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**Throwing the scabbard away: Byron's battle against the censors
of *Don Juan***

Blann, Troy Robinson, Jr., D.A.

Middle Tennessee State University, 1987

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Throwing the Scabbard Away:
Byron's Battle against the Censors of Don Juan

Troy Robinson Blann, Jr.

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Arts

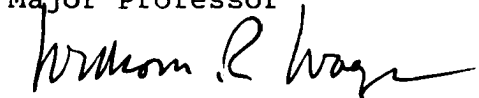
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Throwing the Scabbard Away:
Byron's Battle against the Censors of Don Juan

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Abstract

Throwing the Scabbard Away:

Byron's Battle against the Censors of Don Juan

Troy Robinson Blann, Jr.

The problem with Don Juan is that it is too truthful--at least for the tumultuous times in which it was written. Byron and his poetry express freedom in a variety of ways, so it was probably inevitable that his longest sustained satiric work would immediately clash against the political and moralistic strictures of his homeland--a country that he justifiably felt had banished him forever. The subject of the present study is Byron's writing of Don Juan and, in particular, his managing to get the provocative work into print in spite of the many forces determined to censor its satiric truth-telling.

This study is organized into five chapters. In chapter 1, a variety of background information is given in an attempt to explain historically why the publication of Don Juan met with such resistance. The next three chapters survey the Don Juan material that was considered for censorship. These chapters proceed in a roughly chronological order, following sequentially the publication of the 16 cantos of Don Juan. Chapter 2 focuses on the writing and publication of the first two cantos, including the controversy that the work sparked

Troy Robinson Blann, Jr.

between Byron and his five friends who served as editorial consultants to the poet's conservative publisher, John Murray. Chapter 3 deals with the second publication of Don Juan cantos (3-5) and the frustration that developed between Byron and Murray over that publication--a frustration so extreme that Byron eventually switched publishers. Chapter 4 is concerned with Byron's hiatus from the writing of Don Juan at the request of his mistress Teresa Guiccioli and then his resumption of the work and rapid completion of cantos 6-16. The final chapter gives an overview of censorship as it influenced Byron and his writing of Don Juan. The poet's warring against the censorship of his masterpiece is shown in a broad context. Byron's battle with the censors was a significant part of his lifelong fight for freedom.

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Finally, I want to thank my wife Barbara for both her encouragement and forbearance during the time that she has shared me with this work. In gratitude I dedicate this dissertation to her.

Epigraph

I have that within me that bounds against opposition.

Byron to Lady Melbourne,
Letter of February 11, 1814

A modest hope--but modesty's my forte,
And pride my feeble:--let us ramble on.
I meant to make this poem very short,
But now I can't tell where it may not run.
No doubt, if I had wish'd to pay my court
To critics, or to hail the setting sun
Of tyranny of all kinds, my concision
Were more;--but I was born for opposition.

Don Juan (15.22.1-8)

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Introduction

On April 25, 1816, Lord Byron left his native England never to return. Two summers later, in July of 1818, he began to write his masterwork, Don Juan, and he continued to write on this organically growing comic epic until his death in Missolonghi, Greece, on April 19, 1824. When Byron died, he had completed 14 stanzas of canto 17 of his more than 15,000-line fragment. The publishing of this gargantuan work was done in a very troubled England, while its author maintained his self-imposed exile and was able to communicate with his two publishers--first John Murray and then John Hunt--only by time-consuming (three weeks or so) continental post. However, Byron's absence from England--seen purely as a publishing complication--would be insignificant if Don Juan had not had elements that various people deemed worthy of censorship.

The times were right though for such prohibition. Neither the politics nor the religion of Regency England could approve of Don Juan. Additionally, the phenomenon of Lord Byron's meteoric reputation, his domestic difficulties that caused his departure from England in the first place, and the sensationalistic life that he lived and indeed flaunted on the Continent all contributed to this blue-penciling state of affairs. The stage was set then for a

confrontation between this oppressively cautious attitude and Lord Byron, "the most popular and the most controversial poet of his generation" (Rutherford, Heritage 1) and also one of the most freedom-loving and hypocrisy-hating writers of all literature. Giving an insight into what was to come, Byron wrote early on, ". . . for the soul of me, I cannot and will not give the lie to my own thoughts and doubts, come what may" (Byron, Letters 3: 225).¹

With the perspective of more than 150 years, we can look back and easily realize that, given the circumstances and temperaments involved, it was merely going to be a matter of time before Byron jostled against the windmill of censorship. For those who wish to study the various ramifications of censorship in general or as it applies specifically to Byron's work, it is serendipitous that Byron was away from his censors (with the obvious exception of his favorite mistress, Contessa Teresa Guiccioli, but more of that later) in that his battle with them was almost completely committed to paper. Byron's brilliant defense of his writing about "life" itself (6: 232) despite "the Cant of the day" (6: 95) simply explodes from his letters. Byron once defined poetry as "the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earth-quake" (3: 179). It

¹ In all further references, this work will be designated by the volume number followed by the page number(s).

naturally follows then that any attempt to hold back or alter Byron's poetic fire would bring about this threatened upheaval.

Figuratively speaking, the purpose of this study can be said to be to examine Byron's earthquake. In literal terms, the purpose is to determine how and to what extent the complicated nexus of censorship affected the composition of Byron's Don Juan.

This study is done with a fivefold approach and presented in five chapters. In the initial chapter, pertinent background information is provided in an attempt to explain historically why the publication of Don Juan met with so much resistance. The next three chapters--in fact, the majority of this work--survey the material in Don Juan that was censored and that which was considered for censorship but, for one reason or another, was allowed to see the light of day. Also included in the survey is the remarkable reaction of Byron to the censorship--what Truman Steffan has described as

the erection of literary defenses that were to become more and more aggressive as increasing opposition made him uncompromising, truculent, violent, and at times meanly bad-tempered, made him, in self-justification, think through and define satiric principles--after the event--and provoked him to insist that he would say what he wanted to, and that his work must be published entire and uncut, in defiance of prevailing taste. (9-10)

The content of chapters 2-4 is structured in at least roughly a chronological order and follows sequentially the publication of the 16 cantos of Don Juan. Chapter 2 deals

with the writing and publication of the first two cantos of Don Juan, including the considerable controversy involved in that initial enterprise. The third chapter is concerned with the second publication of Don Juan cantos (3-5) and the frustration that developed between Byron and his publisher John Murray over that publication--a frustration so extreme that Byron eventually switched publishers. Chapter 4 is a consideration of Byron's hiatus from the writing of Don Juan at the request of his mistress and then his resumption of the work and rapid completion of cantos 6-16.

The last chapter is an attempt to give some closure to this overall subject of censorship as it influenced Lord Byron and his writing of Don Juan. The chapter is also a meditation on the idea that for a number of reasons Byron himself seems to have deliberately provoked outrage and its concomitant reaction, censorship.

The letter-writing style by which Lord Byron combatted the various censorships that were brought to bear on Don Juan is not given a chapter of its own. However, this aspect of Byron's literary artistry (which, unfortunately, is virtually unknown to the poet's general readership) is highlighted throughout this study, and this is because it is Byron's letters that so clearly delineate this struggle.

Byron's warring against the censorship of Don Juan can be seen in a larger context--as part of his lifelong battle for freedom. He declared that "There is no freedom in Europe--that's certain" (6: 226-27). Broadly speaking, it

was this intolerable state of affairs that impelled him to write Don Juan, which, he predicted to Murray, "will be known by and by for what it is intended," that is, "as satire on abuses of the present states of Society"

(10: 68). That people wanted to censor this work was simply a sign that they did not understand this intention and/or they did not want to face the truth about life--or at least life as seen by one who had lived as hardily as Byron. The poet himself certainly recognized this. Concerning the realism of his new poem, Byron wrote his banker friend, Douglas Kinnaird,

It may be bawdy . . . it may be profligate--but is it not life, is it not the thing?--Could any man have written it--who has not lived in the world?--and tooled in a post-chaise? in a hackney coach? in a Gondola? Against a wall? in a court carriage? in a vis a vis?--on a table?--and under it? (6: 232)

In a typically Byronic stylistic device, the poet shifts from the serious to the facetious. Of course, that is the nature of Don Juan--seeing life with all of its tragedies and foibles and then turning it into a joke. The problem appears when people are so adamant about others not laughing at their expense or at any of their sacrosanct icons that they abrogate the rights of others by destroying the work itself.

Out of the freedom of people presenting life in art in any way they want and the problem of others not allowing that presentation for whatever reason grows a tension that will probably remain with us for as long as there are people on earth. Lord Byron fought hard for the freedom

side--not only for his own artistic freedom, but for the freedom of others: for the textile laborers in Nottingham, for the Italians in the Carbonari plot, and for the Greeks in their revolution against Turkey. For Byron, it was all part of the same impulse.

Chapter 1

Setting the Stage: Censorship in Regency England

The drawing room of John Murray's combination domicile and publishing house at 50 Albemarle Street became for some time the "centre of literary friendship and intercommunication" (Smiles 264) in early nineteenth-century London. It was here that Murray's two most celebrated writers, Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, first met. Murray recorded this meeting in his diary: "1815. Friday, April 7--This day Lord Byron and Walter Scott met for the first time and were introduced by me to each other. They conversed together for nearly two hours" (Smiles 267). John Murray, Jr., also wrote his recollections of the two men together at his father's house, and he emphasized that both of them, strangely enough, were crippled:

Lord Byron's deformity in his foot was very evident, especially as he walked downstairs. He carried a stick. After Scott and he had ended their conversation in the drawing-room, it was a curious sight to see the two greatest poets of the age--both lame--stumping downstairs side by side. They continued to meet in Albemarle Street nearly every day, and remained together for two or three hours at a time. (Smiles 268-69)

These two crippled writers were among the first to perceive that the times in which they lived "were undergoing a profound change, a revolution marked particularly by a growing strictness of manners and morals" (Quinlan 1). They saw, perhaps with an ironic insight from their own

lame conditions, that the effect of this massive cultural change on literature through public opinion and censorship would indeed be a crippling one. "Like the Puritans of the seventeenth century," many of the moralists of the day "felt it was not enough that a book should be free from impurity" (Thomas 240). To be on the safe side and be indisputably correct from a moral standpoint, these cautious readers felt that all books should contribute to the virtue of mankind. Consequently, ". . . the criticism aimed at novelists like Scott [was] that though they were devoid of the 'immorality' of Byron they were also devoid of moral instruction" (Thomas 240).

As a combination of many factors--such as sweeping evangelical revivalism, reaction against the French Revolution, tremendous economic depression following the Napoleonic Wars, and an intolerable political situation with a long-lived king who had lost his mind completely by 1810 and a selfish, extravagant, licentious Prince Regent who was totally unfit to rule--public opinion was becoming more conservative and, concurrently, more censorious. In his book-length treatment of the subject entitled Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners 1700-1830, Maurice J. Quinlan states that "no time in English history has been so much characterized by suppression and repression as the period from the French Revolution to about 1830" (81).

The tremendous cultural change that we now refer to as Victorianism actually developed several years before the

ascension to the throne by that august lady whose name has become the symbol of that entire era. From a literary standpoint, one of the most dramatic examples of that change occurs in an anecdote that Sir Walter Scott told about a great-aunt of his, a Mrs. Keith of Ravelstone. It seems that this grand old lady had requested that Scott find for her the works of Aphra Behn, a popular authoress of the late seventeenth century. Scott, the perennial antiquarian, was familiar with the writings of Mrs. Behn and could procure them, but he initially demurred, suggesting to his great-aunt that she might not find "either the manners or the language" of the old-fashioned writer to be "quite proper reading" (Scott 96). However, Mrs. Keith disdained Scott's tactful advice, assuring him that as a young woman she had been greatly entertained by the novels of Mrs. Behn and that she was looking forward to renewing her acquaintance with such fine works. Reluctantly, Scott sent the requested books, marking the package "private and confidential." When he next saw his great-aunt, she vehemently returned the books to him with an unmistakable suggestion of her own--"Take back your bonny Mrs. Behn and . . . put her in the fire" (Scott 96). In explanation, the shocked Mrs. Keith told her great-nephew that she "found it impossible to get through the very first of the novels" (Scott 96). In a moment of reflection she added,

But is it not very odd that I, an old woman of eighty and upwards, sitting alone, feel myself ashamed to read a book which sixty years ago I

have heard read aloud for large circles
consisting of the first and most creditable
society in London? (Scott 96)

Scott's anecdote is from 1826--only two years after Byron's death--and Mrs. Keith is truly a representative of a whole class of readers of that time. To explain in a complete and comprehensive way why this genteel octogenarian was horrified at reading fiction that she had previously read in her twenties with perfect equanimity is beyond the scope of this study. However, a brief discussion of the cultural background of Pre-Victorian England, which had so drastically changed in one person's lifetime, should help explain the dynamics of censorship as applied to Don Juan in this particular time and social milieu.

Eighteenth-century England can be fairly well characterized by the phrase "rough and rollicking times in merrie olde England." The opinion of the upper class ruled the nation, and, although this generally determined the political and economic policies of the land, it had little effect on the manners of the masses. In earlier times the church had helped to maintain moral standards, but "in the eighteenth century church attendance was decreasing and clerical influence waned," and, as a result, religion was not a particularly effective regulator of conduct (Quinlan 104). With such ecclesiastical weakness, the lax manners of the eighteenth century were largely due "to the absence of any force strong enough to formulate and to maintain the unwritten laws which normally govern society" (Quinlan

104). At the same time, the rigid formulations of political and economic control grew so unbearable for the lower classes that in France a bloody revolution resulted.

The stagnant conditions of the eighteenth century were being forced to change by the end of the century. The American Revolution followed by the French Revolution is evidence of this. However, the excesses of the French Revolution caused a reactionary tidal wave in England, politically and economically. Even Sir Samuel Romilly,¹ "who was very far from being a militant jacobin" (Woodward 19), described England's general attitude about the French Revolution as an extremely strong backlash towards human freedom:

If any person be desirous of having an adequate idea of the mischievous effects which have been produced in this country by the French Revolution and all its attendant horrors, he should attempt some reforms on humane and liberal principles. He would then find out not only what a stupid spirit of conservation, but what a savage spirit, it has infused into the minds of his countrymen. (qtd. in Woodward 19)

¹ Romilly was the lawyer that Byron retained when he and Lady Byron had their separation procedures. Romilly had "sympathized with the French Revolution and labored all his life in the cause of law reform against the blind opposition of the forces of post-Napoleonic reaction" (Asimov 45). Byron probably hired Romilly because of his liberal principles and his reputation as a reformer. However, when Romilly "slid over to Lady Byron's side" after exercising some "rather shifty ethics" (Asimov 45), Byron never forgave him and even attacked him in the dedication of Don Juan (see stanza 15). Even after Romilly's suicide, Byron bitterly commented to Hobhouse that "I never would have forgiven him living, and will not affect to pity him dead--I hate him still; as much as one can dislike dust" (6: 90).

Nevertheless, the country was more than ready for moral reform.

Evangelical Revivalism had broken out in the eighteenth century (with Wesley, Wilberforce, Whitefield, Simeon, and others) at least partially as a peaceful, nonviolent revolution against the ineffectiveness of the staid state religion. It was the Evangelicals who "pressed the importance of this [moral] reform and pointed its course, and propaganda, becoming more effective as literacy increased, served to indoctrinate the people with Evangelical teachings" (Quinlan 104). The rise in literacy itself was due in a large part to this same religious source since one of the primary functions of the newly founded Sunday Schools was to teach "the lower orders to read" (Quinlan 180).

The conservative reaction to the French Revolution and the widespread effects of the Evangelical Revival were perhaps the two most important facets in the evolution of English public opinion which was to become the Victorian mindset, but they were certainly not the only forces that combined to affect this great alteration of thought. However, many of these factors were very much interconnected, such as increased literacy, more leisure time for reading and the popularity of reading aloud to a family circle, propagandistic religious tracts and magazines, censorship societies, the role of the model female, and strong nationalist feeling based on a sense of moral superiority. In fact, these matters were so inbred

that the cause-and-effect distinctions tend to be lost. Nevertheless, an overview of the politics of the time can help bring this blur into focus.

Old King George III was blind, deaf, and insane for years, and he finally died on January 20, 1820. He was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, George IV, who, since 1810, had ruled as Prince Regent--hence the term "Regency England" to refer to the second decade of the nineteenth century. Erickson and Havran concisely sum up his poor reign: "No English monarch in modern times inspired less public confidence or caused greater scandal to the royal family" (385). The Regent was a true profligate. He had incurred enormous debts because of his inveterate drinking, gambling, and womanizing. By the time that he became king at age 58, a lifetime of indulgence had left him a "dissipated, corpulent, prematurely aged" man with no sense of responsibility (Erickson and Havran 386).

Concurrent with these years of misrule by incompetent Hanoverians, Parliament was governed by "a succession of three Tory ministries--those of Portland (1807-09), Spencer Perceval (1809-12), and Lord Liverpool (1812-27)" (Erickson and Havran 369). Not surprisingly, ". . . the powers of the Crown were being slowly but steadily limited" (Hussey 2).

The Tory ministry that Lord Liverpool presided over for so long was marred because its leading ministers had been so influenced by the French Revolution that they were convinced that the slightest change would destroy the

existing society (Hussey 9). Since Liverpool and his conservative colleagues felt so compelled to prevent a British Revolution, their policies were invariably ones of repression for any movement or demonstration for reform. With their alarmist attitude, they "obstinately refused to see the connection between economic distress and political agitation" (Hussey 11), and after the Napoleonic wars, in 1815 and the years following, there was considerable economic depression.

There were several reasons for this depression. Industry did not adjust well to the sudden change from wartime to peacetime economics. Returning soldiers were unable to find sufficient jobs, and this unemployment caused merchants to be overstocked with goods which their would-be customers were too poor to buy (Richard 171). As a remedial measure, Parliament enacted the Corn Act of 1815, which favored wheat growers but increased the cost of bread (171). The plight of the working classes was intensified when bad harvests in 1816 and 1818 caused wheat famines, "making it impossible for the lowest paid workers to buy sufficient bread, which was then the most important item in their diet and their chief energy-provider" (Hussey 11).

Accompanying this widespread starvation was the reappearance of Luddism, the destruction of time-saving machinery in protest of reduced salaries and unemployment. The Luddites first struck in November 1811, and it was following this action that Byron, "occupying his inherited

seat in the House of Lords, . . . became briefly active on the extreme liberal side of the Whig party . . . [by speaking] courageously in defense of the Nottingham weavers who, made desperate by technological unemployment, had resorted to destroying the new textile machines" (Abrams 508). Byron's maiden speech of Parliament on February 27, 1812, was "a magnificent effort in favor of rioting workers, asking that their legitimate grievances be met in reasonable fashion, instead of answering their desperation-born violence only by bloody repression" (Asimov 4). It was Lord Liverpool, the prime minister himself, who had introduced the Tory riot bill, known as the Frame-breaking Bill, that Byron had so theatrically denounced. The bill was cruel and heavy-handed, calling for the death penalty for anyone breaking textile frames. Two days before his speech, Byron wrote the reason for his adamant position:

My own motive for opposing ye. bill is founded on it's [sic] palpable injustice, & it's [sic] certain inefficacy.--I have seen the state of these miserable men [the frame-breakers], & it is a disgrace to a civilized country. . . . The effect of ye. present bill would be to drive them into actual rebellion. (1: 165)

It is interesting that this dramatic action for the underling occurred so early in the career of Byron the freedom fighter--two weeks, in fact, before he "awoke one morning and found . . . [himself] famous" (Byron, Correspondence 1: 70) for Childe Harold.

Four years later, in the summer of 1816, the domestic condition in England deteriorated to such a point that there was another flare-up of large-scale destruction of

machinery as well as whole factories by the frustrated lower class. Demagogues like Henry ("Orator") Hunt "harangued large meetings to the great alarm of the government" (Hussey 11), and "brilliant pamphleteers like William Cobbett added fuel to the flames" (Marriott 22). By the end of 1816, Cobbett's Political Register "began to exercise an unbounded political influence," and Byron's influence was still to be felt in this fray as he "exhausted his powers of mordant sarcasm in pouring contempt upon the Government" (Marriott 22). Riots and huge gatherings for inflammatory speeches were sporadically happening all over England. In response to the confusion, the government "restricted the right of public meetings and increased the penalties for seditious speech and writings, but those it prosecuted for publishing seditious pamphlets were acquitted by sympathetic juries" (Hussey 12).

The climax of this nationwide agitation occurred on August 16, 1819, at an open field known as St. Peter's Field in the very heart of Manchester. "Carrying banners inscribed with demands for parliamentary reform" (Hussey 12), some sixty thousand people met to hear the radical speaker "Orator" Hunt. Although there was no initial disorder from the vast crowd,

the magistrates, who had brought special constables and detachments of the Lancashire and Cheshire Yeomanry, lost their nerve, and ordered Hunt's arrest. The soldiers who tried to reach him were pressed by the mob and drew their sabres. A troop of hussars came to their rescue and caused a general panic, in which eleven people were killed (including two women) and about four hundred wounded. (Woodward 62)

Because "the cavalry involved had fought at Waterloo" (Erickson and Havran 385), the incident was ironically called "Peterloo." Another name for the debacle was the "Manchester massacre," but, regardless of nomenclature, the "popular indignation . . . was intense" (Hussey 13). The infamous action caused one member of Parliament, Sir Francis Burdett, to respond sharply: "What! kill men unarmed, unresisting, and, gracious God! women, too, disfigured, maimed, cut down, and trampled on by dragoons. Is this England? This a Christian land--a land of freedom?" (qtd. in Thomas 161). When Burdett published this speech, he was "charged with seditious libel, tried and convicted at Leicester in March 1820, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment as well as a fine of 1,000 pounds" (Thomas 161). Interestingly enough, Burdett had highly complimented Byron's similar speech of four years before by saying it was "the best speech by a lord since the 'Lord knows when'" (Marchand, Byron 1: 322).

With this censorious response to Burdett's rhetorical attack about the Peterloo fiasco, it suffices to say that "the government upheld the action of the Manchester magistrates" (Hussey 13). More than this though, Parliament offered its official congratulations to the so-called "victors of Peterloo," and "the Regent expressed his 'high approbation' of the 'exemplary manner' in which the yeomanry 'assisted and supported the civil power'" (Marriott 29).

Considering this kind of self-congratulatory, autocratic attitude from the monarch and his ministry concerning Peterloo, it is not surprising that the government's answer to the rising agitation of the nation was to add further legal repression. Parliament met on November 23, 1819--three months after the slaughter at Manchester--to enact into law the infamous "Six Acts" which were to provide for public order and security. Given the extreme circumstances, three of these rulings may appear to be reasonable:

1. An Act forbidding meetings for drilling and military exercises.
2. An Act empowering magistrates to issue warrants for the search of arms.
3. An Act to promote speedy trial of those accused of breaches of public order and which prevented delays on technical points by the defense, or by the Attorney-General for the prosecution. (Hussey 13)

However, the other three Acts functioned as gag rules for the country, seriously restricting the freedom of public meeting and the press:

4. An Act prohibiting all meetings designed to alter law otherwise than through Parliament. No meetings of over fifty people could be held without notice to the magistrates and those attending must reside in the parish where the meeting was held.
5. Blasphemous or seditious publications could be seized and banishment imposed for those offending a second time.
6. Pamphlets selling below sixpence were now made liable to the same stamp duty as newspapers. (Hussey 14)

As Elie Halevy observes in his History of the English People 1815-1830, "panic [had] gripped the ruling classes" (66). The Six Acts of repression were passed while Lord Castlereagh was Leader of the House of Commons, Lord Eldon was Lord Chancellor, and Lord Sidmouth was the Home Secretary. All three men were "strongly opposed to the idea of democracy" (Wickwar 137), and, incidentally, Byron's writings make it clear that he was just as strongly opposed to them. These leaders of the Tory Cabinet saw themselves as the defenders of public order in a country endangered by riot and on the verge of revolution. Despite strong Whig opposition, they managed "to infect their colleagues with their fears" (Halevy 67), and the last two Acts listed above gave the English magistrates powerful weapons against the printed word.

In the fifth Act, the government used a particularly clever tactic in combining "sedition and blasphemy in the same category" (Halevy 69). Halevy points out that a weakness in this revolutionary movement was an opposition to religion in many of its leaders (30). He cites Jeremy Bentham and Robert Owen as two important economic reformers with a "hostile attitude towards religion" (31). He also mentions that the literacy advocates of revolution--"the romanticists of the school of Byron," namely Byron himself, Shelley, Keats, and Leigh Hunt--were "at this juncture flaunting their hostility to religion" (31). Halevy states that "with these poets irreligion itself was a religion and contempt for morality a moral code" (31). This is an

oversimplified generalization which does not, for example, take into account the religious arguments that Byron had with Shelley, but basically Halevy's view is typical of the way that readers--and nonreaders--perceived these radical writers. This helps explain why many Britishers, who would have been economically enhanced by the reforming ideas that Byron and Shelley favored, would at the same time turn away from them because they were the authors of such so-called blasphemous works as Manfred, Don Juan, Cain, Heaven and Earth, Alastor, The Revolt of Islam, and Prometheus Unbound. The government's bill against "blasphemous and seditious" writing targeted avant-garde writers and effectively drove a wedge between them and the

large numbers both in the middle and in the working class who were attracted by even a Radical programme of parliamentary reform, but were shocked by the anti-Christian character which the leaders of English Radicalism, aping the French revolutionaries, had stamped upon the literature of the movement. (Halevy 69-70)

The paradox of this situation is that the English majority definitely wanted reform, but not at the expense of such revolutionary excesses as those in France. One of the excesses was atheism, and this is why "it is often said that Methodism saved England from revolution" (Derry 60). Be that as it may, the mood in England in 1819 was for political change, but not for heresy of any degree whatsoever.

The politics of the time had indeed caused an increase in press prosecutions. In The Age of Reform 1815-1870, E. L. Woodward reports that "between 1816 and 1834 there were

183 prosecutions in Great Britain for seditious and blasphemous libel, or defamation of the king and his ministers" (29). Of these prosecutions, the great majority--131 of them--"took place in 1817 and 1819-21, [and] after 1824 the number was very small" (29).

Striking close to home, as far as Byron was concerned, was the imprisonment of his close friend John Cam Hobhouse for writing an anonymous pamphlet "in which he had used language derogatory to the House" of Commons (Halevy 74). Marchand notes that "On December 11, 1819, the pamphlet was voted a breach of privilege and Hobhouse, when he admitted the authorship to spare the printer, was committed to Newgate prison where he remained until the dissolution of Parliament in February, 1820" (7: 16n). There are several ironies involved with this bit of censorship. Although Hobhouse said he wrote the offending piece and thus was punished in place of its printer, it is thought that he was imprisoned "for fathering a pamphlet which in all probability he did not write" (Wickwar 134). A second irony is that in the sentence that was held to be the most objectionable in the entire article, it was the last two words--"Knightsbridge Barracks"--that made the sentence so offensive, but in most printings of the piece these two words were omitted, so that the sense of the satiric passage was destroyed (Wickwar 134n). The unexpurgated sentence is as follows: "What prevents the people from walking down to the House and pulling out the Members by the ears, locking up the doors, and flinging the key into

the Thames?--Knightsbridge Barracks!" (Wickwar 134). A final irony is that Charles Dickens's early illustrator, George Cruikshank, had drawn a broadside "showing Hobhouse twiddling his thumbs in Newgate" (Wickwar 134n), but it was suppressed, because the authorities believed in even censoring cartoons of the censored.

By English Common Law, "the publication of anything with a malicious intention of causing a breach of peace was a misdemeanor" (Wickwar 19). The circulation of anything written or drawn on paper that had this presumptive motive "was called a criminal libel" (Wickwar 19). Today in England, just as it was then, the "legal control of literary expression is effected through the operation of the law of libel" (Craig 19). By derivation the term "libel" means a "little book"; however, "in legal terminology it includes any book, journal, paper, picture or other representation." In Byron's day, "libel was also commonly applied to the act of circulating" such material (Craig 19). Therefore, publication had a broader meaning legally than just the printing and wholesale distribution of books that we call publishing today. "It meant any kind of circulation," which included retailing, bookselling, news vending, and even letting "what one had written come into the hands of another person, even without any publicity" (19). With such an all-inclusive, letter-of-the-law attitude being applied to matters of censorship, it is no wonder that a conservative and respectable, law-

abiding publisher like John Murray was more than a little hesitant to print Don Juan.

The 1819 Act against blasphemous and seditious publications that was hurriedly passed after Peterloo was a shrewd conjuncture of two separate identities, but English Common Law actually classifies blasphemous and seditious libels as well as defamatory and obscene libels as the same general offense, that is, criminal libel. Although the Common Law does technically differentiate among written offenses that apply religiously, politically, personally, or sexually, there is a tendency for these separate matters to be lumped together when a work is being censored--as was clearly the case with Don Juan.

This almost indiscriminate combination of printed offenses is also quite evident in the three major societies of censorship that came to life in the Pre-Victorian era. They were the Proclamation Society, the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and the Constitutional Association.

Chronologically, the first of these guardians of public morality was the Proclamation Society. It was founded by a distinguished 28-year-old Evangelical layman, William Wilberforce, as a result of the royal proclamation of June 1, 1787, which was "for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for preventing and punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality" (Thomas 113). The proclamation called for the suppression of "all loose and licentious prints, books, and publications dispensing poison to the minds of the young and unwary" (qtd. in

Quinlan 58). From Quinlan's "examination of earlier proclamations against vice," it appears that "this was the first [ordinance] to forbid the circulation of indecent literature" (58).

With the impetus of this proclamation and a sense of divine direction, Wilberforce marshalled around him in the summer of 1787 a body of eminent men in society who were supportive of his Society, and for about a decade there was an effective "wave of prosecutions of publishing obscene libels" (Thomas 114, 115). Around the turn of the century though, the Proclamation Society seems to have become somewhat less fervent (120). This is somewhat surprising "since the temper of the age was so sympathetic" to this initial group of censors (185). However, the reason for the waning of this group was probably based on the courts' failure to treat obscenity with "quite the same urgency" as the censors did (185). Some convictions were accompanied by only minor fines, and some of the defendants were even acquitted (185).

In 1802 "a similar but less official Society for the Suppression of Vice" was established (Wickwar 36), and it gradually absorbed Wilberforce's faltering organization. The dissolution of the first censorship board and the phoenix-like reemergence of the second emphasizes that the old order was indeed changing. "Even in its earliest months . . . the Vice Society had taken swift action against books and prints, so that the number of prosecutions for obscene publication rose sharply (Thomas

190). At the end of its first year, the Vice Society "numbered over eight hundred members, and had obtained nearly seven hundred convictions" (Wickwar 36). Most of these convictions were for obscene publications. The Vice Society "left the prosecution of blasphemous publications to the Proclamation Society," and only until they merged did the newer group of censors "take a prominent part in the attempt to suppress skeptical writings" (Quinlan 215). Most of the prosecutions for blasphemy came in 1819-23 (215), the exact time when Don Juan was being published.

The members of the Society for the Suppression of Vice had two principal preoccupations in regard to literature and morality:

First and most important, they were preoccupied with a class of literature which could be described as criminally immoral in that it 'depraved and corrupted' its readers. . . . The second preoccupation was with a type of literature which might 'bring a blush to the cheek of modesty,' but except in cases of extreme coarseness of language this was not generally regarded as a matter for legal censorship. (Thomas 193)

It appears then that the Vice Society's primary objective was the eradication of material that was considered indecent because of its sexual nature. During this period --the first two decades of the nineteenth century--both the courts and the people seem to have agreed almost completely with this attitude. In each of the Society's "thirty or forty prosecutions for obscenity . . . from 1802 to 1817," a conviction was obtained (Quinlan 219). Obviously, public opinion had grown similarly rigid concerning moral

ensorship as "almost no one protested when the Society for the Suppression of Vice prosecuted obscene works" (Quinlan 220).

This does not mean that there had been a "complete adoption of Evangelical rules or religious beliefs" (220), but Quinlan's characterization of the earnest Victorian as a cautious creature definitely formed by the opinion of his peers seems to be an accurate portrayal of the typical English gentleman that might read Don Juan and that John Murray would be afraid of offending.

[He] might be of any religious persuasion; he might be of none. His code of conduct was often not so rigorous as that of the Evangelicals. He did not necessarily abjure the theater or novels, but he did insist that they conform to certain standards of propriety. He did not forswear pleasure, but he regarded life with a type of seriousness unknown to his eighteenth-century ancestors. Secretly he might object to the social conservatism of his age, but, fearing the strict tribunal of public opinion, he usually conformed to the approved modes of conduct. To be sure, his deference to them was sometimes mere lip service. But even hypocrisy was less culpable than flouting public opinion. (119)

With his abomination of cant, Byron would never have agreed with the last sentence quoted, but then Byron was not a typical Pre-Victorian gentleman either.

In December 1820, the third major censorship society, the Constitutional Association, was founded. Under the leadership of the Duke of Wellington, a national hero for his winning at Waterloo, the "Association was dedicated to prosecuting seditious labels" (Thomas 168). It was a "strong antiliberal group . . . [with] six bishops, twenty peers, and about forty members of the House of Commons"

(Quinlan 216). Wellington himself looked on "demands for reform as something he could 'crush with his sword'" (Thomas 168) and, basically, was "as staunch a pillar of reaction" as could be found "in post-Napoleonic Britain" (Asimov 34). Naturally, Byron hated the man, just as he despised war and the repressive politics then in vogue--both of which Wellington personified. Undoubtedly, that Wellington was so lionized by the country that Byron had felt compelled to leave caused the poet to link the stodgy man with England itself. In Don Juan, Byron had at Wellington with many uncomplimentary lines (see canto 1, stanza 1; canto 8, stanzas 48, 49, and 125; canto 9, stanzas 1-7; and canto 11, stanza 83). Although this literary lashing afforded Byron some satisfaction, the offense to the popular and powerful Duke gave Murray more grounds for concern.

Another target of Byron's satiric wit, William Wordsworth, was instrumental in the establishment of Wellington's Association. By December 1820 Wordsworth's youthful advocacy of the French Revolution had turned full circle to reactionary conservatism. According to Wordsworth, "The objects of this Association must be deemed of prime importance by every reflecting mind. If its regulations be found judicious . . . I shall be happy to do all in my power to carry them into effect . . . (657). In fairness to Wordsworth, it should be added that when he later "realized how much the Association was to be concerned with the prosecution of allegedly subversive

literature," he withdrew his support (Thomas 169). Concerning Byron's writing though, Wordsworth did not change his mind. In 1827, when vindictive Byron was safely in his grave, Wordsworth smugly vouchsafed: "I do not think I ever could have prevailed upon myself to print such lines as he has done" (qtd. in Thomas 210).²

To return to the Constitutional Association itself, the cause of its founding lies primarily in the unrest that followed two climactic political events. The uproar caused by the massacre at Peterloo on August 16, 1819, and its aftermath of seditious libels had hardly subsided when the next controversy began. The second uproar is often called the "Queen's business" (Marriott 32), and it involves the sordid details of an adultery case brought by the newly crowned King George IV against foolish and indiscreet Princess Caroline of Brunswick. In 1795 the licentious Prince-Regent had gone through with an arranged marriage to this equally licentious woman, "chiefly to reconcile himself with his father and to get his debts paid" (Hussey 15). The couple separated shortly--even before the birth of their daughter, Princess Charlotte--and by 1804 Caroline had gone abroad, where her sexual conduct apparently resembled Lord Byron's. The Prince-Regent had long wanted a divorce from this woman whose immoral "wandering about Italy . . . [was] well known in England . . . [and] was

² Thomas does not identify the source of this quotation.

something of an embarrassment" (Woodward 64). The daughter died in 1817 and George III died three years later, so when the Prince-Regent succeeded his father on the throne at the beginning of 1820, he thought the time was opportune for the divorce proceedings to begin. There were no longer any reasons for George IV to remain married to Princess Caroline, especially when she returned to England in June 1820, claiming "her rights as queen" (Hussey 16). However, she was not allowed to attend the Coronation ceremony, and the populace flocked to her side (Thomas 165). She "posed as a distressed and persecuted woman . . . [and] the shameless life and political unpopularity of her husband" caused her to become a rallying point for the Whigs and Radicals against the embarrassed Tory government (Marriott 33).

In July, one month before the Queen's trial, John Hunt (the Radical publisher whom Byron chose to replace Murray after the publication of cantos 3-5 of Don Juan), published an article about the trial that resulted in a year's imprisonment for Hunt. The article claimed

that such a disgraceful proceeding would only have been possible in a Parliament filled with "venal Borough Mongers, grasping placemen, greedy adventurers, and aspiring title-hunters, or the representatives of such worthies--a body, in short, containing a far greater proportion of public criminals than public guardians." (Thomas 165)³

³ Thomas quotes from the Public Record Office Series King's Bench 28/476/36.

For this, Hunt was duly prosecuted for a seditious libel and convicted. Weathering this experience with the censorious courts, Byron's publisher was not surprised in 1824 when he was fined one hundred pounds for another seditious libel--Byron's The Vision of Judgment.

To conclude the story of Caroline--"the epitome of the wronged woman, despite her own excesses" (Derry 74)--the Tory government's strong-arm henchmen and Byron's sworn enemies, Wellington and Castlereagh, tried unsuccessfully for a compromise, and Lord Brougham, the queen's attorney, "conducted the defense with consummate skill" (Marriott 33). The crowds cheered Caroline, made catcalls at the king, and "smashed the windows of Castlereagh, the Foreign Secretary" (Thomas 165), who was as unpopular as the monarch he served. The embarrassing legal affair dragged on for half a year (June to November 1820) and through three readings in Parliament with fewer votes against the queen with each reading (Marriott 33). Finally, Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, withdrew the bill that would have deprived "the Queen of her title and rights . . . [by dissolving] her marriage" (Derry 75). George IV and the Tory ministry were humiliated as London wildly celebrated, but Queen Caroline's popularity diminished as quickly as it had appeared when in January 1821 she "accepted a house" and a pension of "40,000 pounds a year voted by the House of Commons" (Hussey 16). Her many supporters immediately turned against her, and the gnawing problems that she posed

for the government ended when the unhappy and heavily exploited woman died in August of that same year.

It was in the midst of this crisis and the havoc that the Radical press wreaked with it that the Duke of Wellington's Constitutional Association came into being. In John Hunt's Examiner, the following Radical criticism appeared on January 14, 1821:

Who cannot see that this Constitutional Association is an insult to good government, and would be felt so by able statesmen! We could never reconcile ourselves to that anomaly, the "Society for the Suppression of Vice". . . . But a Society for the Suppression of Vice is a bagatelle compared to the monstrous assumption of a political association to regulate and keep in order the opinions of fellow-subjects. (qtd. in Wickwar 184)

This was in response to the Address that was circulated by this final group of censors, announcing the founding of their organization, the "Constitutional Association for opposing the Progress of Disloyal and Seditious Principles" (Wickwar 181). It is clear that the brunt of the Association's action was to be directed at political matters. The Association called for its seven hundred subscribers to

employ their influence, individually and collectively, in discountenancing and opposing the dissemination of seditious principles; and, above all, resort to such lawful measures as may be deemed expedient to restrain the publishing and circulating of seditious and treasonable libels. (qtd. in Wickwar 181-82)

The Address also emphasized that in addition to seditious libels, the Association would make personal libel its business. Pointing out that the Law of Libel states that

it is criminal to print any material that makes "a private individual look ridiculous," the writers of the Address went on to say that "This same rule will apply in every respect to libels upon public men. It is absurd in principle to suppose that men, in proportion to their elevation, should be deprived of the common protection of the law" (qtd. in Wickwar 182). With Byron's satiric slashing of political figures like Castlereagh and Wellington in Don Juan, rules like these gave John Murray legitimate reasons for his hesitation to publish it.

In essence, the Tories who composed the Constitutional Association tried to make it "the secular counterpart of the Society for the Suppression of Vice" (Wickwar 183-84). It was designed "to save the lower orders from seditious libels and satires on the King" and his Tory government, "just as its companion society had for twenty years been trying to protect them against blasphemous libels and, with more success, against obscenity" (Wickwar 184).

Of the three censorship societies under consideration, the first (Wilberforce's Proclamation Society) had been subsumed by the second (the Society for the Suppression of Vice), and this surviving board, which "was to remain in existence until much later in the nineteenth century" (Quinlan 216), was joined in 1820 by the third group (Wellington's Constitutional Association). These two groups split between them the watchdog jurisdiction of the four major types of criminal libel.

This was the censorship scene during the five years (1819-24) that Don Juan was being published. With these "two societies vigorously prosecuting publishers, it seemed for a few years as though . . . [the censors] might succeed in shackling the press completely" (Quinlan 216). In addition to these prosecuting subscription societies, there was also the heavy arm of Parliament's Home Office as well as the local magistracy, so writers and publishers really had "three chief agents" to fear as far as "enforcement of the Law of Criminal Libel" was concerned (Wickwar 37).

It was this repressive atmosphere that engendered such reticence in a publisher like Murray, who was said by a contemporary to be "the most loyal . . . bookseller in the United Kingdom" (qtd. in Wickwar 266). That Murray paused so long in publishing his best-selling author and in doing so forfeited all the money that would have undoubtedly come pouring in speaks of the tremendous power of this threat of prosecution. Although Murray was very reluctant to print Don Juan (so much so that Byron eventually changed publishers), he finally did publish two batches of the cantos Byron sent him--cantos 1-2 on July 15, 1819, and cantos 3-5 on August 8, 1821. Even though the Vice Society did not prosecute when these cantos appeared (and "it would have been easy to charge Don Juan with being obscene" [Wickwar 263]), "many reviewers denounced it as indecent and immoral" (Quinlan 220).

This type of viciously negative reception from critics, possibly "even more . . . than the fear of

prosecution, kept authors from publishing anything that might appear at all questionable" (Quinlan 220). This is because, ultimately, the reading public, instructed by the critics, determined "its own standards of decency" (220). As Donald Thomas observes in his history of English literary censorship entitled A Long Time Burning:

". . . authors, editors, and the circulating libraries were encouraged by the moral climate of the age to be their own censors: if they failed, it was the reviewers or readers rather than the courts which took them to task" (193).

By the time of the publication of Don Juan, the opinion of many, if not most, of the English about Byron's work had grown increasingly censorious. Even though his writing was extremely popular--probably the most popular of any writing of his day--"the Evangelicals had banned him, and many other people considered him a corrupting influence" (Quinlan 220). The irony in all of this is that "Byron, for all his piquancy, never spoke out as freely as dozens of writers in the eighteenth century, and it seems safe to say that had he written in that period no one would have thought it daring to read his works" (Quinlan 220). The same irony applies, of course, to the present day. From our twentieth-century vantage point, it is obvious that concerns like relativity and timing in regards to censorship are of paramount importance.

That Don Juan was published when it was is really the backbone of this study of censorship. Andrew Lang,

Victorian scholar and man of letters, describes Byron's literary era this way:

English literature had been as free spoken as any other from the time of Chaucer to the death of Smollett [1771]. Then, in twenty years at most, English literature became the most 'pudibond,' the most respectful of the young person's blush, that the world has ever known. (qtd. in Craig 20)

Had this not been so and had not England itself adopted in virtually every phase of its societal life such a stern standard of conduct, this study would have no raison d'etre because Don Juan would not have been censored and--even more--Byron probably would not have left England and, if that were the case, Don Juan would not have been written, at least not Don Juan as we know it. However, such speculation is just that, and Byron's countrymen--especially his publisher and five of his best friends--did impose significant strictures on his masterpiece, particularly the first two cantos, which will be addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Flirting with Freedom while Dodging the Censor

(Cantos 1 and 2)

In the politically fervid and repressive year of 1819, the celebrated, freedom-seeking expatriate Lord Byron gave birth to the first two cantos of Don Juan. The poem has long been considered his masterpiece, and the first two cantos are the ones that are most frequently anthologized and are, arguably, the best of the 16 that he completed. They are also the ones with which the poet had the most difficulty. The birth metaphor is appropriate. From Byron's standpoint, the publishing of this new work was unduly prolonged and agonizing in the frustration it afforded him. The major problem with this literary delivery was the threat of censorship. Byron finished his first draft of canto 1 and sent it to London by November 11, 1818, and canto 2 was completed and ready for publication by January 20, 1819, but Byron had to spend six months waging and finally winning a letter-writing war in order to convince his cautious publisher, John Murray, to put the cantos into print (which he did on July 15, 1819).

At the same time that Byron was writing his first canto of Don Juan, he seems to have been aspiring to new, higher (or perhaps lower, depending on one's taste and aesthetic perspective), and hitherto undiscovered realms of

freedom. Of course, Byron was the perennial libertine, and he fought for freedom throughout his life. But at this particular point in his life, a number of significant factors conjoined to make his composing of Don Juan the strongest written manifestation of his lifelong struggle for liberty. For one thing, Byron was recently cut loose from his marital ties to reforming, bluestocking Annabella Milbanke. Consequently, he was also cut loose from the fickle, hypocritical, and so-called respectable high society of England which had lionized him only months before. Finally, Byron chose to cut himself loose from the whole situation. Following his exit from England on April 25, 1816, Byron went through a period of intensive soul-searching in the company of Shelley and the rest of that now-famous Alpine entourage. Then Byron moved to Italy and lived as promiscuous a life as has probably ever been the fortune of a literary man. In the midst of all this intellectual and physical freedom, Byron happened to find his metrical voice--at least his truest metrical voice--in the form of the Italian ottava rima. With an inimical stir of these ingredients, the dedication and the first canto seemed to bolt right out of Byron's brain. Then the censorship problem arose, and the writing of Don Juan suddenly became accretive. And along with the added stanzas (7 to the dedication, 59 to canto 1, and 14 to canto 2) came a rush of brilliant letters in which Byron protested the censorship of his work. The repressive bulwarks that Byron was bumping against with his energetic

attempts to get his masterpiece published seem only to have increased his passion for freedom. It is ironic that censorship all too often has the effect of serving as an impetus for the writer against the censors so that the end result finds the censors wishing they had left well enough alone. However, the height of irony comes in the Don Juan publication censorship tale when one realizes that the initial censors in this case were Byron's own publisher and five of their mutual friends.

John Murray was Byron's publisher. Ten years older than Byron, Murray had made for himself

an attractive and honorable reputation . . . in the trade and among the literary world, particularly by his enterprising and successful launching of the Quarterly Review in 1809 as a counterblast to the Edinburgh Review. (Murray 3)

Murray's business and home address of 50 Albemarle Street became well known as a virtual literary salon. With his various writers, their friends, book reviewers, and his own advisors congregating in his rooms, Murray found himself (or at least his lodgings) to be "the hub of an influential circle of authors" (Murray 3). For example, it was here that Byron met Sir Walter Scott, and, of the favored meeting place, Washington Irving wrote in 1816:

Murray's drawing room is a great resort of first rate literary characters. Whenever I have a leisure hour I go there and seldom fail to meet with some interesting personages. The hour of access is from two to five. It is understood to be a matter of privilege, and you must have a general invitation. (qtd. in Murray 3)

It was from a group of Byron's best friends in this setting that Don Juan received its unanimous vote of

censure. However, Byron probably had expected somewhat of a reaction like this from his publisher because he initially sent his manuscript of the first canto to his closest friend, John Cam Hobhouse, rather than to Murray. As Hugh Luke has pointed out, any good, conscientious publisher like Murray would have been wary of publishing "any work combining criticism of the ministry with anything which might be interpreted as irreligious or immoral" for fear of prosecution (22). Being sensible, Byron would have known this and, therefore, sent his "'Oeuvre' of 'Poeshie'" (as he called it) to Hobhouse with the following cautionary instructions: "I request you to read--& having read--and if possible approved[,] to obtain the largest or (if large be undeserved--) the fairest price from him [Murray] or any one else" (6: 76). Byron was certainly aware of the censorable nature of his work from the start, because in the same letter to Hobhouse he describes Don Juan as being "as free as LaFontaine; and bitter in politics, too" (6: 77). Concerning the freedom of his new poem, Byron rather proudly elaborates and even provides an initial defense for the criticism that he apparently felt was inevitable:

When I say free--I mean freedom--which Ariosto, Boiardo, and Voltaire--Pulci--Berni--all the best Italian and French--as well as Pope & Prior amongst the English permitted themselves;--but no improper words, nor phrases--merely some situations--which are taken from life. (6: 77)

Byron had expected some balking from Murray and, therefore, had made provision for it: "The damned Cant and Toryism of the day may make Murray pause--in that case you will take

any Bookseller who bids best" (6: 76-77). However, the poet either overestimated the liberality of his friend Hobhouse or else underestimated the offensiveness of Don Juan, because, despite Byron's preparatory letter, Hobhouse was shocked by the "freedom" of the first canto and, "fearing that the poem would ruin Byron's already weakened reputation among the respectable classes, strongly urged its suppression" (Luke 200). Nevertheless, Byron had commissioned the review of the manuscript to more of his friends than just Hobhouse: "I submit the matter to you and Doug [Douglas Kinnaird, Byron's banker]-and you may show the M.S. to Frere and William Rose--and Moore--& whoever you please" (6: 78). Hobhouse took Byron at his word and virtually coordinated an editorial board operating out of Murray's chambers. Besides Hobhouse and Kinnaird, the "Synod," or "Utican Senate," as Byron facetiously called the group, was composed of John Hookham Frere, Scrope Berdmore Davies, and Thomas Moore, all men of letters and close friends of Lord Byron's. Moore indicates in his journal entry of January 30, 1819, that William Stewart Rose had been out of town when Hobhouse had received the letter from Byron that asked him to consult Frere, Rose, and Moore "as to the propriety of publishing" Don Juan (263). Apparently, it was his absence that cost Rose a place on the Synod.

It is ironical, as Edward Bostetter has noted, that "it was from his friends . . . that [Byron] had most to apprehend initially," because, as they read and discussed

the canto, they all followed Hobhouse's lead and "got cold feet" (5). In January 1819, the small consulting group that had gathered around Murray advised unanimously against publication.

Thomas Moore's journal provides perhaps the primary reason for this decision:

Went to Murray. . . . Talked of "Don Juan": but too true that it is not fit for publication: he [Byron] seems, by living so long out of London, to have forgotten that standard of decorum in society to which every one must refer his words at least, who hopes to be either listened to or read by the world. It is all about himself and Lady B., and raking up the whole transaction in a way the world would never bear. (260)

However, in advising the suppression of the poem, the group had not just one complaint (Byron's literary treatment of his former wife), but actually outlined five general areas of contention:

- (1) the inexpediency of renewing his domestic troubles by sarcasms on his wife
- (2) the indecency of parts
- (3) the attacks on religion
- (4) the abuse of other writers of the day
- (5) the confirmation of all stories about . . . [Byron's] Venetian life, which would be given by the rakishness of the poem. (Prothero 4: 276n)

Although there are numerous ways to structure a discussion of the offensive nature of the first canto of Don Juan, a following of the Synod's five-part prescription seems to be particularly appropriate from a literary-historical standpoint.

Lord Byron's "sarcasms on his wife" were unmistakable for contemporary Londoners, and the men who were involved in what Moore called the "joint umpireship on Byron's poem" (264) were probably right in warning their poet-friend of the turmoil that his satire would cause so soon after his celebrated divorce--a divorce in which the whole country, it seemed, had sided with Annabella. However, Byron's poking fun at his ex-wife is mainly impish in nature. For the most part, it is Horatian satire, rather than Juvenalian--full of humorous gibes at Lady Byron, but no really vicious attacks like those directed at Robert Southey and Lord Castlereagh in the dedication.

Byron caricatures his former wife by making his hero's mother be like her in numerous telling ways. Now this equation of wife with mother is psychologically interesting in its own right, but this aspect of Byron's story will be left to the Freudians.

As Thomas Moore recorded in his journal entry of January 31, 1819, "Don Juan's mother is Lady Byron," and the poet ridicules "not only her learning, but various points about her" (266). Byron begins his humorous dissection with the following introduction of the mother, Donna Inez:

His mother was a learned lady, famed
For every branch of every science known--

In every Christian language ever named,
 With virtues equall'd by her wit alone.
 (1.10.1-4)¹

Byron goes on to describe her as being "Morality's grim personification" (1.16.5), and, because "Her favorite science was the mathematical" (1.12.1), he calls her "a walking calculation" (1.16.1), who "look'd a lecture, /Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily" (1.15.1-2). Lady Byron's acumen was indeed "mathematical," and she was renowned for her remarkable memory, which, of course, her ex-husband did not forget: "Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart / All Calderon and greater part of Lope" (1.11.1-2). The hyperbolic nature of this description is realized when one learns that Pedro Calderon (1600-81) wrote about 200 plays and that Lope de Vega (1562-1635), one of the most prolific of all writers, is thought to have written over 2,000 plays. Donna Inez's feat is phenomenal to say the least, and it is no wonder that she had memorized only the "greater part of Lope."

Byron even dresses Donna Inez like Lady Byron. Thomas Moore complains about Byron's ridiculing his former wife by clothing Don Juan's mother in "dimity" (1.12.6), which was Annabella's "favorite dress" (266).

¹ The source of all citations to Don Juan is the Variorum Edition (edited by Truman Guy Steffan and Willis W. Pratt) unless otherwise stated. All quotations from Don Juan will be identified by canto, stanza, and line number(s).

However, Moore and perhaps the other members of the Synod faulted Byron the most when he stooped to comment on his lady's figure: "The conclusion of one stanza [the sixty-first] is, 'I hate a dumpy woman,' meaning Lady B. again. This would disgust the public beyond endurance" (266).

As the literary world knows, Byron never cared much for intellectual women, and after his disastrous marriage to a woman who was intellectually inclined, he tended to detest them. Byron's dislike of educated women, or "bluestockings," as they were called, is an ironic example of his inconsistency insofar as liberty is concerned. George Ridenour correctly observes that Byron's "views on women would hardly commend themselves to emancipated spirits" (19).

Byron also picks on Lady Byron's prudish moral character and elevates it to the same unbelievable heights to which he raises her memory capacity:

Oh! she was perfect past all parallel--
 Of any modern female saint's comparison;
 So far above the cunning powers of hell,
 Her guardian angel had given up his garrison.
 (1.17.1-4)

However, Byron, the masterful satirist, cannot uplift his lady to heaven without doing a bit of undercutting, so, even though "Perfect she was," he has to remind his readers that unfortunately "perfection is / Insipid in this naughty world of ours" (1.18.1-2). Building on this, Byron lets his readers know that Donna Inez (as well as Lady Byron) has "A great opinion of her own good qualities"--so much

so, in fact, that it requires "a saint to bear it" (1.20.2,3). In addition to this and apparently unknown to the many people who were so wholeheartedly on Lady Byron's side, "she had a devil of a spirit" and "let few opportunities escape / Of getting her liege lord into a scrape" (1.20.5, 7-8). Of course, Lord Byron was certainly able to get into his own scrapes (and did), but we all owe it to Lady Byron's exacerbation of those scrapes that we now have Byron's famous anti-bluestocking, quadruple-rhyme couplet: "But--Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual, / Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?" (1.22.7-8). However, Byron's final say about Lady Byron and the idea of not printing his masterpiece for the sake of saving her feelings is not phrased in such jovial terms, as is seen in his letter to Hobhouse on May 17, 1819:

What are you so anxious about Donna Inez for? . . . What--is a ludicrous character of a tiresome woman in a burlesque poem to be suppressed or altered because a contemptible and hypocritical wretch may be supposed to be pointed at?--Do you suppose that I will ever forgive--or forget--or lose sight of her or hers--till I am nothing? (6: 131)

The Synod's second censorious category, "the indecency of parts," covers numerous lines and situations in canto 1, but almost all of them can be summed up as being sexual in nature and, therefore, not fit for polite society. The most shocking of these indecencies occurs in Byron's malicious, 17-stanza dedication of Don Juan to Robert Southey. Byron himself agreed to have these lines removed. In a letter that he wrote to Murray even before receiving

Hobhouse's letter about the committee's decision on the first canto, Byron said, ". . . if you publish Don Juan--I will only have the stanzas on Castlereagh omitted--and the two concluding words (Bob-Bob) of the two last lines of the third Stanza of the dedication to S[outhey]" (6: 94).

In the eleventh stanza Byron refers to England's repressive Foreign Secretary, Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, as an "intellectual eunuch." Isaac Asimov suggests that this is a double-barreled attack:

[Byron] might well be impugning Castlereagh's intelligence and it is true that Castlereagh was a bad orator and therefore sounded stupid at times. The phrase might refer more literally to a real or fancied hyposexuality, for through his long marriage of thirty-five years, Castlereagh had no child. This second implication is reinforced by Byron's deliberate use of "its" for "his" in the succeeding verses. (26)

Equally reasonable is Asimov's explanation of Byron's infamous dedication lines about the current poet laureate, Robert Southey: "You soar too high, Bob / And fall, for lack of moisture quite a dry, Bob" (3.7-8). Asimov states that "a dry Bob" was "then-current slang for intercourse without ejaculation ('lack of moisture')" and adds that the shocking and/or titillating phrase "was a particularly effective way of indicating that Southey went through the motions of writing poetry without producing anything poetic" (17).

In April 1819, Byron carefully explained to Murray that "some stanzas about Castlereagh . . . cannot decently appear," because Castlereagh was "at too great a distance [for Byron] to answer" (6: 104) a challenge to a duel if

one were forthcoming. As far as Southey was concerned, Byron "still wanted to retain the Dedication" (Steffan 24), saying that the poet is "as great a coward as he is a Renegade, and distance can make no odds in speaking of him--as he dare do nothing but scribble even to his next neighbor" (6: 104) (presumably Wordsworth, who receives some Don Juan blows himself). A month later, after Murray had decided to publish Don Juan anonymously (without printing his name or Byron's and without the dedication, the poet agreed to this form of censorship, saying in one letter to Murray, "I won't be shabby--& attack Southey under Cloud of night" (6: 127), and in another, "I won't attack the dog so fiercely without putting my name" (6: 123).

There are a variety of other so-called indecent parts to the first canto. As was becoming usual with Byron, there is the reference to incest. For example, Byron jokingly confides that the ancestors of Donna Julia's husband Alfonso (and, by extension, all Spanish nobility)

bred in and in, as might be shown,
 Marrying their cousins--nay, their aunts and
 nieces, [t/o]
 Which always spoils the bread, if it increases.
 (1.57.6-8)

Of course the romantic situation of a younger man (actually a boy) with an older woman would also not be particularly pleasing to the staid British. That Don Juan "was sixteen, Julia twenty-three" would be considered indecent by those not "amongst sun-burnt nations" (1.68.6, 8). Byron's

cynical witticisms about syphilis (or the great pox) were also not thought to be proper:

I said the small-pox has gone out of late;
Perhaps it may be follow'd by the great.
(1.130.7-8)

and

'Tis said the great came from America;
Perhaps it may set out on its return,--
The population there so spreads, they say
'Tis grown high time to thin it in its turn.
(1.131.1-4)

Byron's humorous view of cuckoldry was another cause for concern, because any good Englishman should know better than to smile at "any wicked woman, who contrived / By stealth her husband's temples to encumber" (1.138.5-6). Byron's satire on Don Juan's education and Byron's list of erotic classical studies were in the poet's own words, "not so decent either" (1.45.8). English eyebrows would also have been raised at Julia's hiding place for her naive lover in her bed, under the covers, and presumably around her legs: "He had been hid--I don't pretend to say / How, nor can I indeed describe the where" (1.166.1-2).

All these examples of indecency have been termed so because of sexual associations, but other matters were also offensive. The cannibalism that is so rampant in canto 2, as well as the shipwreck scene, is conveyed in words that Murray said "ladies may not read" (Smiles 401). Although Byron's publisher warned him that "if . . . [he did] anything it must be done with caution" and, in a schoolmasterly way, told him to "think of the effects of such seductive poetry," he also said that the second canto

"probably surpasses in talent anything that . . . [Byron] ever wrote" (402). Despite the temptation to wander into the censorable parts of canto 2, we must keep in mind that Murray's Utican Senate reviewed only the dedication and the first canto. However, that review was certainly sufficient to raise Byron's ire, and Murray anticipated the poet's angry response to it: "My Lord,--I am very much afraid that you will be sadly out of humour with all your advising friends here" (Prothero 4: 282).

In regard to Byron's specific comments on the indecency of the poem, the censored poet wrote to Murray on May 14, 1819:

Mr. Hobhouse is at it again about indelicacy-- there is no indelicacy--if he wants that, let him read Swift--his great Idol--but his Imagination must be a dunghill with a Viper's nest in the middle--to engender such a supposition about this poem. For my part I think you are all crazed. (6: 125)

A week later, Murray got the full thrust of Byron's satiric wit, although this time Byron was more playful:

You talk of "approximations to indelicacy" this reminds me of George Lamb's quarrel at Cambridge with Scrope Davies--"Sir["] said George--["] he hinted at my illegitimacy." "Yes," said Scrope--"I called him a damned adulterous bastard"--the approximation and the hint are not unlike. (6: 138)

The similarity between approximations and hints certainly comes into play with the committee's third area of complaint. Although Byron maintained that Don Juan "is the most moral of poems" (6: 99), his well-meaning friends thought that many lines would be perceived by readers as "attacks on religion" (Prothero 4: 276n). An example of

this appears early in the first canto when Byron is busy with his mischievous caricature of Lady Byron-Donna Inez. He mentions that "She liked the English and Hebrew tongue, / And said there was analogy between 'em" (1.14.1-2), and then he cracks a religio-linguistic joke about censorship by quoting her:

"'Tis strange--the Hebrew noun which means 'I
 am,' [t/o]
 The English always use to govern d--n."
 (1.14.7-8)

In the Bible "I am" is synonymous with the Hebrew God (see Exodus 3:14), and in Byron's day publishers customarily eliminated the middle two letters of "damn" to avoid trouble with the censor (Asimov 44).

Byron is free with his biblical allusions, and in suggesting that his Don Juan is like Adam before "his fall" (1.127.3) or like King David who is "Prescribed . . . a young belle" (1.168.4) or like Joseph, whose "only garment [also] quite gave way [when] / He fled" (1.186.6-7), he was bound to upset his more pietistic countrymen. Likewise, Byron's making light of Juan's religious education--

Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,
 And homilies, and lives of all the saints
 (1.47.1-2)

--and his casting doubt on this being "the right road to heaven" (1.49.6) was not likely to be taken kindly to, nor was his mocking half-truth that "Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded / That all the Apostles would have done as they did" (1.83.7-8). Also offensive would have been Donna Inez's buffoonery after her son's humorous fall

from grace when she "vow'd (and never had she vowed in vain) / To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles" (1.190.5-6). Ironically, this is the same religious source the fallen Julia has turned to "for her grace, / As being the best judge of a lady's case" (1.75.7-8).

Perhaps more to be feared than anything else in this regard though was Byron's occasional lapse into parody of the Bible. In the forty-ninth stanza, "Young Juan wax'd in goodliness and grace," and in Luke 2: 40, "the child [Jesus] grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." Suggesting that Don Juan was like Adam, David, or Joseph was bad enough, but comparing him to Christ was downright blasphemous, or so straitlaced readers would have thought, supposed the Synod.

Hobhouse notes in his diary that on December 27, 1818, he and Scrope Davies "breakfasted" together, read the first canto of Don Juan, and concluded "the blasphemy and bawdry and the domestic facts overpower even the great genius it displays" (107). Two days later, Hobhouse "called on Hookham Frere, and had a long conversation with him about Lord Byron's Don Juan" (109). Frere opposed publication, because, in his words, "A friend of freedom should be a friend of morality" (109). As a second reason, Frere felt that there was going to be "a convulsion between the religionists and free-thinkers" and that the "first would triumph and the latter [including Byron] be extirpated with their works" (109).

dedication and the "Pantisocratic apostle of Apostasy" in the unfinished preface. Byron found the word apostasy extremely appropriate for Southey, who, along with Coleridge, abandoned not only youthful plans for a libertarian society (their Pantisocracy, or "all-rule" commune), but open-mindedness altogether. Byron quips:

Apostasy's so fashionable, too
 To keep one creed's a task grown quite Herculean;
 Is it not so, my Tory, ultra-Julian?
 (dedication 17.6-8)

These lines conclude Byron's sarcastic dedication of Don Juan to Britain's officious poet laureate, and, in making a "final slap at Southey," Byron implies that "Bob" is more of an apostate than Julian, the Roman emperor who from AD 331 to 363 changed the state religion from Christianity back to Rome's previous pagan worship and received the permanent epithet of "The Apostate" for his efforts (Asimov 29).

Byron also makes light of "the Lakers" for their philosophy and the way they tried to convey it in verse. He mocks the poetry of "Mr. W. Wordsworth" in both the preface and the dedication, focusing in a satirically understated manner on what he thinks is the nature poet's long-windedness and incomprehensibility:

And Wordsworth, in a rather long "Excursion"
 (I think the quarto holds five hundred pages),
 Has given a sample from the vasty version
 Of his new system to perplex the sages.
 (dedication 4.1-4)

Then in the first canto Byron expends 10 stanzas (87-96) in a parody of Wordsworth's education as given in The Prelude

when he describes Juan's own melancholy maturation:

Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow,
 His home deserted for the lonely wood,
 Tormented with a wound he could not know,
 His, like all deep grief, plunged in solitude.
 (1.87.1-4)

In nature, Byron confides, ". . . poets find materials for their books," and he adds facetiously, ". . . every now and then we read them through, / . . . / Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible" (1.90.5-6, 8). Byron finds that Coleridge too has become unintelligible, but his obscurity comes from his having turned "into a metaphysician" (1.91.8):

And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,
 But like a hawk encumber'd with his hood,--
 Explaining metaphysics to the nation--
 I wish he would explain his Explanation.
 (dedication 2.5-8)

Byron satirizes other writers besides "the Lakers" (such as William Sotheby and Henry James Pye), but most of his literary satire, as well as his strongest literary satire, goes, first of all, to "mouthey" Southey. William Wordsworth is clearly the secondary target, and in the last stanza of the first canto Byron lines them up together for a final bashing. Referring to Don Juan, Byron bids a facetious farewell:

"Go little book, from this my solitude!
 I cast thee on the waters, go thy ways!
 And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
 The world will find thee after many days."
 When Southey's read, and Wordsworth understood,
 I can't help putting in my claim to praise--
 The first four lines are Southey's every line:
 For God's sake, reader! take them not for mine.
 (1.222.1-8)

This cavalier treatment by Byron caused a perturbed Wordsworth to predict that "Don Juan will do more harm to the English character than anything in our time" (579). Southey was even more dogmatic in his retaliatory pronouncement that "Don Juan . . . is a foul blot on the literature of his [Byron's] country, an act of high treason on English poetry" (21). Such responses were what Byron's board of censors had feared. On the other hand, Byron's own response to the qualms of his friends is typically fearless and independent:

You sha'n't make Canticles of my Cantos. . . . I will have none of your damned cutting & slashing.--If you please[,] you may publish anonymously[;] it will perhaps be better;--but I will battle my way against them all--like a Porcupine. (6:105)

This rebellious tone of Byron's was perhaps part of what the sensitive Synod was trying to squelch in its last and rather amorphous categorical objection to Don Juan. The group's fifth complaint--"the confirmation of all stories about his [Byron's] Venetian life, which would be given by the rakishness of the poem" (Prothero 4: 276n)--is a kind of catch-all that includes not only the ribald aspects of the canto such as the comic bedroom scene, but also all the gossipy tales about Byron himself and his amorous adventures "where the climate's sultry" (1.63.8). In order for Byron to get his "experiment" (6: 68) into print then, he had to combat both what his "cursed puritanical committee" (6: 99) found objectionable in the

work itself and something quite extraneous to the work, his own colorful and now somewhat sordid reputation.

Byron was far from his publisher, and his most loyal friends were strongly arguing for the suppression of his poem; yet even against these odds, Byron sent a volley of remarkable letters, protesting the decision of the Synod and supporting the cause of freedom of the press, particularly his own freedom in all of its aspects. As Byron's definitive biographer, Leslie Marchand, phrases it, Byron was "glorying in his new freedom," away from all English constraints, and he "was jealous of any attempts on the parts of his friends or his publisher . . . to curb his frankness from moral squeamishness or fear for his reputation" (Byron's Poetry 163).

A strong theme in Byron's retaliatory letters is his outright defiance of censorship and the public that it was intended to be protecting. In a letter to both Hobhouse and Kinnaird ("Dear H. and Dear K.") not long after the Synod's negative response to Don Juan, Byron strikes a Manfred-like pose and thunders, "I will not give way for all the Cant of Christiandom" (6: 91). Byron is equally indomitable towards Murray: "I care nothing for what may be said, or thought, or written on the Subject" (6: 104). In another letter he tells Murray that "as to the Cant of the day--I despise it--as I have ever done all it's [sic] finical fashions" (6: 95). More than six months later Byron was still in the same imperious, grandiloquent mood, as in another letter to Murray he declaims:

Come what may--I will never flatter the Million's canting in any shape--circumstances may or may not have placed me at times in a situation to lead the public opinion--but the public opinion--never led nor ever shall lead me. (6: 192)

Besides taking this Promethean stance, Byron also counters the complaints of his would-be censors by directing their attention to the literary quality of the poem itself. To Kinnaird he emphatically says:

As to "Don Juan"--confess--confess--you dog--and be candid--that it is the sublime of that there sort of writing--it may be bawdy--but is it not good English?--it may be profligate--but is it not life, is it not the thing? (6: 232)

Byron also asks the Synod to compare the morality of Don Juan with the morality found in earlier writers who were clearly accepted in 1819: ". . . are we more moral than when Prior wrote[?]-is there anything in Don Juan so strong as in Ariosto--or Voltaire--or Chaucer?" (6: 91). However, as Steffan has noted, Byron failed to realize "that no contemporary book, in any century, has ever been able to claim from public opinion that immunity from moral or political censure which books of the past are given without question" (20).

Byron repetitiously argued with Murray and friends to let the poem stand or fall by itself, because he staunchly believed that "Juan would either fail entirely or succeed completely--there will be no medium" (6: 192). In one of several letters to Murray in which similar views are expressed, Byron says that "if the poem has poetry--it . . . [will] stand--if not--fall" (6: 94). When this argument did not appear to move Murray, Byron resorted to a

more businesslike ploy and told his publisher that instead of "'thinking of the effect,'" he should "think . . . of the sale" and dispense with his "nonsensical prudery" (6: 167-68).

Murray was actually wanting Byron to undertake a "great work," not knowing, ironically enough, that he had the beginnings of one in his hands. Of course, Byron had no such foresight at the time either. He derided the idea of writing "an Epic poem . . . or some such pyramid" (6: 105) but he did proffer his Don Juan: "You have so many 'divine' poems, is it nothing to have written a Human one? without any of your worn out machinery" (6: 105). When Murray showed that he was at least interested in the idea of Don Juan as a "great work" and asked for some kind of prospectus, Byron revealed exactly how free the composing of Don Juan really was: "You ask me for the plan of Donny Johnny--I have no plan--I had no plan--but I had or have materials" (6: 207). The freedom of writing a "great work" about human (and not "divine") nature without the "worn out machinery" and without years of planning exhilarated Byron, and this is shown in the tone of his letters to Murray, if not in the sense of them. "You might as well make Hamlet . . . 'act mad' in a strait waistcoat--as trammel my buffoonery. . . . Why Man the Soul of such writing is it's [sic] license" (6: 207-08).

Don Juan appealed to Lord Byron "as a medium for telling the truth in poetry in a more transparent way than he had ever attempted before" (Marchand, Byron's Poetry

159). Even T. S. Eliot, who was hostile to much of Byron's poetry, admired Don Juan for the "sincerity" of its truth-telling and the "objective" self-portrait which "comes nearer to honesty than any that appears in his earlier work" (235). The freedom to tell the truth about himself and virtually everything else was the real cause of Byron's problem with censorship in the first place, and as Byron himself so succinctly put it, "if people won't discover the moral [of Don Juan] that is their fault not mine" (6: 99).

From the time that he left England as an exile, "Freedom, . . . [that] forbidden fruit" (Manfred 2.3.71), was uppermost in Byron's mind, and he fused this compelling drive towards freedom with an evolving philosophy of the indomitable will. The result was a "will to social freedom, which, though temporarily eclipsed, would ultimately prevail" (Bostetter 4). In this way Byron became more than a spokesman for the disillusioned post-Napoleonic war era; ". . . he became the prophetic voice of a revolutionary future" (4). The political aspects are more pronounced in the later cantos of Don Juan, but the impetus for independence and individualism is in the very bedrock of this episodic epic.

Andrew Rutherford has rightly said the "Byron's love of liberty and hatred of oppression are among his most attractive features as a man and as a poet" (Study 182). This is clearly evidenced in Don Juan, and, if anything, it is even more so in the letters that Byron wrote in defiant protest of his friends's attempt to abort this new,

idiosyncratic work of freedom. The tone of the prose of these letters often mirrors the tone of the poetry of Don Juan, and, if the letters had not been written, we might not have the poem to read. For these two reasons, it seems appropriate to let Lord Byron have the last say in one of his letters:

Cut me up root and branch--quarter me in the
Quarterly . . . make--if you will--a spectacle to
men and angels--but don't ask me to alter for I
can't--I am obstinate and lazy--and there's the
truth. (6: 207)

Chapter 3
The Second Installment--after
Many Dun Letters (Cantos 3-5)

The next series of Don Juan cantos (3-5) was not published until August 8, 1821, more than two years after Murray's initial venture with Byron's volatile satire. The tentative publisher delayed even more this time than he had with the first publication when he not only went over everything in the dedication and first canto with a stringent editorial eye but had his junta of five censors do the same thing.

Cantos 3 and 4 were originally written as one large and continuous unit, and the first draft was completed on November 30, 1819, with 211 stanzas. This canto actually had fewer stanzas than the first pair (211 as compared to 222 and 216, respectively), but the number of stanzas per canto was currently around 100 and not twice that amount.

Byron sent his bifurcated canto to Murray on February 19, 1820, and wrote a number of letters both to Murray and to others (7: 34-35, 39-40, 41-45, 49-52, and 59-60) in which he explains or at least mentions this splitting. Byron's cutting "the third Canto of Don Juan into two" (7: 34) is important because it clearly establishes the general length of the Don Juan cantos from this point on.

No more are there cantos of over 200 stanzas. The average length of cantos 3-16 is approximately 108 stanzas. For the curious, a listing of the 16 completed cantos with the number of stanzas and lines in each appears as follows:

Cantos	Stanzas	Lines
1	222	1777
2	216	1728
3	111	984
4	117	936
5	159	1272
6	120	960
7	87	696
8	141	1128
9	85	680
10	87	696
11	90	720
12	89	712
13	111	888
14	102	816
15	99	792
16	123	1072

Outwardly, this listing of stanza lengths might have nothing to do with the censorship of the poem, but the attitude that Byron now took towards his publisher in their financial dealings definitely seems to be a manifestation of the rising friction between the two which had as its base the problem with censorship.

Two weeks before he sent the third canto, Byron warned Murray about the dividing of it and carefully explained that this was not a ploy to charge more money for his work. Byron gave as his reason for halving the new canto that "it was too long," yet he acknowledged that "the two [parts] together are not longer than one of the first" two cantos. To explain this paradox, Byron wrote Murray that he had "made this division . . . to suppress some tediousness in the aspect of the thing" (7: 34-35). This was an interesting and different type of suppression of Don Juan-- a kind of divide-and-conquer tactic designed to suppress not the writing itself but the boredom that is the result of writing that has been toned down so that it will not be as offensive as the initial cantos and therefore will not be "suppressed" in the sense of the word used in this context. Ironically, it was the heavy-handed suppression that the first two cantos received and the corroborating public reaction to them that caused Byron to change the tone of the next canto so that, as he described it to his friend Kinnaird upon its completion, it became "very decent--but dull--damned dull" (6: 256).

Murray was made timorous about cantos 3-4 because of the same reaction of the public to the first two cantos, so he hurriedly sent a copy of the new work to John Wilson Croker, a leading contributor to the publisher's Quarterly Review, to get his opinion. Croker was generally exuberant in his praise of the new cantos: "What sublimity! what levity! what boldness! what tenderness! what majesty!

what trifling! what variety!" However, he perceived the same dullness that Byron saw--"what tediousness! for tedious to a strange degree, it must be confessed that whole passages are" (Redpath 260). Croker's advice concerning this aspect of boredom was just the opposite of Byron's solution. The critic wrote to Murray:

I think it would be much better for [Byron's] . . . fame and your profit if the two cantos were thrown into one, and brought to a proper length [i.e., about half of the 215 stanzas that then composed the two cantos] by the retrenchment of the many careless, obscure, and idle passages which incuria fudit. (Redpath 262)

As far as censorship is concerned, Croker found "little, very little, of . . . offensive nature in these cantos" (3 and 4), and he favored "the omission . . . of [only] five stanzas," advising Murray "to get Lord Byron to revise these two cantos" (Redpath 262). He also gave Murray a bit of reprimanding advice about the publisher's overly fastidious attitude about Don Juan:

As to the PRINCIPLES, all the world, and you, Mr. Murray, first of all, have done this poem great injustice. There are levities here and there, more than good taste approves, but nothing to make such a terrible rout about--nothing so bad as Tom Jones, nor with a hundred degrees of Count Fathom. (Redpath 260)

As a disclaimer for his critical remarks, Croker states that he is not "justifying Lord Byron," with whom his "acquaintance [has been] none, or next to none" and that he has "no interest [in Byron] beyond what we must all take in a poet who, on the whole, is one of the first, if not the first, of our age" (260). With no personal motive involved and with no special consideration of Byron, Croker quite

plainly tells Murray, "I direct my observations against you and those whom you deferred to" (260)--that is, Byron's five censorious friends who are discussed in the preceding chapter.

Croker begins his berating of Murray's quibbling by using a tactic that Byron has already mastered--comparing Don Juan with other works that are somewhat salacious in nature but have become accepted unquestionably as classics.

If you print and sell Tom Jones and Peregrine Pickle, why do you start at Don Juan? Why smuggle it into the world and, as it were, pronounce it illegitimate in its birth, and induce so many of the learned rabble, when they could find so little specific offense in it, to refer to its supposed original state as one of original sin? (Redpath 260)

Croker follows this criticism with a suggested solution that simply involves a change in attitude and that would have been easy enough to effect if Murray had been so inclined.

If instead of this you had touched the right string and in the right place, Lord Byron's own good taste and good nature would have revised and corrected some phrases in his poem which in reality disparage it more than its imputed looseness of principle; I mean some expressions of political and personal feelings which, I believe, he, in fact, never felt, and threw in wantonly and de gaiete de coeur, and which he would have omitted, advisedly and de bonte de coeur, if he had not been goaded by indiscreet, contradictory, and urgent criticisms, which, in some cases, were dark enough to be called calumnies. (Redpath 260-61)

Croker's belief that Byron would have censored himself had his work been treated with less of a reactionary attitude is, of course, pure speculation, but from the number of times that Byron did censor himself in both this poem and

others, it is reasonable to assume that Croker was correct in his thinking

that if Mr. Gifford,¹ or some friend in whose taste and disinterestedness Lord Byron could rely, were to point out to him the cruelty to individuals, the injury to the national character, the offense to public taste, and the injury to his own reputation, of such passages as those about Southey and Waterloo and the British Government and the head of that Government, . . . these blemishes in the first cantos would be wiped away in the next edition; and that some that occur in the two cantos [that Murray sent him, i.e., 3-4] . . . would never see the light. (Redpath 261)

Croker's observations are perceptive and reliable as to the morality of these turbulent times, the quality of Byron's poem itself, and the personalities of this complicated Don Juan nexus. If Murray had followed the tenor of Croker's common-sensical advice, he would have spared himself considerable anxiety and Byron considerable frustration. Also, Murray would have undoubtedly made more money as a publisher if he had not driven his top money-maker elsewhere to have printed not only the last eleven cantos of Don Juan but virtually everything else that Byron wrote after August 8, 1821, the date of Murray's much-delayed publication of cantos 3-5.

¹ William Gifford (1756-1826) was the first editor of Murray's Quarterly Review and also Murray's literary advisor. Ever since his college days at Cambridge, Byron had greatly respected Gifford for his literary judgment. Byron also admired Gifford as the author of some turn-of-the-century satires, and Byron modeled his first satire, English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, after them (7: 175n).

To return to Byron's disillusionment with Murray's publishing policies as reflected through the poet's references to the division of the original third canto into two, suffice it to say there is a major attitudinal difference between the way Byron wrote his friend William Bankes of the split and the way he first told Murray in his letter of only 12 days before:

There are more cantos (and be d--d to them) . . . in my drawer . . . ; only I must first cut up (or cut down) two aforesaid cantos into three, because I am grown base and mercenary, and it is an ill precedent to let my Mecaenas [Maecenas], Murray, get too much for his money. (7: 39)

Byron's message in this letter to Bankes is in sharp contradiction to his telling Murray that "I have not made this division to double upon you (7: 35).

In spite of the mercenary motive that he mentions to Bankes, Byron did not ask for additional payment for the fourth canto, and he insistently tells Murray that his reason for cutting the original one canto into two is that he "found it too long" and boring for one piece. "Remember this," he emphasizes, "and don't imagine that there could be any other motive" (7: 42). Ten days later Byron reaffirms this in a letter to Hobhouse: "I sent Murray two more Cantos of Donny Johnny--but they are only to reckon as one in arithmetic--because they are but one long one cut into two--which was expedient on account of tedium" (7: 51). Then Byron stresses: ". . . so don't let him [Murray] be charged for these two but as one" (7: 51). Yet underlying this honorable-businessman side of Byron is the

growing frustration that the poet felt towards his procrastinating publisher. He shows this with his playful threat about really shortening his cantos: "I should have served you a pretty trick if I had sent you for example cantos of 50 stanzas each--like that Oriental Country Gentleman Mr. Galley [sic] Knight with his Eastern Sketches" (7: 35). In 1817 Henry Gally Knight published Phrosyne, a Grecian Tale and Alashtar, an Arabian Tale. These are the "Sketches" to which Byron refers, and he sarcastically adds in the letter, "blessings on his [Knight's] pretty poesy" (7: 35n).

In his very next letter to Murray, Byron teases some more: "I might have sent you a dozen cantos of 40 stanzas each--those of 'the Minstrel' (Beatties's) are no longer--and ruined you at once." Then, in typical Byronic fashion, he undercuts the force of his message by adding "if you don't suffer as it is" (7: 42). This tacked-on clause reveals Byron's continuing humanitarian feeling for his publisher, who was caught in the swirl of England's greatest age of "suppression and repression" (Quinlan 81). It also indicates that Byron's removal of himself from the chaotic situation in Britain had caused him to be not as knowledgeable about how things were at home as he would have liked to be.

Byron's frustration at Murray's delay and his own self-imposed restriction of not being able to communicate with his publisher except by letter is manifested in Byron's ambivalent talk of money matters regarding the

publishing of Don Juan. Byron seems to be mixing both sarcasm and sincerity when he declares to Murray:

". . . you are not pinned down to anything you say in a letter and . . . calculating even those two cantos as one only (which they were and are to be reckoned) you are not bound by your offer,--act as may seem fair to all parties" (7: 42). Throughout his life Byron's aristocratic pride made him feel awkward about writing for pay at all, and yet "honesty and self-honesty were almost an obsession with him" (Marchand, Byron's Poetry 12), so his sense of fair play virtually demanded that he get what was coming to him --both equitable pay for good work and, more importantly to Byron, fair as well as timely treatment of that work.

Byron's second round of letter-writing warfare with Murray began almost as soon as the first two cantos were published (July 15, 1819). Byron was quite naturally anxious to hear what the public response to Don Juan would be, and he did not like to be kept waiting. On July 30 Byron wrote to Hobhouse: "Donny Johnny will either succeed greatly--or tumble flatly--there will be no medium--at least I think not . . . but I know nothing and hear nothing . . . of Juan" (6: 187).

In Murray's defense, the publisher did write Byron the day after publication, but he gave a "very tremulous" (6: 212) report. He quickly followed that letter with a "second in better spirits" (6:210). However, the truth was that the number of early purchases was down: ". . . only twelve hundred copies of Don Juan sold out of fifteen

hundred printed, and that was a sad blow to a man who had seen ten thousand Corsairs go in one day" (Steffan 30). Murray--always the conservative--initially underestimated and painted too gloomy a picture. On Byron's part, there was overreaction. Byron's disappointment at the early sale of Don Juan was clearly projected onto his publisher. The incensed poet wrote back to Murray spitefully and ridiculed his whole fearful group of Albemarle Street censors:

Of Don Juan I hear nothing from you--you chicken-hearted--silver-paper Stationer you . . . I never saw such a set of fellows as you are--and then the pains taken to exculpate the modest publisher--he had remonstrated forsooth!--I will write a preface that shall exculpate you and Hobhouse &c. completely . . . but at the same time I will cut you all up (& you in particular) like Gourds. (6: 205)

At this time, John Cam Hobhouse and Douglas Kinnaird were the two correspondents besides Murray on whom Byron relied most heavily for news of the fortunes of Don Juan--Hobhouse more for the literary and critical views and Kinnaird, Byron's banker, for the financial side. Byron's anger at not receiving reports on the recently published Don Juan--or, more accurately, not receiving positive reports--is still evident in the letter that Byron wrote to Hobhouse 11 days after his letter to Murray quoted above: "I hear nothing of Don Juan but in two letters from Murray." Byron gives Hobhouse a broadside for his silence as well as for his negative vote on the poem for fear of offending Annabella and her family: "Will my wife always live? will her mother never die? is her father immortal? what are you about? married and settled in the country I

suppose by your silence?" Although Byron may not have been consciously intending to do so, this bit of knuckle-rapping reveals the high estimate that Byron placed on the first two cantos of Don Juan. He strongly suspected that Don Juan would outlive the people in it, because he knew he was doing some of his best writing. In the postscript of this Hobhouse letter he admits as much: "Of the fate of the 'poem' I am quite uncertain, and [do] not anticipate much brilliancy for your silence.--But I do not care--I am . . . sure . . . that I never wrote better--and I wish you all better taste? (6: 212).

With Kinnaird, however, Byron was all business. As with the others, he mentions that "Of the Don himself I hear nothing," but with his banker-friend Byron was mainly interested in money: "Remit Murray's Don Juan money--it must be nigh due. . . . Gather together always what monies you can in my name.--That is the great point. . . . I never will write to you except about money" (6: 221). This concern for Don Juan money seems to have been at least partially prompted by Murray's report that "the poem . . . [had] not sold well" (6: 234). A poor sale was probably perceived by Byron as an affirmation of his friends's counsel not to print the poem. The more money he could receive from the sale of Don Juan, the more he could feel justified in his defiant rejection of that counsel. At any rate, it is certain that the sale of the first two cantos of Don Juan discouraged Byron and had a negative effect on

his writing of the next canto (which became the next two cantos).

Byron wrote to one friend, Richard Hoppner, that "the third Canto is in advance about 100 stanzas--but the failure of the two first has weakened my estro--and it will neither be so good as the two former" (6: 234). The poet wrote essentially the same to his publisher and, in addition, attributed blame for his writing "standstill--for the present" to the poor welcome that his poem had gotten: "I had written about a hundred stanzas of a third Canto to Don Juan--but the reception of the two first is no encouragement to you nor me to proceed" (6: 235). Although not a form of censorship per se, a negative response from an audience is a powerful way to stop a writer in his tracks.

Poor sales of Don Juan were not the only sore point that troubled Byron with this first publication. (Actually Murray's first volume of "Don Juan was not a financial failure but had done very well" (6: 253n). Thanks to Murray's first fearful reports, though, Byron believed that Don Juan had failed in the marketplace, and this produced the same deleterious effect on Byron's writing of the third and fourth cantos that a genuine failure would have.) Poor reviews of the poem hit home with Byron, especially the scathing one that he got from Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (August 1819 issue) which attacked not only Don Juan, but the life and character of its author. Byron was so perturbed by what he called the reviewer's

"diabolical . . . abuse . . . [and] outrageous license" (6: 257) that he wrote a lengthy response entitled "Some Observations upon an article in Blackwood's Magazine" (dated March 15, 1820), which Murray circulated in manuscript but which was not printed until 1833 (Rutherford, Heritage 166).

The criticism that Don Juan provoked was so acrid that it caused Byron himself to delay sending Murray the next two cantos. By February 1820 the critics made Byron "have some doubts whether they [cantos 3-4] ought to be published," and Byron acknowledged to Murray that the new cantos "may have not the Spirit of the first . . ." (7: 35). He admitted that although "the outcry has not frightened[,] . . . it has hurt . . ." him, and he concluded this letter to his publisher in a somber and resentful tone: ". . . I have not written 'con amore' this time.--It is very decent however--and as dull . . ." (7: 35). Although Byron claimed at this time not to be frightened by the outcry, he specifically admitted such a fear to Kinnaird in a letter of the previous October (1819)--fear to such an extent that at times he sadly thought of putting aside his ample "materials . . . [for his non-plan] of Donny Johnny" (6: 207): ". . . the outcry has frightened me.--I had such projects for the Don" (6: 232). Combining some self-pity with his assumption of the high and permanent literary standing that Don Juan would attain and throwing in a bit of ribald word play to boot, Byron made this pronouncement about the power and the

cost of censorship: ". . . the Cant is so much stronger than Cunt--now a days,--that the benefit of experience in a man who had well weighed the worth of both monosyllables--must be lost to despairing posterity" (6: 232). Whether or not we choose to accept Byron at his word, believing that the critical outcry "frightened" him in October and then subsided into a fearless "hurt" by the following February, it is certain that the outcry did affect him greatly.

Since "the review of a literary work was taken seriously by the author, the critic, and the public" and since "an unfavorable one brought condemnation and ridicule from all quarters" and since literary periodicals had a "huge circulation" in the early nineteenth century (Herman Ward 1-2), it is understandable that the reviewers's moralistic criticisms of Don Juan were quickly accepted by the pietistic reading public, and, as Byron explained to Richard Hoppner, Don Juan became "a sore subject with the moral reader--and the cause of a great row" (6: 234). In his secondhand reporting of the Don Juan reaction in England to his Venetian friend, Byron wrote: "I understand the outcry was beyond everything--pretty Cant for people who read Tom Jones--and Roderick Random--and the Bath Guide--and Ariosto--and Dryden--and Pope--to say not of Little's poems" (6: 234). (It is ironic that certain "amorous poems which Byron read avidly while a schoolboy at Harrow" [Marchand, Byron 3:764n] were written under the pseudonym of Thomas Little by Thomas Moore, one of the five friends of Byron who protested on moral grounds against the

publishing of Don Juan.) Once again Byron defends his poem by comparing it to similarly tainted but nevertheless accepted works of literature, and, to remain at least seemingly humble, he adds a disclaimer which emphasizes the poem's decency--the very thing that for the lack of which he has been roundly condemned: "Of course I refer to the morality of these works and not to any pretension of mine to compete with them in any thing but decency" (6: 34).

The combination of poor initial sales of Don Juan, a general public outrage by those who had bought it (and undoubtedly those who had not), the critics' stinging evaluation of it, and the pervading fear of censorship threw Byron into a near panic. A month and a half after the July 15 publication, Byron wrote to Murray: "I wish that I had been in better spirits, but I am out of sorts--out of nerves--and now and then--(I begin to fear) out of my senses" (6: 216). He claimed that the cause of his illness was Italy: "All this Italy has done for me--and not England" (6: 215). Given his high rate of profligacy in that country, he is probably correct--at least, superficially. But it was England that caused Byron to behave--and misbehave--the way that he did in Italy, and, although he turns his fears of going insane into a joke at the expense of his homeland and his naysaying friends, Byron's very mentioning of his mental condition indicates the kind of stress he was under at this time. In the letter he says: "I defy all of you and your climate to boot to make me mad.--But if ever I do really become a

Bedlamite--and wear a strait waistcoat--let me be brought back among you--your people will then be proper compagny [sic]" (6: 216).

Adding to the pressure that Byron was feeling was yet another factor--his fear that his remaining legal rights to Ada, his one legitimate child, would be removed if Don Juan were brought to court and he were found guilty of writing an obscene, seditious, or blasphemous work. This was a very real possibility, and the likelihood of Byron's fear being realized increased tremendously when Don Juan did actually become the object of a court case, the proceedings of which were, ironically enough, brought about by Byron's own publisher.

The reason for Murray's apparent courting of disaster was that this "most respectable of publishers" (Halevy 33) wanted legal protection against piracy. Shortly after Murray's first and rather expensive volume of Don Juan appeared, the two genuine cantos were pirated and produced in four different cheap and "small shilling editions" (Wickwar 267). Byron wrote to Murray that he "should not let those fellows publish false 'Don Juans'" (6: 236), but he still did not want to be identified in print as the author of the anonymous work. It was this anonymity--both on Byron's part and Murray's--that made Don Juan such fair game for the pirates.

Forgeries of Don Juan were another problem. It was only four days after the original publication of Don Juan (July 15, 1819) that William Hone's Don Juan: Canto the

Third was printed (6: 236n). Murray felt handicapped in trying to carry out Byron's request to stop "those fellows," because in his attempt to avoid legal prosecution for libel he had published Don Juan without giving credit to Byron as author or himself as publisher. His self-protecting action had ironically reversed itself. Murray's feelings about the matter must be well suggested in the following description by Wickwar: "A poem by the greatest poet of the day may have been a bestseller; but there was little to be gained by being its original publisher when there was no lack of pirates in London and in Paris, and no means for restraining them" (267). With no other alternative, Murray turned to the legal system and "applied for an injunction to suppress . . . [the piracies] and establish his copyright" (Steffan 31).

Byron was immediately alarmed because of the possible ramifications of the suit that might affect him and his daughter, so he told Murray:

You may do as you please--but you are about a hopeless experiment--Eldon will decide against you--were it only that my name is in the record. --You will also recollect that if the publication is pronounced against on the grounds you mention as indecent & blasphemous that I lose all right in my daughter's guardianship and education--in short all paternal authority--and every thing concerning her--except the pleasure I may have chanced to have had in begetting her. (6: 252)

The bitterness in Byron's last phrase is appropriate to the nonexistent hopes he had for success in court with Lord Eldon presiding over the case. Just the month before (November 1819), Eldon had been instrumental in the quick

passage in Parliament of the repressive Six Acts following the Peterloo Massacre. More pressing on Byron's mind, though, was Eldon's March 27, 1817, decision to strip Percy Shelley of his rights to his children based on his atheistic writing (the pamphlet entitled The Necessity of Atheism for which he had been expelled from Oxford and his shocking [for the times] poem Queen Mab), his radical opinions on marriage, and his much ballyhooed behavior. Byron reminded Murray of this previous finding by Lord Eldon in a similar situation ("It was so decided in Shelley's case--because he had written--Queen Mab--&c. &c." [6: 252]) and then cautioned him, saying: ". . . you can ask the lawyers--and do as you like--I do not inhibit you trying the question [regarding the copyright of Don Juan and the infringements on it]--I merely state one of the consequences to me" (6: 252). It is true that Byron did not specifically ask Murray to withdraw his suit, but he certainly did try to "inhibit" his publisher from pursuing the matter in court, despite the poet's written claim to the contrary, as quoted above.

Another trial that had a bearing on this case--at least in Byron's mind--was that of Richard Carlile for republishing Thomas Paine's Age of Reason and other writings. The Society for the Suppression of Vice brought suit against Carlile shortly before Murray applied for his injunction, and a conviction was secured. The radical bookseller, "who specialized in the works of Paine" (Quinlan 215), was not only fined, but imprisoned from 1819

until 1825. However, Carlile had "his wife and sister keep his shop open for the sale of deistical works," and, when they were imprisoned in turn, "associates of . . . [his] took over the business" (Quinlan 215). Meanwhile, the wily prisoner also managed to issue a government-embarrassing periodical called The Republican directly from Dorchester Gaol (6: 240n). Carlile apparently relished being a martyr. He was pleased with each prosecution, since every trial promoted his publications (Quinlan 215). Byron perceived this reversal of the censors' intention, because in November 1819 he wrote Murray: ". . . what folly is this of Carlile's trial?--why let him have the honours of a martyr? it will only advertise the books in question" (6: 240). A month later Byron's interest in the Carlile case intensified as he saw it poisoning the atmosphere of the trial concerning his own work. He expressed this dramatically in a letter to Kinnaird:

Murray it seems wishes to try a question of copyright of Don Juan--and bring in my name--I would rather pay him back the money [the 1625 pounds that Murray had paid him for cantos 1 and 2];--as he will be sure to lose--the Chancellor would decide against him . . . as the cry is at present up with that fool Carlile and his trash in such a manner--that they [the authorities] would re-crucify Christ himself if he re-appeared in his old humble accoutrements--and had only his own word for his credentials. (6: 256)

Although Byron was thoroughly convinced that Murray would lose his case, he decided to provide literary advice to Murray's lawyers in the event that he was unsuccessful in his many subtle and not-so-subtle attempts to persuade his publisher to withdraw the suit:

Of the Chancellor's law--I am no judge--but take up Tom Jones & read him--Mrs. Waters and Molly Seagrim--or Prior's Hans Carvel--& Paulo Purganti--Smollett's Roderick Random--the chapter of Lord Strutwell--& many others;--Peregrine Pickle the scene of the Beggar Girl--Johnson's London for coarse expressions--for instance the word "clap" & "grope his breeches with a monarch's air"--Anstrey's Bath guide--the "Hearken Lady Betty Hearken"--take up in short--Pope--Prior--Congreve--Dryden--Fielding--Smollett. (6: 253)

After citing so many legitimate authors whose copyrights were being honored, Byron pointed out a problem: "What becomes of their copyright if his [Lord Eldon's] Wat Tyler-decision is to pass into a precedent?" (6: 253). In making this insight, Byron referred to a legal embarrassment of Robert Southey's. The poet laureate had tried to get an injunction from Lord Eldon when in 1817 a publisher pirated Wat Tyler (1794), a radical work that Southey had written as an idealistic young man enthralled by the French Revolution. Although by the time of the trial Southey had become a reactionary Tory, he was nevertheless denied an injunction by the Lord Chancellor on the grounds that his youthful writing was "seditious . . . [and therefore] not subject to copyright" (6: 253n).

Despite Byron's considerable anxiety about Murray's attempt to get an injunction against the pirates of Don Juan and his conviction that his few rights to Ada would be taken from him, Lord Eldon did grant the injunction. The winning of this case was ironic in that Murray's principal attorney, Sharon Turner, doubted the success of this legal endeavor as much as Byron. In three letters to Murray,

Turner made it clear that he and his partners found Don Juan to be morally objectionable, and Turner went so far as to say that if possible he "would suppress it altogether in every form" (Smiles 408). Even though his profession called on him to plead for the poem he so opposed, Turner had a personal morality that made him function almost as a censor rather than as a proponent of Don Juan:

The evil [Don Juan itself], if not stopped, will be great. It will circulate in a cheap form very extensively, injuring society wherever it spreads. Yet one consideration strikes me. You could wish Lord Byron to write less objectionably. You may also wish him to return you part of the 1625 pounds. If the Chancellor should dissolve the injunction on this ground [i.e., that Byron repay his royalties to Murray], that will show Lord B. that he must expect no more copyright money for such things [as Don Juan], and that they are too bad for law to uphold. Will not this affect his mind and purify his pen? . . . Perhaps nothing but the Court treating him as it treated Southey may sufficiently impress Lord B. (Smiles 406)

The strategy that Turner proposed to Murray was that he show "the case separately . . . [to] three of . . . [his] ablest counsel" in the hopes that if all three lawyers believed that an injunction "could not be supported," then Byron would be convinced to return "an adequate proportion of the purchase money" (Smiles 406), and Murray could then forego his application for the dubious injunction. In the midst of these plans, Turner "got a surprise," because Lancelot Shadwell, the second attorney with whom he consulted, carefully "read Don Juan and thought an injunction possible" (Steffan 32). Turner reported to Murray that Shadwell, "a very conscientious

man . . . [whose] general opinions are . . . not favorable to Lord B. and . . . [whose] taste is highly moral," had disapproved of various passages of Don Juan, but had concluded in general agreement with Byron's advice that "the passages are not more amatory than those of many books of which the copyright was never doubted" (Smiles 407-08).

Shadwell had noted about Don Juan one saving grace, and that was that the poem had a moralistic and didactic aspect--"that one great tendency of the book . . . was to show in Don Juan's ultimate character the ill effect of the injurious maternal education which Don Juan is represented as having received, and which had operated injuriously upon his mind" (Smiles 408). It was this undeniable, albeit sexist, observation that won the day for Don Juan and convinced straitlaced Lord Eldon to award the injunction. The result of this legal victory was threefold: (1) there was a suppression of the piracies of Don Juan; (2) there was also "a considerable [increase in] profit" from the volume for "both Murray and Byron"; and (3) there was a sparing of English society from "at least partial contamination" (Steffan 32) of the so-called "evil" work because, as moralistic Mr. Turner succinctly noted, legal allowance of piracy of Don Juan "can only do more mischief to let cheap editions be circulated" (Smiles 408).

In spite of this unexpected win at court with Don Juan, Byron's anxiety about losing his legal rights to Ada because of the notoriety of the poem continued to resurface

from time to time. Half a year after the injunction proceedings, Byron wrote to Hobhouse and insisted

that the third & fourth Cantos of Don J . . . be published anonymously & this merely because in the present state of Cant and hypocrisy in England--any freedom of expression on Creeds or manners--would prevent the author from asserting the guardianship of his own children--this I know--for on this ground the Chancellor [Lord Eldon] decided on Shelley's case--and would be but too happy to do likewise by any other person obnoxious to the present rulers. (7: 121)

Byron repeated himself four months later--this time to his procrastinating publisher, who still had not issued the next pair of cantos, even though he had had them for the past eight months: "Recollect that if you put my name to [Don] Juan in these canting days--any lawyer might oppose my Guardian right of my daughter in Chancery. . . . Now I prefer my child to a poem at any time" (7: 196). In another letter to Murray in the following month, Byron was again worried about "a Chancery Suit . . . [on his] daughter's guardianship" if the new cantos were published and the authorities could "identify" their author (7: 238). Even as late as February 8, 1822--close to two and a half years after Lord Eldon's favorable decision--Byron continued to write Murray of his fear that the authorities "would annihilate . . . [his] guardianship of the child" (9: 104) because of their dislike of Don Juan. Although this repetitious concern makes Byron sound paranoid, the moral standards of the English people and their conservative overseers were so strict at this time that Byron was close to being correct when he claimed that the

"present code [would allow] a facetious poem . . . to take away a man's rights over his family" (7: 238).

As great as was Byron's fear of British legalism and the threat he perceived it posed to him and his daughter because of Don Juan, there was another source of anxiety for the poet that proved to be even more significant in the total picture of the writing and publishing of this poem. This greatest apprehension and frustration of Byron's was based on Murray's own fear of legal repercussions and the subsequent procrastination that it caused. Although, in comparison, Byron's obsessive concern about the abrogation of his rights to Ada seems to have been a more acute anxiety, his ordeal with Murray's insecurities and delays with the publishing of Don Juan was certainly a more chronic one and, overall, a more stressful one.

For Byron, most of 1820 was unproductive as far as the writing of Don Juan is concerned. After finishing the combined cantos 3-4 in December 1819, and finishing the dreaded chore of copying them by January 17, 1820, Byron sent them in packets to Murray on February 21 but did not start work on the fifth canto until October 16. Byron's mood was "querulous and discouraged" (Steffan 33) during this slack time. His complaints to and about Murray during the last half of 1819 chiefly concern Murray's not keeping him abreast of the success or failure of Don Juan or else his own fears about the injunction, but Byron's increasing discomfort with Murray in 1820 was due to the publisher's

dilatory behavior once the hurriedly demanded new cantos had been sent.

On March 29, 1820, Byron wrote to Hobhouse that "Murray was so pressing & in such a hurry for something for the Season--that . . . [he (Byron)] sent him a cargo," although he felt like getting "sulky about Juan" and not writing any more cantos (7: 63). Three weeks later, Byron's ire was up. He reported that Murray had "not condescended to acknowledge [receipt of] but two of half a dozen packets . . . [of] poeshie," and, borrowing from Shakespeare's Henry V, Byron instructed Hobhouse to "'bleed him in the Jugular'" (7: 52).

Byron's tone had calmed by the next week when he confided to Kinnaird that John Murray not only had acknowledged receipt of the new cantos but that they did "not please the said John--& his Synod." (Since Kinnaird had been a member of the group of readers who had composed the editorial board that Murray had used with the first canto of Don Juan and since Byron here refers to the "Synod" as if Kinnaird is no longer a member of it, it seems reasonable to assume that Byron's future references to the "Synod" apply to whomever Murray invites to read and comment on the poet's submissions, and not just to the original five mutual friends who served in that capacity at the beginning of the long poem.) Byron agreed with this negative assessment of cantos 3-4, even calling the work "trash" and admitting that it was "not very brilliant this time." Concerning censorship, Byron struck the defiant

stance he took with the first two cantos but then immediately wavered:

I can't alter--I can't cobble--I have struck out a few stanzas--& that is all I can do--except suppressing the whole new Cantos, to which I have no objection. . . . Now I am by no means anxious for the publication--& have written [Murray] to say so. (7: 85-86)

With his faltering readership and lack of encouragement from Murray, Byron contemplated abandoning his Don Juan project. On June 8 he wrote Hobhouse that he was "tired of scribbling" and that only the incentive of "an occasional extra thousand pounds" had caused him to write this much of Don Juan. Even that motivation, though, was not going to make him write more if his work was going "to be caviled upon" (7: 115).

Even though Byron knew that his two new cantos did not measure up to the first two and admitted as much to Murray, he did not blame himself but instead found Murray to be at fault for being in such "a violent hurry for poetry" that the poet felt rushed in his composition and therefore turned out inferior work (7: 114). Byron also berated his publisher's liking half of cantos 3-4 but at the same time disliking half:

. . . if one half of the two new Cantos be good in your opinion--what the devil would you have more?--no--no--no poetry is generally good--only by fits & starts--& you are lucky to get a sparkle here & there--you might as well want a Midnight all stars--as rhyme all perfect.
(7: 84)

Murray seemed not to know what to do with his new pair of Don Juan cantos, so he did nothing, including not

corresponding with his frustrated poet. In Byron's letter to Murray dated May 8, 1820, the ignored writer began sarcastically with the phrase, "From yr. not having written again" (7: 96), and his sarcasm deepened in the May 20 letter: ". . . you are an excellent man--a great man--& live among great men--but do pray recollect your absent friends--and authors" (7: 102). Because of Murray's reluctance, Byron had to hear from others and perhaps even intuit his publisher's intentions concerning cantos 3-5: "It has been intimated to me that there is some demur & backwardness on your [Murray's] part to make propositions with regard to the M.S.S. transmitted to you at your own request" (7: 114). On June 19, 1820, Byron wrote to Kinnaird that "with regard to Murray I know nothing" (7: 120) and three days later to Hobhouse:

It is not because he declines that I disapprove--but because he hesitates and shuffles--why not speak at once?--why not have spoken months ago? I sent the M.S.S. months ago at his own eager request--and so far from making hard terms--I let him off from his own previous offers--but is this a reason to keep me month & month in a state of suspense--neither announcing my letters--nor replying to my friends²--Could he not have said yes or no? . . . I require nothing but an answer. (7:121)

Hobhouse passed on to Murray this last and particularly hard-hitting message, which seems to have broken through Murray's reserve, because the reticent publisher finally

² Here Byron is referring to Hobhouse and Kinnaird, both of whom Byron used as go-betweens in an attempt to get some kind of response from Murray regarding cantos 3-4.

notified Byron that he had decided against immediate publication--a response that was not a final no, but that merely opened the door wider for further equivocation. Upon receiving this temporary rejection, Byron reproached his publisher again--not for the decision itself, but for Murray's keeping him "four months in suspense--without any answer at all" (7: 124).

On August 24 and again on September 28, Byron suggested that Murray publish the third and fourth cantos "quietly with the first reprint of the others [i.e., cantos 1-2]--so that they may make little noise--as they are not equal to the first" (7: 162). Aside from this, he was silent about further work with Don Juan, and, on October 12, his frustration seems to have reached its nadir when he informed Murray that he did not "feel inclined to care further about 'Don Juan'" (7: 202). Then, four days later, Byron began canto 5. Unlike the forced, unsatisfying, and prolonged composition of cantos 3-4, which took three months, the writing of the first draft of the fifth canto was completed in six weeks (Steffan 104). Although the speed with which Byron wrote canto 5 is astonishing--especially considering all the negative factors that had almost convinced him to abandon this work--the pace of Byron's composition of some of the other Don Juan cantos was even faster. Byron wrote 5 of the last cantos of Don Juan at a virtual gallop: canto 11 in 11 days, canto 13 in 1 week, canto 14 in 2 weeks, canto 15 in 3 weeks, and canto 16 in 5 weeks (Steffan 302).

More important, though, than the relatively short time that Byron took to write canto 5 is the high quality of the work. Steffan rates the fifth as "one of the superior cantos of the epic" and states that as far as cohesive unity is concerned, "the fifth canto is artistically superior to the first two and is equalled only by the war cantos (VII and VIII)" (215).

Byron finished the first draft of canto 5 on November 27, 1820, and finished his copying a month later on December 26, sending the manuscript two days later to Kinnaird rather than to the sphinx-like Murray. Even though his attitude about Don Juan had changed drastically from the misery of the summer and Byron was as energetic as ever, his disposition towards Murray was still one of anger. When he wrote Murray that he was copying the fifth canto, Byron demanded with his old adamantine vigor: "I want to know what the devil you mean to do?" In the same indignant and indomitable spirit, Byron curtailed the short letter with a somewhat justifiable insult: "As you don't deserve a longer letter nor any letter at all--I conclude" (7: 25). With the addition of a fifth canto--one of which Byron was much more confident than he was of its two weaker predecessors--he clearly did not want another round of dalliance with his overly cautious publisher.

However, Byron's increased harshness towards Murray seems to have prolonged Murray's silence rather than to have brought it to an end. Byron's first letter of the new year (that of January 4, 1821) begins with this concern:

D[ea]r M[urra]y--I write to you in considerable surprize [sic] that since the first days of November--I have never had a line from you. . . . I have written to you at least ten letters--to none of which I have had a word of answer. (8: 56)

A letter to Kinnaird on the same day shows that this matter is uppermost in Byron's mind: "It is two months since I have had a line from Murray. . . . Now this looks like shuffling--it was his business to write at any rate--whatever he intends--pray--let me know something of him" (8: 57-58).

A brief view of Murray at this time is given, not by Kinnaird, but by Thomas Moore, who had dinner with Washington Irving on December 28, 1820, and recorded in his journal that the American writer told him that Murray "complains grievously of the last things Lord Byron has sent [cantos 3-4] as unworthy of himself & likely to injure Murray's property in the former works [cantos 1-2]" (373).

Later in January, Byron renewed his "sparkle here & there" argument (7: 84) about publishing the Don Juan cantos:

The third Canto of D.J. is dull--but you must really put up with it--if the two first--and the two following are tolerable--what can you object?--particularly as I neither dispute with you on it--as a matter of criticism--or a matter of business. (8: 65)

Byron clearly saw himself as the mistreated artist suffering at the whims of his unwilling publisher. Yet, as Steffan notes about Byron's much more "determined" position, "the old fire" of his scorching 1818-19 letters had been reignited (35), and he now balked once again at

any form of censorship: "I can't alter.--That is not my forte." Then, with a bit of sensible advice, Byron suggested to Murray that if he published "the three new ones [cantos] without ostentation--they . . . [might] perhaps succeed" (8: 65).

Nevertheless, Byron's once-Promethean stance had weakened as he repeatedly threw himself at Murray's mercy, economically, by allowing the publisher to set "the terms for the three D.J.s" (8: 77). This fall from his mountain-high popularity and resultant saleability was a sore point with Byron, and his hurt pride about this matter is evident in his early February letter to Kinnaird: "Had it been five years ago [i.e., 1816]--(when I was in my zenith) I certainly would not have taken three thousand guineas--for the whole of the M.S.S. now in his [Murray's] hands" (8: 72).

Byron's curious ambiguity about being an aristocrat and yet writing for money shows up here, but what appears to be a surfacing of a mercenary nature in Byron actually is more of a desire for a stamp of approval--a verification of his popularity--than anything else. Otherwise, Byron would certainly not have let Murray name his own price. However, this view of the business angle of the Don Juan publication and Byron's attitude toward it is complicated by Byron's proud dare to Murray: ". . . did I ever write for popularity?--I defy you to show a work of mine (except a tale or two) of a popular style or complexion" (8: 78). There are both truth and falsehood in Byron's claim.

Perhaps the best way to resolve such an equivocation is to recall Gloucester's famous line that epitomizes the multiple readings of King Lear: "And that's true too" (5.3.12).

At any rate, Byron used a monetary ploy to try to move Murray. In March, while Murray was still hesitating about publishing cantos 3-5, one of Murray's competitors, a Mr. Fearman, offered to publish them. With a typically sarcastic tone, Byron was quick to notify Murray of this rival offer: "Illustrious Moray . . . I enclose the proposition of a Mr. [Fe]arman one of yr. brethren--there is a civil gentleman for you" (8: 90). This early threat to go to another publisher was not a serious consideration by Byron at this time, because Murray had "requested to publish the Juans" (8: 92) right before Byron added this extra incentive to prevent any further delay on Murray's part. However, the thought of Byron's switching publishers was now planted in the minds of both Murray and his prize writer, and, 20 months later, on November 18, 1822, Byron made this threat a reality.

Murray's decision to go ahead and print the three cantos appears to have been prompted by what was perhaps Byron's most strongly worded protest up to that time. The message, in fact, was a virtual diatribe: "I never let anyone off in the long run. . . . See if I don't do you as good a turn--you unnatural publisher! . . . You are a paper cannibal" (8: 78). In the same letter with this vitriolic denunciation, Byron tries another tactic, one

designed to impress Murray with the epic scope of Byron's conception of Don Juan and, presumably, to enamor the publisher with the prospect of continuing profitable publications:

The 5th. [canto] is so far from being the last of D.J. that it is hardly the beginning.--I meant to take him the tour of Europe--with a proper mixture of siege--battle--and adventure. . . . To how many cantos this may extend--I know not--nor whether (even if I live) I shall complete it--but this was my notion. (8: 78)

This letter of February 16 seems to be crucial in finally pushing Murray to the brink of publishing cantos 3-5. Murray's knowledge that Fearman would publish them if he continued to decline was undoubtedly an important factor as well.

On August 8, 1821, Murray did publish the next three cantos of Don Juan, still anonymously, with neither author nor publisher being named. This time, though, the success of this volume was immediate and without question. As Samuel Smiles described the remarkable sale in his Memoirs of John Murray,

There was quite a rush for the work. The booksellers' messengers filled the street in front of the house in Albemarle Street, and the parcels of books were given out of the window in answer to their obstreperous demands. (1: 413)

One would think that this semblance of the days of Byron's zenith would have pleased the poet, and probably it did, but his first reaction to the published work was one of anger. Because of the printing errors and omissions that he found, Byron dashed off another blistering letter to Murray:

Dear Sir--I have received the Juans--which are printed so carelessly especially the 5th. Canto--as to be disgraceful to me--& not creditable to you. . . . the errors are so gross--words added--changed--so as to make cacophony & nonsense. . . . I copied the Cantos out carefully--so that there is no excuse. . . . If you have no feeling for your own reputation pray have some little for mine. (8: 192)

Byron felt that Murray's carelessness was because his "Synod . . . [did not] approve of it [the new cantos]," and he attacked the opinions of these new Albemarle Street editors with the same vigor that he did the group of friends who were his original censors back in 1818-19: "I have read over the poem carefully--and I tell you it is poetry--Your little envious knot of parson-poets may say what they please--time will show that I am not in this instance mistaken" (8: 192). In spite of the continuing wrangle that ensued between Byron and Murray over who was at fault about the printing errors, the above repartee shows that Byron was once again full of confidence about his work and ready to do battle with anyone who dared to tamper with it--whether the tampering was intentional censorship or not.

It is ironic that the volume of Don Juan cantos that caused the longest delay before publication due to the publisher's fear of censorship underwent little expurgation. Of course, with cantos 3-4, this is not surprising when one considers how subdued Byron became after the public outrage that greeted the publications of the first two cantos.

The "very decent--but dull--damned dull . . . third Canto of Don Juan" (6: 256) had only two sections that were withdrawn before publication. Most important was the omission of the infamous lines on the Duke of Wellington. These eight scurrilous stanzas that Byron wrote on July 10, 1819, were intended to introduce canto 3, but Byron agreed with Murray and his Synod that the stanzas were inappropriate here, coming as they would have in the middle of the idyllic Haidee episode. Political prudence in the form of Moore's advice probably had more to do with this rejection than anything else, but there is no question that these stanzas are much more applicable to the section in Don Juan to which they were shifted--the prologue of canto 9, following the two war cantos (Steffan 95).

The other discarding was done by Byron himself. It was a single unnumbered stanza that was written on the same page as four stanzas on Wordsworth and Southey (DJ 3: 97-100). The stanza "has nothing to do with these poets but [instead] describes the languor and enervation that follow sexual and alcoholic debauch" (Steffan 95). Byron wrote to Murray about erasing "the six stanzas [DJ 3: 93-95, 97-98, and 100 in all probability] about those two imposters Southey and Wordsworth" (7: 82), but he never did.

With canto 4 one could be justified in saying that no stanza was rejected outright. However, as a safeguard, Byron had developed a new manuscript policy--the offering of alternative lines. In writing the first two cantos, he had given Murray 30 variant readings from which to choose

(11 options in canto 1 and 19 in canto 2), but, with flagging confidence and fear of court action, Byron now sent his publisher far more possibilities. Although canto 3 is only half as long as canto 2, it also has the same number of variations (19). But it is with canto 4 that Byron truly seems to be indecisive. This canto has only 6 more stanzas than canto 3, and yet Byron wrote 30 optional lines. Byron's renewed vigor in the writing of the fifth canto one year later was accompanied by a marked decrease in this practice of offering Murray a number of choices. Canto 5, though it has 42 more stanzas than canto 4, was, nevertheless, granted only 14 alternative readings. After the second volume of Don Juan, Byron virtually quit this practice altogether, because there are only 11 more multiple-choice opportunities in the remaining 11 cantos (Steffan 111-12).

There is only one true instance of censorship in canto 5, and that is the withholding of stanza 61, a rather shocking satiric reference to Queen Caroline which adds bestiality to her widely known reputation for sexual activity:

That injured Queen, by chroniclers so coarse
 Has been accused (I doubt not by conspiracy)
 Of an improper friendship for a horse
 (Love, like religions, sometimes runs to
 heresy: [t/o]
 This monstrous tale had probably its source
 (For such exaggerations here and there I see)
 In writing "Courser" by mistake for "Courier";
 I wish the case would come before a jury here.

The notorious and exploited wife of generally disliked George IV had been acquitted of the charge of adultery less

than a year before this canto was published, and she unexpectedly died on August 7, 1821, the very day before its publication, so the offensiveness of this stanza--had it been published--would have been extreme. In the court case, the king was charging his estranged wife with having committed adultery with Bartolommeo Bergami, who had served as Queen Caroline's chamberlain while she had lived in Italy. He had formerly been a courier (Pratt 128), which explains Byron's word play in the seventh line of the stanza.

On June 21, 1821--less than two months before publication of the new cantos--Hobhouse wrote to Byron: "By the way, do not cut at poor Queeny in your Don Juan . . ." (8: 148n). Byron responded on July 6: "My dear H--I have written by this post to Murray to omit the stanza to which you object" (8:148). For those who feel compassion for this misused queen, it is certainly to Byron's credit that he made this one concession and agreed not to capitalize on an embarrassing situation at home. If Byron had used this topical titillation, England would probably have been rife with rumor that Byron's Don Juan had killed the queen, just as the death of "poor John Keats" (8: 102) was widely attributed to a harsh review in the Quarterly Review. Incidentally, the Keats rumor was spread in no small part by Byron himself and his poetical compatriot, Percy Bysse Shelley.

Byron had met Caroline in 1813 and had gotten along well with her at that time. Although he felt that she was

guilty of adultery, he sympathized with her and probably identified with her somewhat since his own domestic difficulties had been ballyhooed across the country much as hers had and he also had escaped his spouse by taking refuge in Italy. Also, since the Liberals had backed the queen in the recent royal showdown in court, it was politically expedient for Liberals like Hobhouse (and also Byron) that the queen not be turned into a laughingstock via Byron's deriding wit. There appear to have been a number of factors that played a role in persuading Byron to omit the sixty-first stanza. Even after the queen's death, Byron was adamant in his agreement that these lines should be censored. They were not reinserted into the printed poem until after his death (Asimov 459).

There were two other notable omissions in the first publication of canto 5: stanza 158, which was to have been the penultimate stanza of the canto, and a lengthy note on Bacon and Voltaire that was to have been appended to stanza 147. Both of these omissions seem to have been simply oversights on Murray's part. Byron was particularly annoyed with Murray for neglecting to print these two additions which he had sent his publisher after the original mailing of the canto to Kinnaird in December. (Specifically, on January 8, 1821, Byron sent Murray his notes for stanza 147, and on March 1, 1821, he sent stanza 158.) The poet immediately chastised his publisher:

Upon what principle have you omitted the note on Bacon & Voltaire? and one of the concluding

stanzas sent as an addition? because it ended I suppose--with

"And do not link two virtuous souls for life
Into that moral Centaur man & wife? ["]

Now I must say once [and] for all--that I will
not permit any human being to take such liberties
with my writings. . . . (8: 192)

Although many more letters were to be exchanged between these two men, the last sentence quoted above serves as a fitting farewell statement from Byron to his publisher as far as their Don Juan business was concerned. After this publication of August 8, 1821, Byron did not allow Murray to publish any new cantos of Don Juan.

In concluding a chapter that deals primarily with the considerable anxiety and frustration that Byron suffered during the writing and publication of Don Juan, cantos 3-5, perhaps it would be meaningful to consider the accolades that Percy Bysshe Shelley gave to this part of the sequel in his letter to Byron of October 21, 1821:

It is a poem totally of its own species, & my wonder and delight at the grace of the composition no less than the free & grand vigour of the conception of it perpetually increase.--The few passages which anyone might desire to be cancelled in the 1st & 2nd Cantos are here reduced almost to nothing. This poem carries with it at once the stamp of originality and a defiance of imitation. Nothing has ever been written like it in English --nor if I may venture to prophesy, will there be. . . . You unveil and present in its true deformity what is worst in human nature, & this is what the wiflings of the age murmur at, conscious of their want of power to endure the scrutiny of such a light.--We are damned to the knowledge of good & evil, and it is well for us to know what we should avoid no less than what we should seek. . . . The fifth canto, which some of your pet Zoili in Albemarle St. [Murray's Synod] said was dull, gathers instead of loses, splendor & energy. . . . You are

building up a drama, such as England has not yet
seen. . . . (357-58)

Chapter 4
The Rest of the Story--
with a New Publisher
(Cantos 6-16)

The longest hiatus in Byron's writing of Don Juan occurred between the completion of canto 5 in December 1820 and the resumption of the verse tale in April 1822. Byron blamed this "Embargo" (9: 182) of his writing of Don Juan on his mistress, Countess Teresa Guiccioli, who had read the first two cantos and then had asked her lover to stop writing on the poem because of its "immorality" (Blessington 206). Paul Trueblood is probably correct in his assessment of the situation: "Teresa's reaction was merely the natural displeasure of a constant woman confronted with a cynical and jocular treatment of love" (6).

For a number of reasons, though, Byron's year-and-a-half withdrawal from the poem should not be totally attributed to this woman whom the poet called "the female Censor" (9: 198). For one thing, it was not until July 1821 that Teresa exacted a promise from Byron to set Don Juan aside. For at least half a year then (from the time that he finished canto 5), Byron chose of his own free will not to proceed with the poem.

Another reason not to take the censorship imposed by Teresa too seriously is to be found in the jocular manner in which Byron talks about this matter when writing to Murray, Moore, and Hobhouse. Byron does not sound a bit sad when he writes his publisher that he has "promised not to continue Don Juan" (8: 147). In fact, he makes this real-life situation sound like just another farcical round in his poem: "She had read the two [cantos] first in the French translation--& never ceased beseeching me to write no more of it" (8: 147). Certainly, Byron is in a high comic mood when he writes about his release from the countess's censorship. He humorously refers to Teresa as "My Dictatress" (9: 182) and "the female Censor Morum of my morals" (9: 198), generally treating the whole concern as if it were a joke and just a temporary expediency to make domestic life with "the Guiccioli" more subdued.

That the censored poet fully intended to return to Don Juan is strongly suggested by his comment to Shelley's second cousin, Thomas Medwin, when they were discussing the eventual outcome of the unfinished work: ". . . to please her I have discontinued his [Don Juan's] history and adventures; but if I should resume them, I will tell you how I mean him to go on" (Medwin 164). If Medwin's recollections of this conversation are to be trusted, Byron envisioned that his epic would "have twenty-four books" (or cantos) and that "Poor Juan . . . [would] get into all sorts of scrapes, and at length end his career in France, . . . guillotined in the French Revolution" (165).

This conversation would have taken place at the earliest in November 1821, since Byron did not meet Medwin until that month, and this would have been about four months after Byron's promise to the countess. Notice how similar this talk is to Byron's plans for Don Juan as outlined in his letter to Murray on February 6, 1821: "I mean to take him the tour of Europe--with a proper mixture of siege--battle--and adventure--and to make him finish as Anacharsis Cloots--in the French Revolution" (8: 78). Cloots was Jean Baptiste Clootz, a Prussian baron nicknamed Anacharsis, who was active in the French Revolution and was later executed (in 1794) after falling under the suspicion of Robespierre (8: 78n).

These plans certainly do not sound like Byron had ever intended to put his comic hero permanently to rest after five cantos. It is clear that before his promise to the countess Byron was not planning to stop work on Don Juan. Two months before telling Teresa that he would not write anymore on the poem, he told his publisher that "The 5th [canto] is so far from being the last of D.J. that it is hardly the beginning" (8: 78). It may be hard to understand why a writer who took such a Promethean stance against even partially censoring the initial cantos of Don Juan at the request of his friends would acquiesce to a total censoring of future cantos at the request of his mistress--sexual favors or not. There also may be other explanatory information concerning this issue that is simply not known. However, we do know that Byron persuaded

the countess to release from him his restrictive commitment by July 8, 1822, and it is highly probable that he had broken his promise some three months before this authorization.

A study of the manuscripts shows that "Byron deliberately and conspicuously tried to conceal the dates of composition . . . of cantos 6 and 7" (Steffan 384). The manuscript of the sixth canto has only the year date 1822, and the seventh canto has the month and day on both the first and last pages, but they "have been heavily scratched over" (384). However, the terminal date appears to have been June. Twelve of the other completed cantos have both initial and terminal dates of composition, and all of them except for cantos 6 and 7 have one or the other. From this, it seems clear that Byron was hiding the actual dates on which these two cantos were written. The logical conclusion as to why he would do this is that he was working on this continuation of Don Juan before Teresa had told him that he could, and, quite naturally, he did not want tangible proof available that he had reneged on his promise. If this speculation is correct, and cantos 6 and 7 had been completed by June, it helps explain why Byron would mention to Murray on July 8 the possibility of having "three or four cantos of D[on] Juan ready by autumn or a little later" (9: 183) and then notify Moore on August 8 that he indeed had "written three more cantos of Don Juan" and was "hovering on the brink of another (the ninth)" (9: 191).

This line of reasoning is even more convincing when one considers that Byron had certainly not been writing Don Juan cantos at the rate of three per month, which would be the case if he had started canto 6 on July 9 as the Countess believed. This kind of speed-writing of poetry may have been possible for Byron, but unlikely--especially, as Steffan has pointed out, "at this stage of Juan composition" (385). A few months later, Byron was able to write three cantos (13-15) in six weeks (February 12 to March 25, 1823), but this seems to have been "the most sustained composition of Don Juan" that Byron ever accomplished (385).

The conjecture that Byron returned to Don Juan before he received Teresa's permission to do so is supported by a final piece of evidence. In his collection of Byron's letters, Prothero notes the date of the preface of cantos 6, 7, and 8 as being July 1822 (6: 95n). It is probable that Byron did not write his preface until he had completed or almost completed the three cantos that the short prose work was to head. The first drafts of these three cantos, then, were finished by late July or early August 1822 if these inferences are correct.

All of this is said to emphasize that Byron's delay in producing more of the rambling Don Juan tale after his completion of cantos 3-5 in December 1820 was not entirely due to Countess Guiccioli's moral reticence. Aside from Teresa's request for him "not to continue that poem

further" (8: 148), what factors were involved in Byron's suspension of his writing of Don Juan?

As was frequently the case with Byron throughout his life, a host of difficulties beset him during the 14-month period in which the composition of Don Juan was at a standstill. He finished canto 5 in December and had 8 months of frustration before Murray finally printed the second collection of Don Juan cantos. Another distraction for Byron was a controversy with Reverend William L. Bowles over Alexander Pope and the complication that was added by the anonymous "John Bull" pamphlet. Also on the literary side, Byron was distressed by the public outcry caused by Cain. This followed Byron's own outcry about Marino Faliero's being put on stage at Drury Lane. Byron had specifically "protested against this . . . usurpation" (8: 22), because, as he notified Murray, the play "was written solely for the readers . . . [and] intended for the Closet only" (8: 59). When the closet drama was forced upon the theater anyway, Byron told his publisher that "It would be nonsense to say that this has not vexed me a good deal" (8: 116).

Because of his association with Teresa's family, the Gambas, Byron also became embroiled in the Carbonari and its unsuccessful attempt at an uprising. The subsequent exile of Teresa's brother, Pietro, and then father, Ruggero, caused the countess to flee from her birthplace, Ravenna, to Pisa, which, in turn, triggered yet another move for Byron. That the poet became exasperated with the

political intrigues can be seen in the following entry in his Ravenna journal:

Heard of nothing but war,--"The cry is still, they come" [Macbeth 5.5.2]. The Car[bonar]i seem to have no plan--nothing fixed among themselves, how, when, or what to do. In that case, they will make nothing of the project, so often postponed, and never put in action. (8: 32)

Another stressful situation for the poet was the arrest and threatened banishment of Byron's Italian servant Tita for being in a knife-drawn argument that was provoked by an officer of the Cardinal's guard. This apparently framed affair seems to have been an earlier attempt by the Ravenna authorities to drive Byron away.

After the move to Pisa, Byron was involved in another incident with an arguing soldier--one that ended in the serious wounding of the man by another of Byron's Italian servants. The imprisonment of several of Byron's retinue and the subsequent trial deeply concerned Byron. He hired Lorenzo Collini, "a brilliant Florentine lawyer" (Marchand, Byron 3: 989) to handle the legal proceedings, and most of the independent witnesses were "given money" (990). "It was said, by someone in a position to know, that this affair cost Byron 3,000 scudi" (Ross 758). Since that sum translates into roughly 1900 pounds or about what Byron was "earning . . . a year by his pen" (Marchand, Byron 3: 971), this tribulation was financially as well as emotionally draining for the poet. As far as the emotional aspect of the situation is concerned, Byron admits to Sir Walter Scott in a letter of May 4, 1822, that this "brawl with a

dragoon" problem has preoccupied him to the point of his not being able to write or deal with "literary matters . . . since the publication and row about 'Cain'" (9: 154).

Continuing trouble with Claire Clairmont over the care and education of their daughter, Allegra, also added to Byron's distress, and this was ultimately exacerbated by the child's death on April 20, 1822. Teresa melodramatically describes how deeply affected Byron was by the death of his five-year-old daughter:

A mortal paleness spread itself over his face, his strength failed him, and he sunk into a seat. His look was fixed, and the expression such that I began to fear for his reason; he did not shed a tear; and his countenance manifested so hopeless, so profound, so sublime a sorrow, that at the moment he appeared a being of a nature superior to humanity. He remained immovable in the same attitude for an hour, and no consolation which I endeavoured to afford him seemed to reach his ears, far less his heart. . . . He desired to be left alone, and I was obliged to leave him.
(Moore 2: 615)

Although Teresa often tends to exaggerate, the fact that Byron never pronounced the child's name after that day (Moore 2: 615-16) adds validity to her account of such profound mourning. This deep emotional disturbance in Byron is also borne out in his comment to Lady Blessington: "While she [Allegra] lived, her existence never seemed necessary to my happiness; but no sooner did I lose her, than it appeared to me as if I could not live without her. Even now the recollection is most bitter . . ." (44).

News of other deaths had also taken their emotional toll on Byron. On December 10, 1821, the sixth birthday of

his daughter, Ada, Byron had had "premonitions of gloom" (Marchand, Byron 3: 956) which he accounted for soon after when he learned that Dr. John Polidori, his friend and former physician, had committed suicide. Byron told Thomas Medwin:

I was convinced something very unpleasant hung over me . . . I expected to hear that somebody I knew was dead;--so it turns out. Poor Polidori is gone! When he was my physician, he was always talking of Prussic acid, oil of amber, blowing into veins, suffocating by charcoal, and compounding poisons . . . [and now] he has prescribed a dose for himself that would have killed fifty Mithridates. (Medwin 104)

Six weeks later, February 15, 1822, Byron was notified that his mother-in-law, Lady Judith Noel, had also died (on January 28). Although Byron profited financially from this event and had not cared for the old woman who had designated in her will that Ada not be shown his portrait, the poet's reaction to her death was a surprising one: sympathy for his estranged wife. Medwin records that Byron "and all his servants . . . [were] in deep mourning" after receiving the news and that Byron told him: "I am distressed for poor Lady Byron! She must be in great affliction, for she adored her mother! The world will think I am pleased at this event, but they are much mistaken" (111).

A final matter that troubled Byron during these days away from Don Juan was his perception of aging and his own mortality. Byron seems to have always been extremely conscious of his appearance, and as early as 1816 he began in his letters a recurrent commentary on how old he was

starting to look: "My hair is growing grey, & not thicker; & my teeth are sometimes looseish though still white & sound. Would not one think I was sixty instead of not quite nine and twenty?" (5: 120). By the time he was 34 and had the noted sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini make his bust, Byron was obsessed with aging. When the bust was finished in September 1822, "Byron was shocked to see his own physical deterioration recorded in stone . . . [and] he felt that he had already lived a lifetime and that his youth was gone" (Marchand, Byron 3: 958). He wrote to Murray: "I assure you Bartolini's is dreadful--though my mind misgives me that it is hideously like. If it is--I cannot be long for this world--for it overlooks seventy" (9: 213). Byron's hurt vanity perhaps made him exaggerate, but his friend Medwin says that "Bartolini's is an admirable likeness" and gives the following uncomplimentary description of the 34-year-old poet: "I saw a man about five feet eight, apparently forty years of age: as was said of Milton, he barely escaped being short and thick" (7). By this Pisan stage of his life, "middle age had definitely settled upon him" (Marchand, Byron 3: 979). Yet Byron was only 33 and 34 years old during this time (November 1, 1821 to September 27, 1822). Byron's ironic misperception of his own aging is also noted by Itsuyo Higashinaka:

By ordinary standards he would never be considered as old. Yet mentally he felt himself older than he actually was, and his physical appearance and physiological condition contributed to making him believe that he was growing old at a fast rate. (59)

Byron's obsession with aging certainly was not limited to the 14-month span in which Byron was not writing on Don Juan. However, certain experiences that occurred during that time--clearly important experiences to Byron like the Carbonari political intrigue with all of its freedom-fraught ramifications and the sobering deaths of Allegra, Polidori, and Lady Noel (plus the newly acquired wealth that he inherited at her death)--seem to have caused a change in Byron.

Shelley's death is not listed here nor has this tragedy been discussed in the context of events that affected Byron during his agreed-to silencing of Don Juan, because in all probability Byron was already back at work on Don Juan when his friend died. In fact, Shelley's drowning was on July 8, 1822, and that was the very day that Byron wrote his letter to Murray about Teresa's lifting the Don Juan "Embargo" (9: 182). Definitely, though, Shelley's unexpected death shocked Byron and added to the change in him between canto 5 and canto 6.

Marchand explains at least part of the change in this way:

His change in attitude from that of his spendthrift youth was perhaps due in part to the fact that at thirty-four he was experiencing the growing anxieties of age and the need for security. He was looking forward to the time when he would have to provide not only for himself, but also for his child, perhaps for Teresa and her family, and very probably for Augusta [Leigh] and her children. (Byron 3: 973)

Paul Graham Trueblood devotes two chapters in his The Flowering of Byron's Genius: Studies in Byron's Don Juan to

justifying his thesis that various factors that occurred during the time of Teresa's censorship of Don Juan "from December 1820 to June 1822 . . . [had] contributed to Byron's increasing soberness of purpose" and that this "attainment of spiritual and creativity maturity" naturally manifested itself in the "satiric seriousness . . . [and] satiric genius" that Trueblood finds "in the last cantos of Don Juan" (25).

Unlike Marchand and Trueblood, Steffan tends to play down the significance of the events that occurred within Byron's year and a quarter hiatus from Don Juan--at least as far as providing reasons for Byron's temporary stalling in the writing of the work is concerned. Steffan feels that the argument that "the row with the dragoon, . . . the death of Allegra, and other Pisan distractions would have prevented Byron from beginning a new canto is scarcely tenable" (384). Steffan's most convincing reason for this view is his reminder that "later distractions in 1822--the death of Shelley, domestic troubles with the Hunt family, and removal to Genoa--did not check the composition of Juan" (385). Another valid point in his argument is that "these troubles could have been the very forces that drove . . . [Byron] to composition" rather than kept him from it. Steffan points out that Byron's "consistent practice over many years suggests that" that is the case, and he adds that "Byron's customary view was that poetic composition provided a release from daily reality and that it was a natural necessity" (384-85).

Byron does indeed explain his conception of writing as purgative in nature when he writes to his fellow poet

Thomas Moore:

. . . it [poetic inspiration] comes over me in a kind of rage every now and then . . . and then, if I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad. As to that regular, uninterrupted love of writing, which you describe in your friend [Lord John Russell, who claimed to enjoy writing], I do not understand it. I feel it as a torture, which I must get rid of, but never as a pleasure. On the contrary, I think composition a great pain. (8: 55)

Based on this powerful epistolary delivery, it seems that Byron would continue writing regardless of his circumstances, so perhaps Steffan is correct, and Byron's halting the progress of Don Juan was not unduly influenced by the distractions of this period in the poet's life--even though one of his biographers calls it "the most utterly saddening of his career" (Mayne 381). Still, we should not push the purgative prescription too far. We need to remember that Byron did virtually stop writing when faced with his circumstances in Greece. On the other side of this argument, though, we need to keep in mind that Byron did not stop writing altogether during this 14-month period; he just was not writing on Don Juan. Rather than taking either extreme--i.e., assuming that Byron stopped his work on Don Juan solely because Teresa asked him to or believing that the delay was due to the considerable turmoil that Byron was experiencing at the time--it seems more reasonable to compromise and attribute the cause of this writing lag primarily to Teresa's in-house censoring,

as it were, but to acknowledge that the numerous emotional events that absorbed Byron at this time also played a role in achieving this state of affairs.

A final factor that should not be overlooked in an analysis of Byron's break from writing Don Juan is the frustration that Byron felt towards his publisher for his tentative handling of the work. (For more detail see the previous chapter, "The Second Installment--after Many Dun Letters.") All the trouble that Byron had had in getting Murray to publish both installments of Don Juan must have been extremely discouraging to the poet. Murray had certainly given Byron grounds for calling him "the most nervous of God's booksellers" (Medwin 168), and, after three years of wrangling about the troublesome epic, it is only natural that the poet turned to other writings.

During the 14-month gap in the writing of Don Juan, Byron turned primarily towards verse drama and wrote Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari, Cain, Heaven and Earth, and Werner. He also indulged in satiric verse, writing "The Blues" and The Vision of Judgment during this time. Clearly then Byron's moratorium was against writing more of Don Juan and not against writing itself.

However, his shifting away from Don Juan did not earn Byron much respite from the censorious readers back in England. Murray was strongly criticized in an anonymous pamphlet for having published Cain. Byron adopted the hero's pose and came to his publisher's defense, offering to return to England and take whatever punishment was

forthcoming. Of this latest technique by censors-- attacking the publisher when the writer was not at hand-- Byron writes to Murray: "The attempt to bully you--because they think it won't succeed with me seems to me as atrocious an attempt as ever disgraced the times" (9: 103). He goes on to say that if

any proceedings [are] dictated against you I beg [that they] may be transferred to me--who am willing & ought to endure them all--that if you have lost money by the publication--I will refund--any--or all of the Copyright . . . I alone occasioned it--& I alone am the person who either legally or otherwise should bear the burthen.--If they prosecute--I will come to England--that is, if by Meeting it in my own person--I can save yours . . . you shan't suffer for me--if I can help it. (9: 103-04)

This high-sounding talk seems to be primarily Byronic bravado, because three weeks earlier the poet wrote Kinnaird about Murray's fears of prosecution over Cain and simply suggested that his lawyers quote some "daring passages from Milton," such as "'Evil be thou my Good' and 'better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven'" (9: 89). At this earlier time, at least, Byron was not overly concerned with the censorship threat; his letter ends with an insolent flourish: "Master Murray (besides being probably in no great peril) ought to recollect that 'Cesarem vehit' and be proud of his company" (9: 89). (Byron's Latin allusion is to a traditional story about Julius Caesar. When he was caught in a storm in a small boat, Caesar encouraged the terrified pilot with the words "Caesarem vehis et fortunam ejus," which means "You carry Caesar and his fortunes" [9: 89n].)

Byron did perhaps take the situation a little more seriously after he read the diatribe against Murray. In the letter in which he promises a return to England if necessary, Byron admits the following: "I had been laughing with some of my correspondents at the rumours &c. till I saw this assault upon you--and I should at that too--if I did not think that it may perhaps hurt your feelings or your business" (9: 104). At any rate, Cain was not prosecuted, and Byron did not have to make good on his promise to return to England.

Byron did, however, use this occasion as further justification of his much-threatened leaving of Murray for another publisher. In his postscript to the same letter in which he promises a personal defense of Murray, Byron writes:

You will now perceive that it was as well for you--that I have decided upon changing my publisher--though that was not my motive--but dissatisfaction at one or two things in your conduct--of no great moment even then. But now--all such things disappear in my regret at having been unintentionally the means of getting you into a scrape.--Be assured that no momentary invitation (at real or supposed omissions--or commissions) shall ever prevent me from doing you justice where you deserve it--or that I will allow you (if I can avoid it) to participate in any odium or persecution--which ought to fall on me only. (9: 104)

This passage well illustrates the ambiguity of Byron's relationship with his publisher. Regardless of the frequent sniping that Byron does at Murray in his many letters to him, it is clear that Byron held the man in high regard and did not really want an irrevocable break with

him. Even in July 1821, when Byron had been so vehemently pressing Murray to publish the second installment of Don Juan, the poet defended his publisher to Kinnaird: "I believe M[urray] to be a good man with a personal regard for me." Byron explains that "a publisher becomes identified almost with his authors" and that since "in a Man like M. . . . business is nothing but a perpetual speculation on what will or will not succeed," Kinnaird should "not think too harshly of him" (8: 153). Perhaps the best summary of this equivocal business affiliation is Marchand's assessment of Byron's letters to Murray:

". . . though he [Byron] continued to twit and to scold Murray, Byron's letters to his publisher were in the main the frankest and most friendly as well as the most interesting of all his letters from Italy" (Byron 2: 919).

Nevertheless, Murray's general conservatism--manifested by lengthy delays and overall indecisiveness--ultimately got to be too much for Byron the rebel to tolerate. The poet sharply points out this antipodal difference in temperaments: "The difference between you and me is--that you are of every man's opinion (especially the last man who talks to you) and I of no man's.--Both extremes are Bad--but we can't establish a medium" (9: 168). In the same letter Byron adds one of his most sarcastic rebukes: "Indeed you are altogether so abstruse and undecided lately--that I suppose you mean me to write--'John Murray Esqre. a Mystery' a composition which would not displease the Clergy nor the trade" (9: 160). The two

excerpts quoted above suggest the tone which Byron used in expressing his final exasperation with Murray. The wonder of it is that the relationship lasted for as long as it did. Just as he did for months before the publication of both of the Don Juan installments, Byron engaged in a lengthy letter-writing battle with his passive publisher. Within the very month of Murray's much-delayed publishing of cantos 3-5 of Don Juan (August 1821), Byron began his complaining, and it did not end until he sent his final notice on November 18, 1822.

Initially, Byron was annoyed at the printing mistakes, "especially [in] the 5th Canto," and the degree of his consternation was considerable: ". . . it is enough to drive one out of one's senses--to see the infernal torture of words from the original" (8: 192).

Two months later, Byron had a host of complaints. Concerning Cain, but equally applicable to any of Murray's numerous requests of Byron to rewrite offensive passages from Don Juan, the incensed poet says: "I told you before that I can never recast anything.--I am like the Tiger--if I miss the first spring--I go growling back to my Jungle again--but if I do hit--it is crushing" (9: 54). In the same letter (that of November 3, 1821), Byron gripes again about the "errors" in the latest Don Juan and rebukes Murray for failing a second time to claim credit for publishing the work: "You have played the Stepmother to D[on] J[uan]--throughout.--Either ashamed--or afraid--or negligent--to your own loss and nobody's credit.--Who ever

heard before of a publisher's not putting his name?"

(9: 54).

Byron also takes Murray to task for the cowardly way he has handled what we of the later twentieth century might call the public relations aspect of the publishing of Don Juan:

Murray--you are an excellent fellow--a little variable--& somewhat of the opinion of every body you talk with--(particularly the last person you see) but a good fellow for all that--yet nevertheless--I can't tell you that I think you have acted very gallantly by that persecuted book--which has made it's [sic] way entirely by itself--without the light of your countenance--or any kind of encouragement--critical--or bibliopolar.--you have disparaged the last three cantos to me--& kept them back above a year--but I have heard from England--that (notwithstanding the errors of the press) they are well thought of--for instance--by American Irving--which last is a feather in my (fool's) Cap. (9: 54-55)

Despite his humorous expression of dissatisfaction, Byron clearly felt his publisher's lack of encouragement for Don Juan. By late January 1822 in two letters to Kinnaird this feeling begins to sound frenetic: "I shall not give way to discouragement--as long as I do not feel my mind failing," and "As long as I can find a single reader I shall publish my Mind (while it lasts) and write whilst I feel the impetus" (9: 94). Even in May Murray continued to serve as a depressant for his beleaguered writer. Byron reported to Shelley that "Murray writes discouragingly--and says 'that nothing published this year has made the least impression'" (9: 161). Byron became paranoid, as he began to believe that his depression was intentionally brought on by Murray:

I rather suspect that Murray has not played fairly with me--I have heard lately two or three instances of his crookedness--that make me almost believe that he wishes to depress me--and is set on by someone higher than himself. (9: 93)

The motive for this paranoia was clearly related to Byron's fear of censorship. Seeing "Murray as a man of straw, intimidated by the Tory press and by Tory customers," Byron could envision his publisher turning coat on him and insidiously damaging his work at the behest of someone like Robert Southey, the poet laureate, with whom he was so enraged at this particular time that he sent a challenge to a duel (Steffan 42).

Byron's dismay at Murray's negative attitude was compounded when he heard "from everybody . . . that the new Dons are liked--but that M[urray] has neither given them nor their predecessors fair play" (9: 55). Perhaps even more frustrating to Byron was that Murray's disposition towards Don Juan was a contradictory one: ". . . he went about affecting not to be the publisher of Don Juan--&c. at the very time that he was pressing me to write more of it" (9: 84).

At first in this fuss after the publication of cantos 3-5, Byron simply called Murray a "lukewarm publisher" and proudly pointed out that "still it [Don Juan] succeeds" despite what must have appeared to Byron at times as outright sabotage: "Murray and others kept back the Cantos a whole year & more--because they were dull--& wanted alterations &c. &." (9: 55). It appears that Byron was simply renewing his same old wrangle with Murray. This is

true, of course, but this time the disagreements were finally accumulating towards a final break.

In November 1821 Murray fretted so much about Cain that Byron told Kinnaird to "try another publisher" for The Vision of Judgment, recognizing that with its topical satire it "is a different sort of thing" (9: 62) and something that Murray would not be able to handle. After finishing Werner in December, Byron also planned to have it published by someone besides Murray. On January 22, 1822, he let Murray know this in a caustic and excessively formal note:

As you have lately published more of mine than you seem to think convenient--it is probable that I shall not trouble you with the publication of these [the five acts of Werner]--but transfer them to some other publisher,--and I apprize you of this--because it may be proper after the length of the connection--not to terminate it abruptly without such advice of my intention.
(9: 90)

On February 6 and again on February 25, Byron proposed to Kinnaird that the Parisian publisher Galignani be used "as an experiment" (9: 100) and replacement for Murray, and he directed Kinnaird to get all of his manuscripts from Murray. Byron seems relieved, if not puckishly pleased, when he writes that "Murray (who is I suppose heartily alarmed) will I dare say give them up--(and the connection very willingly" (9: 101).

Apparently Byron's business "connection" with Murray would have been at an end in late February 1821, but on March 6 Byron received a letter from Murray that "melted" him (9: 120). This letter and the difficulty that Murray

had recently undergone from having published Cain changed Byron's mind, for the moment at least, about breaking away from his publisher. Byron relented about withholding Werner from Murray and made a magnanimous gesture in an attempt to reestablish their former healthy relationship:

I think it disgraceful to those who have persecuted you.--I make peace with you--though our war was for other reasons--than this same controversy [over Cain].--I have written to Moore by this post to forward to you the tragedy of "Werner", which I sent to him to transmit to another publisher.--I shall not make or propose any present bargain about it or the new Mystery [Byron's verse drama Heaven and Earth] till we see if they succeed.--If they don't sell--(which is not unlikely) you shan't pay--and I suppose this is fair play--if you choose to risk it. (9: 121)

The new relationship quickly proved to be ineffectual, however. Two months after the rectification of their differences Byron was as impatient as ever with his non-acknowledging publisher: "When I write to you as a friend you will of course take your own time and leisure to reply, but when I address you--as a publisher--I expect an answer (9: 156). Byron gave Murray another chance at a peaceable separation, and, from the tone of Byron's letter, it is certain that the poet hoped Murray would take it:

As it was at your own wish that I agreed to continue our literary connection, this appears a strange mode of renewing it--but if you have repented of your desire--let me know at once (for you are not celebrated for knowing your own mind upon such matters as I hear with regard to others as well as myself) and there is no harm done. (9: 156)

As passive as usual, Murray did not take Byron up on his offer, so Byron berated him again in his letter of June 6

but to no appreciable effect. A month later, on July 8, 1822, Byron demanded that Murray "hand over" to John Hunt The Vision of Judgment, the Pulci translation, "any prose tracts," and all other manuscripts except Werner and the Memoir (9: 182). (Murray had already agreed to publish Werner and he did on November 23, 1822. By the order of the poet, the manuscript of the Memoir was "not to be published till . . . [Byron was] in . . . [his] grave" [9: 172].) It is in this same letter of July 8 that Byron announces that Teresa Guiccioli had released him to return to Don Juan and, as a teaser, that "It is not impossible that . . . [he] may have three or four cantos of D[on] Juan ready by autumn or a little later" (9: 182). Surely Byron was indulging in some perverse pleasure by ending this letter in such a fashion.

Again Byron's paranoid delusion about Murray's being in league with the poet's censorious enemies came into play. Wanting to know "what became of the stanzas to Wellington" so that he could use them as the opening of canto 9, Byron wrote his request for them to Thomas Moore on July 12, 1822 (9: 183). It was three years before, almost to the day (July 10, 1819), that Byron had written these eight infamous stanzas attacking the Duke of Wellington. He had originally intended them for canto 3. However, he had realized that they were not appropriate for the idyllic love story with Haidee, so he had suppressed them for the time being and then added them where they would have more relevance: after the description of the

senseless slaughter at Ismail. Both cantos 7 and 8 deal with the bloody siege of this city, and Byron's eight-stanza raillery at the militaristic Duke of Wellington could hardly have been placed at a better juncture in Don Juan than after this epic scoffing at martial glory. Yet despite the apparent bravery behind Byron's mockery of the fearsome duke, the poet's paranoia was clearly evident when he wrote to Moore about the stanzas: "If they have fallen into Murray's hands, he and the Tories will suppress them, as those lines rate that hero at his real value" (9: 183). Byron cautioned Kinnaird on September 12 not to "be talked over by that fellow . . . [because] as to what regards Murray--that great man ought to be narrowly watched" (9: 207). One month later Byron addressed Murray himself with his suspicions, especially of "that Rogue Southey" (9: 206):

I will show you that I am not disposed to permit you to take advantage of my absence . . . which whatever may be your motive--can do little credit to you--& less to your instigators--for I firmly believe that there is someone behind the curtain playing you off upon this occasion.--I know enough of the baseness of Mr. Southey--and his employers to believe them capable of anything--and as for yourself--though I am very unwilling to believe you acted willfully & wittingly--as their tool--you leave me no other supposition but that either by menaces or persuasions they are rendering you an instrument--of their purposes personal and political,--"on fair ground I could beat forty of them" [Coriolanus 2.1] but not if my Armourer proves treacherous--and spoils my weapons.--I am truly sorry to be obliged to address you in such a manner--but you have forced me to do so. (10: 17-18)

This was probably Byron's sternest scolding of his publisher, and it came on the heels of John Hunt's

publication of The Vision of Judgment on October 15, 1822, in the first issue of the Liberal. Tangential to this first real breaking away from Murray as publisher were Byron's reproaches to Murray for not being civil to Hunt (September 23) and for not sending Hunt the preface to The Vision of Judgment (October 22).

As a final preparation for his irreparable parting from Murray, Byron wrote to his publisher on October 31:

. . . when I wished to put an end to the connection this year--it was at your own special request to Messrs Moore and Hobhouse--that I agreed to renew it--since that period--what your conduct has been you know--and so do I;--the truth is that you never know your own mind . . . you act like the philosopher in Rasselas who took the direction of the winds under his auspices--take care--that one of them don't blow you down some morning. (10: 22)

Considering how long Byron had complained about Murray as well as to him and for as many different matters as one can imagine, it is ironic that Byron took as long as he did in his leave-taking. Actually he had two farewells to Murray. On November 6, Byron told Murray:

As a publisher I bid you a final farewell.--It would have been my wish to have remained on terms of acquaintance with you--but your recent--& repeatedly rude neglect of my earnest directions to you in matters of business--render that also impracticable. (10: 28)

A dozen days later Byron repeated this final notice, but this goodbye was on somewhat friendlier terms:

My letters to you were written under the impression that you have acted unfairly by Hunt--and when that is cleared up--of course I have no complaint against you.--I shall withdraw from you as a publisher--on every account even on your own--and I wish you good luck elsewhere. (10: 36)

As is evident in this pair of farewells, Byron's final agitation with Murray was caused by the unsatisfactory way in which the literary business was transferred from one publisher to the other. On several occasions Byron faulted Murray for his "injudicious rudeness" (10: 68) to John Hunt, and even to the point of refusing to see him. Byron was angry and embarrassed when Murray was "indiscreet enough" (10: 36) to show around a letter in which the poet had criticized Leigh Hunt and the Liberal. In his letter to Murray on October 9, 1822, Byron had written: "I am afraid the Journal is a bad business--and won't do." Further on in the same paragraph he had added his opinion about the domestic situation at Palazzo Lanfranchi: "I have done all I can for Leigh Hunt--since he came here--but it is almost useless--his wife is ill--his six children not very tractable and in the affairs of this world he himself is a child" (10: 13). Even more exasperating for Byron were the legal charges brought against John Hunt by the Constitutional Association for publishing the politically offensive Vision of Judgment. Byron blamed Murray for this prosecution, claiming that Murray gave "incorrect copies of the Vision &c. to John Hunt . . . with the view of getting him into a scrape" (10: 24). By "incorrect copies," Byron meant ones that had not been corrected--specifically, the wrong copy of "Vision" which did not have the most libelous passages deleted.

Obviously, then, the transitional period from Murray to Hunt was not particularly smooth, as indicated by a

number of spiteful letters Byron wrote. Typical of this correspondence is his letter to Kinnaird written on December 14, 1822: "That Murray will intrigue and do all the mischief he can from hatred to the Hunts--and pique at me--is certain--& has been already seen--but I'll weave him a web before I have done with him" (10: 58). When Byron expelled this venom, he had cantos 6-12 of Don Juan completed, and his new publisher had "no Capital" (10: 58). This financial concern may at least partially explain why Byron was so slow in cutting the last strings of his relationship with Murray in spite of the numerous negative factors. At this time Byron had not yet consigned to John Hunt the rights to publish the next cantos of Don Juan. Byron was "still hoping that Kinnaird . . . [could] get some publisher to buy the copyright" (10: 23) since John Hunt could not, but Byron's banker was unable to fulfill the poet's wishes. Settling then with Hunt, Byron decided to give on a profit-sharing basis the rest of the Don Juan cantos as well as all subsequent writing to this impoverished, but honest and brave, publisher whom Byron called "a stiff sturdy conscientious man" (10: 69).

Finally shed of the publishing hindrances that Murray seemed to be constantly providing, Byron was able to charge ahead with the publishing of Don Juan and have the remaining 11 cantos published by John Hunt in 4 installments. Their publication dates are as follows:

cantos 6-8	July 15, 1823
cantos 9-11	August 29, 1823

cantos 12-14 December 23, 1823

cantos 15-16 March 26, 1824

The speed at which Byron wrote these 11 cantos (which amount to 1134 stanzas or 9160 lines) is truly astounding. The chart below gives an indication of the specific time frame in which Byron wrote the individual cantos and his location when composing them.

1822

Pisa

Apr. Byron presumably began canto 6.

Montenero (Leghorn)

May-June Byron finished first draft of cantos 6 and 7.

July 12 Byron was writing canto 8, which was finished along with the preface to cantos 6-8 by late July or early August.

Aug. 8 Byron announced that he has "written three more cantos of Don Juan, and . . . [is] hovering on the brink of another (the ninth)" (9: 191).

Aug. 27 Byron had "nearly (quite three) four new cantos of Don Juan ready" (9: 198).

Sept. 7-10 Byron sent cantos 6-7 to Kinnaird.

Oct. 5 Byron finished first draft of canto 10.

Oct. 6 Byron began canto 11.

Oct. 17 Byron finished first draft of canto 11.

Oct. 31 Byron had sent cantos 10 and 11 to Kinnaird by this date.

Dec. 7 Byron finished first draft of canto 12.

Dec. 14 Byron sent canto 12 to Kinnaird.

1823

Genoa

Feb. 12 Byron began canto 13.

Feb. 19 Byron finished first draft of canto 13.

Feb. 23 Byron began canto 14.

Feb. 25 Mary Shelley had finished copying canto 13 by this date, and, presumably, it was sent to Kinnaird about this time.

Mar. 4 Byron finished first draft of canto 14.

Mar. 8 Byron began canto 15.

Mar. 25 Byron finished first draft of canto 15.

Mar. 29 Byron began canto 16 and sent cantos 14 and 15 to Kinnaird.

May 6 Byron finished first draft of canto 16.

May 23 Byron had sent canto 16 by this date.

A somewhat surprising feature about the publishing of these last 11 cantos is that all of them were written before John Hunt began cranking out the 4 remaining installments. Byron managed the colossal feat of writing cantos 6-16 in about one calendar year--roughly from mid-April 1822 to early May 1823, and the cantos were published by Hunt within a 9-month span--an amazing difference from the publication history of cantos 1-5 under John Murray's aegis.

It seems obvious that the increased rate of Byron's writing of Don Juan was closely related to the sense of

freedom that the poet undoubtedly felt once he had finally pried his writing loose from his overly cautious literary overseer. Teresa also provided no further censorship once she was given to understand by Byron himself that the rest of Don Juan (after canto 5) would "always . . . be more guarded and decorous and sentimental in the continuation than in the commencement" (9: 182). Byron's puckish nature was clearly evident when the poet immediately followed this report of his promise to abide by Teresa's stipulations with the following speculation: "How far these conditions have been fulfilled may be seen perhaps by and bye" (9: 182). Surely a mischievous gleam sparkled in Byron's eye when he promised that the rest of Don Juan would be "immaculate" and then ambiguously added that he had "been as decent as need be" (9: 198). That Byron was not particularly restraining himself (despite his promises to Teresa) is clearly seen in his addition of the previously censored Wellington stanzas to the beginning of canto 9. An even more pronounced example of Byron's new unrestraint can be found in this same canto in what Lang calls "the bawdiest passage in Byron's works" (see DJ, canto 9, stanzas 55-67). The passage is Byron's "apostrophe to the vulva, especially Catherine's" (164), and it is highly unlikely that Teresa was aware of these lines.

Shielding Teresa from any of his new Don Juan material that would truly offend her so that he would no longer have her complaints and simultaneously feeling fewer compulsions and finally no compulsion to please Murray, Byron seems to

have experienced a new freedom in his writing, which possibly accounts for the acceleration of the Don Juan production. It is also probable that the game that Byron made of his gentle duplicity with Teresa added to his zest for writing more of the poem and at a faster rate. Shedding his censors' constrictions and playing his double-dealing game with Teresa appear to have made the actual writing of the continued cantos a more enjoyable pursuit for Byron and a welcome escape from the cloying aspects of his current situation--the political unrest, Leigh Hunt and his undisciplined brood, the problems with The Liberal, the demand for more money from virtually everyone around him, and all of the other frustrations. Leslie Marchand describes this curious conjoining of Byron's mischievous mood with his speeded-up writing of Don Juan in this way:

Having returned to the writing of Don Juan, Byron found it easy to escape from the annoyances of the present into the pleasant creations of his pen. He could look back at the world's follies and his own with an amused detachment, or with a soft melancholy regret no longer strained to the tragic. . . . Part of his pleasure was to share the amusing stanzas with Teresa, . . . [but he would] translate only what he wished her to see. And once back in a scene with . . . promising prospects for comment on womankind, he could not control his puckish humor.

Sometimes Teresa stood by him, wondering at his facility and his absorbed enjoyment. "His pen moved so rapidly over the page that one day I said to him, 'One would almost believe that someone was dictating to you!' 'Yes,' he replied, 'a mischievous spirit who sometimes even makes me write what I am not thinking. There now, for instance--I have just been writing against love!' 'Why don't you erase it, then?' I asked. 'It's written,' he replied, smiling, 'the stanza would be spoiled.' And the stanza remained." (Byron 3: 1014)

Aiding the speed of his writing at this time is the fact that Byron chose not to spoil many of these new stanzas by the careful pruning and adding and rewriting that he had so diligently applied to the first five cantos when so many censorious friends were looking over his shoulder. From Steffan's painstaking, line-by-line study of the composition of Don Juan, we find that "the proportionate number of lines revised on the manuscript sharply and steadily decreases . . . in the later cantos (VI-XVI)" (112). In fact, "later revision in . . . [this writing] period is practically nonexistent," and many of the minor changes between Byron's practically illegible manuscripts and the fair copies that Mary Shelley made of them are her changes and not his. It is thought "that Byron either overlooked . . . [these substitutions] or else preferred [them] to his original" (112). Of the 11 cantos written in this yearlong period, there are 6 in which "Byron does not rewrite a single line after he has finished the first draft . . . and a very large number of stanzas have major changes in only one or two lines" (113). The more Byron progressed in his epic, the more his revision diminished. By and large, "the last four cantos . . . were printed practically as they were written on the first draft, without major alteration of a single line" (113).

Steffan notes the irony of the situation in which Byron had "exercised [the] most care" with the initial cantos while pretending "to take Juan lightly" and then, after "opposition . . . drove him to protest his

seriousness[,] he . . . proceeded to dash off canto after canto with extraordinary facility" (114). The irony involved here seems to be more than just happenstance though. Byron's final break from Murray occurred on November 18, 1822, and the last four cantos (13-16)--the ones with the least revision--were the ones that Byron wrote after his separation from his publisher. It seems reasonable to assume that Byron's consciousness of the impending and then accomplished break from Murray would have had a liberating effect on his writing of Don Juan, 6-16.

Of the few stanzas that were actually expurgated from this last group of more liberated cantos, all were censored by Byron himself. There are six such stanzas in all, and five of them come from canto 6. (A seventh expurgated stanza was also canceled by Byron in the unfinished seventeenth canto.)

The first of these rejected stanzas was numbered 29 by Byron in the first draft of canto 11, but sometime prior to John Hunt's August 29, 1823, publication of cantos 9, 10, and 11 the poet replaced it with the stanza numbered 30.

The original stanza is as follows:

At length the boys drew up before a door
 From whence poured forth a tribe of well-clad
 waiters [t/o]
 (While on the pavement many a hungry w-re--
 With which this Moralest of cities caters
 For Gentlemen whose passions may boil oer
 Stood as the unpacking gathered more
 spectators) [t/o]
 And Juan found himself in an extensive
 Apartment;--fashionable but expensive.

The lines that superseded it compose two stanzas actually, and they are as follows:

They reached the hotel: forth streamed from the
front door [t/o]

A tide of well-clad waiters, and around
The mob stood, and as usual, several score
Of those pedestrian Paphians, who abound
In decent London when the daylight's o'er;
Commodious but immoral, they are found
Useful, like Malthus, in promoting marriage:--
But Juan now is stepping from his carriage

Into one of the sweetest hotels,
Especially for foreigners--and mostly
For those whom favour or whom fortune swells,
And cannot find a bill's small items costly.
There many an envoy either dwelt or dwells,
(The den of many a diplomatic lost lie)
Until to some conspicuous square they pass,
And blazon o'er the door their names in brass.

In this change of stanzas Byron has kept the general outline of Juan's arriving at the meretricious hotel with its "well-clad waiters," but has omitted his reference to "many a hungry w-re" and the "Gentlemen whose passions boil oer." Here Byron seems to be almost prudish by first censoring the full spelling of the word "whore" and then censoring it altogether. He also has lessened the bite of his sarcasm by substituting "decent London" for "this Moralest of cities." Basically, Byron has cleaned up his original stanza by removing some offensive words and covering their absence with euphemistic verbiage like his allusions to Paphians and Malthus. He also has shifted the blame for the immorality of the hotel away from his hypocritical countrymen and onto the convenient "foreigners." Obviously, this would not be as offensive to his English readers.

Later in canto 11 Byron expurgated a stanza and a half. On April 24, 1823--some six months after the stanzas were originally composed--Byron wrote to John Hunt, directing his attention to these lines:

I have marked in the proofs that the half of 57, and the whole of 58th Stanza are to be omitted--and asterisks placed instead of the lines, leaving however the space and numbers of the stanzas the same. Do not forget this. (10: 158)

Unlike Murray, who drew Byron's ire for failing to make some of his requested changes, Hunt remembered this order, and lines 5-7 of stanza 57 and all of stanza 58 were omitted in the initial 1823 edition. Stanza 57 was first printed in its entirety in 1833, and stanza 58 was not published until 1837.

The reason for these cancellations is hard to understand. The satire of these stanzas is directed at two minor literary figures, Reverend George Croly (1780-1860) and Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), and one wonders why Byron felt compelled to spare the feelings of these writers when he obviously did not show such compassion to other practitioners of the trade. Byron had grudges against both men, and why they initially escaped the acid of Byron's pen remains a mystery.

Croly was an unabashed imitator of Byron, and Byron thought Croly an insufferable egotist. Twice in his letter to Murray, Byron mentions the man with obvious distaste: "I say nothing against your parsons--your Smedleys--and your Crolys--it is all very fine--but pray dispense me from the pleasure [of reading their poetry]" (7: 201), and "Croly is

superior to many--but seems to think himself inferior to Nobody" (7: 225). Byron's poetic comment on Croly--minus the asterisks from the fifth, sixth, and seventh lines--is as follows:

Sir Walter reigned before me; Moore and Campbell
 Before and after; but now grown more holy,
 The muses upon Sion's hill must ramble,
 With poets almost clergyman, or wholly;
 And Pegasus hath a psalmodic amble
 Beneath the very Reverend Rowley Powley,
 Who shoes the glorious animal with stilts,
 A modern Ancient Pistol--by the hilts!

The essence of the stanza is that England's contemporary writers have all become sanctimonious creatures, with Croly leading the way with his ludicrously exaggerated piety. It is puzzling as well as ironic that Byron allows Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Moore, and Thomas Campbell--much better and better known writers and also friends of his--to bear his satiric banter, while he whitewashes his mockery of a writer who truly deserves it.

Byron disliked Milman even more than he did Croly. Another writing clergyman, Milman began to incur Byron's displeasure with "his critical proceedings in the Quarterly"--particularly when, as Byron phrases it in a letter to Murray, "he pretends to preach morality" (8: 193). At first Byron was impressed by Milman because of his poem The Fall of Jerusalem (1820). However, a little over a year later Byron was referring to him as "the 'Fall of Jerusalem' fabricator" (9: 53), because, among other things, he thought that "Milman was responsible . . . for criticizing Don Juan severely"

(McGann 750). Byron's hostilities towards Milman appear to become even more extreme when, though erroneously, Byron identified Milman as the author of John Croker's vicious Quarterly review of Keats's poetry. In regard to that review and the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy that Byron and Shelley both made of Keats's subsequent death, Byron wrote the following ditty:

"Who killed John Keats?"
 "I," says the Quarterly
 So savage and Tartarly;
 "'Twas one of my feats."
 "Who shot the arrow?"
 "The poet-priest Milman
 (So ready to kill man),
 Or Southey or Barrow!"

Byron allowed these lines to circulate, but he mysteriously withdrew stanza 58, which, though clearly about Milman, does not even call him by name:

Still he excels that artificial hard
 Labourer in the same vineyard, though the vine
 Yields him but vinegar for his reward,--
 That neutralized dull Dorus of the Nine;
 That swarthy Sporus, neither man nor bard;
 That ox of verse, who ploughs for every
 line:-- [t/o]
 Cambyses' roaring Romans beat at least
 The howling Hebrews of Cybele's priest.--

In this canceled stanza Byron refers to both Croly and Milman, although the latter gets the worse drubbing. This is because Byron is comparing the two, and in this evaluation, even though "Reverend Rowley Powley" is horrible, "Still he excels" Milman. In the middle of the stanza (lines 4-6), Byron lades the supposed Keats-killer with three abusive epithets. With "That neutralized dull Dorus of the Nine," Byron refers to Dorus, "the ancestor of

the Dorians, whose most notable representatives were the Spartans, the least poetic and artistic of the Greeks" (Asimov 835). The "Nine" refers to the nine Muses, so the "dull Dorus of the Nine" means the least poetic Muse, or, by extension, the worst poet (Asimov 835). "That swarthy Sporus" is a reference to a very effeminate male lover of Nero's, and the "ox of verse" alludes to Milman's recent appointment to the Oxford professorship of poetry (Pratt 226). After the epithets, Byron, by way of literary allusions, has Croly's Catiline: A Tragedy ("Cambyses' roaring Romans") "beat at least" Milman's The Fall of Jerusalem ("The howling Hebrews of Cybele's priest"). By making his derogatory comparison of Milman's work with Croly's, Byron continues to ridicule Milman's literary talent, and, by referring to Milman as "Cybele's priest," Byron adds to his attack on Milman's manhood, since all priests of the Asian goddess Cybele were eunuchs (Asimov 835).

The purpose behind Byron's exclusion of this stanza and a half does not become any more understandable when one looks at the censored lines in their immediate context. In this part of canto 11, Byron has Juan frequenting London literary "Coteries" and, "as in Banquo's glass," watching "ten thousand living authors pass" (11.54.3.5). In stanzas 55 and 56 Byron falls into a reverie about his own fall from being "'the greatest living poet'" and "The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme" (11.55.1, 8). Then he starts in on everyone else, taking jabs at "turncoat

Southey" in stanza 56; at Scott, Moore, and Campbell in the uncensored section of stanza 57; at Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, and "rogue Southey" again in stanza 59; and finally at "killed off . . . John Keats" in stanza 60. It is a remarkable feat of poetic compression that Byron is able to satirize so many writers in so few stanzas, but one still wonders why the satirist decided to spare Croly and Milman.

The answer may be found in a letter from Mary Shelley to Byron in October of 1822: "I have nearly finished copying your savage Canto. You will cause Milman to hang himself" (198). Her husband and Byron's friend, Percy Shelley, had died only three months before. Marchand records that although Byron "had never had any strong feeling of accord for Mary, he tried now [after Shelley's drowning] to make amends . . . by extending every kindness to her" (Byron 3: 1017-18). Mary Shelley wrote to her friend Maria Gisborne that "Lord Byron is very kind to me & comes with the Guiccioli to see me often" (185). One of Byron's kindnesses towards Mary Shelley was "to give her employment in her precarious financial situation"; specifically, he "hired her to make clean copies of some of the new cantos of Don Juan" (Marchand, Byron 3: 1042). It may be that another of Byron's kindnesses to Mary Shelley was the deletion of the Milman stanza (stanza 58), since it obviously displeased her. If this supposition is so, then the cancellation of the three Croly lines (5-7) from stanza 57 can be explained as well. The logic of the Milman stanza intrinsically involves Croly (see lines 1-3 and 7 of

stanza 58 as well as the lines concerning him in the preceding stanza). It is feasible then that Byron decided that, without the full treatment of Croly which stanza 58 gives, the three Croly lines in stanza 57 were, by themselves, simply insufficient for his purposes. Consequently, when Byron decided to forego the Milman lines for Mary Shelley's sake, he probably concluded that the Croly lines, which were so closely interspersed with them, had to be sacrificed as well.

In the original manuscript of canto 11, two more stanzas follow stanza 75, but these were also canceled by Byron. These rejected stanzas are as follows:

That is, if some lordship has an ancestor
 Of rank enough to set in stone or lead,
 Far easier though for the good town of Manchester
 To find retorts [sic?] for innocent blood shed
 By butchers in her streets, than for the
 staunchest, or [t/o]
 Proudest of Parian Patrician (bred
 They know not how) the one half the present case
 Of peers, to prove their title no disgrace.

Bankers--Contractors-Borough Mongers--Bullies
 Scotch with blue green ribbons--Irish with a
 blue; [t/o]
 Some, for having turned converted [sic?] Cullies,
 Others for other dirty work gone through
 Dukes, fools by birth, while Clogher's Bishop
 sullies [t/o]
 The law, at least until the Bench revert to
 true [t/o]
 Plain simple fornication--nor behold
 The Senate which Tiberius met of old--

Essentially, these stanzas attack those with newly found money and power who have acquired these commodities by trickery, cheating, or "other dirty work gone through" legally. These morally stained leaders of English society (which Byron estimates to be "one half the present case /Of

peers") number among themselves "Clogher's Bishops" as well as "Bankers--Contractors--Borough Mongers--Bullies" and the Irish lords who were given the Scottish Order of the Thistle and the Garter following the dissolution of the Irish Parliament (Pratt 234). With "Clogher's Bishops," Byron is referring to the Honorable Percy Jocelyn (1764-1843). Jocelyn was made the bishop of Clogher in 1820, but he lost the office two years later "on account of a scandalous crime" with a soldier named Moverly. Concerning Jocelyn, Byron gently jibes his Irish poet-friend Thomas Moore: "What do you think of your Irish bishop? Do you remember Swift's line, "Let me have a barrack--a fig for the clergy?' [the last line of Swift's 'The Grand Question Debated']. This seems to have been his reverence's motto" (Prothero 6: 101-02). Byron's mention of "Dukes, fools by birth," is probably a reference to the Duke of Wellington--England's hailed hero of Waterloo who was also instrumental in the "strong, antiliberal . . . Constitutional Association, . . . which was particularly designed to prosecute so-called seditious works" (Quinlan 216).

Also in the first of these two rejected stanzas is "Byron's only explicit reference" in Don Juan (Pratt 234) to the Manchester massacre of August 16, 1819, which was commonly known as Peterloo. (For specific information about this infamous slaughter, see chapter 1.) The second stanza concludes with a satirical comment on English law as Byron suggests that the current "Bench" is as unjust as the Roman "Senate" was in Tiberius's day. This indictment of

British justice is surely to be linked with the allusion to the Manchester massacre in the previous stanza. It is Byron's pronouncement on Parliament's reactionary response to the slaughter--both its congratulating the Manchester magistrates on a job well done and then its enacting into law the repressive "Six Acts" only three months after the audacious event occurred. It is also an expression of Byron's negative feelings about the court system in general--feelings which were undoubtedly colored by his fear of censorship.

With these two satiric stanzas expressing so effectively what Byron wanted to say to his parvenu countrymen, one is hard pressed to understand why the poet deleted them. Surely it is not because of the word "fornication." Well, yes and no. The word itself would not have scared off the poet, but, in conjunction with "The Law," that was probably what did. That was certainly the case with the last stanza that Byron expurgated--the one from canto 12 which was originally numbered 18:

That suit in Chancery--(I have a Chancery Suit
 In right good earnest--also an Appeal
 Before the Lords--whose Chancellor's more acute
 In law than equity--as I can feel--
 Because my Cases put his Lordship to't--
 And--though no doubt tis for the Public weal,
 His Lordship's Justice--seems not that of
 Solomon-- [t/o]
 Not that I deem our Chief Judge is a hollow
 man--) [t/o]

Byron's censorship of this stanza was clearly motivated by the poet's fear of Lord Eldon and his often ruthless decisions. A comparison of the canceled stanza with the

one that Byron used to replace it shows that the chancellor is not even mentioned in the second version. In fact, only the beginning of the first line is repeated in Byron's rewrite:

That suit in Chancery,--which some persons plead
 In an appeal to the unborn, whom they,
 In the faith of their procreative creed,
 Baptize Posterity, or future clay,--
 To me seems but a dubious kind of reed
 To lean on for support in any way;
 Since odds are that Posterity will know
 No more of them, than they of her, I trow.

The repeated half line, "That suit in Chancery," is a double-barreled reference, because Lord Eldon handled two court cases in which Byron's interests were involved. Byron undoubtedly had both of them in mind when he wrote the stanzas. On February 9, 1822, the Lord Chancellor had refused to honor John Murray's suit to stop the pirating of Cain. Eldon also tried the suit for "the disposition of property under the will of Lady Noel" (Pratt 237). In Byron's letters to his lawyers and friends, it is clear that the poet greatly disliked and distrusted "The Chief Judge of the Kingdom--Lord Eldon--the Great legal oracle of Mr. Southey's own [Tory] party" (9: 97). On July 23, 1822, Byron wrote to Kinnaird that "Eldon will never given any thing like fair play to me" (9: 188). On three other occasions the poet made similar comments about the Lord Chancellor's unfairness "in any cause in which . . . [Byron was] interested" (9: 191). When Byron's quite justified opinion of the chancellor is considered, it is reasonable to conclude that at least three of the seven stanzas that

Byron himself expurgated--those originally numbered 11: 75-76 and 12: 18, which make light of the law--were done so primarily for fear of legal reprisal from the intolerant Lord Eldon, the highest judge in the land.

This show of tact in Byron's decision to avoid overtly offending Eldon should not be interpreted as a general mellowing of the poet. In fact, although he wisely skirted a direct imbroglio with Eldon, Byron seems to have developed a clearly antagonistic attitude towards his general reading public and to have been determined not to spare his readers' sensibilities in the slightest. On May 20, 1822, or about the time that Byron was finishing the first drafts of cantos 6 and 7 after his Don Juan hiatus, he reports to Shelley:

Murray writes discouragingly--and says 'that nothing published this year has made the least impression' . . . you see what it is to throw pearls to Swine--as long as I wrote the exaggerated nonsense [the romantic verse tales which had catapulted Byron to the top of London's literary heap only a few years before] which has corrupted the public taste--they applauded to the very echo--and now that I have really composed within these three or four years some things which should 'not willingly be let die'¹--the whole herd snort and grumble and return to wallow in their mire. (9: 161)

With a wry sense of fair play, though, Byron admitted that "it is fit that . . . [he] should pay the penalty of

¹ Here Byron is quoting from John Milton's The Reason of Church Government (Book 2). Given Byron's extensive reading, it is almost certain that he would also be familiar with "Areopagetica," Milton's great tract against censorship.

spoiling them--as no man has contributed more than . . . [himself] to produce that exaggerated & false taste" (9: 161). Still, it is clear that the public's negative reaction to Cain (published December 19, 1821) and the other work that Byron had produced during his 14-month break from Don Juan prompted the incensed and frustrated poet to strike back, taking on his general readership in addition to the antagonistic critics, the overly cautious John Murray, and all of the assorted friends with their repressive advice. In a letter to Kinnaird, written a few days before the one to Shelley, Byron forcefully expresses this new sense of purpose against opposition to his writing.

I shall not be deterred by any outcry--they hate me--and I detest them--I mean your present Public--but they shall not interrupt the march of my mind--nor prevent me from telling the tyrants who are attempting to trample upon all thought--that their thrones will yet be rocked to their foundation. (9: 152)

The troubling complex of Teresa's censorship, Murray's hesitancy, the political problems, the legal complications with his wife over her mother's estate when Lady Noel died (on January 28, 1822), and Byron's own depression following the deaths of Allegra (on April 20, 1822) and Shelley (on July 8) seems to have been ignited by the fierce outcry against Cain. Regardless of the exact psychological mechanisms that were at work in the background of Byron's renewed dedication to Don Juan, the result was a literary explosion that caused Byron to write with greater abandon than ever before--and thus to proceed in a manner quite

different from that which he promised Teresa in telling her he would write the rest of Don Juan in a "more genteel" manner (9: 182). Steffan describes this new or, more appropriately, renewed Byron as "a crusader, bent on, and proud of, martyrdom" (47). And Jerome McGann records Byron's resolute resumption of Don Juan this way:

. . . Byron's interest and determination were completely restored, and he carried the poem forward with a will that signalled a rededication of his energies, if not a complete reconception of his purposes. . . . When he decided . . . to go on with his poem in a serious and continuous way, he determined not to compromise his convictions. (717)

Byron's intention not to compromise his beliefs--even for his previously fawning readers--is strongly stated in his letter to Murray on June 6, 1822:

. . . when I once take pen in hand--I must say what comes uppermost--or fling it away--I have not the hypocrisy to pretend impartiality--nor the temper (as it is called) to keep always from saying--what may not be pleasing to the hearer--or reader. (9: 168)

In reaction to his fallen acclaim, Byron adopted a proud and insular pose of having "never courted popularity--and . . . [caring] little or nothing for the decrease or extinction thereof" (10: 36). He particularly scorned his British readers: "I care but little for the opinions of the English--as I have long had Europe and America for a Public and were it otherwise I could bear it" (10: 36). By the beginning of the new year (1823), Byron acknowledged "how violent public opinion is at this moment against [him]" (10: 47 and 80), but, rather than try to placate it, he maintained his indomitable, Manfred-like attitude: "I will

not be bullied--and I would rather come home to be calumniated & persecuted than receive the adulations of a dastard and slavish people" (10: 72). In fact, his Promethean manner went beyond a mere steadfast stance and became retaliatory: "As to 'The Liberal,' I do not know how it is going on; but all my friends of all parties have made a portentous outcry against the whole publication, and so continue, which is a great encouragement" (10: 116-17). And "As to D[on] J[uan]," Byron wrote Kinnaird on March 10, 1823, ". . . you have now nine Cantos [6-14] in hand . . . I care nothing for outcry &c.--they shall be published and that speedily if I were to print them myself" (10: 121). Ten days later, Byron again wrote Kinnaird--this time with even more vengeance in his tone: "I have nearly done a 15th Canto of D[on] J[uan]--I am aware that those about you--discourage and disparage that work--but I will 'keep my threep'²--and ten times the more so--for opposition or outcry" (10: 127). Byron was only five days from finishing the first draft of canto 15, his tenth canto since the last publishing of Don Juan, so perhaps he was thinking specifically of his new satiric sequels to his epic when ranking his threat of a "ten times" revenge on his reading public. Whether or not this numerical

² Byron's "threep" is a variant of the Scottish "threap," which means "obstinate determination"--a good kenning for this extremely individualistic poet (10: 127n).

coincidence was an intended reference to Don Juan on Byron's part, it certainly fit the occasion.

Over the months of the Don Juan continuation, Byron's initial pose as the persecuted and recalcitrant solitary man appears to have become a reality in his own mind. His first rebellious responses that claimed no interest in his own popularity and no concern over public outcry sounded like so much braggadocio when he originally dashed them off in May of 1822. However, by March of the next year, Byron, with his continuous utterance of this theme, seems to have convinced himself that he truly felt this way about his audience. After 10 months of his reiterating this melodramatic position, a sense of sincerity seems to have crept into his pretentious-sounding pronouncements. Consequently, he does seem to mean what he says when, on March 10, 1823, he writes to John Hunt that he (Byron) is "at this moment the most unpopular man in England--and if a whistle would call . . . [him] to the pinnacle of English Fame," he would not blow it (10: 120). Elaborating on this frame of mind that he has settled into, Byron in his letter to Hunt one week later makes this attitude more believable when he explains the motivation behind it:

Every publication of mine has latterly failed; I am not discouraged by this, because writing and composition are habits of mind, with which Success and Publication are objects of remoter reference--not causes but effects, like those of any other pursuit. I have had enough both of praise and abuse to deprive them of their novelty, but I continue to compose for the same reason that I ride, or read, or bathe, or travel --it is a habit. (10: 123)

Byron's pronounced contempt of popularity--his alternating pose of defiance or indifference to public opinion--has merged into a truly felt reality of artistic independence.

Along with this development in Byron is the poet's face-saving reliance on the favorable response to Don Juan by European readers and, even more so, on the approbation of contemporary literary idols like Germany's Goethe and America's Washington Irving. Yet more than being just face-saving and ego-massaging, this acclaim from areas beyond England made Byron realize that Don Juan was indeed a masterwork--one that would outlive the picayune carping of his own puritanical time.

Byron knew that "there is a fortune in fame as in every thing else in this world" (8: 114) and that "there is no lottery more hazardous than literature" (8: 223). Consequently, he admitted that he did not know "what the present Juans may or may not do in the way of success and that there was not "time to know exactly" (8:223). Byron felt that his ultimate recognition lay in the hands of posterity, and he wryly explained this to one of his admirers:

I really cannot know whether I am or am not the Genius you are pleased to call me, but I am very willing to put up with the mistake, if it be one. It is a title dearly enough bought by most men, to render it endurable, even when not clearly made out, which it never can be till the Posterity, whose decisions are merely dreams to ourselves, has sanctioned or denied it, while it can touch us no further. (9: 172)

But despite Byron's pretensions at modesty, he was at times quite certain that posterity would find in his favor:

My object is not immediate popularity in my present productions, which are written on a different system from the rage of the day. But mark what I say; that the time will come when these will be preferred to any I have before written:--it is not from the cry or hubbub of a month that these things are to be decided upon. (Prothero 6: 25)

Certainly vanity and rationalization had a part in the makeup of such pronouncements, but Byron was also making a truthful insight when he perceived that "D[on] Juan will be known by and bye for what it is intended . . ." (10: 68). He understood that his own inflammatory reputation and the contemporary social situation with its plentitude of repressive acts and attitudes were too immediate for his great work to receive the kind of objective reading that would allow people not only to tolerate it but to understand it. But this realization did not stop his writing.

They [Byron's readers] mistake the object of "Don Juan", which is nothing but a satire on affectations of all kinds, mixed with some relief of seriousness and description. At least this is the object, and it will not be easy to bully me from "the farce of my humour."³ (10: 116)

On January 29, 1823, with seven cantos completed since his return to the Don Juan project and his perhaps half-serious promise to Teresa to be more cautious in his writing, Byron wrote to Kinnaird: "It is true--the adventures are kept in abeyance--but if I err not--there is

³ In his edition of Byron's letters, Marchand indicates that this quotation by Byron is unidentified.

some morality and perhaps poesy--and it may be wit--to keep them as fresh as salt can make them" (10: 93).

Byron's last phrase certainly suggests the salty, or earthy, nature of Don Juan, but perhaps we should keep in mind that salt also has a preservative quality. Whether or not Byron was intentionally punning with his reference to salt, the continued popularity of Don Juan into the present--into the posterity that Byron foresaw more than 150 years ago--makes it clear that Byron was correct in his judgment that Don Juan was the kind of work that would be recognized after his own day.

During the 12 to 13 months in which Byron resumed his work on Don Juan and completed cantos 6-16, the poet made various statements about his work, how it was received, and how it would be received in the future. Two of his strongest statements occurred in reaction to threatened censorship, and they can be considered bookend-like supports for this remarkable year of writing, because one statement appeared early and the other late in the period.

On August 8, 1822, in the same letter to Thomas Moore in which Byron explains why he wants the Wellington stanzas for canto 9, appear the following heroic words, which can serve as a credo for his writing of all of Don Juan:

With these things and these fellows, it is necessary, in the present clash of philosophy and tyranny, to throw away the scabbard. I know it is against fearful odds; but the battle must be fought; and it will be eventually for the good of mankind, whatever it may be for the individual who risks himself. (9: 191)

On March 31, 1823, two days after beginning his last completed canto, Byron made another powerful statement about his attitude towards censorship and Don Juan:

I care nothing for what may be the consequence--critical or otherwise--all the bullies on earth shall not prevent me from writing what I like--& publishing what I write--"coute qui coute"--if they had let me alone--I probably should not have continued beyond the first five [cantos]--as it is--there shall be such a poem--as has not been since Ariosto--in length--in satire--in imagery--and in what I please. (10: 132)

In a way the world should be thankful for all the anti-Don Juan forces that were exerted on Byron, because if the poet had not felt a strong need to avenge himself on his naysayers, it is possible that his lengthy, 16-canto fragment would have been only a third as long as what we now have. At the same time, it is sad to read these words of Byron's and consider the full, unwritten poem--"such a poem"--as he envisioned it, even as he was writing on the last canto that he was to finish.

With Byron having such a grand vision for his masterwork, it is quite natural that Byron looked to Goethe--the generally acknowledged premier man of letters in Europe--for his approval of Don Juan. On his way home from studies in Germany, a young George Bancroft visited Byron at Montenero on May 22, 1822 (Marchand, Byron 3: 1000). In their conversation, Bancroft told the poet that Goethe was Byron's "professed patron and protector" (10: 164). He also said that "Goethe and the Germans . . . [were] particularly fond of Don Juan" and that they judged it "as a work of Art" (10: 165). Byron

later wrote: "I am very glad of old Goethe being pleased having a great esteem and admiration of that illustrious patriarch of European Letters" (10: 73). Only a few days before he left Leghorn for Greece, Byron received a letter from Goethe. Excitedly, Byron replied,

. . . I could not have had a more favorable Omen or more agreeable surprise than a word from Goethe written by his own hand.--I am returning to Greece to see if I can be of any little use there;--if ever I come back I will pay a visit to Weimar to offer the sincere homage of one of the many Millions of your admirers. (10: 213)

Unfortunately, Goethe's letter did not prove to be the "favorable Omen" that Byron had hoped it might be. However, the conditional factor in his last sentence quoted above indicates that Byron knew that he was probably going to his death in going to Greece.

Despite his frequent pose of nonchalance and indifference to his public and critics alike during this last writing period, Byron clearly cared about how his countrymen felt about him. He showed this at the very end by revealing in two letters to close friends that one of the motives behind his death trip to Greece was to rectify his reputation. To Hobhouse, he wrote prophetically: "My going up far and away--would neutralize the bookselling hostility against me--as being likely to be my latest work" (10: 151). Yet Byron's concern was not just an egotistical one. To Kinnaird, he said: "As to the M.S.S.--you really must publish them whenever I have sailed--my distance will diminish the hatred of my enemies--and the object on which I am employed will do us no dishonor--at least it ought not

(10: 199-200). Byron wanted the latest Don Juan publications to profit from his hoped-for heroics in Greece--even if that included his death.

Byron's wish for a positive final response to himself from England was definitely intertwined with his wish for a truly meaningful acceptance of his farewell work. From his own experience, he well knew both the truth and force behind the logical fallacy known as ad hominem. Byron's fatal trip to Greece was not exclusively to reestablish his former leonine stature in literary England so that his masterpiece would receive a favorable or at least thoughtful reading from those who would otherwise demand its censure. However, it does seem that this notion was in the back of Byron's mind.

Chapter 5

"Columbus of the Moral Seas" Provoking Outrage and Censorship: Some Concluding Comments on "the Most Moral of Poems"

Byron once told his wife that he thought that writers after their deaths were perhaps destined to remain on earth as ghosts until the effects of their work had worn away completely. Much later, on August 9, 1850, Annabella wrote of the matter to the Reverend F. W. Robertson and confided that Byron believed that he might have to haunt the world for 500 years (Doris Moore 487).

Certainly many of the concerns--social and institutional--that Byron mocked in Don Juan are still present today and are changed only somewhat in form and degree. Although it was 165 years ago (i.e., in 1822) that Byron explained to Murray that "Don Juan will be known by and bye, for what it is intended,--a Satire on abuses of the present status of Society" (10: 68), the mammoth and sprawling satire is larger than the time in which it was written, and its effects are still operative today. Therefore, if Byron was correct in his speculation about a writer's afterlife, his spirit must still be hovering nearby because Don Juan speaks at length to life itself in all of its reckless and vulgar and hilarious and yet moving abandon.

However, towards the end of his life and especially during the five-year period (July 1818 to May 1823) in which Don Juan was composed, Byron continually worried about the decline of his popularity. In just eight months John Hunt had published cantos 6-16 in four installments (6-8 in July 1823, 9-11 in August 1823, 12-14 in December 1823, and 15-16 in March 1824). When these cantos appeared, the multitudinous critics banded together (except for a very few exceptions) for a vicious attack. The damnation of Byron by Blackwood's Magazine is typical of the reviewers: "We are wallowing in a sty of mere filth. . . . I don't remember anything so complete as the recent fall of Lord Byron's literary name" (Pratt 307). But regardless of the critics, the cantos sold--and quickly at that. Byron died at Missolonghi on April 19, 1824, but had he known of the success of Don Juan as indicated by the rapid reprintings and almost immediate piratings as well as the numerous imitations and spurious sequels, he would have undoubtedly been pleased and would have had no grounds for further worry about his success and popularity--at least for the two decades after his death while the tidal wave of Byronism swept across England, the Continent, and the United States.

Concerning Don Juan, however, the "journals for the decade following Byron's death seem to have entered into a conspiracy of silence regarding the poem," and it remained "in the backwash of Romantic enthusiasm" until the

twentieth century (Pratt 309). Edward E. Bostetter characterizes the situation in this way:

Though Don Juan continued to have after Byron's death an "under the counter" popularity, it was not really considered respectable art among the writers and critics who were the arbiters of public taste. During the later nineteenth century the tides of taste were governed by the highly earnest view of life that we know as Victorianism, and though the "serious" poetry of Childe Harold and Manfred continued to be uneasily admired and enjoyed, and the lurid details of Byron's life were savored as a forbidden fruit, there was no place for the flippant iconoclasm of Don Juan. (10)

After the critics' initial ranting about Don Juan before Byron's death and then following the obligatory moratorium after his death, the reviewers again began their attacks on the poet. Predictably, their attacks did not focus as much on Byron's writing as on his morality, which ultra-conservative Thomas Macaulay characterized in the Edinburgh Review (June 1831) as nothing but "a system of ethics compounded of misanthropy and voluptuousness" (Pratt 312). Also representative of the critics' opposition is Thomas Carlyle's famous dictum: "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe" (192). With his brilliant-sounding parallelism, Carlyle reveals his own forgetfulness of the work he is recommending, because within the writings of Goethe are praises of the writings of Byron--writings that Carlyle wants his Victorian readers to "close." However, the height of anti-Byronism comes with Thackeray, in Samuel C. Chew's opinion. In his Byron in England, Chew cites the following sneer in Fraser's Magazine (June 1841) by the author of Vanity Fair as the most characteristic of the

mid-Victorian literary opinions of Byron and his masterpiece:

Ah, what a poet Byron would have been had he taken his meals properly, and allowed himself to grow fat--if nature intended him to grow fat--and not have physicked his intellect with wretched opium pills and acrid vinegar, that sent his principles to sleep, and turned his feelings sour! If that man had respected his dinner, he never would have written Don Juan. (255)

This bit of representative invective also illustrates how little Byron's literary detractors of the time felt that they had to rely on the text of Don Juan itself to justify their butchering.

Even though the critics became increasingly opposed to Byron by the mid-century, Byron remained a great literary hero for the general reader. There appeared a flurry of new editions of Byron's complete works, official or otherwise, with virtually all of them including Don Juan. Pratt records that between 1824 and 1860 "at least forty collected editions of the poet appeared in England" (313). It is ironic that although the critics were turning a collective cold shoulder to Don Juan, "the poem was available to readers," and, more than that, "it was read" (Pratt 313).

No matter who pronounced that no one read Byron anymore and no matter how often this judgment was made, the vitality of Byron's work seems to have kept the poetry in print. At least a partial explanation of this dichotomy of opinion between the host of Byron's harsh reviewers and his army of inveterate readers lies in the following paradox.

The very things in Byron and his writings that provoked outrage and censorship from the repressive forces of this particularly prudish and puritanical age also provided altogether too fascinating a temptation for the general reader not to succumb to.

In 1828 the publisher Cawthorne supplied a perfect example of this equivocal mind-set when he printed The Beauties of Don Juan, which was advertised as "including only those passages which are calculated to extend the real fame of Lord Byron" (qtd. in Doris Moore 487). This bowdlerized edition was characterized in the Literary Gazette as "a captivating volume with all the impurities of Don Juan expurgated. . . . It may with perfect propriety be put into female hands, from which the levities and pruriences of the entire poem too justly excluded it" (qtd. in Doris Moore 487). Although The Beauties of Don Juan at first glance might strike one as a censor's perfect compromise--Byron's Don Juan minus its immorality and brazen tone--the sanitized rendition was not "put" into enough hands, female or male, to make the venture profitable. The buying public made it clear that it was Byron in his unadulterated version that was wanted. Nevertheless, the critics, publishers, and other literary arbiters of the day saw their role as moral guardians for the literate population, and Cawthorne's attempt to present Byron without impurities was simply representative of the type of social double standards that Byron so expertly put to shame in Don Juan.

As Marchand has noted, "It is difficult now in this [current] age of freedom of expression . . . to comprehend how shocking Don Juan was to the Romantics of . . . [Byron's] own time and to the Victorians . . ." (1: 7). However, if one keeps in mind as a background the extremely stringent social codes that came out of the British political reaction to the French Revolution as well as the complex cultural ramifications of the Industrial Revolution and the Evangelical Movement and then considers the addition of a provocative personality like Lord Byron's and his greatest work, which Jerome McGann calls "the most important poem published in England between 1667 (when Paradise Lost was issued) and 1850 (when The Prelude finally appeared in print)" (xvii), the shocking effect of Don Juan does become more understandable.

Byron seems to have deliberately provoked outrage, and, since he was a writer, censorship was a natural concomitant. At least four reasons can be identified for Byron's provocation of outrage and censorship. One reason is sheer perversity. Another is that he liked to defend himself, and that is at least partially because he was so good at it. A third reason is that he absolutely hated cant in all its many forms and knew that he could deal effectively with hypocrisy by using his gift of mockery. A final reason is that he truly thought that the purpose of art is to tell the truth, and, in the poetry that was being written in his time, he did not see that this was being

done. Consequently, he set out as a solitary and perhaps quixotic champion to correct the situation.

"Perversity" may be too strong a term to describe the first of the motivations for Byron's provocativeness. Perhaps a combination of words like "impertinence" and "irreverence" and "contemptuosity" and "devil-may-care nonchalance" gets more at the heart of this characteristic of Byron's. Nevertheless, this matter is probably best approached by considering some evidence that Byron and others have revealed about this feature in his personality. In a letter of November 14, 1822, that is thought to have been addressed to Mary Shelley, Byron writes: "I am not a cautious letter-writer and generally say what comes uppermost at the moment" (1: 1). In A Poet and His Publisher, John G. Murray, a descendant of Byron's publisher, writes the following about the presumed delight Byron found in writing letters that would ambivalently thrill and yet embarrass Murray and his Utican Senate:

These are the intimate letters about his love-affairs that so shocked Tommy Moore, and I have a feeling that Byron was tickled by the thought of Murray's puritan Tory embarrassment, conflicting with his pride at being the first to receive news from his distinguished author, when he wanted to be able to read them out to his circle of friends. Even in 1902 Prothero, the editor of Byron's selected letters, could not bring himself to print them all or in full. (12)

In the same vein Byron seemed to enjoy making Murray squirm with literary matters as well. The following little wrench provides a good example: "I think my translation of Pulci will make you stare" (7: 35).

Lady Blessington's record of Byron's conversations with her reveals the same impish quality in the poet.

Of his own works, with some exceptions, he always spoke in derision, saying he could write much better, but that he wrote to suit the false taste of the day, but that if now and then a gleam of true feeling or poetry was visible in his productions, it was sure to be followed by the ridicule he could not suppress. Byron was not sincere in this, and it was only said to excite surprise, and show his superiority over the rest of the world. It was this same desire of astonishing people that led him to depreciate Shakespeare, which I have frequently heard him do, though from various reflections of his in conversation, and the general turn of his mind, I am convinced that he had not only read, but deeply felt the beauties of our immortal poet. (98-99)

Being even more specific about Byron's mischievous nature, Lady Blessington attributes the following confession to the poet:

I was in old times fond of mystifying . . . , but "was is not is" with me, as God knows, in any sense, for I am now cured of mystifying, as well as of many others of my mischievous pranks. . . . I have always had a strong love of mischief in my nature, . . . and this still continues, though I do not very often give way to its dictates. It is this lurking devil that prompts me to abuse people. . . . (186)

It was also "this lurking devil"--this irrepressible, impish sense within him--that led Byron to write a work like Don Juan, which, he says, "is meant to be a little facetious upon every thing" (6: 67) and has no other "intention but to giggle and make giggle" (6: 208).

Somewhat paradoxically, though, Byron has also written of Don Juan that "it is the most moral of poems--but if people won't discover the moral that is their fault not mine" (6: 99). In a way, one could summarize all

Byron's problems with censorship (or at the very least with criticism) of Don Juan by saying that many of his readers simply did not "discover the moral" of the poem and they reacted because of their own misreading. Byron's mischievous inclination is also clearly to be seen behind his seemingly innocent, "most moral of poems" pose, but another of the previously mentioned reasons for Byron's provocation of outrage and its attendant censorship is evident as well in the above quotation, and this is Byron's skill and relish in defending himself.

In Byron's correspondence the brilliance of his ability to defend himself and his work is evident. This current study has cited so many examples of Byron's admirable fencing techniques by way of letter writing that further models are not necessary. But beyond his skillful self-protection in the epistolary form, satiric verse and published prose have also served Byron in good stead--especially in response to critics from the journals. As noted by Herman M. Ward in Byron and the Critics, "No poet . . . has commented more [and one might add the word 'devastatingly'] about the effects of adverse criticism on a young writer than Byron" (6). Such poems as English Bards and Scotch Reviewers and Hints from Horace certainly blazed a broad enough satiric path that by 1819, when the periodicals had truly begun their turn against Byron, neither the critics nor the general readers should have been surprised at his profusion of stinging retorts in Don Juan.

Along with Byron's poetic stands against the critics are three pieces of defensive prose: the humorous "A Letter to the Editor of 'My Grandmother's Review,'" the protesting "Reply to Blackwood's," and the potent preface of cantos 6, 7, and 8 of Don Juan.

The first writing comes as the result of a joke that Byron plays in the first canto. Scampishly, he claims to have bribed the British Review so that he will get a favorable critique. William Roberts, the editor of the journal, took Byron seriously, and, in his review of Don Juan, he obstreperously denies the poet's facetious charge. Byron could not keep himself from following up on Roberts's "tumbling into such a trap" (6: 24), so he wrote his mock-serious letter, signing it "Wortley Clutterbuck," and he took the occasion to ridicule not only Roberts but the whole industry of periodical reviewing.

However, none of Byron's other squabbles about Don Juan criticism were as enjoyable to the poet as this little deception. At the other extreme, in fact, the review of Don Juan that caused Byron the most displeasure was "the one in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, August, 1819" (Herman Ward 150), and this scathing review was the catalyst for Byron's second prose defense. Because the anonymous review attacked both the poem and the poet on moral grounds, Byron wrote a lengthy, two-fisted Reply. . . . Primarily, he protested against the use of personal matters (like the satire on Lady Byron) in the Blackwood's review, but then he launches into his own

assessment of the declining state of British letters and delivers a few criticisms concerning "Southey and his connection with the reviews, . . . the Edinburgh's policy against Pope," and "the death of Keats from a lampoon in the Quarterly" (Herman Ward 151).

Byron's third prose defense--the preface to cantos 6, 7, and 8--is a fine example of how good he was at defending himself. Initially, Byron dispenses with complaints about the inappropriateness of satirizing Lord Castlereagh of the War Office because of the man's recent suicide:

Had that man's Oligarchy died with him, they [Byron's offending stanzas] would have been suppressed; as it is, I am aware of nothing in the manner of his death or of his life to prevent the free expression of the opinions of all whom his whole existence was consumed in endeavouring to enslave. . . . I, for one of millions, looked upon him as the most despotic in intention, and the weakest in intellect that ever tyrannized over a country. (Variorum 3: 3-4)

Then Byron expands his commentary on this particular oppressor to all of those who compose "the degraded and hypocritical mass which leavens the present English generation" (Variorum 3: 5). By association, Byron redefines the word "blasphemer," and then, by being the writer of these words, he subtly links himself with the world's most wonderful "blasphemers," Socrates and Jesus Christ:

The hackneyed and lavished title of Blasphemer . . . should be welcome to all who recollect on whom it was originally bestowed. Socrates and Jesus Christ were put to death publicly as Blasphemers, and so have been and may be many who dare to oppose the most notorious abuses of the name of God and the mind of man. (Variorum 3: 5)

Coming full circle, Byron concludes his vigorous preface by alluding once more to the Castlereagh situation and then sounding forth a final warning against all the forms of oppression that he will attack in the later cantos of Don Juan:

I have no wish to trample on the dishonoured or the dead; but it would be well if the . . . [oppressors] should abate a little of the Cant which is the crying sin of this double-dealing and false-speaking time of selfish Spoilers. . . . (Variorum 3: 5)

Byron's fiery preface leads into a consideration of another feature of the poet's inclination towards provoking outrage and censorship, and that was his intolerant hatred of cant. The reverse side of this hatred was Byron's intense love of freedom, and he most clearly expresses this double-bladed disposition in a conversation with his amanuensis Lady Blessington: "There are but two sentiments to which I am constant,--a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant" (220).

The word "cant," according to Jay A. Ward, "in its early nineteenth century usage, meant to be hypocritical or insincere" (59), and, in reference to the word as it is used by Byron, M. K. Joseph states that "'Cant' recurs throughout the letters and conversations as a term defining almost everything to which Byron's satire is opposed" (284). With his acute sensibilities, Byron saw cant everywhere in England and, of course, said so: "The truth is, that in these days the grand 'primum mobile' of England is cant; cant political, cant poetical, cant religious,

cant moral; but always cant, multiplied through all the varieties of life" (Prothero 5: 542). In connecting Byron's two "constant sentiments," one might say that cant is all manner of hypocrisy--that multifarious pretense that mitigates against truth, which, in turn, is the birthplace of liberty.

Continually, Byron gives evidence of these two "sentiments" in Don Juan. For example, he opens canto 7 with a hope that his kind of writing--satire that makes us look at ourselves and laugh at all of our foibles--is not against the law:

When we know what we all are, we must bewail us,
 But ne'ertheless I hope it is no crime
 To laugh at all things--for I wish to know
What, after all, are all things--but a show?
 (7.2.5-8)

However, the possibility of this hope's becoming true is futile, because the poet and his epic satire already stand accused:

They accuse me--Me--the present writer of
 The present poem--of--I know not what--
 A tendency to under-rate and scoff
 At human power and virtue, and all that;
 And this they say in language rather rough.
 Good God! I wonder what they would be at!
 I say no more than hath been said in Dante's
 Verse, and by Solomon and by Cervantes.
 (7.3.1-8)

Byron reminds his readers that "Ecclesiastes said, 'that all is vanity'" and then drolly observes that "Most modern preachers say the same, or show it / By their examples of true Christianity" (7.6.1-3). This brings him to ask the censor: "Must I restrain me, through the fear of strife, /

From holding up the nothingness of life?" (7.6.7-8).

Since no answer is forthcoming, the beleaguered poet rages:

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
 To show ye what ye are in every way.
 (7.7.1-4)

In the next canto and in a calmer tone, Byron again identifies his purpose as far as England is concerned:

. . . how shall I relate in other Cantos
 Of what befell our hero in the land,
 Which 'tis the common cry and lie to vaunt us
 A moral country? But I hold my hand--
 For I disdain to write an Atalantis;
 But 'tis as well at once to understand,
 You are not a moral people, and you know it
 Without the aid of too sincere a poet.

What Juan saw and underwent, shall be
 My topic, with of course the due restriction
 Which is required by proper courtesy;
 And recollect the work is only fiction,
 And that I sing of neither mine nor me,
 Though every scribe, in some slight turn of
 diction, [t/o]
 Will hint allusions never meant. Ne'er doubt
This--when I speak, I don't hint, but speak out.
 (11.87-88.1-16)

Along with reaffirming his purpose, Byron gets in a healthy thrust at the critics and also forthrightly states what his style of delivery will be--loud and direct.

In canto 12 Byron pretends to be unwillingly impelled to make his moralistic asides, apologizing to his readers and blaming these digressions on his Muse and all the while punning on "dessert" and "desert":

Oh, pardon me digression--or at least
 Peruse! 'Tis always with a moral end
 That I dissert, like Grace before a feast:
 For like an aged aunt, or tiresome friend,
 A rigid guardian, or a zealous priest,
 My Muse by exhortation means to mend
 All people, at all times and in most places;

Which puts my Pegasus to these grave paces.
(12.39.1-8)

But Byron is his own Muse, and he is the one who "means to mend / All people." His didactic method is really Blakeian, because he is actually turning the established moral order inside out and reversing traditionally held virtues and vices:

But now I'm going to be immoral; now
I mean to show things really as they are,
Not as they ought to be; for I avow,
That till we see what's what in fact, we're
far [t/o]
From much improvement with that virtuous plough
Which skims the surface, leaving scarce a scar
Upon the black loam long manured by Vice,
Only to keep its corn at the same old price.
(12.40.1-8)

As Watson has observed, Byron is "attacking a conception of morality that would equate it with keeping things nice and clean"; as an alternative to this shallow and hypocritical position, Byron proposes a morality "which is aware of the truth and starts from there" (213). Granted, the truth is Byron's version of it, but one must begin somewhere, and it is true that

Truth is always strange,
Stranger than Fiction: if it could be told,
How much would novels gain by the exchange!
How differently the world would men behold!
How oft would vice and virtue places change!
The new world would be nothing to the old,
If some Columbus of the moral seas
Would show mankind their soul's Antipodes.--
(14.101.1-8)

Byron sees himself as this "Columbus of the moral seas," and with the turbulence of the times and the topsy-turvy perceptions of morality that are at play here, it is not surprising that high irony is present too--the irony of

Byron's misunderstanding readers' seeing him as a blasphemer, just as he has predicted in his preface.

Byron also subsumes politics in his attack on Britain's cant of morality. In canto 15 he claims that

In politics my duty is to show John
 Bull something of the lower world's condition.
 It makes my blood boil like the springs of Hecla,
 To see men let these scoundrel Sovereigns break
 law. [t/o]

But politics, and policy, and piety,
 Are topics which I sometimes introduce,
 Not only for the sake of their variety,
 But as subservient to a moral use;
 Because my business is to dress society,
 And stuff with sage that very verdant goose.--
 (15.92-93.5-14)

The oppression of the people by reactionary European sovereigns did indeed make Byron's "blood boil," and, even though Byron continually warns readers against making biographical interpretations of his poem, it is difficult not to do so when one considers his revolutionary roles with the Carbonari and the Greeks and then reads some of his lines like the following:

For I will teach, if possible, the stones
 To rise against Earth's tyrants. Never let it
 Be said that we still truckle unto thrones;--
 But ye--our children's children! think how we
 Showed what things were before the world was
free! [t/o]
 (8.135.4-8)

Byron's "strong love of liberty" (Blessington 220) is clearly manifested in many rebellious stanzas, including:

Raise but an arm! 'twill brush their web away,
 And, without that, their poison and their
 claws [t/o]
 Are useless. Mind, good People! what I say--
 (Or rather Peoples)--go on without pause!
 The web of these Tarantulas each day
 Increases, till you shall make common cause:

None, save the Spanish Fly and Attic Bee,
As yet are strongly stinging to be free.
(9.28.1-8)

Byron is convinced that freedom will come only when "the Mob / At last fall sick of imitating Job" (8.50.7-8) and rises against the kings. And the poet feels that that time is not far off, as he indicates with this quip: "'God save the king!' and kings! / For if he don't, I doubt if men will longer--" (8.50.1-2).

However, Byron realizes that oppression can come from the mob just as it comes from kings because he admits that "It is not that I adulate the people," and he wishes "men to be free / As much from mobs as kings--from you as me" (9.25.1 and 7-8). But even so, Byron still sees himself as "born for opposition" (15.22.8) and particularly as fighting for "the weaker side" (15.23.1). Also, he sees the fight as an ongoing one. In his view, the world that he is trying to shame into reform is so morally destitute that only revolution--a bringing about of a new way of life and a new way of looking at life--will destroy cant and cause freedom to flourish:

At first it grumbles, then it swears, and then,
Like David, flings smooth pebbles 'gainst a
giant; [t/o]
At last it takes to weapons such as men
Snatch when despair makes human hearts less
pliant. [t/o]
Then comes "the tug of war";--'twill come again,
I rather doubt; and I would fain say "fie
on't," [t/o]
If I had not perceived that Revolution
Alone can save the Earth from Hell's pollution.
(8.51.1-8)

In his Ravenna journal, Byron writes a similarly radical message: "The king-times are fast finishing. There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist; but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresaw it" (8: 26). As an English nobleman with both fame and fortune as well as the freedom of a roaming expatriate, Byron was the perfect "mouthpiece of the dumb revolutionary indignation which was seething in the breasts of the best friends and lovers of liberty in Europe" (Brandes 356). By using Don Juan to make himself "the poet of the crisis" (Trueblood 14) in the bitter and reactionary years after Waterloo, Byron, as a writer, could hardly do more to provoke outrage and censorship.

As powerful an advocate for social and political concern as Byron is in Don Juan, he is no less a defender of truth when it is in the form of art--especially in the poetry of Alexander Pope. A lifelong admirer of eighteenth-century literature, Byron believed, along with his Augustan idol, that the purpose of art is to tell the truth. In Pope, he thought that he had found "the supreme English example of a poet who is a varied and faultless technician and, at the same time, a champion of moral truth" (Joseph 295). In his defense of Pope in the Bowles controversy, Byron magnanimously maintains that Pope "is the moral poet of all civilization; and as such, let us hope that he will one day be the national poet of mankind" (Prothero 5: 560). Elsewhere, Byron writes that Pope is "the best of poets" (8: 193). It is no wonder then that

from Byron's standpoint, "the decadence of contemporary poetry was due to the [Romantic] reaction against Pope and the principles of moral and technical excellence for which he stood" (Joseph 295). Consequently, Don Juan is, among a host of other things, a poem against poetry--at least poetry as it was conceived by Byron's overly earnest contemporary poets who tended to deify the imagination and ignore Byron's view of moral truth in their breaking away from artistic standards established by Pope.

Watson has called Don Juan "the most Romantic of all Romantic poems because it is the wildest and freest" (213), but, ironically, it is also a poem in rebellion against the Romantic poetry of the day because Byron is continually emphasizing the realism and truth of the world that he is portraying. At the end of canto 8 he takes stock of his writing so far and in his offhand way characterizes exactly what he is doing in his gargantuan poem:

Reader! I have kept my word,--at least so far
 As the first Canto promised. You have now
 Had sketches of love, tempest, war--
 All very accurate, you must allow,
 And Epic, if plain truth should prove no bar;
 For I have drawn much less with a long bow
 Than my forerunners. Carelessly I sing,
 But Phoebus lends me now and then a sting.
 (8.138.1-8)

The reaction that his truth-telling poem got from women enlightened Byron about a surprising feature of Don Juan and truth. He reported to Murray that "a very pretty Italian lady" told him that she "would rather have the fame of Childe Harold for three years than an Immortality of Don Juan!" (7: 202). Byron realized then that "The

truth is that it is too true--and the women hate every thing which strips off the tinsel of Sentiment--& they are right--or it would rob them of their weapons" (7: 202). Yet the truth that too much truth can be uncomfortable is not reserved for women alone, as Byron well knew from the very beginning of his writing of Don Juan. He confirmed that when, after finishing the first canto, he wrote Moore that he thought the poem "too free for these very modest days" (6: 67-68).

But freedom--both in subject matter and style of writing--is the virtual backbone of this strange, amorphous fragment of a poem of which Byron confides:

I ne'er decide what I shall say, and this I call
 Much too poetical. Men should know why
 They write, and for what end; but, note or text,
 I never know the word which will come next.
 (9.41.5-8)

The freedom that Byron writes of is pristinely mirrored in the manner in which he writes so that the message of Don Juan truly becomes its method and vice versa.

As an artist who feels that he has to tell the truth as freely as he can and in the form that best fits him, mercurial Byron must be seen as a hero and a defiant one at that, openly challenging all repression:

And I will war, at least in words (and--should
 My chance so happen--deeds) with all who war
 With Thought;--and of Thought's foes by far most
 rude, [t/o]
 Tyrants and Sycophants have been and are.
 I know not who may conquer: if I could
 Have such a prescience, it should be no bar
 To this my plain, sworn, downright detestation
 Of every despotism in every nation.
 (9.24.1-8)

The attempts to censor Don Juan were, of course, warring with "Thought," and through his written words--in the poem itself but especially in his barrage of powerful letters--Byron was able to "conquer." Despite all his difficulties with censorship of Don Juan, Byron was able to avoid a total ban of his poem. The last completed canto was published within the last month of his life, and, despite all the vicious critics--Victorian and otherwise--Don Juan is still being read, and it is still provoking thought.

A study such as this should be concluded by the poet's own words, and the following passage certainly seems to offer an accurate portrait of both Byron and the way he felt about censorship:

he
Who neither wishes to be bound nor bind,
May still expatiate freely, as will I,
Nor give my voice to Slavery's Jackall cry.
(9.26.5-8)

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