

MARY SHELLEY'S FAIR COPYING OF *DON JUAN*

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(First published as *Mary Shelley's Fair Copying of Don Juan*, *Keats-Shelley Review*, Spring 1996, pp.221-41; printed with permission.)

(*Don Juan* is quoted by canto, stanza and line, thus: "VI, 45, 5". BLJ: *Byron's Letters and Journals* ed. Leslie A. Marchand, John Murray 1973-94. MWSL: *Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* ed. Betty T. Bennett, Johns Hopkins 1980-8. JMS: *Journals of Mary Shelley* ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, Clarendon 1987.)

The role of Mary Shelley in the transmission of Byron's work to posterity is second in importance to that of no-one else apart from William Gifford and the poet himself. She made copies of, among other things, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III,¹ *Mazeppa*, *Lines to the Po*, *the Ode to Venice*, *Francesca of Rimini*, *The Age of Bronze*, *Werner*, *The Deformed Transformed*, and last but hardly least, *Don Juan* Cantos VI-XVI.² Her manuscripts of *Mazeppa*, *the Ode to Venice*, *Werner*, *The Deformed Transformed*, *The Age of Bronze*, *The Island* and *Don Juan* VI-XVI were used as printer's copy for the first editions. Her copies of *Chillon*, *Childe Harold III*, *Mazeppa*, *Francesca*, *the Ode to Venice*, *To the Po* and *Werner* survive: of her work on *Don Juan*, only Cantos VI, VII and VIII remain.³ I wish principally in this essay to examine her *Don Juan* fair copies, and to consider the circumstances in which they were made.

After Shelley's death, on July 8th 1822, Byron's presence was something about which Mary felt ambivalent. After being two hours in his company "for the first time for about a month" she wrote in her journal for October 19th of the same year:

... incapacity & timidity always prevented my mingling in the nightly conversations of Diodati – they were as it were entirely tête-a-tête between my Shelley & Albe & thus as I have said – when Albe speaks & Shelley does not answer, it is as thunder without rain, The form of the sun without heat or light, as any familiar object might be shorn of its dearest & best attribute – & I listen with an unspeakable melancholy – that is not yet all pain. –

I am very grateful to Nora Crook for her detailed comments on the typescript. (CPW: *Lord Byron The Complete Poetical Works* ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller.)

1: Mary's copy of *Childe Harold III* – at the Sterling Library, London University ([SL] V 6 Safe) is normally stated to have the first seven stanzas in Byron's hand. See CPW II 298, or *Lord Byron VI, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage A Critical, Composite Edition*, ed. Erdman and Worrall (Garland 1991) pp. xvi, 165, and 169: "Legend has it that the first seven stanzas are in Byron's hand, the rest in Mary Shelley's hand with Byron's corrections. Yes, one can recognize Byron's hand in those first seven ..."). As the first seven stanzas are clearly in the same hand as all the rest – Mary's, as Erdman's and Worrall's photocopies, on pages 168, 172 and 175, make clear – it is hard to know how this tale began, or why it is repeated.

2: See CPW II 298; IV 448; II 298; IV 493; IV 496; V 714, 736, 741, 746, 752, 755, 759, 762 and 765; VI 690; VI 726-7; VII 119 and 131.

3: The rough draft of Cantos VI and VII is in the British Library (Ashley 5163) and is available in photocopy, with transcription and commentary, in Garland's *Lord Byron V* (1989) ed. Andrew Nicholson. That of Canto VIII is at the University of Texas: I have not been able to see it, but am grateful to Cathy Henderson of the manuscripts department there for the photocopies from which I have checked the note to VIII, 18, 8, and made the transcription of the couplet-variants of VIII 86. The rough drafts of *Mazeppa* and *Venice an Ode* are to be found in Garland's *Lord Byron I*, (1986) ed. Levine and McGann.

Mary Shelley's fair copy of Cantos VI VII and VIII is at the John Murray Archive, London, and I am grateful to the late Mr John G. Murray and Virginia Murray (also the staff at Dove Cottage, Grasmere) for allowing me to study it. Her fair copies of *Werner*, *Francesca of Rimini*, and *Venice an Ode* are also in the John Murray Archive. That of *To the Po* is in the Abinger Collection in the Bodleian; of *Mazeppa*, in the Brotherton Collection at Leeds University; of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, in the Scrope Davies Papers at the B.L.

The fullest account of Mary's relationship with Byron that I know is Ernest J. Lovell's *Byron and Mary Shelley*, *Keats-Shelley Journal* (1953) pp. 35-49. Another analysis of the changes in her fair copies of *Don Juan* will be found in the *Variorum* edition by Steffan, Steffan and Pratt (Texas 1971) I 112-13 n31, and 176-8; and an account strikingly different from that offered above is in *Byron and the Shelleys* by Jane Blumberg (Collins 1992) pp. 137 and 163. Here we are told that Mary worked on *The Two Foscari* and *Sardanapalus*, too: but in what capacity is not made clear.

The above explains that which would otherwise be an engima, why Albe has the power by his mere presence & voice of exciting such deep & shifting emotions within me. For my feelings <are> <do> <not at all> have no analogy with my opinion of him, or the subject of his conversation – (JMS II 439-40: see also MWSL I 290-1.)

The second paragraph perhaps shows a degree of naivety, with the supposed enigma readily solved: but Mary seems never to have admitted the possibility that, like all other women he met, she might find Byron attractive in himself, irrespective of any memories of her husband which his company evoked, and despite her “opinion of him” or of “the subject of his conversation”. In late August 1822 she wrote to Maria Gisborne:

Lord Byron has been [several words canceled] very kind – [half line canceled] but the Guiccioli restrains him perhaps – she being an Italian is capable of being jealous of a living corpse such as I. (MWSL I 253)

Mary’s lot during these months was even more unhappy than usual. Life with the Hunt family was tense; her widowhood, and memories of her two lost children (she had further miscarried in June 1822) made life a dreadful burden. On the last day of the year, she wrote in her diary:

No one now loves me. I love thee, my only one – I love nature – & I trust that I love all that is good in my fellow creatures – but how changed I am! Last year, having you, I sought for the affection of others – & loved them even when unjust and cold – but now my heart is truly iced – if they treat me well, I am grateful; – yes – when that is – I call thee to witness in how <ma> warm a gush my blood flows to my heart & tears to my eyes – how truly I then love them – but I am a lonely unloved thing. – Serious and absorbed – none cares to read my sorrow _____

But I would not speak of others – I care not about them. (JMS II 448)

Mary’s literary way of expressing her misery has been commented on;⁴ but whatever her private style, fair-copying in such a mood, for example, the perhaps pornographic Canto VI of *Don Juan*, cannot have been a congenial task. We may suspect that it was not a task which she would at first have anticipated with pleasure anyway: for she had, on first acquaintance with Byron’s ottava rima style, associated it with his moral disintegration. On April 27th 1819 she had written to Maria Gisborne, referring firstly to *The Vampyre* (supposed at that time to be his) and secondly to *Don Juan* Cantos I and II:

... I dare say that we shall like it better than the poetry in which he is engaged at present which is in the Beppo style – What a miserable thing it is that he should be lost as he is among the worst inhabitants of Venice – (MWSL I 96)

However, she overcame her initial distaste, as we can in part see from her use of lines from *Don Juan* in correspondence. She paraphrases III, 35, 7-8 (“ – that climax of all human ills; / The inflammation of our weekly bills”) in a letter to Maria Gisborne of March 7th 1822 (MWSL I 221); she twice misquotes I, 52, 1-2 (“Well I say nothing – but one thing I will say”)⁵ firstly in a letter to the Hunts of July 26th 1823 (MWSL I 352) and then in another to Marianne Hunt on October 10th 1824 (MWSL I 453). Finally she quotes the words of Julia at I, 194, 8 (“To love again and be again undone”) in a letter to Teresa Guiccioli on the occasion of Byron’s death, on May 16th 1824 (MWSL I 419). It is worth commenting, however, that

4: See Bonnie Rayford Neumann, *The Lonely Muse A Critical Biography of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (Salzburg 1979) p. 149 and n20.

5: This amusing line is self-quoted by Byron from *Beppo* (96, 5). He had previously used it in correspondence (BLJ III 94 and V 198): but he there borrowed it from Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic* (I i). Sheridan borrows it in turn from Mrs Slipslop at Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews*, II 3.

none of the lines which she quotes come from any of the Cantos which she has copied (Byron was his own fair copyist for Cantos I-V).

The work on *Don Juan* occupied Mary from mid-1822 to May 1823. Part of it was done in Pisa; part in Genoa. Financial worry does not seem to have been part of her motive for doing it, though doubtless all cash was welcome. She made some money writing for *The Liberal*; and on September 17th 1822 she writes to Maria Gisborne:

After my own crowns are gone, if Sir T. behaves ill, I hope to be able to support myself by my writings & mine own Shelley's Mss. At least during many long months I shall have peace as to money affairs & one evil the less is much to one whose existence is suffering alone. (MWSL I 260: see also references to her temporary financial stability at I 309 and 317).

It is hard to know when in 1822 she started work: her fair copies of Cantos VI and VII are dated (by Byron) with the year; that of Canto VIII is not dated. At the time of Shelley's death Byron had finished the composition of Cantos VI and VII; and by the end of the month – in part in reaction to the deaths of Allegra and Shelley – he had completed the horrifying Canto VIII. Canto IX (the last one to be written in Pisa) was complete by the end of September 1822; Canto X by October 6th; Canto XI by October 17th; Canto XII by December 7th; Canto XIII by February 19th 1823; Canto XIV by March 4th; Canto XV by March 25th; and Canto XVI by May 6th 1823. Nine years later, in June 1832, Mary wrote to John Murray:

The last Cantos of D.J. were written with great speed – I copied them there were scarcely any erasures and his chief delight was in sending them to me, to date the beginning & end with the name of the same month – to prove how quickly they were composed – (MWSL II 163)

Mary probably did the greater part of the work at the Shelleys' apartment in the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa, across the Arno from Byron's Palazzo Lanfranchi in Pisa; and, from September 11th, at the Casa Negroto in Genoa, a mile down the hill from the Casa Saluzzo, the establishment which she obtained for Byron⁶ and into which he moved in early October 1822. We have no references in her letters or journals to Cantos VI, VII or VIII, her work on which must have been done in the early and desperate months of her bereavement: but in correspondence, her enthusiasm for the later Cantos often runs high. On October 15th 1822 she writes to Jane Williams, also widowed, and now back in London:

I have copied for him the 10th Canto of Don Juan It is not in his fine style, but there are some beautiful & many witty things in it – (MWSL I 281)

And to Byron himself she writes, on October 21st 1822, about Canto XI:

I have nearly finished copying your savage Canto – You will cause Milman to hang himself – “non c'è altro rimedio” [Mary refers to Stanza 58] – I was much pleased with your notice of Keats [in Stanza 60] – your fashionable World is delightful – & your dove [“where?”: see Stanzas 76-85] – you mention eight years [at 76, 3] – exactly the eight years that comprizes all my years of happiness – (MWSL I 284)

Then, on December 14th of the same year, referring to Canto XII:

Your Lordships MS. was very difficult to decypher, so pardon blunders & omissions.

I liked your Canto extremely; it has only touches of your highest style of poetry, but it is very amusing & delightful. It is a comfort to get anything to gild the dark clouds now my sun is set. –

⁶: The editor of her letters is at odds with the editors of her journals on this point – compare MWSL I 259 n1 with JMS II 429 n1.

Sometimes when very melancholy I repeat your lyric in “The Deformed”, & that for a while enlivens me – (MWSL I 299)⁷

She seems to have looked forward to receiving the new Cantos as they emerged, at regular intervals. In late February 1823 she writes to him:

I have been expecting Don Juan but I fear your Lordship’s illness has been the cause of its delay – perhaps this fine weather will cure you – (MWSL I 314).

It seems that Byron expressed concern that she might find the poem offensive. But on February 25th 1823 she assures him:

Don Juan will not annoy me – I am obliged to occupy myself closely to curb in some degree the agitation that in spite of all my efforts possesses me. (MWSL I 316)

Communication between the two became intermittent. On March 7th she writes to Jane Williams:

I see very little of LB. he does not come here; & you may guess that my visits to Casa Saluzzi are, like those of Angels – “short, & far between.” (MWSL I 321).

Byron himself twice (BLJ X 52 and 69) denies that he sees either the Hunts or Mary any more than he has to. On March 30th 1823 Mary writes to him, worried that the rhythm of their literary relationship is also being broken:

The 15th Canto was so long coming even after I had heard that it was finished, that I began to suspect that you thought that you were annoying me by sending me employment. Be assured however on the contrary, that besides the pleasure it gives me to be in the slightest manner useful to your Lordship, the task itself is a delightful one to me

Is Aurora a portrait? <She is> Poor Juan I long to know how he gets out or rather into the net. Are the other Cantos to be published soon? (MWSL I 324)

On April 12th 1823 she writes:

I hear that you have begun your 16th Canto. I trust that your Lordship will make use of me, in the only way I can be of service to you as long as my residence near you gives you the opportunity (MWSL I 326).

Documentation of the detail of Mary’s routine on the work does not exist, and we do not know how much (if anything) Byron paid her. We may perhaps imagine him despatching the manuscripts, Mary receiving them within half an hour or so, spending several days on the work (copying *Mazeppa* had taken from September 30th to October 2nd 1818 – see JMS I 228) returning both them and the original drafts, with or without covering notes, and Byron then looking them over, before despatching them to John Hunt in London. What we do not know is, whether she ever saw them again, or whether she knew what happened during the process of his looking them over. To judge from those we still have, a degree of mortification might have overcome her had she seen them; for some aspects of her work met with

7: We may perhaps detect a more spontaneously positive reaction than those of Mary to *Don Juan* in this passage, written to Byron on November 16th 1822, and referring to Act I of *The Deformed Transformed*: ‘I have copied your MSS. The “Eternal Scoffer” seems a favourite of yours. The Critics, as they used to make you a Childe Harold, Giaour, & Lara all in one, will now make a compound of Satan & Caesar to form your prototype, & your 600 firebrands in Murray’s hands will be in costume. I delight in your new style more than in your former glorious one, & shall be much pleased when your fertile brain gives my fingers more work.’ (MWSL I 289. See also I 285: ‘You could not have sent me a more agreeable task than to copy your drama, but I hope you intend to continue it, it is a great favourite of mine.’)

considerable disapproval on his part, and her almost-immaculate presentation was rapidly ruined by scores of alterations. Their covert dispute over the poem's text takes on very interesting overtones, and one is never sure that Byron wouldn't have done better to copy the poem himself, so jealous does he appear about his words and meanings falling, so soon after composition, under the less committed pen of another writer – although having a fair-copy made so swiftly must, at the same time, have been very useful in enabling him to give his new work a cool critical assessment.

A question rarely asked is, why did Byron feel fair copies to be needed at all? Such recent works as *The Two Foscari*, *Sardanapalus*, *Cain*, and *The Vision of Judgement* had been sent to London (insured: BLJ VIII 147) in the only manuscripts he had created: neither attachment to his original papers nor self-consciousness about the legibility of his handwriting had stood in the way of their dispatch (and, we must presume, he never saw them again). The printer who could be relied upon to decipher the crabbed hand and bunched lines in which *Sardanapalus* was written (BLJ VIII 128, 136, or 155) could have been entrusted with the *Don Juan* drafts, in which some stanzas appear without erasure – strong evidence of previous work, perhaps on paper-scrap.

But Byron had always sent fair copies of *Don Juan*, even of Cantos I to V, when the fatigue of making them was his alone. The rough drafts of Cantos VI to XVI are on expensive paper, which has kept so well as often to seem almost pristine, and Byron had them sewn into thick bindings, as if they were of more than usual value to him. A strong attachment to them on his part may thus be guessed at, and formed, I would suggest, as important an aspect of his motive for having copies made as did consideration for the printer, or charity towards Mary Shelley. A further motive, perhaps still more important, would be the need to see the whole poem, now flowing fast, in perspective; to avoid imbalance, repetition and so on. Without a text to hand this would be hard, even for one with Byron's excellent memory.

To deal first with the aspect of Mary's work of which many readers will already have heard, namely the strictness of her morality. "I hate & despise the intrigues of married women" she writes to Jane Williams on September 18th 1822, *à propos* of Trelawny's affair with Mrs Wright, wife of the man who built the *Don Juan* and the *Bolivar* (MWSL I 264). Byron's jocular depiction of Gulbeyaz in Canto VI must have affronted her sensitivity here, with a domestic example of married women's intrigues so near at hand.

Much later, on December 27th 1830, she wrote to Trelawny, who was trying to get her assistance in publishing *Adventures of a Younger Son*:

I am sure that yours will be a book interdicted to women. – Certain words & phrases, pardoned in the days of Fielding are now justly interdicted – & any gross piece of ill-taste will make your bookseller draw back – I have named all the objectionable passages, & I beseech you to let me deal with them as I would with Ld Byrons Don Juan – when I omitted all that hurt my taste – Without this yielding on your part I shall experience great difficulty in disposing of your work – (MWSL II 120).

She was never conscious of having so much power over Byron.

In fact, not much in Cantos VI – VIII did hurt Mary's taste; but the bits which did, she refused to copy, leaving gaps for Byron to fill. The first complete line which she omits in this way is VI, 29, 8 ("From ogling all their charms from breasts to backs") which Byron has to ink-in. She has previously decided, at VI, 15, 7 (having tried out her choice of word once and erased it) that "a sincere woman's heart" makes a more acceptable effect than "a sincere woman's breast"; Byron has to ink his original word over hers. At VI, 67, 5, "Through the heaved heart the dream of a far shore" is her preference over the original "Through the heaved breast the dream of some far shore": here, instead of inking the words over hers, Byron erases and interlineates. At VI, 87, 6, "her breast of Wail" becomes "her heart of wail"; with the same result; and even the innocent VIII, 13, 8 ("May win perhaps a medal at the breast") gets the same treatment. Although the poor formation of Mary's lower-case bs is sometimes at

fault (Byron often goes over them on other words, lest the printer take them for hs) most of the above represent attempts at re-writing on her part, rejected by him.

At VIII, 22, 6, Mary refuses to collaborate with Byron's joke about wedding-nights, and sends him:

.. . like a pad,
Or hawk, or most mortals after one
Warm bout are broken into their new tricks ...

And he has to ink-in the offending word "bride;" into her gap (in the following line she also copies "into" as "to" – spoiling the scansion). She found the couplet to Canto VI Stanza 92 impossible to copy in full – even the innocent first rhyme – and gave Byron

In Catherine's reign, whom Glory
As greatest of all sovereigns

He thus had to add "still adores" and "and w—res" himself; altering his original, which has the elision "yet adores" and the uncut "and whores". By way of riposte, perhaps, he inked-over her "where" in "the where and how" at VI 99, 7, as if it might be in danger of being read as "the whore and how". In Canto VIII, the couplet to Stanza 130

But six old damsels each of seventy years,
Were all deflowered by different Grenadiers.

has also to be written by Byron into a space left by his copyist. The same fate befalls the rude opening of Canto VIII Stanza 76:

Then being taken by the tail – a taking
Fatal to warriors as to women – these ...

Mary again declines copying, and Byron, feeling either ashamed, or that he may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, re-writes, with an up-to-date reference to the Bishop of Clogher, news of whose humiliation in the pub off the Haymarket has arrived since the rough draft was written:⁸

Then being taken by the tail, a taking
Fatal to bishops as to soldiers; these ...

At VI, 65, 8, the innocent "And lips apart, which shewed the pearls beneath" may be transcribed by Mary as either, "With lips apart, which shewed the hearts beneath" or "With lips apart, which shewed the pearts beneath", depending on how her writing is read: Byron underlineates his correction. Another example of copyist being more explicit than poet intended is her substitution of "These black-eyed Virgins make the Moslems fight" for his original "These black-eyed Visions make your Moslem fight" at VIII, 114, 5; here he allows her rephrasing to stand. A taste for another kind of explicitness is shown in her substitution of "redeeming blood" for "redeeming gore" at VIII, 122, 6; here, however, he insists on the original.

Byron has to copy VIII, 95, 2 ("A slender streak of blood announced how near") but this is because Mary has missed it in turning the page.

Mary omits other words because of the partial legibility of Byron's handwriting (although "pearls" at VI, 65, 8 reads clearly enough). What problem she might have with "besiege us" at VI, 10, 5, with "pink" in the phrase "the pink of old Hexameters" at VI, 18, 3, with "spouseless" at VI, 63, 5, or with "shrink" at VIII, 99, 4, would not otherwise be clear;

8: Byron finally concluded Canto VIII on August 1st; the Bishop had been arrested on July 19th.

she leaves gaps, as she does with “Giaours” at VI, 48, 6, and “Calvin” at VII, 4, 2: Byron takes advantage of this last omission to change his mind and write “Luther” instead. The words concerned are indeed obscurely formed in his manuscript. On November 29th 1825 Mary wrote to John Howard Payne, remembering the experience:

I shall be glad to see Irvine’s letters – & the handwriting, crabbed after reading your distinct syllables, will become as clear to me as Lord Byron’s [sic] letterless scrawl – (MWSL I 495; see also her letter to Byron of October 3rd 1818: MWSL I 80).

At several other points, her concentration falters, as when at VI, 4, 2, “commonest Ambition” becomes “cormorant Ambition”. Byron has to correct this, as he also does when she omits the d in “landscape” at VI, 53, 1 and the r in “cheerful” at VI, 53, 3: both are words describing the erotic charms of Dudù. Mary often has difficulty with the words “brow” or “brows”, which she transfers as “bow” or “bows” on at least three occasions (VI, 6, 6; VI, 65, 6; and VI, 101, 8); twice she makes “transfer” “tranfer” (at VI, 16, 6, where she corrects it herself, and at VI, 81, 7, where neither Byron nor she notice it). She gives “fair” as “fare” at VI, 40, 4, and “tail’s” as “tale’s” at VII, 74, 6. Her work needed – and received – thorough checking. In working on Mazeppa she miscopies a “seperate” at line 341 and two “something’s” at lines 273 and 327, all of which Byron corrects. Perhaps her clumsiest error occurs in the note to *Don Juan* VIII, 18, 8, where she reverses the sense of the line she has just copied, and makes the soldier’s name “Grove” in real life and “Grose” in the gazette. Byron, whose rough version seems legible enough, again corrects.

Specialised military and comical foreign words both often defeat her: at VII, 12, 4 “barbette” (meaning, writes Professor McGann, “a battery set to fire over a low breastwork”)⁹ she transcribes as “barbottle”. At VII, 15, 3 “Lwow” has to await Byron’s deciphering, and at VII, 66, 5 she leaves another gap for him to write “Nicolaiew” (at VII, 6, 8 she has spelled it, with a more Slavonic precision, “Nicolaiev”; but Byron has insisted on the French w). At VII, 17, 2 “Kocloboski” has a syllable added and becomes “Kocloboski”, which puts the scansion out: Byron deletes the offending o. A hard crux is the Russian name at VII, 25, 4: Mary conscientiously reads “Schitchitzkoff” from the smudged original, which could be “Schttkritzhoff”, but Byron, contrary to his habit, will not allow such blatant indecency, decorates her capital S to make it a T, and then over-inks the first t and the second hi – with what intention is not clear. At VIII, 46, 3, 3, Byron has to identify the Dutch engineer as “Cohorn”.

The most common reason for his altering her fair copy is that she has lower-cased a capital. He capitalised in part after the manner of Pope or of Fielding, that is, after a fashion once standard, but by the 1820s abandoned by most printers:¹⁰ in part after an idiosyncratic and haphazard system of his own, to which he was very attached. In the first five cantos of *Don Juan*, William Gifford and Thomas Davison, Murray’s editor and printer, had ignored his clear requirements, but, perhaps in part out of respect for Gifford’s judgement, he had never protested. Having the party responsible closer to hand, and less awe-inspiring, perhaps made him feel more strongly about his capitals; and few stanzas pass without his violently uppercasing at least one letter – often so violently as to render a whole syllable illegible, making it necessary for him to delete the entire word, and interlineate over what had been otherwise a perfectly good copy. Here are two examples: Canto VI Stanza 17, and Canto VII

9: CPW V 723.

10: Readers interested in this point could perhaps start by looking at John Smith, *The Printer’s Grammar* (1755) pp. 50-1, and Philip Luckombe, *History and Art of Printing* (1771) pp. 248-9; then Caleb Stower, *The Printer’s Grammar* (1808) pp. 60-1, and John Johnson, *Typographia* (1824) Volume II pp. 32-3. Pope was in fact not at all consistent with regard to capitalisation of nouns, and seems to have become less attached to the convention as time went by. See Foxon and McLaverty, *Pope and the Early Eighteenth Century Book Trade* (Oxford 1991) Chapters 4 and 5. The implication here is that the *Twickenham* Pope, in adhering to the capitalisation and italics of the first editions, would not have had Pope’s approval.

of her letters to make them look joint property – a new idea seems to have occurred to him, and, after line 292 (*And left me twice so doubly lone*) he added the desolate lines 293-9, vertically in Mary's right hand margin:

Lone as the corse within it's shroud,
 Lone as a solitary Cloud
 A single Cloud on a sunny day
clear,
 While all the rest of Heaven is <gay>
 A frown upon the Atmosphere
to appear
 That hath no business <there or here>
 When skies are blue & earth is gay. –

Notice that he is writing – and revising – straight on to Mary's version. Whether he was musing on his post-separation loneliness with her present, or whether he had just seen another chance to get an anti-Wordsworth reference into a poem already laden with anti-Wordsworth references, or both, we shall never know. But it may have represented the kind of intimate collaborative moment about which Mary was, in 1822 and 1823, still feeling nostalgic.

At *Don Juan* VIII, 84, 8, Byron may harbour the suspicion that Mary has copied either "To the live leg still slung the severed head" or even "To the live leg still sung the severed head": only infra-red or ultra-violet could tell us, so assertive is the smudge with which he has tried to render the error unseen for all time.

One would like very much to know whether any communication passed between them other than the brief notes from Mary, printed above: at four points Byron leaves a major substantive decision to be made between variants,¹² and Mary's sole choice seems to be the one which has determined the text for posterity. At VI, 2, 7-8 the draft reads (deletions unboldfaced, in pointed brackets):

Men with their heads reflect on this and that –
 But women with their hearts or – <h/>Heaven knows what!
 –
or
 –
 <Man's>
 <The> <pensive part is mostly in the head>
 Man with his head reflects – (as Spurzheim tells –)
 But <w/>Women with the heart – or something else. -
 –
[or]
 –
(now & then)
 Man's pensive part is <mostly in> the head –
the
 <But> Woman's <in the> heart – or any thing instead.

Mary rejects the explicit second and third thoughts, and opts for the first. At VIII, 86, 7-8, Byron writes, first,

And that outrageous <appetite> appetite for lies

12: In his own fair-copies, Byron often left line-variants for his collaborators to choose from. A typical example is that for the last line to *Don Juan* III, 57, where he leaves three possibilities, and writes "Dr Murray Choose one of the three – yrs ever Byn." (Sterling Library MSS, Sheet 4 side 2, right-hand margin, not recorded in CPW); or *Don Juan* III, 16, 5, where Murray can choose between *a bidet* and *teapot, tray* "in case the other piece of feminine furniture frightens you – Bn." (Sterling Library MSS, Sheet 1 side 4, right-hand margin, or CPW V 698).

most
 Which <most> of all doth Man<ki> characterize.
 –
 [or]
 –
 with for Souls,
 Which Satan angles <there withal> like flies.) –

Not being satisfied with leaving just this choice to the world, he then adds, vertically in the right-hand margin,

–
 or
 –
 (The twigs which Satan limes for human flies.)

Here Mary copies the second variant – and it has been the reading ever since. Did she consult with Byron? With Leigh and Marianne Hunt? With anyone? Byron seems to have been happy with her decisions – unless he was, once he had launched the variants on to the world, fatalistically indifferent (two further variant-clusters left to her to choose from are the couplets to Canto VI, Stanza 19 and Canto VII, Stanza 54).

Theorists who argue that text is established as much by social process as by isolated creativity¹³ seem to me to be supported by this last element of the Byron-Mary Shelley partnership – but by few others. Byron allows Mary to make the four decisions which he cannot himself make; he learns how objectionable certain lines may be, via her rejection of them; but he counter-rejects far more of her rejections than he accepts, and is impatient at most of them. (The deterministic theory being a capacious one, however, both her reactions and his impatience may in turn be analysed as parts of the social process whereby text is established.)

That one reason for Mary's revisions to the texts Byron sent her was Wollstonecraftian, there can be no doubt. The first and ninth lines of Canto VI read, antithetically, in rough:

“There is a Tide in the affairs of Men ...
 There is a tide too in the Affairs of Women ...

Mary lower-cases all the capitals, and rejects “too” in line 9, perhaps on the grounds that its insistence on the difference between the tides is lewd and patronising. And Byron, though no friend to feminism, allows her change to stand. The questions, how far should editors respect his apparent embarrassment, how far should they assume that he'd rather have kept the “too”, and even, how far should they assume that he noticed Mary's omission, are very interesting.

It has been argued that Byron's quarrel with Mary over the text of his greatest work cools with Canto VIII;¹⁴ and it may be true that he make fewer corrections there. However, in the very last stanza he inks-over the first four letters of “Muezzin's”, re-upper-cases its m, and adds two punctuation marks – an exclamation-mark after “heard no more”, and his much-favoured emphatic dash after the final full stop (which last he may have had to add anyway, for Mary often leaves them out). We have no guarantee that with the fair copy of Canto IX the drama did not revive. Was it, for instance, her refusal to copy the disillusioned lines about marriage at the couplet of IX, Stanza 75 – or to copy the “pedestrian Paphians” Stanza (XI, 30) which caused him to rewrite them?

13: See CPW V xxii: “Byron expected and even welcomed such minor interventions in his texts by friends who supplied him with editorial and copying help”. See also McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, pp. 34-5, 43-4, 51, 75 and 113. For an effective riposte, see *ibid.*, p. 126. Simple miscopying is often what Mary is guilty of, rather than creative collaboration.

14: See the Texas *Variorum* edition, I 113n 31; or Blumberg, *op.cit.* p. 137.

The story of the end of the relationship between Mary and Byron is a depressing one. For much of the first half of 1823 Byron was, with ruthless commonsense, attempting to persuade her to go back to England, the better to provide for Percy, her son (on Christmas Day 1822 he assured Murray that “Mrs. S I believe will go to England in the Spring” – BLJ X 69). She hated the idea, and was very distressed that he should take the part of the feudalistic Sir Timothy Shelley, her father-in-law, whom she suspected of wishing to separate her from the boy (MWSL I 315-16, 318, 320: see also BLJ X 78 for Byron’s letter to Sir Timothy Shelley about the child). Byron offered to pay her fare, but for reasons which have been discussed (MWSL I 345 n4) the money never reached her. Meantime other developments were occurring. A doom-filled letter from Mary to Jane Williams on April 10th 1823 (MWSL I 328-31) relates, firstly, Byron’s advice about returning (“... he piques himself on giving good advice & I must follow it, or lose my credit with him – which stands greatly I believe on my known admiration of his writings and my docility in attending to him” – MWSL I 328) and secondly, the communication Byron has received from the London Greek Committee, and his keenness to go to Greece “... if they prove to him that the Provisional Government will be glad of his presence” (MWSL I 329). Two more letters to Jane, of May 31st and early July, put a very disillusioned interpretation on the turn events have taken:

LB. is fixed on Greece – he gets rid of two burthens; the G – & the Liberal – the first is natural, though I pity her – the second ought not to be, and need not be, but so it is. (MWSL I 341).

Will you let my father know what I have said of my affairs, & explain to him at the same time the primum mobile of LB actions – Meanness – the Greek Expedition will not blind you – thus he walks off triumphantly from these shores with his untouched thousands, and he has already p[r]epared many designs for their safe analyssis [sic: query, “anabasis”?] from their Greek journey – the Reatreat [sic] of his 9,000 will be worthy of the pen of another Zenophon [sic]. (MWSL I 345).

Byron left Genoa for Greece – with Trelawny – on July 13th 1823 (see BLJ X 212 for his letter of the 14th to John Hunt, giving orders about the publication of *Don Juan*). Having refused to see Mary, he requested that she go to the Casa Saluzzo as he left, in order to comfort Teresa. Mary had already written Teresa three letters, commiserating with her, and declining Teresa’s offer to reconcile her and Byron. Part of Teresa’s French translation of Mary’s Italian is thus translated into English:

Dear Contessina ... the feeling of hostility is so painful that it is a great consolation to me to find that the poison has not reached you. I thank you truly for your offers – but if I am to understand that you want to mediate between Lord Byron and myself, I fear that you will not succeed. I felt no repugnance from the idea of accepting obligations and kindnesses from a friend – and I imagined, or to put it better, I flattered myself that LB would be glad to bind me with ties not only of friendship but also of gratitude. But now all is over – and he who has no esteem for me cannot be my Benefactor.

Ld Byron having said that it would be disagreeable for him to see me, you realize that I cannot have the pleasure of calling on you, but I would be charmed to see you here. (MWSL I 346).

Mary’s letter to Jane Williams of July 23rd says the rest:

Lord Byron, Trelawney Pierino Gamba &c sailed for Greece on the 17th Ult. I did not see the former. His unconquerable avarice prevented him from supplying me with money, & a remnant of shame caused him to avoid me. (MWSL I 349)

It is possible to make some guesses as to what all this documentation indicates. Firstly, whether or not Mary was in love with Byron,¹⁵ she admired him greatly, and her misery over

15: A voice strongly in favour of this idea will be found at *Moon in Eclipse A Life of Mary Shelley* by Jane Dunn (Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1978) pp. 263 – 264. However, Muriel Spark, at *Mary Shelley* (Constable 1988) takes an opposite position on p. 103; and Eileen Bigland on p. 209 of *Mary Shelley* (Cassell 1959) appears implicitly to

the loss of Shelley would be exacerbated by the idea that Byron's regard for her was lessening in addition, and that thus the climacteric period of her life had closed. His coldness in the face of her attempts, via the fair-copying, to preserve at least their friendship, must have been very painful; and her cynicism at his motives in going to Greece seems defensive.

Byron for his part would seem to be trying to distance himself, firstly from poetry – see the ostentatious speed with which he wrote Canto after Canto of *Don Juan* – but secondly, and in much greater measure, from the oppressiveness of “absurd womankind” (BLJ X 142)¹⁶ against whose wishes his work on the epic had been resumed,¹⁷ whose insatiability he had celebrated in Cantos V and VI, and also in Cantos IX to XVI. It is worth reflecting that the last stanzas of the poem describe two people coming down to breakfast in a state of acute post-coital depression. That Byron should be obliged (by charity, politeness and routine) to dispatch his verse monthly to a female copyist, who seemed to be trying and neuter it by various methods, would not have helped his state of mind.

Another reason for his desire to see Mary out of the country may have been the way she pressed him to be more friendly to those incorrigible breeders the Hunts (MWSL I 288-90) by his association with whom (over The Liberal) he was becoming embarrassed – despite his disclaimers – and to be more generous to the hated Claire Claremont, from whom he had himself bred without success, and who was, by the middle of 1823, planning to work in Russia (MWSL I 306, 312, 321; JMS II 457-8). Eight days after Byron's departure, Mary left Italy for England, where she came to an accommodation of sorts with Sir Timothy Shelley (JMS II 468 n1) and discovered that a dramatisation of *Frankenstein* had made her famous (MWSL I 378).

A DESCRIPTION OF MARY'S *DON JUAN* FAIR COPIES

The copies are half-bound in orange Morocco. The bifolia on which Mary writes are of uniform paper throughout, and have a watermark consisting of “G B A” on the left-hand side, and a lion crowned and rampant on a shield on the right-hand side. The text consists of the following:

The Preface to Cantos VI, VII and VIII in Byron's autograph, on one folio sheet laid sideways, and one half sheet. Watermark “G M” – the same paper as the rough drafts of Cantos XIII – XVI.

CANTO VI is on eight bifolia, two being divided. Mary has numbered the sheets as follows: 1-4; <4/>5-8; 9-10 split from 11-12; 13-16; 17-20; 21-24; 29-30 split from 31-32; 33-blank. Byron has numbered the upper-left-hand corner of page 1, “Canto 6th.” He has similarly marked the upper-right-hand corner of the first page of each fourth sheet, that is: 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29, and 33. He has put an aborted “C” at the top of page 31, and written “Canto 6th.” across the top of the last blank page.

CANTO VII is on five bifolia, all complete. Four missing numbers in Mary's sequence perhaps indicate numbering beforehand and then one bifolium lost or damaged: 1-4; 5-8; 9-12; 13-16; 17-20; (21-4 missing); 25-6. Byron has numbered the upper-right-hand corner of

disagree as well (“... her whole being was wrapped up in the memory of Shelley”). Ernest Lovell, in the *Keats-Shelley Journal* article cited above, takes a Freudian line.

Lady Blessington – who mocked Medwin because Byron “hummed” him – was probably a victim of the same jocularly when she reported Byron as saying that Southey's rumour of his sleeping with both Mary and Claire angered him because of “the bad taste of loving a woman as Mrs Shelley” (see Blessington, *Conversations*, ed. Lovell p. 156n.) More Blessington-rumoured vilification of Mary by Byron is reported by Henry Crabb Robinson at *His Very Self and Voice*, pp. 371-2.

16: The phrase comes from Scott's *The Antiquary*, Chapter 6; see also BLJ IX 21.

17: See the analyses by Jerome McGann at CPW V 714, and by Andrew Nicholson at *Byron V* (Garland 1991) xv – xviii.

page 1, “Canto 7th.” He has similarly marked the upper-right-hand corner of the first page of each fourth sheet, that is: 5, 9, 13, 17 (21 is missing) and 25. Page 26 is marked “Canto 7th.” in the upper-left-hand corner.

CANTO VIII is on eight bifolia, all complete. Mary’s numbering goes: 1-4; <4/>5-8; 9-12; 13-16; 17-20; 21-24; 25-28; 29-32 (although we look in vain for the “32”). She also misses numbering the sixty-fifth stanza “LXV” in turning from page 14 to page 15, numbering it “LXVI” instead, and continuing the error to the end. Byron, who often makes similar mistakes even in Arab numbering, pays no attention. He has numbered the upper-left-hand corner of page 1, “1st”, and the upper-right-hand corner, “Canto 8th.” He has similarly marked the upper-right-hand corner of page 3, and then the upper-right-hand corner of the first page of each fourth sheet, that is: 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25 and 29.

Mary – whose ruled lines are sometimes visible – starts by copying two stanzas to a side: Canto VI pages 1, 2, 3, and 4 have this number approximately. But page 5 has nearly three stanzas, page 6 has three stanzas, page 7 has two full stanzas and large chunks of two more; and soon Mary has doubled the amount of text on each page from what seemed her earliest plan.