mellor's reading depends on the fact that 'the climax of [his] career' abjured 'the incredibly difficult balancing between two opposed and unreconciled ideas for a protracted period of time' (Mellor, p.186). The relationship between modernity and romantic irony remains to be explored.

Voicing the historicist concerns of the later 1980s, Nigel Leask employs the concept of modernity to mean Western capitalist progress (rather than an aesthetic concept).<sup>14</sup> Leask's study of Romantic representations of the East considers 'Romanticism's sense of its own problematic *modernity*' in the context of self-conscious antiquarian techniques: 'placing the "original" ballad within a discontinuous historical or geopolitical field and posing questions about the moral and cultural significance of heroic and epical values in the context of a "progressive" present.'<sup>15</sup> Leask goes on to argue that 'Byron's critique of empire broadens out into a critique of modernity itself' (Leask, p.60), and he develops the critical perceptions of Willis Pratt in 1957 to provide a startling analogy between the 'narrative anxiety of *Lara*' and the 'dark mythic forces of Fascism and totalitarianism':

Nazism represented the imperialist subjugation of Europe itself, complete with racial psychosis, a subjugation mirroring the more extreme forms of domination meted out by European liberal democracies to their refractory colonial subjects. The process is uncannily anticipated in Byron's *Tale*; *Lara*, like European modernity, is cut loose from tradition and custom; morally unrestrained and sceptical of the notion of freedom. (Leask, p.60)

<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of two sorts of modernity, see Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, 4th edn. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p.41.

<sup>15</sup>Nigel Leask: *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; hereafter 'Leask'), p.28

Also using an historicist approach, Jerome Christensen reads an economic anxiety into the production of 'Byronism'. One of the more suggestive moments in his episodic study is a brief consideration of the economics of quoting: 'the modernity of *Juan's* dispensation is that neither the narrator nor anyone else can claim on cognitively reliable grounds to be its father. The narrator must forcibly institute the grounds of his own authority, summoning as he does so the maddening aporia of self-legitimizing authority.'<sup>16</sup> In this reading, a modern severance from tradition generates a self-conscious reliance on tradition. This circularity is the dominant pattern of Christensen's modernity as in his reflection on the "Carpe diem" exhortation of Canto XI:

The quotation marks are what Hazlitt calls an 'infliction of the present' on the incorporated maxim, the sign of a time when the existence of the 'common place' is itself at stake. *Juan's* citation compulsion is the symptom of a bookish existence unattached to a community of ethical phrases. 'The man of the book has no land,' in Lyotard's words, and without land verbal prescriptions seem abstract, derivative; they require the backing of typographical conventions. The citation attempts to generate for the maxim a normative transcendence of the moment of audition. And in fact 'Carpe diem' rules the English Cantos, which like the annals of the United Kingdom, are a tissue of seizures, failed and successful, past and present, literal and figurative.' (Christensen, p.327)

Christensen's alternating emphasis on the economics of text and context in Byron's poems may be contrasted with William Galperin's invocation of Lyotard's 'unpresentable' to foreground questions about perspective in Romantic works.<sup>17</sup> Galperin's study searches for poems which like the

<sup>16</sup>Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.328. This extract picks up on Theodor Adorno's definition of modernism cited at the beginning of the chapter: the 'ground of modernism is both the absence of a ground and the explicit rejection by modernism of a ground, even if there were one'. (Christensen, p.303)

<sup>17</sup>William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993; hereafter 'Galperin'), pp.244-82 (p.248). Galperin



postmodern films *Lolita* and *China Town* question an omniscient position and acknowledge their own materiality. Such a deconstructive dynamic Galperin locates in Byron's treatment of the Elgin Marbles in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Galperin, pp.249-50), but his criteria for this version of the 'postmodern condition' lead to a categorisation of *Don Juan* as less deconstructively 'advanced' than aspects of the first cantos of *Childe Harold* :

If the most mature aspects of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* represent a resistance to writing [...] and to the totalizing visions writing ordinarily serves, then *Don Juan* would seem to confirm Byron's claim that his earlier poems were more advanced than anything he had produced subsequently [...] For all of *Don Juan's* various subversions, it is also the case that these are circumscribed by writing - so much writing, as it turns out, that the poem's radical elements are all but ancillary to their mode of production. (Galperin, p.271)

Although we might be able to follow the logic behind Galperin's argument, his critique of *Don Juan's* 'notable faith in writing' (Galperin, p.271), demonstrates the losses of a too mechanistic theoretical approach.

All these critics have made suggestive and sometimes compelling links between Byron's writing and twentieth-century texts. This is, indeed, what I intended to do when I began the research for my thesis. I discovered, however, that attempts to liken one writer to another more often than not lead to an acute awareness of the differences between them. I do not intend, therefore, to add to the list of twentieth-century writers whose writing follows the formal dynamic of Byron's work. This would be to succumb to a purely formal mode of criticism in which parallels of shape could be laid uncritically one over the other, creating endless and ultimately formless bibliographic spires.

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argues that 'totalising efforts to make Byron into a modernist or a postmodernist derive from 'Byron's virtual exclusion from the more liberal, humanistic conceptions of the romantic achievement [...] by critics such as M.H. Abrams and Harold Bloom' (Galperin, p.246).

What seems to me to link Byron's *ottava rima* work with forms of modernist and postmodernist writing is an acute awareness of the historical matrix of literary composition. This thesis has discovered that Byron's modes of disruption are historical constructs and that it is not possible to discuss form as a dehistoricized entity. We can produce meaning in form, but its identity will always be relative as the constructions of Byron's modernity this century are contingent on their historical contexts. Byron's modes of digressive allusion materialise this contingency and overlay a sense of loss at fragmentation with a quizzical acceptance of fragments. It is this openness to haphazard historical particulars which makes digressive allusion hospitable to late twentieth-century constructions of modernity. A focus on the reader's role in constructing the allusive texture of Byron's writing allows us to see one way in which Byron anticipates the textual manoeuvres of that extreme of modernist writing we can call postmodern.

'Postmodernism' is a fiercely contested term and I should clarify my understanding of it as a form of writing which engages the reader in the undecidability of the surface more than the interpretation of symbols.<sup>18</sup> Digressive allusion opens up specific ways of looking at the intertextual structures which preoccupy postmodern criticism. In order to draw out the aesthetic and philosophical implications of my study, I shall identify discussion of modes of digression in postmodernist writing, hoping that a reading which is alert to both points of contact and difference will enable a closer definition of Byron's particular digressive texture.<sup>19</sup> We have seen

<sup>18</sup>I am here drawing on the criticism of modern American poetry by Marjorie Perloff in *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp.4-28. Perloff's discussion of W.B. Yeats's criticism of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* exemplifies the objections to 'grotesque fragments', 'unbridged transitions', 'unexplained ejaculations' (pp.155-56) which I am suggesting were a feature of Byron's contemporary reception. For a discussion of indeterminacy in readings of novels, see Wolfgang Iser, 'Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction' in *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. by J. Hillis Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp.1-45.

<sup>19</sup>The critical neglect of texture in Romantic writing has recently been addressed by Thomas McFarland in the introduction to *Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau* (Oxford: Clarendon

how what appears to be the repetition of a word or form can mean entirely different things, depending on its context, but this does not mean that these differences cannot be negotiated. By tracing a formal dynamic which has been closely defined in the course of the thesis into different historical contexts, I hope that this conclusion might suggest ways forward, without losing touch with past detail.

An important difference between Byron's writing and the modernist undecidability of, for example, Beckett's texts is that Byron's scepticism is ultimately affirmative. Our experience of textual instability in *Don Juan*, therefore, is of a more generous voice than the paradoxes of incertitude in *The Unnamable*: instead of 'I can't go on, I'll go on', *Don Juan* embraces the society of the reader in its promise to 'rattle on'.<sup>20</sup> Jerome McGann has approached a description of this generous supplement in his analysis of the way that the dynamic driving Byron's writing is inadequately represented as a 'dialectical form':

*Don Juan* does something more than set in motion Byron's version of Kierkegaard's either/or problematic. The poem's contradictions [...] deconstruct all truth-functions which are founded either in (metaphysical) Identity or (psychological) Integrity. In their place is set a truth-function founded (negatively) in contradiction itself, and (positively) in metonymy: to the negative either/or dialectic, *Don Juan* adds the procedural rule of 'both/and'.<sup>21</sup>

What we have in Byron's writing, McGann suggests, is 'a third being [...] the awareness of the unresolved characters of original opposition' (*Towards a Literature of Knowledge*, p.56). I have argued that in digressive allusion this 'third being' is more like an invitation to the reader to make the casting vote

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Press, 1995). McFarland argues that critical attention to texture will help to reinstate notions of 'quality' or value which have been displaced by deconstructive readings.

<sup>20</sup>See Michael G. Cooke, *The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, pp.175-205 for an eloquent argument for 'Byronic Affirmation'.

<sup>21</sup>Jerome J. McGann, *Towards a Literature of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; hereafter *Towards a Literature of Knowledge*), p.56

and it is important to stress that *Don Juan* does not offer infinite 'unresolvability' because each reading is contingent upon choices created by digressive allusion which are resolved from moment to moment by the reader. McGann builds on his exploration of an aesthetic positive in *The Beauty of Inflections* where despite the "nihilistic" effect of the poem's view of inevitable disappointment in European history, the poem is seen as 'a great work of hope, for it insists that projects of change and renewal must continue to be raised up despite the fact of absolute adversity' (*The Beauty of Inflections*, p.286). I wish to build on McGann's aesthetic and philosophical conclusions by bringing together three varieties of theoretical writing which offer the possibility of an affirmative texture of disruption.

Deconstruction's interest in the value of disturbance and its insistence on the materiality of language supplies a late twentieth-century theoretical model for the effect of digressive allusion. Although deconstruction has been criticised as an evasion of history and an utterly nihilistic procedure, the sociability of its practices offer more scope for affirmation in a community of readers than has been allowed. Derrida claims that 'deconstruction perhaps has the effect, if not the mission, of liberating forbidden *jouissance*':

There is no efficient deconstruction without the greatest possible pleasure [...]. In these terms, literature would lift repression: to a certain extent at least, in its own way, never totally, and according to rule-governed scenarios, but always in the process of modifying their rules in what we call the history of literature.<sup>22</sup>

The '*jouissance*' involved in deconstruction is suggestive of the affirmative dynamic of *Don Juan* but we hesitate, I think, before the absolutism of 'never totally, and according to rule-governed scenarios'. An *ottava rima* stanza is 'a rule governed scenario' and the materiality of *Don Juan's* language can

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<sup>22</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (London and New York: Routledge, 1992; hereafter '*Acts of Literature*'), p.56

work as political agency precisely because the reader is invited to limit textual *jouissance* as, for example, in the multiplicity of puns which impede our progress through the *Siege Cantos*. Derridean deconstruction can offer us suggestive models for the dynamic of disruption,<sup>23</sup> undecidability, and moments where the reader is disconcerted, but its elating momentum defers the urgency of discrimination and construction which is part of the texture of *Don Juan*.

Political agency is at work in the radical *jouissance* of French feminist theory. Luce Irigaray's seminal essay, 'Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un' celebrates female plural sexuality in prose which suggests the kind of elusive pleasure offered by digressive allusion:

The geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined [...]  
 'She' is indefinitely other in herself. That is undoubtedly the reason she is called temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious - not to mention her language in which 'she' goes off in all directions and in which 'he' is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Contradictory words seem a little crazy to the logic of reason, and inaudible for him who listens with ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance. In her statements - at least when she dares to speak out - woman retouches herself constantly. She just barely separates from herself some chatter, an exclamation, a half-secret, a sentence left in suspense - When she returns to it, it is only to set out again from another point of pleasure or pain. One must listen to her differently in order to hear an 'other meaning' which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Derrida's observations on the law of genre and his demonstrations of the disruptive potential of the footnote are particularly pertinent to a discussion of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Cantos I and II, and the *Oriental Tales*. See *Acts of Literature*, pp. 153; 221-52.

<sup>24</sup>Luce Irigaray, 'This Sex Which is Not One', transl. by Claudia Reeder, *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton: Harvester, 1981; hereafter 'New French Feminisms'), pp.99-106 (p.103).

The italicised evocation of weaving, embracing and casting-off provides us with an image for the unstable texture of digressive allusion. Irigary's description of plural sexuality as a 'different economy' captures our sense of Byron's challenge to the outraged Tory critics of his day but Irigary, of course, would base this different economy exclusively in experience of the female body.<sup>25</sup> This sentimental reliance on the sincerity of writing the female body allows no room for the transitions of artifice or ventriloquism which are so great a part of the pleasure in Byron's writing. And the essential '*privacy of this silent, multiple, diffuse tact*' (*New French Feminisms*, p.103) is at odds with our sense of the community of poem and readers created by *Don Juan*.<sup>26</sup>

In a reading which emphasises the plurality of folk cultures rather than gender, the body emerges in Bakhtin's paradigms of carnival as a challenge to generic authority. His exploration of the structures of carnival in Rabelais's writing sees made for the festive disruptions of *Beppo* and *Don Juan*.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, Bakhtin conveys a sense of joy or '*jolly relativity*' in the processes of carnivalized literature: 'The carnival attitude possesses an indestructible vivacity and the mighty, life-giving power to transform.' He

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<sup>25</sup>Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, however, allow this semiotic style to be written by a man and they both use the example of James Joyce. See Cixous's description of woman's speech as 'never simple or linear, or "objectified", generalized' in 'The Laugh of the Medusa', transl. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen (*New French Feminisms*, pp.245-64 (p.251)). See also Julia Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin's category of Menippean discourse, especially the way that it 'tends towards the scandalous and eccentric in language':

The 'inopportune' expression, with its cynical frankness, its desecration of the sacred, and its attack on etiquette, is quite characteristic. This discourse is made up of contrasts [...] It uses abrupt transitions and changes; high and low, rise and fall, and misalliances of all kinds [...] It is an all-inclusive genre, put together as a pavement of citations.

Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, transl. by Thomas Cora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.83.

<sup>26</sup>Perhaps the greatest loss in reading French feminist theory with *Don Juan* is the reliance of these schools of criticism on the theories of Lacan. This underpinning means that the critic's attention is occupied by asking to what system does any reading subscribe rather than asking what any reading might create. In digressive allusion, the reader's potential to create offers a way of questioning the Lacanian 'Law' as I have suggested in Chapter Five.

<sup>27</sup>Work on the effects of the carnival as experienced by Byron in Venice remains to be done, especially examinations of the oral culture, of street theatre, and of the art of improvised narrative in the theatre.

identifies three basic characteristics of carnival attitude; the way that mythical heroes and historical figures are 'deliberately and emphatically contemporized', a reliance on experience and 'free imagination' rather than legend, and a 'deliberate multifariousness and discordance'.<sup>28</sup> We could trace these characteristics in Byron's digressive techniques although we might wish to question the degree in which *Don Juan* is liberated from legend. Byron's digressive allusions contain elements of parody which make Bakhtinian carnival a closer model than the *jouissance* of Derridean deconstruction or the *jouissance* of French feminism but Bakhtin's reliance on a dynamic of duality qualifies the encounter between carnival theory and Byron's Venice.

The texture of carnivalized writing is dealt with in Bakhtin's book on Rabelais where the interruption of coarse language and blasphemy is associated with the processes of the grotesque body:

It is the people's growing and ever-victorious body that is 'at home' in the cosmos. It is the cosmos' own flesh and blood, possessing the same elemental force but better organized. The body is the last and best word of the cosmos, its leading force. Therefore it has nothing to fear. Death holds no terror for it. The death of the individual is only one moment in the triumphant life of the people and of mankind, a moment indispensable for their renewal and improvement.<sup>29</sup>

This extract, however, typifies what happens when we look for theoretical models for Byron's writing. There is a moment of recognition and qualified

<sup>28</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.88-89.

<sup>29</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p.34. For a longer consideration of the uses of Bakhtinian theory in readings of *Don Juan*, see Philip W. Martin, 'Reading *Don Juan* with Bakhtin', in *Don Juan*, ed. by Nigel Wood (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993) pp.90-121 (hereafter 'Reading *Don Juan* with Bakhtin'). Martin argues that if we read the poem's body as a transgressive grotesque body, 'then its pronouncements on indigestion, illness, and bodily malfunction can be seen no longer as impertinent interruptions or digressions, but as an integrated part of *Don Juan's* deconstruction and reconstruction of those dominant paradigms: spirit and body, metaphysics and physics' ('Reading *Don Juan* with Bakhtin', p.117). This 'integration', I believe, detracts from a reading of the poem by reducing the digressions to an expression of duality. Peter W. Graham argues that *Don Juan's* England offers a Bakhtinian 'chronotype': 'a place permitting us to range through time in space, to see the past in the present' (*Don Juan and Regency England*, p.163). I am keen not to lose the specific and startling contrasts between different realms of experience in this 'blend'.

assent (the body "at home" in the cosmos is suggestive) until the dynamics of another text take over and we end with the 'renewal and improvement' of mankind which is a long way from *Don Juan's* bleak awareness that 'Though Ireland starve, great George weighs twenty stone' (VIII. 126).

Provisional and fleeting points of contact between Byron and postmodern writing are suggestive but in the end, Byron's writing resists the totalising discourse of any one theoretical model. One obvious point of difference is that our models of postmodern writing tend to be in prose. Bakhtin, for example, foregrounds the novel as prime subversive genre. Although Byron challenges the law of genre (as early nineteenth-century reactions to his poetry show), the *ottava rima* work is energised by strict adherence to a verse form which resists the disintegration of form linked with novelisation. Rhyme cannot be endlessly deferred and poetic form and genre stand as recognisable (historical) presences in poetry to which we still respond. The multiple dynamics of form remain one of the most important, though relatively undiscussed aspects of Byron's work. We lack a vocabulary to talk about the pleasure of form and its relationship with the pleasure of disruption.<sup>30</sup> It is with the acknowledgement of a problem that I am happy to end.

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<sup>30</sup>Machine-readable texts may make a contribution to this sort of debate by enabling the reader to trace patterns which occur in the verse simultaneously.



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Harmony and Variation

John Addington Symonds's use of the word 'harmony' in 1880 holds different resonances from the 'harmony' invoked by William Roberts in 1812. In the brief space of an appendix, it is not possible to give a detailed or comprehensive account of nineteenth-century literary critical interpretations of harmony. It is equally difficult to map (except in very general terms) the development of harmony in a musical context. This is partly because general surveys of the music of this period are informed by widely dispersed literary analogies. For example, Percy Scholes characterises the early nineteenth-century as one of 'emotional intensity':

We arrive now at the Beethoven-Schubert period (French Revolution, 'Sturm und Drang', and the passion and introspection of the *Werther* type of literature)<sup>1</sup>

Scholes describes the late nineteenth century (the context of Symonds's remarks) as the period of "'Romantic" harmony'. Musical harmony in this era (according to Scholes) was marked by increased chromatic work and intensification by temporary displacements. Symonds could have been aware both of the expressive dissonance and yearning chromaticism which creates Wagnerian harmony, and possibly very early modern attempts at disrupting romantic harmony with polytonality. Symonds's metaphor of the 'rapid modulation from key to key' (p.3 above) suggests, however, the work of Beethoven or Schubert.

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<sup>1</sup>Percy A. Scholes, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, 10th. edn. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.447. Julian Rushton points out that '*Sturm und Drang* should only be used for music as an analogy, not to imply any causative literary origin' (Julian Rushton, *Classical Music: A Concise History from Gluck to Beethoven*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986)), p.114.

The effect of disrupted harmony for a nineteenth-century audience may be characterised by the initial public response to most compositions in what is perceived as a 'modern' idiom. When Liszt's second piano concerto (A Major) was performed in London at the Crystal Palace in 1874, its variations met with some opposition:

The Concerto consists of one movement only, but this includes within itself no less than seven changes of time and expression [...] A more chaotic effect could hardly have been produced had the notes been drawn, haphazard, out of the toy known as the musical kaleidoscope. Why was such trash allowed to figure in the programme?<sup>2</sup>

Symonds's emphasis on 'coherence', however, suggests that as well as the musical analogy, he is also working with a more abstract concept of harmony which for western European cultures has a significance beyond its musical sense:

1. The just adaptation of one part to another. Bacon.
2. Just proportion of sound. Watts.
3. Concord; correspondent sentiment. Milton.<sup>3</sup>

Johnson's definition of discord runs as follows:

1. Disagreement; opposition; mutual anger. Shakespeare.
2. Difference, or contrariety of qualities. Dryden
- 3.[in music] Sounds not of themselves pleasing, but necessary to be mixed with others. Peacham.

The more generally congruous sense of harmony (beyond its relationship with melody in music) is given first place in the OED.

<sup>2</sup>Critical review quoted on EMI 1960 Stereo recording (CFP 40057).

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers* 2 vols., (London, 1755), facsimile edition (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1990).

1. Combination or adaptation of parts, elements, or related things so as to form a consistent and orderly whole; agreement, congruity.
2. Agreement of feeling or sentiment; peaceableness, concord.
3. Combination of parts or details with each other, so as to produce an aesthetically pleasing effect; agreeable aspect thus arising.
4. The combination of musical notes, so as to produce a pleasing effect; melody; music. (The earliest sense in English.)

It appears to be this sense of 'agreement' and 'peaceableness' which Symonds felt to be violated in Byron's poetry although Symonds had at his disposal musical references to unsettle a definition of harmony as concord. For Symonds, a symphonic ideal of coherence and resolution towards the home tonic has replaced the divine association which clung to the idea of harmony for Byron's contemporaries.

For Moore, Southey and Roberts, the Christian allegorical interpretation of harmony (as developed from the Pythagorean theory of the harmony of the spheres) was still available. See, for example, Moore's 'The Genius of Harmony' and Southey, *Roderick* XXI: 'to heavenliest harmony reduce the seeming chaos' (quoted in OED). The concept of *concordia discors* has usually been invoked to summarise 'the triumph of "symphony" over the discordant voices'.<sup>4</sup> It is, however, possible to place a different emphasis on discord and to see it as vital to harmony. Spitzer points out that Christian thought reduced the role of dissonance:

Whereas the Stoics (like Heraclitus) had thought of harmony as forcing together the inimical, Augustine has in mind rather the ability of harmony to smooth out apparent discord - as the 'inner-ear' of the believer hears the unity underlying diversity. Thus the *concordia discors* foreshadows the differentiated harmony of the saints. (Spitzer, p.40)

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<sup>4</sup>Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963; hereafter 'Spitzer'), p.9

The religious impulse towards theories of synthesis is perhaps best illustrated in the work of Coleridge and his adaptation of the idea of a 'pre-existing harmony' for a Unitarian vision of the world.<sup>5</sup> In chapter fourteen of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge expanded on the synthetic power of the imagination and in claiming that it 'blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial', he revealed his concept of harmony as 'the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities'.<sup>6</sup>

The moral imperative which had become attached to harmony is evident even in Spitzer's study where he refers to 'the destructive process of 'demusicalization' and secularization' and to the growth of a 'segmentary, fragmentary, materialistic, and positivistic view of the world' as 'this era of disintegration' (Spitzer, p.138). In the eighteenth century, harmony was (virtually) synonymous with virtue. Theism informed the social concept of harmony which had been advanced by Shaftesbury:

Admiration and Love of Order, Harmony and Proportion, in whatever kind, is naturally improving to the Temper, advantageous to social Affection, and highly assistant to Virtue; which is itself no other than the love of Order and Beauty in Society.<sup>7</sup>

It seems likely that the religious connotations of harmony contributed to the criticisms of Byron's work as exhibiting 'discordant principles'. Indeed, the atheist Shelley's frequent invocation of the term harmony was so infused with the vocabulary of Christian/Platonic thought that after his death, Mary Shelley was able to re-present him to the nineteenth-century orthodox public on its own terms:

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of Coleridge's early Unitarian belief in the one supreme God (as opposed to the corrupted doctrine of the Trinity), and his reading of Plato and Pythagoras, see Ian Wylie, *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), especially Chapters One and Two.

<sup>6</sup>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria: or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions* ed. by George Watson (London and Melbourne: Dent, 1975), p.174.

<sup>7</sup>Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p.73

Shelley shrunk instinctively from portraying human passion, with its mixture of good and evil, of disappointment and disquiet [...] he loved to shelter himself rather in the airiest flights of fancy [...] in such imaginations [...] which celebrated [...] the thousand harmonious sounds which nature creates in her solitudes. (Note on 'Poems of 1820')

[Shelley's letters] will be the best testimonials of his appreciation of the harmonious and beautiful in art and nature, and his delicate taste in discerning and describing them. (Note on 'Poems of 1818')

His fertile imagination, and ear, tuned to the finest sense of harmony, preserved him from imitation. (Editor's Note on *Queen Mab*)<sup>8</sup>

The more technical use of the word harmony to characterise metrical language was illustrated by Byron in his 'Some Observations upon an Article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*' (1820) where he describes the harmony of Pope as superior to the versification of his detractors:

It is this very harmony particularly in Pope - which has raised the vulgar and atrocious Cant against him, - because his versification is perfect - it is assumed that it is his only perfection. (Nicholson, p.111)

This is a less common, but more accountable use of the term - it is typical of Byron at this time that he should use the word harmony to foreground coherence of form and mortal art over the currency of an abstract system of perfection. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, however, the use of the word 'harmony' is more informed by the Pythagorean/Platonic conceptions of the term although harmony in this poem is also recognised as a construct of the creating imagination.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>The *Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Mrs. Shelley (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), pp.279; 230; 239

<sup>9</sup>See, for example, "Eternal harmony" (III. 90), 'The harmony of things' (IV. 126), The '[howling]' harmony of the winds in IV. 106 is subsumed by the momentary harmony of

If discussions of music and aesthetics from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are consulted, we can trace a number of arguments about the relationship between 'variation' and what Francis Hutcheson called 'a sort of uniformity' (see below). Yves Marie André's analysis of musical beauty suggested that it was independent of opinion or taste but derived from 'the great book of reason':

C'est-à-dire, Monsieur, que pendant que tant de voix et d'instruments sonores vous frappaient l'oreille par des accords agréables, vous sentiez au dedans de vous-même un maître de musique intérieur qui battait la mesure, si j'ose ainsi parler, pour vous en marquer la justesse, qui vous en découvrait le principe dans une lumière supérieure aux sens; dans l'idée de l'ordre, la beauté de l'ordonnance du dessein de la pièce dans l'idée des nombres sonores, la règle des proportions et des progressions harmoniques dont ils sont les images essentielles; dans l'idée de la décence, une loi sacrée qui prescrivait à chaque partie son rang, son terme, et sa route légitime pour y arriver.<sup>10</sup>

This exemplifies the Christian interpretation of harmony which was invoked by Roberts. André argued that, to avoid the exhaustion of consonance, music has 'taken over the use of dissonance, as shade is used in painting':

Et où l'a-t-on trouvé, ce sel harmonique si nécessaire, surtout dans les grandes compositions, pour en varier les accords, pour les lier ensemble, pour en rendre l'expression plus sensible par une modulation plus piquante? L'eût-on deviné? La musique l'est allée prendre jusque dans le sein de ses plus cruelles ennemies: elle a trouvé des tempéraments pour se les concilier; c'est-à-dire l'art d'en adoucir la rudesse, de leur prêter même une partie de l'agrément des consonnances, pour les empêcher d'en troubler l'harmonie; de les employer comme les ombres dans la peinture. (André, pp.85-6)

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human mind and divinity in St Peter's, Rome: 'Vastness which grows - but grows to harmonize - / All musical in its immensities' (IV. 156).

<sup>10</sup>*Oeuvres Philosophiques du Père André de la Compagnie de Jésus*, ed. by Victor Cousin (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1843; hereafter 'André'), p.79

This illustrates an eighteenth-century impulse towards assimilation and cohesion that stands behind many of the criticisms of Byronic juxtaposition. The idea of harmony as an aspect of natural order ('His will') was familiar in England well into the nineteenth century, but in the late eighteenth century, a growing interest in the aesthetics of imperfection (fragments and ruins) led to the sort of opinions which were expressed by Thomas Twining.

'There are times,' he wrote in a letter to Dr Charles Burney 4 April, 1774, 'when one's ears call *only* for harmony and a pleasant jingle; when one is disposed to merely sensual music' (*italics mine*). Twining associated this 'fixed' harmony with the harpsichord and denounced the 'perfect monsters that will check me in my extempore ramblings'.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Twining advocated the expression of subjectivity through the piano and argued with Burney about the existence of 'dissonant Harmonics' (Barry, pp.100-101).

In Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Herder was responsive to the emotional impact of 'fluctuations of power' in harmony, maintaining that

In the realm of sound, harmony performs, as it were, the function that the straight line does in relation to other kinds of line, or the square or rectangle in relation to other geometrical figures: it is the foundation of correctness, yet it can generate of itself no form of organic beauty.<sup>12</sup>

Although the German debate at this time provided a multiplicity of arguments compared with the English forum, it is possible to recognise a recurring preoccupation with constructs of unity. Around 1802-3, Schelling placed harmony in an integral relationship with melody:

<sup>11</sup>quoted by Kevin Barry, *Language Music, and the Sign* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; hereafter 'Barry'), p.100

<sup>12</sup>*Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Peter le Huray and James Day (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; hereafter 'le Huray and Day'), p. 256

harmony stands in the same relationship to rhythm as ideal unity does to phenomenal unity, or as the concept of diversity expanding into unity does to the contrasting one of unity expanding into diversity. (le Huray and Day, p.279)

His argument that rhythm and harmony are forms of motion in the universe led to an explanation of harmony as centripetal force itself (which is what in Christian Evangelical terms it represented to William Roberts). An overtly Christian interpretation of harmony was exemplified in mid-nineteenth century Germany by Theodor Mundt:

*Harmony* represents the most intimate, characteristic and fundamental aspect of modern music. This is essentially something developed by the Christian spirit, something that symbolises the truly Christian life of the spirit, in which creation in all its profusion and variety is united and subsumed in the one fundamental and divine Idea. Harmony in music is, in fact, the simultaneous combination of sound of *different* voices. Such an ideal combination of essentially different elements constitutes an artistic relationship that is both rich and precise; *melody*, on the other hand, is only the rhythmically ordered sequence of sounds of a simple musical idea. (le Huray and Day, p.547)

Closely connected with attempts to define the nature of harmony were aesthetic discussions about the degree of variety that existed or that could be tolerated in musical composition. This has a bearing on the way that Byron's 'rapid modulations' were received throughout the nineteenth century. In his *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Francis Hutcheson (a Scottish follower of Shaftesbury) upheld the view that,

Under *Original Beauty* we may include *Harmony*, or *Beauty of Sound*, if that Expression can be allow'd, because *Harmony* is not usually conceiv'd as an Imitation of any thing else. Harmony often raises Pleasure in those who know not what is the occasion of it: And yet the Foundation of this Pleasure is known to be a sort of *Uniformity* [...]. Now good compositions [...] must retain a general *Unity* of key, an *Uniformity* among the parts in *Bars*, *Risings*, *Fallings*, *Closes*. The Necessity of this will appear,



by observing the *Dissonance* which would arise from tacking parts of different tunes together as one, altho both were separately agreeable.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1738 corrected fourth edition of his *Treatise*, Hutcheson stressed the importance of the 'due regard' which was to be had for the 'time and humour in which the composition is begun' to avoid the 'Discord' which would be caused by 'frequent and inartificial change' but he also located pleasure in the 'mysterious effect of discords':

They often give as great Pleasure as continu'd Harmony; whether by refreshing the Ear with *Variety*, or by awakening the Attention, and enlivening the Relish for the succeeding Harmony of Concords, as Shades enliven and beautify Pictures, or by some other means not yet known. (Hutcheson(1738), p.28)

Writing his *Principes de la Littérature* in the mid-eighteenth century, Charles Batteux, Professor-Royal of the French Academy, argued that discord 'has its place':

Parmi les passions, il y en a qui éclatent, d'autres qui frémissent. La Mélodie, pour prendre toutes ces formes, varie à propos les tons, les intervalles, les modulations, emploie avec art les dissonances mêmes. Car les dissonances étant dans la nature, aussi bien que les autres tons, ont le même droit qu'eux, d'entrer dans la Musique. Elles y servent non-seulement d'assaisonnement & de sel; mais elles contribuent d'une façon particulière à caractériser l'expression Musicale. Rien n'est si irrégulier que la marche des passions, de l'amour, de la colère, de la discorde: souvent, pour les exprimer, la voix s'aigrit & détonne tout-à-coup: & pour peu que l'art adoucisse ces désagréments de la nature, la vérité de l'expression console de

<sup>13</sup>Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; in Two Treatises. In which the Principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury are Explain'd and Defended, against the Author of the Fable of the Bees: and the Ideas of Moral Good and Evil are establish'd, according to the sentiments of the Antient Moralists. With an Attempt to introduce a Mathematical Calculation in Subjects of Morality* (London, 1725; hereafter 'Hutcheson'), pp.25-6.

sa dureté. C'est au compositeur à les présenter avec précaution, sobriété, intelligence.<sup>14</sup>

This blend of mimetic and expressive theories anticipates Byron's defence to Murray of his 'scorching and drenching' in *Don Juan*. Unexpectedly, perhaps, Christian Friedrich Michaelis's examination of humour in music (1806-7) comes closest to offering an aesthetic categorisation and justification of rapid transitions:

Music is humorous if it displays the composer's wilfulness more than the strict practice of artistic techniques; in such a case, the musical ideas are very odd and unusual and they do not follow on one another as the natural harmonic progressions might seem to imply. Instead, the listener is surprised by quite unexpected turns of phrase, by unexpected transitions, or by wholly new and oddly-shaped figures [...]. Established ideas are inverted in new shapes, the notes are syncopated, individual parts are woven into remarkable textures, keys are boldly approached and left, returns to the original key and main theme are equally unexpected and everything concludes in so individual a manner that nothing can be explained in terms of conventional musical techniques, customary musical forms, or natural regular procedure. The very unexpectedness of it all has precisely the same impact as do the ideas of a comical or humorous narrator who combines the bizarre with a wayward imaginative capacity to give the most familiar things a new look, and who, boldly and openly gives rein to his thoughts without ever offending against good taste. (le Huray and Day, p.291)

Apart from the crucial last clause, Michaelis has here set up a critical frame of reference for the appreciation of Byron's *ottava rima*. André had discussed the effect of transitions from key to key 'that amaze the ear by their very variety', but this was only in the context of 'noble subjects'. Michaelis approached the sublime from a different angle and allowed that humorous music could be witty or more serious; the latter quality arising from a sublime form of 'mobility' in which the composer is impelled by his immediate mood and the

<sup>14</sup>M. l'Abbé Batteux, *Principes de la Littérature*, 5 vols. (Paris: Desaint & Saillant, 1764), I, 350.

ideas that are generated by it 'to express the strange succession and transformation of emotions and ideas to which he is subject' (le Huray and Day, p.292).<sup>15</sup>

Michaelis's theory of humorous music, therefore, offered an aesthetic that could comprehend *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan* but his work was not widely disseminated (Michaelis was denied a post at the University of Leipzig 'on account of his association with the "atheist" philosopher Fichte' (le Huray and Day, p.286)). More influential in the nineteenth century were the theories of Hegel who advanced a synthetic view of harmonic relationships:

more profound music not only *may* push its movements up to the very limits of immediate consonance, indeed may even first transgress them in order then to return into itself, but, on the contrary, it *must* tear apart the simple first harmony into dissonances. For such oppositions alone are the basis of the deeper relations of the secret harmony which have a necessity of their own, and thus the deeply impressive movements of the melody also have their basis solely in these deep harmonic relations. Boldness in musical composition therefore abandons a purely consonant progression, goes on to oppositions, summons all the starkest contradictions and dissonances and gives proof of its own power by stirring up all the powers of harmony; it has the certainty nevertheless of being able to allay the battles of these powers and thereby to celebrate the satisfying triumph of melodic tranquillity.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Byron's note on 'mobility' in *Don Juan* Canto XVI refers the reader to the French term 'mobilité' (CPW, V, 769). Although Byron expresses doubt about its being an English characteristic, 'mobility' does appear in Johnson's dictionary. The illustrations there, however, are not as close to Byron's use of the term as the examples given for 'mobilité' in Paul Robert's *Dictionnaire Alphabétique et Analogique de la Langue Française* (6 vols., (Paris, 1953-64)) where mobilité is associated with a digressive imaginative capacity, 'mobilité de l'imagination qui erre, qui vague' and also with political instability, 'révolutions capricieuses'. Arguably the most convincing source for Byron's French use of the term is De Staël's *Corinne*, 'Oswald était étonné de cette mobilité qui faisait succéder l'une à l'autre des impressions si différentes' (X,4) (quoted in *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française*, 5 vols. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1885-86)). This possibility is discussed in George M. Ridenour, *The Style of Don Juan*, pp.163-64.

<sup>16</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, transl. by T.M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II, 932

If in early nineteenth-century Britain, Burke's aesthetic theory still held sway, it may be because critics bolstered Burkean paradigms with continental philosophy which 'fitted' rather than adopting new approaches. Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry* excluded 'great variety and quick transitions from one measure or tone to another' (*A Philosophical Enquiry*, p.112) from the category of the beautiful in music. Just as the Burkean sublime was generated by indefiniteness and obscurity, there was no aesthetic category to receive Byronic juxtaposition.

Continental theories which made the greatest impression in Britain did not seriously challenge Burke's paradigms. Schopenhauer discussed the infinite variety of the melodic line as corresponding to 'the inexhaustibleness of nature in the difference of individuals, physiognomies, and courses of life':

The transition from one key into quite a different one, since it entirely abolishes the connexion with what went before, is like death inasmuch as the individual ends in it. Yet the will that appeared in this individual lives on just the same as before, appearing in other individuals, whose consciousness, however, has no connexion with that of the first.<sup>17</sup>

This sublime form of continuity dissolves distinction and manages to be all-inclusive and exclusive at the same time. Schopenhauer (in contrast to Michaelis) claimed that 'the inexpressible depth of music' offers 'a paradise quite familiar and yet eternally remote [...] wholly excluding the ludicrous', and he invoked the monster as an image of imperfection:

The definite intervals of the scale are parallel to the definite grades of the will's objectification, the definite species in nature. The departure from the arithmetical correctness of the intervals through some temperament, or produced by the selected key, is analogous to the departure of the individual from the type of the species. In fact, the impure discords, giving no definite interval, can be compared to the monstrous abortions between

<sup>17</sup>Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, transl. by E.F.J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1969; hereafter '*The World as Will and Representation*'), II, 261

two species of animals, or between man and animal. (*The World as Will and Representation*, II, 264; 258-59)

As the first chapter of this thesis demonstrates, accusations of monstrosity were levelled at Byron's later work because of its disruption of political or aesthetic 'truths'.

From these few examples it may be seen that although many differing concepts of harmony and modulation were available to the nineteenth-century critics of Byron's work, the dominant critical standpoint was an Augustinian-Hegelian concept of synthesis which could accommodate *Childe Harold* (ignoring its early satiric interruptions) but not *Don Juan*.

## APPENDIX B: Satire

Thomas Warton's digressive exploration into the origins of English literature relegated satire to a low generic rank. Satirists, he pronounced, are 'scurrilous and illiberal [...] when they descend to mere invective'.<sup>18</sup> His brother Joseph Warton had anticipated his hierarchy when in his assessment of Pope, he argued that 'wit and satire are transitory and perishable, but nature and passion are eternal'.<sup>19</sup> Joseph Warton's critical division between 'pure poetry' and 'ethical poetry' had a great influence on the later eighteenth-century: in particular, his placement of Pope below the first rank of poets (Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton,) contributed to the debate that culminated in the Pope/Bowles controversy (Bowles belonged to the School of Warton). Joseph Warton's depreciation of satire was in keeping with Neo-Classical preference for the elevated style. Indeed, his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* cited Horace's disclaimer to 'all right and title to the name of poet, on the score of his ethic and satiric pieces' (I, p.vii).

When in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries the lyrical/ philosophical poem came to take precedence over other elevated forms, satire predictably continued to be disparaged in the hierarchy of genres. As René Wellek has pointed out, however, there is a deep gulf between theory and practice throughout the history of literature:

For three centuries people repeated the views held by Aristotle and Horace, debated these views, put them into textbooks, learned them by heart - and actual literary creation went on its way quite independently. (Wellek, I,6)

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<sup>18</sup>Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, 3 vols. (London, 1774-81), I, 36.

<sup>19</sup>Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* 2 vols. (London, 1762-82), I, 335.

Although satire as a generic whole was considered to be secondary, there were further divisions within it.<sup>20</sup> Beattie distinguished between comic satire (against human foibles) and serious satire (against vice and crime). He found that Horatian satire was more acceptable than Juvenalian satire:

I find that the generality of critics are all for the moderation and smiling graces of the courtly Horace, and exclaim against the vehemence and vindictive zeal of the unmannerly Juvenal.  
(*Essays*, p.662)

The division between Horace and Juvenal was common. Schiller, for example, separated punitive satire (Juvenal, Swift, Rousseau) from laughing satire (Cervantes, Fielding, Sterne). Such theoretical disapproval of Juvenalian extremes did not prevent translations and imitations of Juvenal from appearing. Amongst Byron's contemporaries, for example, Wordsworth, Gifford, Hobhouse and Hodgson produced translations of Juvenal. Gifford's prefatory 'An Essay on the Roman Satirists' defended Juvenal for 'that integrity, which fearlessly calling in strong description to the aid of virtue, attempts to purify the passions, at the hazard of wounding our delicacy, and offending our taste'<sup>21</sup>

In his 'Introductory Letter' to *The Pursuits of Literature*, Thomas Mathias offered an extended apology for turning to satire and invoked 'the greatest masters of ancient and legitimate composition':

In my opinion, the office of a Satirist is by no means pleasant or desirable, but in these times like the present, it is peculiarly necessary.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Alastair Fowler discusses the way that 'satire is the most problematic mode to the taxonomist' in *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982; hereafter '*Kinds of Literature*') p.110. He also points out that during the eighteenth century satire was 'promoted' as 'Dryden, Pope, Swift, and others considered it fit for some of their most ambitious work' (*Kinds of Literature*, p.223).

<sup>21</sup>*The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis Translated into English Verse by William Gifford Esq., With Notes and Illustrations* (London, 1802), p.lix.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas J. Mathias, *The Pursuits of Literature: A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues With Notes*, 8th edn. (London: T. Becket, 1798; hereafter '*Pursuits of Literature*')

Mathias found the motive of private malignity entirely indefensible but he argued that,

if Satire is an instrument, and a powerful instrument to maintain and enforce publick order, morality, religion, literature, and good manners [...] the community may authorize and approve it. The authorized instruments of lawful war are lawful. (*Pursuits of Literature*, pp.8-9)

In a Byronic context, it is also worth noting that Mathias believed the 'power of legitimate Satire' could be 'extended and strengthened with the rampart of prose' (p.8). This refers to the extensive footnotes incorporated in the poem.

In the preface to the Second Dialogue, Mathias explained the role of the notes:

however excellent, the work of any Satirist is transitory as to it's immediate subject. But as it is a view of life *designed* to be presented to other times, as well as those in which it is written, the necessity of an author's furnishing *Notes* to his own *Composition* is evident, to clear up for himself such difficulties as the lapse of time, (and indeed of a very little time) would unavoidably create. This is a privilege and a liberty which was denied to the antients, which Dryden rejected, and Pope partially adopted. (*Pursuits of Literature*, p.107)

Mathias cites the example of Pope, but is also responding to the critical pronouncements of Dr Johnson who stated that *Hudibras* would not last because its allusions were particular.

In the later eighteenth century, verse and prose satires were used by the Tory *AntiJacobin* to counter a perceived political threat from literature of sensibility but, as my second chapter suggests, satire and sentiment work in parallel rather than opposing ways. The role of satire in romanticism has been underplayed: Byron referred to the genre as 'a species of composition not very favourable to imagination' (Nicholson, p.111). Stuart Curran's authoritative study, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* observes that satire is



an 'extremely vital mode in British Romanticism, one whose full dimensions have never been addressed in criticism'<sup>23</sup> Satire is a genre, Curran argues, 'whose constituents have never even been catalogued' and 'where the customary anonymity of authorship necessitates detective work to establish identities'(Curran, p.13). Much detailed research needs to be accomplished, therefore, before informed discussion of the genre can commence.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Curran, pp.12-13

<sup>24</sup>An important and recent contribution to research on romantic satire is Steven E. Jones's study, *Shelley's Satire, Violence, Exhortation and Authority* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994).

APPENDIX C: A Note on Beattie's 'On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition'

It is worth extracting a portion of this essay as it gives some indication of the way that juxtaposition was received in the later eighteenth-century. Beattie regards incongruity and juxtaposition as a source of laughter and regarding the Horatian monster he observes that,

the parts of a laughable assemblage must be in some degree unsuitable and heterogeneous. (*Essays*, p.602)

However, Beattie states that the incongruities must be 'blended' in the same assemblage, that the reader discovers 'a bond of connection [...]. We recognize a likeness, and consequently a relation, or ground of comparison' (*Essays*, p.603). The 'uncouth and jarring circumstances' in Butler's *Ralpho* and *Hudibras* were 'appropriate' because they held a moral purpose: '[Butler's] design was, to make his hero not only ludicrous, but contemptible' (*Essays*, p.604).

Beattie's essay imposed limits on what could be juxtaposed with what, illustrating the eighteenth-century taboo that Byron was to break in *Don Juan*:

Ridiculous ideas, associated by custom, with religious truths, can have no good effect upon the mind [...] And I cannot but think, that, in this view, even the *Tale of a Tub*, notwithstanding its unequalled merit as a piece of humorous writing, is blameable, in the general tenor of the allegory, as well as in particular passages [...] between smiling and sneering, between complacency and contempt, between innocent mirth and unseasonable buffoonery, there seems to me to be a very wide difference. (*Essays*, pp.624-25)

Upholding these high standards, however, left a lot to the individual responsibility of the (educated) reader:

When sacred things are profaned by meanness of allusion and language, the incongruity will not force a smile from a well-disposed person, except it surprise him in an unguarded moment. (*Essays*, p.664)

Beattie's reliance on 'good breeding' (ie: not to laugh 'except where it is probable that the jest may be equally relished by the company' (*Essays*, p.669)) was one of the social and critical edicts of Byron's contemporaries that would be deconstructed by *Don Juan*. The law of genre helped to prevent the reader from being 'surprised in an unguarded moment'. According to Beattie, ludicrous juxtapositions in rhyme were only suitable for certain genres:

In ordinary rhimes, the sound, being expected, gives no surprise; and, being common, seems natural, and a thing of course: but when two or three words, in the end of one line, correspond in sound to two or three syllables of the same word, in the end of another, the *jarring coincidence* is more striking and more surprising. But as they surprise us the more, the less they are expected, and the less they seem to be sought for, these rhimes must lose their effect when too frequent. And the same thing must happen, when they are incorrect, on account of the imperfect resemblance, and because everyone knows it is an easy matter to bring words together that have some *letters* only in common: and therefore one is rather offended than entertained with the rhyme of this couplet of Prior ['inspect us' / 'breakfast' ][...] Hudibrastic rhimes can take place only in burlesque; such trifling being unsuitable to all serious poetry, and even to the affecting solemnity of the mock-heroic. (*Essays*, pp.625-26)

(Byron would not have allowed the word 'trifling' to pass so primly). It is this generic 'sense of place' backed up by taste which conditioned whether juxtaposition was acceptable or not:

A sublime thought, or solemn expression, unexpectedly introduced in the midst of something frivolous, seldom fails to provoke a smile, unless it betray unseasonable levity, or want of taste in the author. (*Essays*, p.630)

*Don Juan* may be regarded as a recurring encounter with 'unguarded moments' but its disruptive effect on Byron's contemporary readers was put down to 'want of taste'. According to Beattie's essay, therefore, juxtaposition was a recognised feature of composition but subject to the strict demarcation of the lower genres.

## APPENDIX D: Taste

Byron's contemporary reviewers like William Roberts invoked an eighteenth-century understanding of 'taste'. In his study Stone observes that 'data can supply no fixed criteria of taste'.<sup>24</sup> Stone argues that for the later eighteenth-century theorists, taste could be established by pointing out the immediate causes of "'those uniform emotions of disgust and admiration'" (Stone, p.22), and devising ways of avoiding or exciting them respectively. The belief in uniformity of taste was a key eighteenth-century precept.

René Wellek, however, reminds us that the 'so-called universal audience excluded the bulk of the population' (Wellek, I, 24), and he goes on to show that the elaborate theorising that went on about taste in the eighteenth-century offered the view 'that it was both acquired and spontaneous, innate and cultivated, "sentimental" and intellectual' (Wellek, I, 24). The important shift of critical concern was, in Wellek's opinion, to the reaction of the audience. It was, arguably, this growing attention to the affective powers of literature combined with the massive circulation of the 'best-seller' that led many of Byron's critics to invoke the doctrine of taste against him.

In 1758, Burke had granted the subjectivity of taste:

for sensibility and judgement, which are the qualities which compose what we commonly call a Taste, vary exceedingly in various people. From a defect in the former of these qualities, arises a want of Taste; a weakness in the latter constitutes a wrong or a bad one. (*A Philosophical Enquiry*, p.23)

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<sup>24</sup>P.K.W. Stone, *The Art of Poetry 1750-1820: Theories of Poetic Composition and Style in the Late Neo-Classical and Early Romantic Periods* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967; hereafter 'Stone'), p.23

By making 'a defect of judgement' the cause of a wrong taste, Burke popularised an association between taste and morals:

[wrong taste] may arise from a natural weakness of understanding [...] or, which is much more commonly the case, it may arise from a want of proper and well-directed exercise [...] Besides that ignorance, inattention, prejudice, rashness, levity, obstinacy, in short, all those passions, and all those vices which pervert the judgment in other matters, prejudice it no less in this its more refined and elegant province. (*A Philosophical Enquiry*, p.23)

In his essay on humorous composition, Beattie had linked the work of good taste with 'good breeding' but he also advanced the widely-held view that taste could be enhanced by the 'well-directed exercise' of travel abroad:

the man of observation, who has made a tour of Europe, should be a better judge of elegance [...] than he who has never travelled beyond the frontier of his native province. (*Essays*, p.699)

It is easy to see in this context how Byron (who had advertised his good-breeding in *Hours of Idleness*, and his tours abroad in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), would come to be accused of perverted judgement and bad taste.

In his satire, *The Pursuits of Literature*, Mathias upheld the authority of the ancients:

the Greek writers are the universal legislators in taste, criticism, and just composition, from whom there is no appeal, and who will be found unerring directors. (*Pursuits of Literature*, p.269)

This view continued into the nineteenth-century: in his *Researches in Greece*, Leake had observed that

the most striking defect in the modern Greeks is in their want of taste, which can only be acquired, and can be acquired by them

so readily, by a more intimate acquaintance with the inimitable models of their ancestors [...] A very imperfect knowledge of the ancients, a preference of French and Italian literature, and a general want of mental cultivation and polished society, have, in general produced among the Greeks a less classical taste, than is to be found in the most remote regions of Europe, where the works of their ancestors are studied.<sup>25</sup>

According to Leake's and Mathias's view, 'good taste' and 'classical taste' amounted to the same thing. In modern literature, Mathias listed Burke, Dr Johnson and the two Warton brothers as 'Guides of the Publick Taste'. As seen above, this led to a conflation of Burkean aesthetics and Burkean politics: anti-Jacobinical literature coincided, to some extent with 'good taste'. Taste was closely related to issues of propriety and in the nineteenth century became increasingly involved in puritanical efforts to expunge open references to sexuality from literature (eg. 'The Beauties of ...' in a book title indicating 'tasteful' adaptation of material).

Byron uses the term in a classical sense in connection with the Pope/Bowles controversy:

I have at last lost all patience with the atrocious cant and nonsense about Pope [...] There is no bearing it any longer, and if it goes on, it will destroy what little good writing or taste remains amongst us. - - I hope there are still a few men of taste to second me, but if not, I'll battle it alone. (BLJ, VII, 61)

Byron also uses the word in a pejorative sense to talk about recent fashion: 'the atrocious bad taste of the times - ' (BLJ, VII, 179); 'There can be no worse sign for the taste of the times than the depreciation of Pope' (Nicholson, p.149). For the vital effect of Byron's perception that the 'taste of the times' was driven by an assumed refinement, see Chapter Three.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>William Leake, *Researches in Greece* (London: John Booth, 1814), p.235

<sup>26</sup>Hazlitt's essay 'Outlines of Taste' argues that 'Taste is nothing but an enlarged capacity for receiving pleasure from works of imagination, &c.' (Howe, XX, 387). His application of this rule, however, interestingly runs into a debate on harmony:

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Those who deny that there is a natural and pleasing softness arising from harmony or gradation, might as well affirm that sudden and abrupt transitions do not make our impressions more distinct as that they do not make them more harsh and violent. Beauty consists in gradation of colours or symmetry of form (conformity): strength or sublimity arises from the sense of power, and is aided by contrast. The ludicrous is the incoherent, arising, not from a conflicting power, but from weakness or the inability of any habitual influence to sustain itself' (Howe, XX, 390).



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APPENDIX E: Statistical Tabulation of Digressive Allusion in *Don Juan*<sup>27</sup>

Canto	Number of Parentheses	Number of Signalled Allusions	Number of Stanzas	% of Digressive Allusion
Dedication	3	7	17	58.8
I	49	35	222	37.8
II	42	8	216	23.1
III	28	21	111	44.1
IV	13	12	117	21.4
V	27	20	159	29.5
VI	21	29	120	41.7
VII	18	29	87	54.0
VIII	26	38	141	45.4
IX	31	33	85	75.2
X	22	29	87	58.6
XI	26	46	90	80.0
XII	28	43	89	79.8
XIII	18	32	111	45.0
XIV	11	29	102	39.2
XV	16	36	99	52.5
XVI	30	34	123	52.0
XVII	3	7	14	71.4

<sup>27</sup>See also the table prepared by Bernard Beatty on the proportion of Digression to Narrative in *Don Juan*, Beatty, p.84.

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Letter of John Murray to Byron 16 October 1820

Letter of John Murray to Byron 24 October 1820

Letter of John Murray to Byron 27 October 1820

Letter of John Murray to Byron 3 November 1820

Letter of John Murray to Byron 19 December 1820

Letter of John Murray to Byron 29 December 1820

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