

### *Don Juan*

Byron worked on *Don Juan* from 1818 until his death, publishing it piecemeal from 1819 to 1824. His immediate poetic inspiration for his satirical reworking of the *Don Juan* legend was *The Monks and the Giants* (1817), by his friend John Hookham Frere. In this, he said, he discovered the power of the *ottava rima* rhyme scheme (abababcc) that drives his own poem. His models for *Don Juan*'s rambling episodic format were the serio-comic romances of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian writers Pulci, Ariosto, and Berni. Byron, however, did more with these influences than anyone could have hoped or dreamed. The flexible structure allowed him to range widely, moving with ease from high-flown philosophical reflections to the most trivial minutiae, and back again—sometimes within the same stanza. In the guise of a garrulous raconteur, Byron was able to comment seriously on English and European politics, the hypocrisy of sexual mores, the falseness of conventional morals, and the often painful complexities of human emotions.

At the same time, *Don Juan* remains a comic goldmine. All forms of wit—satire, wordplay, parody, just plain silliness—confront the reader, and no cultural shibboleth escapes Byron's mockery. For this reason, the poem was met with outrage and horror upon its publication. Indeed, Byron's own mistress, Teresa Guiccioli, found it immoral, but although he stopped writing it at her request in 1821, he resumed again in 1822. Friends and critics alike lamented what they saw as Byron's lack of tact, his lack of taste, and his lack of decency. He was attacked for making his personal life public (the portrait of Juan's mother, Donna Inez, in the first canto was agreed to be a satirical picture of Lady Byron), and for writing a poem "not ... didactic of any thing but mischief." Byron himself famously insisted that he had written the poem only "to giggle and make giggle," and continued writing.

Byron's protagonist is a many-layered creation. The story of the great seducer was first told by Tirso de Molina (Gabriel Téllez) in *El Burlador de Sevilla y convidado di piedra* ("The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest," 1616?); it subsequently inspired such masterpieces as Molière's *Don Juan ou Le Festin de pierre* (1665), Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* (1676), and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787). Apparently Byron first encountered the story in a pantomime (see Canto 1.7, below). But Byron's *Don Juan* (pronounced, in the English manner, Joo-an, with the stress on the first syllable), like his poem, is more than the sum of his sources. He is, first and foremost, a parody

of the famous Don Juan, for he is a passive fellow, seduced and sweet-natured rather than seducing and ruthless. He is also a parodic version of the epic hero figure (including Byron's own most famous creation, Childe Harold), and by extension, of Byron himself; throughout the poem Byron uses Juan to play on the public notion of what it meant to be "Byron."

*Don Juan* incorporates three chronological levels: Byron wrote it from 1818 to 1824, using his memories of the England in which he moved from 1812 to 1816, but Juan lives in the late eighteenth century. The narrative voice is carefully constructed; it evidently both is and is not meant to be Byron. This subversion of certainty pervades the poem at every level. Yet paradoxically, the effect it creates is often naturalistic. "Confess—you dog!" Byron wrote to his friend Douglas Kinnaird about the poem in 1819, asking "is it not life?—is it not the thing?"

from *Don Juan*

"Difficile est proprie communia dicere."<sup>1</sup>

Horace, *Epistola ad Pisones*

DEDICATION<sup>2</sup>

1

Bob Southey! You're a poet—Poet Laureate,  
And representative of all the race;  
Although 'tis true that you turned out a Tory<sup>3</sup> at  
Last—yours has lately been a common case:  
5 And now, my epic renegade! what are ye at,  
With all the Lakers<sup>4</sup> in and out of place?

<sup>1</sup> *Difficile ... dicere* Latin: It is hard to treat in your own way what is common.

<sup>2</sup> *DEDICATION* This Dedication is an attack on Robert Southey (1774–1843), then England's Poet Laureate, although Byron also makes jokes at the expense of other poets (especially Coleridge and Wordsworth). Southey had spread the rumor that Byron and Shelley participated in a "league of incest" when they were living in Switzerland (Byron was at that time conducting an affair with Mary Shelley's stepsister, Clair Clairmont. Southey believed them to be half-sisters, and further believed that both had sex with both men). Less personally, Byron felt that Southey had played the part of a traitor when he abandoned his early republican ideals and became a wholehearted supporter of the increasingly conservative government. Nonetheless, when he decided to publish the first two cantos anonymously, Byron had the Dedication omitted; he felt it was cowardly to attack Southey anonymously. The stanzas were first published in 1833.

<sup>3</sup> *Tory* Supporter of the conservative group in Parliament; the Tories were opposed to a more republican political stance, which Southey once assumed.

<sup>4</sup> *Lakers* The name applied by the *Edinburgh Review* to Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth, who all resided in the Lake District at one time or another.

A nest of tuneful persons, to my eye  
Like "four and twenty Blackbirds in a pye;"<sup>5</sup>

2

"Which pye being opened they began to sing"  
10 (This old song and new simile holds good),  
"A dainty dish to set before the King,"  
Or Regent,<sup>6</sup> who admires such kind of food;  
And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,  
But like a hawk encumbered with his hood,  
15 Explaining Metaphysics to the nation—  
I wish he would explain his Explanation.<sup>7</sup>

3

You, Bob! are rather insolent, you know,  
At being disappointed in your wish  
To supersede all warblers here below,  
20 And be the only Blackbird in the dish;  
And then you overstrain yourself, or so,  
And tumble downward like the flying fish  
Gasping on deck, because you soar too high, Bob,  
And fall, for lack of moisture quite a-dry, Bob!<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *pye* Byron here makes a pun on the familiar nursery rhyme. Henry James Pye (1745–1813) had been Poet Laureate before Southey.

<sup>6</sup> *Regent* The Prince of Wales (later George IV) was appointed Prince Regent in 1811, after his father, George III, had become permanently incapacitated for ruling.

<sup>7</sup> *I wish ... his Explanation* Coleridge's philosophical prose was notoriously vague and hard to follow.

<sup>8</sup> *a-dry, Bob* Slang for sex without ejaculation.

4

And Wordsworth, in a rather long "Excursion"  
(I think the quarto holds five hundred pages),<sup>1</sup>  
I has given a sample from the vasty version  
Of his new system to perplex the sages;  
'Tis poetry—at least by his assertion,  
And may appear so when the dog-star rages<sup>2</sup>—  
And he who understands it would be able  
To add a story to the Tower of Babel.

5

You—Gentlemen! by dint of long seclusion  
From better company, have kept your own  
At Keswick,<sup>3</sup> and, through still continued fusion  
Of one another's minds, at last have grown  
To deem as a most logical conclusion,  
That Poesy has wreaths for you alone:  
There is a narrowness in such a notion,  
Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes  
for Ocean.

6

I would not imitate the petty thought,  
Nor coin my self-love to so base a vice,  
For all the glory your conversion brought,  
Since gold alone should not have been its price.  
You have your salary; was't for that you wrought?  
And Wordsworth has his place in the Excise.<sup>4</sup>  
You're shabby fellows—true—but poets still,  
And duly seated on the Immortal Hill.

<sup>1</sup> *Wordsworth ... pages* Byron here refers to Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814). It was presented as a portion of a projected philosophical love poem, *The Recluse*, which Wordsworth never completed.

<sup>2</sup> *dog-star rages* Sirius, ascendant during the hottest days of the summer, was once believed to have a maddening influence.

<sup>3</sup> *Keswick* Of the Lake Poets only Southey lived at Keswick; Coleridge had moved there with his family in 1800, but he was no longer living there in 1819. Wordsworth lived nearby, at Grasmere.

<sup>4</sup> *Wordsworth ... Excise* In 1813, Wordsworth had been appointed Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland (a sinecure), through the influence of his patron Lord Lonsdale. In gratitude, he dedicated *The Excursion* to Lonsdale.

7

Your bays<sup>5</sup> may hide the baldness of your brows—  
50 Perhaps some virtuous blushes—let them go—  
To you I envy neither fruit nor boughs—  
And for the fame you would engross below,  
The field is universal, and allows  
Scope to all such as feel the inherent glow:  
55 Scott, Rogers, Campbell, Moore and Crabbe,<sup>6</sup> will try  
'Gainst you the question with posterity.

8

For me, who, wandering with pedestrian Muses,  
Contend not with you on the winged steed,  
I wish your fate may yield ye, when she chooses,  
60 The fame you envy, and the skill you need;  
And, recollect, a poet nothing loses  
In giving to his brethren their full meed  
Of merit, and complaint of present days  
Is not the certain path to future praise.

9

He that reserves his laurels for posterity  
(Who does not often claim the bright reversion)  
Has generally no great crop to spare it, he  
Being only injured by his own assertion;  
And although here and there some glorious rarity  
70 Arise like Titan<sup>7</sup> from the sea's immersion,  
The major part of such appellants go  
To—God knows where—for no one else can know.

10

If, fallen in evil days on evil tongues,  
Milton appealed to the Avenger, Time,  
75 If Time, the Avenger, execrates his wrongs,  
And makes the word "Miltonic" mean "sublime,"  
He deigned not to belie his soul in songs,  
Nor turn his very talent to a crime;

<sup>5</sup> *bays* Bay, or laurel, leaves were awarded both to military heroes and to poets (hence the term "poet laureate"). Julius Caesar was allegedly gratified with his because they hid the fact that he was bald. Southey was not bald, and this particular insult is striking, given that Byron himself had frequently commented on Southey's good looks.

<sup>6</sup> *Scott* Sir Walter Scott, poet and novelist (1771–1832); *Rogers* Samuel Rogers, poet (1763–1855); *Campbell* Thomas Campbell, poet (1777–1844); *Moore* Thomas Moore, poet (1779–1852); *Crabbe* George Crabbe, poet (1754–1832).

<sup>7</sup> *Titan* The Latin name for Helios, the Sun God.

80 He did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,  
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.

11  
Think'st thou, could he—the blind Old Man—arise  
Like Samuel from the grave,<sup>1</sup> to freeze once more  
The blood of monarchs with his prophecies  
Or be alive again—again all hoar  
85 With time and trials, and those helpless eyes,  
And heartless daughters—worn—and pale—and  
poor;<sup>2</sup>  
Would *he* adore a sultan? *he* obey  
The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh?<sup>3</sup>

12  
Cold-blooded, smooth-faced, placid miscreant!  
90 Dabbling its sleek young hands in Erin's gore,  
And thus for wider carnage taught to pant,  
Transferred to gorge upon a sister shore,  
The vulgarest tool that Tyranny could want,  
With just enough of talent, and no more,  
95 To lengthen fetters by another fixed,  
And offer poison long already mixed.

13  
An orator of such set trash of phrase  
Ineffably—legitimately vile,  
That even its grossest flatterers dare not praise,  
100 Nor foes—all nations—condescend to smile,  
Not even a sprightly blunder's spark can blaze  
From that Ixion grindstone's ceaseless toil,<sup>4</sup>  
That turns and turns to give the world a notion  
Of endless torments and perpetual motion.

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel from the grave* See 1 Samuel 28.13–14.

<sup>2</sup> [Byron's note] Pale, but not cadaverous:—Milton's two elder daughters are said to have robbed him of his books, besides cheating and plaguing him in the economy of his house, &c. His feelings on such an outrage, both as a parent and a scholar, must have been singularly painful. Hayley compares him to Lear. See part third, *Life of Milton*, by W. Hayley (or Hailey, as spelt in the edition before me).

<sup>3</sup> *Castlereagh* Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh (1769–1822), a politician widely reviled at this time as reactionary.

<sup>4</sup> *Ixion ... toil* For attempting to rape Hera, Ixion was bound to a wheel that rolled forever through Hades.

14  
105 A bungler even in its disgusting trade,  
And botching, patching, leaving still behind  
Something of which its masters are afraid,  
States to be curbed, and thoughts to be confined,  
Conspiracy or Congress to be made—  
110 Cobbling at manacles for all mankind—  
A tinkering slave-maker, who mends old chains,  
With God and Man's abhorrence for its gains.

15  
If we may judge of matter by the mind,  
Emasculated to the marrow *It*  
115 Hath but two objects, how to serve, and bind,  
Deeming the chain it wears even men may fit,  
Eutropius of its many masters,<sup>5</sup> blind  
To worth as freedom, wisdom as to Wit,  
Fearless—because *no* feeling dwells in ice,  
120 Its very courage stagnates to a vice.

16  
Where shall I turn me not to *view* its bonds,  
For I will never *feel* them?—Italy!  
Thy late reviving Roman soul desponds  
Beneath the lie this State-thing breathed o'er  
thee—  
125 Thy clanking chain, and Erin's yet green wounds,  
Have voices—tongues to cry aloud for me.  
Europe has slaves—allies—kings—armies still,  
And Southey lives to sing them very ill.

17  
Meantime—Sir Laureate—I proceed to dedicate,  
130 In honest simple verse, this song to you,  
And, if in flattering strains I do not predicate,  
'Tis that I still retain my "buff and blue";<sup>6</sup>  
My politics as yet are all to educate:  
Apostasy's so fashionable, too,

<sup>5</sup> [Byron's note] For the character of Eutropius, the eunuch and minister at the court of Arcadius, see Gibbon. [See Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. 32.]

<sup>6</sup> *buff and blue* The colors of the Whig Club, and of the cover of the leading Whig periodical, the *Edinburgh Review*.

To keep *one* creed's a task grown quite Herculean;  
Is it not so, my Tory, ultra-Julian?<sup>1</sup>

### Canto 1

1  
I want a hero: an uncommon want,  
When every year and month sends forth a new one,  
I'll, after cloying the gazettes with cant,  
The age discovers he is not the true one;  
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,  
I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan—  
We all have seen him in the pantomime,  
Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

2  
Vernon, the butcher Cumberland, Wolfe, Hawke,  
Prince Ferdinand, Granby, Burgoyne, Keppel, Howe,  
Evil and good, have had their tithe of talk,  
And filled their sign posts then, like Wellesley<sup>2</sup> now;  
Each in their turn like Banquo's monarchs stalk,  
Followers of fame, "nine farrow" of that sow:<sup>3</sup>  
France, too, had Buonaparte and Dumourier  
Recorded in the *Moniteur* and *Courier*.<sup>4</sup>

[Byron's note] I allude not to our friend Landor's hero, the traitor Count Julian, but to Gibbon's hero, vulgarly yclept "The Apostate." [The Emperor Julian was raised as a Christian, but returned to the worship of the Roman gods before becoming emperor in 361.]

<sup>1</sup> *Vernon* Admiral Edward Vernon (1684–1757); *Cumberland* William, Duke of Cumberland (1721–65), whose victory over the Young Pretender at Culloden (1746) was notorious for its brutality, and whose nickname was "Billy the Butcher"; *Wolfe* General James Wolfe (1726–59); *Hawke* Edward, Lord Admiral Hawke (1715–81); *Ferdinand* Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick (1721–92); *Granby* John Manners, Marquess of Granby (1721–90); *Burgoyne* General John Burgoyne (d. 1792); *Keppel* Augustus, Lord Admiral Keppel (1725–86); *Howe* Richard, Lord Admiral Howe (1725–99); *Wellesley* Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. Wellington Street and Waterloo Bridge were both opened on the anniversary of Waterloo, in 1817.

<sup>2</sup> *Each in ... sow* See Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 4.1.64–65, 112–24.

<sup>3</sup> *Dumourier* Charles-François Duperier Dumouriez (1739–1823), French general. The *Moniteur* and *Courier* were French newspapers.

3  
Barnave, Brissot, Condorcet, Mirabeau,  
Petion, Clootz, Danton, Marat, La Fayette,<sup>5</sup>  
Were French, and famous people, as we know:  
20 And there were others, scarce forgotten yet,  
Joubert, Hoche, Marceau, Lannes, Desaix, Moreau<sup>6</sup>  
With many of the military set,  
Exceedingly remarkable at times,  
But not at all adapted to my rhymes.

4  
25 Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,  
And still should be so, but the tide is turned;  
There's no more to be said of Trafalgar,  
'T is with our hero quietly inurned;  
Because the army's grown more popular,  
30 At which the naval people are concerned;  
Besides, the prince is all for the land-service,  
Forgetting Duncan, Nelson, Howe, and Jervis.<sup>7</sup>

5  
Brave men were living before Agamemnon<sup>8</sup>  
And since, exceeding valorous and sage,

<sup>5</sup> *Barnave* Antoine-Pierre-Joseph Barnave (1761–93); *Brissot* Jean-Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754–93); *Condorcet* Marie-Jean-Antoine, marquis de Condorcet (1743–94); *Mirabeau* Honoré-Gabriel Riquetti, comte de Mirabeau (1749–91); *Petion* Jérôme Petion de Villeneuve (1753–94); *Clootz* Jean-Baptiste, baron de Clootz (1755–94); *Danton* Georges-Jacques Danton (1759–94); *Marat* Jean-Paul Marat (1744–93); *La Fayette* Marie-Jean-Paul, marquis de La Fayette (1757–1834). All those listed were French Revolutionaries. Mirabeau died of natural causes, Marat was assassinated, and La Fayette was still alive; the rest all perished in the Terror that followed the French Revolution. Clootz, who changed his name to Anacharsis Clootz and nominated himself "l'orateur du genre humain," is a clue to Byron's plans for the conclusion of his unfinished epic: see his letter to John Murray on 16 February 1821 (below).

<sup>6</sup> *Joubert ... Moreau* Barthélemy-Catherine Joubert (1769–99), Louis Lazare Hoche (1768–97); François Séverin Marceau-Desgravières (1769–96); Jean Lannes, duc de Montebello (1769–1809), Louis-Charles-Antoine Desaix de Voysieux (1768–1800); and Jean-Victor Moreau (1763–1813), were generals in the French Revolutionary Army.

<sup>7</sup> *Duncan* Adam, Lord Admiral Duncan (1731–1804); *Nelson* Horatio, Lord Admiral Nelson (1758–1805), killed at Trafalgar; *Jervis* John, Lord Admiral Jervis (1735–1823); for Howe, see note to line 12.

<sup>8</sup> [Byron's note] "Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona," &c.—HORACE." [Agamemnon was the king of the Greeks and leader of the Greek expedition against Troy in Homer's *Iliad*.]

35 A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;  
But then they shone not on the poet's page,  
And so have been forgotten:—I condemn none,  
But can't find any in the present age  
Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);  
40 So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

6  
Most epic poets plunge "in medias res"<sup>1</sup>  
(Horace makes this the heroic tumpike road),  
And then your hero tells, when'er you please,  
What went before—by way of episode,  
45 While seated after dinner at his ease,  
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,  
Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,  
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

7  
That is the usual method, but not mine—  
50 My way is to begin with the beginning;  
The regularity of my design  
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,  
And therefore I shall open with a line  
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)  
55 Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,  
And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

8  
In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,  
Famous for oranges and women—he  
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,  
60 So says the proverb—and I quite agree;  
Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,  
Cadiz<sup>2</sup> perhaps—but that you soon may see:  
Don Juan's parents lived beside the river,  
A noble stream, and called the Guadalquivir.

<sup>1</sup> *in medias res* Latin: in the middle of things.

<sup>2</sup> *Cadiz* Byron anglicizes the pronunciations of his Spanish words, so that Seville is pronounced "SEvil"; Cadiz to rhyme with "ladies."

9  
65 His father's name was José<sup>3</sup>—*Don*,<sup>4</sup> of course,  
A true Hidalgo,<sup>5</sup> free from every stain  
Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source  
Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;  
A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,  
70 Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,  
Than José, who begot our hero, who  
Begot—but that's to come—Well, to renew:

10  
His mother was a learned lady,<sup>6</sup> famed  
For every branch of every science known—  
75 In every Christian language ever named,  
With virtues equalled by her wit alone,  
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,  
And even the good with inward envy groan,  
Finding themselves so very much exceeded  
80 In their own way by all the things that she did.

11  
Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart  
All Calderon and greater part of Lopé,<sup>7</sup>  
So that if any actor missed his part  
She could have served him for the prompter's copy;  
85 For her Feinagle's were an useless art,<sup>8</sup>  
And he himself obliged to shut up shop—he  
Could never make a memory so fine as  
That which adorned the brain of Donna Inez.

12  
Her favourite science was the mathematical,  
90 Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,

<sup>3</sup> *Jóse* Byron changes the stress, so that José is pronounced with the emphasis on the first syllable.

<sup>4</sup> *Don* Spanish title, denoting high rank.

<sup>5</sup> *Hidalgo* Gentleman, by birth.

<sup>6</sup> *His mother ... lady* Although Byron denied that the character of Donna Inez was a satiric portrait of his wife, a perceived resemblance to her was one of the chief complaints his friends made against these cantos.

<sup>7</sup> *Calderon ... Lopé* Calderón de la Barca (1600–81) and Lopé de Vega (1562–1635), Spanish dramatists.

<sup>8</sup> *Feinagle's ... art* Gregor von Feinagle (1765?–1819) invented a new method of memorization.

Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic all,<sup>1</sup>  
Her serious sayings darkened to sublimity;  
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call  
A prodigy—her morning dress was dimity,  
Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,  
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

13  
She knew the Latin—that is, "The Lord's Prayer,"  
And Greek—the alphabet—I'm nearly sure;  
She read some French romances here and there,  
Although her mode of speaking was not pure;  
For native Spanish she had no great care,  
At least her conversation was obscure;  
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,  
As if she deemed that mystery would ennoble 'em.

14  
She liked the English and the Hebrew tongue,  
And said there was analogy between 'em;  
She proved it somehow out of sacred song,  
But I must leave the proofs to those who've seen 'em,  
But this I heard her say, and can't be wrong,  
And all may think which way their judgments lean  
'em,  
"Tis strange—the Hebrew noun which means 'I am,'  
The English always used to govern d—n."<sup>2</sup>

15  
Some women use their tongues—she *looked* a lecture,  
Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily,  
An all-in-all sufficient self-director,  
Like the lamented late Sir Samuel Romilly,<sup>3</sup>  
The Law's expounder, and the State's corrector,  
Whose suicide was almost an anomaly—  
One sad example more, that "All is vanity"  
(The jury brought their verdict in "Insanity").

<sup>1</sup> *Her wit ... Attic all* Attic, that is, Grecian wit, refined and delicate.

<sup>2</sup> *d—n* Cf. Exodus 3.14. Byron is referring to "God damn."

<sup>3</sup> *Romilly* Sir Samuel Romilly (1757–1818), lawyer and legal reformer, represented Lady Byron during the separation proceedings, despite having previously accepted a retainer from Byron. Byron never forgave him. Romilly's wife died in October 1818, and he committed suicide. This stanza was censored in the first edition.

16  
In short, she was a walking calculation,  
Miss Edgeworth's novels stepping from their covers,  
Or Mrs. Trimmer's books on education,  
Or "Cœlebs' Wife" set out in quest of lovers,<sup>4</sup>  
125 Morality's prim personification,  
In which not Envy's self a flaw discovers,  
To others' share let "female errors fall,"  
For she had not even one—the worst of all.

17  
Oh! she was perfect past all parallel—  
130 Of any modern female saint's comparison;  
So far above the cunning powers of hell,  
Her guardian angel had given up his garrison;  
Even her minutest motions went as well  
As those of the best time-piece made by Harrison:<sup>5</sup>  
135 In virtues nothing earthly could surpass her,  
Save thine "incomparable oil," Macassar!<sup>6</sup>

18  
Perfect she was, but as perfection is  
Insipid in this naughty world of ours,  
Where our first parents never learned to kiss  
140 Till they were exiled from their earlier bowers,  
Where all was peace, and innocence, and bliss  
(I wonder how they got through the twelve hours)  
Don José, like a lineal son of Eve,  
Went plucking various fruit without her leave.

19  
145 He was a mortal of the careless kind,  
With no great love for learning, or the learned,  
Who chose to go where'er he had a mind,  
And never dreamed his lady was concerned:

<sup>4</sup> *Miss Edgeworth's ... lovers* Byron here refers to three female writers famous for their didactic and moral works: Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849), author of *Moral Tales* (1801) and other fiction; Sarah Trimmer (1741–1810), author of books for children and publisher of *Guardian to Education* (1802–06); and Hannah More, to whose *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809) he alludes.

<sup>5</sup> *Harrison* John Harrison (1693–1776) invented a chronometer so accurate that it could be used to calculate longitude.

<sup>6</sup> [Byron's note] "description des *vertus incomparables* de l'huile de Macassar."—See the Advertisement. [Macassar oil, a dressing for the hair named after an Indonesian location said to be the source of its ingredients, was very popular through the nineteenth century.]

The world, as usual, wickedly inclined  
 To see a kingdom or a house o'ertumed,  
 150 Whispered he had a mistress, some said *two*,  
 But for domestic quarrels *one* will do.

Now Donna Inez had, with all her merit,  
 A great opinion of her own good qualities;  
 155 Neglect, indeed, requires a saint to bear it,  
 And such, indeed, she was in her moralities;  
 But then she had a devil of a spirit,  
 And sometimes mixed up fancies with realities,  
 And let few opportunities escape  
 160 Of getting her liege lord into a scrape.

This was an easy matter with a man  
 Oft in the wrong, and never on his guard;  
 And even the wisest, do the best they can,  
 Have moments, hours, and days, so unprepared,  
 165 That you might "brain them with their lady's fan;"<sup>1</sup>  
 And sometimes ladies hit exceeding hard,  
 And fans turn into falchions<sup>o</sup> in fair hands,  
 And why and wherefore no one understands.

'Tis pity learned virgins ever wed  
 With persons of no sort of education,  
 Or gentlemen, who, though well-born and bred,  
 Grow tired of scientific conversation:  
 I don't choose to say much upon this head,  
 I'm a plain man, and in a single station,  
 175 But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,  
 Inform us truly, have they not hen-pecked you all?

Don José and his lady quarrelled—*why*,  
 Not any of the many could divine,  
 Though several thousand people chose to try,  
 'Twas surely no concern of theirs nor mine;  
 180 I loathe that low vice curiosity,  
 But if there's any thing in which I shine  
 'Tis in arranging all my friends' affairs,  
 Not having, of my own, domestic cares.

<sup>1</sup> *brain them ... fan* Cf. Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV* 2.3.21.

And so I interfered, and with the best  
 Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;  
 I think the foolish people were possessed,  
 For neither of them could I ever find,  
 Although their porter afterwards confessed—  
 190 But that's no matter, and the worst's behind,  
 For little Juan o'er me threw, down stairs,  
 A pail of housemaid's water unawares.

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,  
 And mischief-making monkey from his birth;  
 195 His parents ne'er agreed except in doting  
 Upon the most unquiet imp on earth;  
 Instead of quarrelling, had they been but both in  
 Their senses, they'd have sent young master forth  
 To school, or had him soundly whipped at home,  
 200 To teach him manners for the time to come.

Don José and the Donna Inez led  
 For some time an unhappy sort of life,  
 Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;  
 They lived respectably as man and wife,  
 205 Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,  
 And gave no outward signs of inward strife,  
 Until at length the smothered fire broke out,  
 And put the business past all kind of doubt.

For Inez called some druggists and physicians,  
 And tried to prove her loving lord was *mad*,  
 210 But as he had some lucid intermissions,  
 She next decided he was only *bad*;  
 Yet when they asked her for her depositions,  
 No sort of explanation could be had,  
 215 Save that her duty both to man and God  
 Required this conduct—which seemed very odd.

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,  
 And opened certain trunks of books and letters,  
 All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;  
 220 And then she had all Seville for abettors,  
 Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);  
 The hearers of her case became repeaters,

Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,  
 Some for amusement, others for old grudges.<sup>1</sup>

And then this best and meekest woman bore  
 With such serenity her husband's woes,  
 Just as the Spartan ladies did of yore,  
 Who saw their spouses killed, and nobly chose  
 Never to say a word about them more—  
 225 Calmly she heard each calumny that rose,  
 And saw *his* agonies with such sublimity,  
 That all the world exclaimed, "What magnanimity!"

No doubt, this patience, when the world is damning us,  
 Is philosophic in our former friends;  
 'Tis also pleasant to be deemed magnanimous,  
 The more so in obtaining our own ends;  
 And what the lawyers call a "*malus animus*"<sup>2</sup>  
 Conduct like this by no means comprehends:  
 Revenge in person's certainly no virtue,  
 230 But then 'tis not my fault, if *others* hurt you.

And if our quarrels should rip up old stories,  
 And help them with a lie or two additional,  
 I'm not to blame, as you well know, no more is  
 Any one else—they were become traditional;  
 Besides, their resurrection aids our glories  
 By contrast, which is what we just were wishing all:  
 And science profits by this resurrection—  
 235 Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection.

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,  
 Then their relations, who made matters worse;  
 ('Twere hard to tell upon a like occasion  
 To whom it may be best to have recourse—  
 I can't say much for friend or yet relation):  
 The lawyers did their utmost for divorce,  
 But scarce a fee was paid on either side  
 Before, unluckily, Don José died.

<sup>1</sup> *For Inez ... grudges* During the months leading up to their separation, Lady Byron did, or was suspected by her husband of doing, all the things attributed to Donna Inez in these two stanzas.

<sup>2</sup> *malus animus* Latin: bad spirit.

He died: and most unluckily, because,  
 According to all hints I could collect  
 From counsel learned in those kinds of laws  
 260 (Although their talk's obscure and circumspect)  
 His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;  
 A thousand pities also with respect  
 To public feeling, which on this occasion  
 Was manifested in a great sensation.

But ah! he died; and buried with him lay  
 The public feeling and the lawyers' fees:  
 His house was sold, his servants sent away,  
 A Jew took one of his two mistresses,  
 A priest the other—at least so they say;  
 270 I asked the doctors after his disease,  
 He died of the slow fever called the tertian,  
 And left his widow to her own aversion.

Yet José was an honourable man,  
 That I must say, who knew him very well;  
 275 Therefore his frailties I'll no further scan,  
 Indeed there were not many more to tell;  
 And if his passions now and then outran  
 Discretion, and were not so peaceable  
 As Numa's (who was also named Pompilius),<sup>3</sup>  
 280 He had been ill brought up, and was born bilious.

Whate'er might be his worthlessness or worth,  
 Poor fellow! he had many things to wound him,  
 Let's own, since it can do no good on earth;  
 It was a trying moment that which found him  
 285 Standing alone beside his desolate hearth,  
 Where all his household gods lay shivered round him;  
 No choice was left his feelings or his pride,  
 Save death or Doctors' Commons<sup>4</sup>—so he died.

Dying intestate, Juan was sole heir  
 290 To a chancery suit, and messuages, and lands,

<sup>3</sup> *Pompilius* The peaceable second king of Rome; see Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*.

<sup>4</sup> *Doctors' Commons* Divorce courts.

Which, with a long minority and care,  
 Promised to turn out well in proper hands:  
 Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,  
 And answered but to nature's just demands;  
 295 An only son left with an only mother  
 Is brought up much more wisely than another.

38  
 Sagest of women, even of widows, she  
 Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,  
 And worthy of the noblest pedigree:  
 300 (His sire was of Castile, his dam from Aragon).  
 Then for accomplishments of chivalry,  
 In case our lord the king should go to war again,  
 He learned the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,  
 And how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery.

39  
 305 But that which Donna Inez most desired,  
 And saw into herself each day before all  
 The learned tutors whom for him she hired,  
 Was, that his breeding should be strictly moral;  
 Much into all his studies she inquired,  
 310 And so they were submitted first to her, all  
 Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery  
 To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.

40  
 The languages, especially the dead,  
 The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,  
 315 The arts, at least all such as could be said  
 To be the most remote from common use,  
 In all these he was much and deeply read;  
 But not a page of any thing that's loose,  
 Or hints continuation of the species,  
 320 Was ever suffered, lest he should grow vicious.

41  
 His classic studies made a little puzzle,  
 Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,  
 Who in the earlier ages raised a bustle,  
 But never put on pantaloons or boddices;  
 325 His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,  
 And for their Æneids, Iliads, and Odysseys,  
 Were forced to make an odd sort of apology,  
 For Donna Inez dreaded the mythology.

42  
 Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,  
 330 Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,  
 Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,  
 I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,  
 Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn  
 Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample;<sup>1</sup>  
 335 But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one  
 Beginning with "*Formosum Pastor Corydon*."<sup>2</sup>

43  
 Lucretius' irreligion is too strong  
 For early stomachs, to prove wholesome food;  
 I can't help thinking Juvenal was wrong,  
 340 Although no doubt his real intent was good,  
 For speaking out so plainly in his song,  
 So much indeed as to be downright rude;  
 And then what proper person can be partial  
 To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?<sup>3</sup>

44  
 345 Juan was taught from out the best edition,  
 Expurgated by learned men, who place,  
 Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,  
 The grosser parts; but fearful to deface  
 Too much their modest bard by this omission,  
 350 And pitying sore his mutilated case,  
 They only add them all in an appendix,  
 Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Byron's note] See Longinus, Section 10, "*hina me hen ti per auten pathos phainetai, pathon de sunodos*." [See Ovid's *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*; the erotic lyrics then attributed to Anacreon; the erotic lyrics of Catullus; and the poem by Sappho beginning "To me he seems a peer of the gods," praised by Longinus in *On the Sublime* 10.]

<sup>2</sup> *Formosum ... Corydon* This is the first line of Virgil's second Eclogue, which may be translated, "The shepherd Corydon [burned for] fair [Alexis, his master's darling]." The poem is about love between men.

<sup>3</sup> *Lucretius' ... Martial* Byron here refers to three classical works which Inez certainly would have considered dangerous: Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, a philosophical poem; Juvenal, *Satires*, and Martial's epigrams, which are notoriously scurrilous and obscene.

<sup>4</sup> [Byron's note] Fact. There is, or was, such an edition, with all the obnoxious epigrams of Martial placed by themselves at the end. [The Delphin edition of Martial (Amsterdam, 1701) has an appendix entitled "Epigrammata Obscaena."]

45  
 For there we have them all at one fell swoop,  
 Instead of being scattered through the pages;  
 They stand forth marshalled in a handsome troop,  
 To meet the ingenuous youth of future ages,  
 Till some less rigid editor shall stoop  
 To call them back into their separate cages,  
 Instead of standing staring altogether,  
 Like garden gods—and not so decent either.

46  
 The Missal too (it was the family Missal)  
 Was ornamented in a sort of way  
 Which ancient mass-books often are, and this all  
 Kinds of grotesques illumined; and how they,  
 Who saw those figures on the margin kiss all,  
 Could turn their optics to the text and pray  
 Is more than I know—but Don Juan's mother  
 Kept this herself, and gave her son another.

47  
 Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,  
 And homilies, and lives of all the saints;  
 To Jerome and to Chrysostom<sup>1</sup> inured,  
 He did not take such studies for restraints;  
 But how faith is acquired, and then insured,  
 So well not one of the aforesaid paints  
 As Saint Augustine in his fine Confessions,  
 Which make the reader envy his transgressions.<sup>2</sup>

48  
 This, too, was a sealed book to little Juan—  
 I can't but say that his mamma was right,  
 If such an education was the true one.  
 She scarcely trusted him from out her sight;  
 Her maids were old, and if she took a new one  
 You might be sure she was a perfect fright,

<sup>1</sup> *Jerome* St. Jerome (340?–420), translator of the Bible into Latin; *Chrysostom* St. John Chrysostom (347?–407); both were ascetics.

<sup>2</sup> [Byron's note] See his *Confessions*, lib. i. cap. ix. By the representation which Saint Augustine gives of himself in his youth, it is easy to see that he was what we should call a rake. He avoided the school as the plague; he loved nothing but gaming and public shows; he robbed his father of everything he could find; he invented a thousand lies to escape the rod, which they were obliged to make use of to punish his irregularities.

She did this during even her husband's life—  
 I recommend as much to every wife.

49  
 385 Young Juan waxed in goodness and grace;  
 At six a charming child, and at eleven  
 With all the promise of as fine a face  
 As e'er to man's maturer growth was given:  
 He studied steadily, and grew apace,  
 390 And seemed, at least, in the right road to heaven,  
 For half his days were passed at church, the other  
 Between his tutors, confessor, and mother.

50  
 At six, I said, he was a charming child,  
 At twelve he was a fine, but quiet boy;  
 395 Although in infancy a little wild,  
 They tamed him down amongst them; to destroy  
 His natural spirit not in vain they toiled,  
 At least it seemed so; and his mother's joy  
 Was to declare how sage, and still, and steady,  
 400 Her young philosopher was grown already.

51  
 I had my doubts, perhaps I have them still,  
 But what I say is neither here nor there:  
 I knew his father well, and have some skill  
 In character—but it would not be fair  
 405 From sire to son to augur good or ill:  
 He and his wife were an ill-sorted pair—  
 But scandal's my aversion—I protest  
 Against all evil speaking, even in jest.

52  
 For my part I say nothing—nothing—but  
 410 *This* I will say—my reasons are my own—  
 That if I had an only son to put  
 To school (as God be praised that I have none)  
 'Tis not with Donna Inez I would shut  
 Him up to learn his catechism alone,  
 415 No—no—I'd send him out betimes to college,  
 For there it was I picked up my own knowledge.

53  
 For there one learns—'tis not for me to boast,  
 Though I acquired—but I pass over *that*,  
 As well as all the Greek I since have lost:

420 I say that there's the place—but "*Verbum sat.*"<sup>1</sup>  
I think, I picked up too, as well as most,  
Knowledge of matters—but no matter *what*—  
I never married—but, I think, I know  
That sons should not be educated so.

54  
425 Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,  
Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit; he seemed  
Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;  
And every body but his mother deemed  
Him almost man; but she flew in a rage,  
430 And bit her lips (for else she might have screamed),  
If any said so, for to be precocious  
Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

55  
435 Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all  
Selected for discretion and devotion,  
There was the Donna Julia, whom to call  
Pretty were but to give a feeble notion  
Of many charms in her as natural  
As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,  
Her zone to Venus, or his bow to Cupid  
440 (But this last simile is trite and stupid).

56  
The darkness of her oriental eye  
Accorded with her Moorish origin;  
(Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by;  
In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin).  
445 When proud Granada fell, and, forced to fly,  
Boabdil<sup>2</sup> wept, of Donna Julia's kin  
Some went to Africa, some staid in Spain,  
Her great great grandmamma chose to remain.

57  
450 She married (I forget the pedigree)  
With an Hidalgo, who transmitted down  
His blood less noble than such blood should be;  
At such alliances his sires would frown,  
In that point so precise in each degree  
That they bred *in and in*, as might be shown,

<sup>1</sup> *Verbum sat* Latin: A word [to the wise] is enough.

<sup>2</sup> *Boabdil* Mohammed XI, the last Moorish king of Granada, defeated by the Spanish in 1492.

455 Marrying their cousins—nay, their aunts and nieces,  
Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.<sup>3</sup>

58  
This heathenish cross restored the breed again,  
Ruined its blood, but much improved its flesh;  
For, from a root the ugliest in Old Spain  
460 Sprung up a branch as beautiful as fresh;  
The sons no more were short, the daughters plain:  
But there's a rumour which I fain would hush,  
'Tis said that Donna Julia's grandmamma  
Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

59  
465 However this might be, the race went on  
Improving still through every generation,  
Until it centred in an only son,  
Who left an only daughter; my narration  
May have suggested that this single one  
470 Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion  
I shall have much to speak about), and she  
Was married, charming, chaste, and twenty-three.

60  
Her eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)  
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire  
475 Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise  
Flashed an expression more of pride than ire,  
And love than either; and there would arise  
A something in them which was not desire,  
But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul  
480 Which struggled through and chastened down the  
whole.

61  
Her glossy hair was clustered o'er a brow  
Bright with intelligence, and fair and smooth;  
Her eyebrow's shape was like the aerial bow,  
Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,  
485 Mounting, at times, to a transparent glow,  
As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,  
Possessed an air and grace by no means common:  
Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

<sup>3</sup> *Marrying... increases* The Byron family frequently intermarried, cousins wedding cousins.

62  
Wedded she was some years, and to a man  
Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;  
And yet, I think, instead of such a ONE  
'Twere better to have TWO of five-and-twenty,  
Especially in countries near the sun:  
And now I think on't, "*mi vien in mente,*"<sup>1</sup>  
Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue  
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

63  
'Tis a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,  
And all the fault of that indecent sun,  
Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,  
But will keep baking, broiling, burning on,  
That howsoever people fast and pray  
The flesh is frail, and so the soul undone:  
What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,  
Is much more common where the climate's sultry.

64  
Happy the nations of the moral north!  
Where all is virtue, and the winter season  
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth;  
('Twas snow that brought St. Anthony to reason);<sup>2</sup>  
Where juries cast up what a wife is worth  
By laying what'er sum, in mulct, they please on  
The lover, who must pay a handsome price,  
Because it is a marketable vice.

65  
Alfonso was the name of Julia's lord,  
A man well looking for his years, and who  
Was neither much beloved, nor yet abhorred;  
They lived together as most people do,  
Suffering each other's foibles by accord,  
And not exactly either *one* or *two*;  
Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it,  
For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

<sup>1</sup> *mi... mente* Italian: it comes into my mind.

<sup>2</sup> [Byron's note] For the particulars of St. Anthony's recipe for hot blood in cold weather, see Mr. Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*. [It was actually St. Francis of Assisi who was reported to have thrown himself naked into the snow to counteract the temptations of the flesh.]

66  
Julia was—yet I never could see why—  
With Donna Inez quite a favourite friend;  
Between their tastes there was small sympathy,  
For not a line had Julia ever penned:  
525 Some people whisper (but, no doubt, they lie,  
For malice still imputes some private end)  
That Inez had, ere Don Alfonso's marriage,  
Forgot with him her very prudent carriage.

67  
And that still keeping up the old connexion,  
530 Which time had lately rendered much more chaste,  
She took his lady also in affection,  
And certainly this course was much the best:  
She flattered Julia with her sage protection,  
And complimented Don Alfonso's taste;  
535 And if she could not (who can?) silence scandal,  
At least she left it a more slender handle.

68  
I can't tell whether Julia saw the affair  
With other people's eyes, or if her own  
Discoveries made, but none could be aware  
540 Of this, at least no symptom e'er was shown;  
Perhaps she did not know, or did not care,  
Indifferent from the first, or callous grown:  
I'm really puzzled what to think or say,  
She kept her counsel in so close a way.

69  
545 Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,  
Caressed him often, such a thing might be  
Quite innocently done, and harmless styled,  
When she had twenty years, and thirteen he;  
But I am not so sure I should have smiled  
550 When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three,  
These few short years make wondrous alterations,  
Particularly amongst sun-burnt nations.

70  
Whate'er the cause might be, they had become  
Changed; for the dame grew distant, the youth shy,  
555 Their looks cast down, their greetings almost dumb,  
And much embarrassment in either eye;  
There surely will be little doubt with some  
That Donna Julia knew the reason why,

560 But as for Juan, he had no more notion  
Than he who never saw the sea of ocean.

71

Yet Julia's very coldness still was kind,  
And tremulously gentle her small hand  
Withdrew itself from his, but left behind  
A little pressure, thrilling, and so bland  
565 And slight, so very slight, that to the mind  
'Twas but a doubt; but ne'er magician's wand  
Wrought change with all Armida's<sup>1</sup> fairy art  
Like what this light touch left on Juan's heart.

72

570 And if she met him, though she smiled no more,  
She looked a sadness sweeter than her smile,  
As if her heart had deeper thoughts in store  
She must not own, but cherished more the while,  
For that compression in its burning core;  
Even innocence itself has many a wile,  
575 And will not dare to trust itself with truth,  
And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

73

But passion most dissembles yet betrays  
Even by its darkness; as the blackest sky  
Foretells the heaviest tempest, it displays  
580 Its workings through the vainly guarded eye,  
And in whatever aspect it arrays  
Itself, 'tis still the same hypocrisy;  
Coldness or anger, even disdain or hate,  
Are masks it often wears, and still too late.

74

585 Then there were sighs, the deeper for suppression,  
And stolen glances, sweeter for the theft,  
And burning blushes, though for no transgression,  
Tremblings when met, and restlessness when left;  
All these are little preludes to possession,  
590 Of which young Passion cannot be bereft,  
And merely tend to show how greatly Love is  
Embarrassed at first starting with a novice.

75

Poor Julia's heart was in an awkward state;  
She felt it going, and resolved to make  
595 The noblest efforts for herself and mate,  
For honour's, pride's, religion's, virtue's sake;  
Her resolutions were most truly great,  
And almost might have made a Tarquin<sup>2</sup> quake;  
She prayed the Virgin Mary for her grace,  
600 As being the best judge of a lady's case.

76

She vowed she never would see Juan more,  
And next day paid a visit to his mother,  
And looked extremely at the opening door,  
Which, by the Virgin's grace, let in another;  
605 Grateful she was, and yet a little sore—  
Again it opens, it can be no other,  
'Tis surely Juan now—No! I'm afraid  
That night the Virgin was no further prayed.

77

She now determined that a virtuous woman  
610 Should rather face and overcome temptation,  
That flight was base and dastardly, and no man  
Should ever give her heart the least sensation;  
That is to say, a thought beyond the common  
Preference, that we must feel upon occasion,  
615 For people who are pleasanter than others,  
But then they only seem so many brothers.

78

And even if by chance—and who can tell?  
The devil's so very sly—she should discover  
That all within was not so very well,  
620 And, if still free, that such or such a lover  
Might please perhaps, a virtuous wife can quell  
Such thoughts, and be the better when they're over;  
And if the man should ask, 'tis but denial:  
I recommend young ladies to make trial.

79

625 And then there are such things as love divine,  
Bright and immaculate, unmixed and pure,  
Such as the angels think so very fine,

<sup>1</sup> *Tarquin* Sextus Tarquinius raped Lucretia, a Roman matron, who subsequently stabbed herself.

<sup>1</sup> *Armida* The enchantress in Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*.

And matrons, who would be no less secure,  
Platonic, perfect, "just such love as mine:"  
630 Thus Julia said—and thought so, to be sure,  
And so I'd have her think, were I the man  
On whom her reveries celestial ran.

80

Such love is innocent, and may exist  
Between young persons without any danger,  
635 A hand may first, and then a lip be kist;  
For my part, to such doings I'm a stranger,  
But *hear* these freedoms form the utmost list  
Of all o'er which such love may be a ranger:  
If people go beyond, 'tis quite a crime,  
640 But not my fault—I tell them all in time.

81

Love, then, but love within its proper limits,  
Was Julia's innocent determination  
In young Don Juan's favour, and to him its  
Exertion might be useful on occasion;  
645 And, lighted at too pure a shrine to dim its  
Ethereal lustre, with what sweet persuasion  
He might be taught, by love and her together—  
I really don't know what, nor Julia either.

82

Fraught with this fine intention, and well fenced  
650 In mail of proof—her purity of soul—  
She, for the future of her strength convinced,  
And that her honour was a rock, or mole,<sup>1</sup>  
Exceeding sagely from that hour dispensed  
With any kind of troublesome control;  
655 But whether Julia to the task was equal  
Is that which must be mentioned in the sequel.

83

Her plan she deemed both innocent and feasible,  
And, surely, with a stripling of sixteen  
Not scandal's fangs could fix on much that's seizable,  
660 Or if they did so, satisfied to mean  
Nothing but what was good, her breast was peaceable—  
A quiet conscience makes one so serene!  
Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded  
That all the Apostles would have done as they did.

<sup>1</sup> *mole* Massive structure, such as a pier or breakwater.

84

665 And if in the mean time her husband died,  
But heaven forbid that such a thought should cross  
Her brain, though in a dream! (and then she sighed)  
Never could she survive that common loss;  
But just suppose that moment should betide,  
670 I only say suppose it—*inter nos*.  
(This should be *entre nous*,<sup>2</sup> for Julia thought  
In French, but then the rhyme would go for nought.)

85

I only say suppose this supposition:  
Juan being then grown up to man's estate  
675 Would fully suit a widow of condition,  
Even seven years hence it would not be too late;  
And in the interim (to pursue this vision)  
The mischief, after all, could not be great,  
For he would learn the rudiments of love,  
680 I mean the seraph way<sup>3</sup> of those above.

86

So much for Julia. Now we'll turn to Juan,  
Poor little fellow! he had no idea  
Of his own case, and never hit the true one;  
In feelings quick as Ovid's Miss Medea,  
685 He puzzled over what he found a new one,  
But not as yet imagined it could be a  
Thing quite in course, and not at all alarming,  
Which, with a little patience, might grow charming.

87

Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow,  
690 His home deserted for the lonely wood,  
Tormented with a wound he could not know,  
His, like all deep grief, plunged in solitude:  
I'm fond myself of solitude or so,  
But then, I beg it may be understood,  
695 By solitude I mean a sultan's, not  
A hermit's, with a harem<sup>o</sup> for a grot. *harem*

88

"Oh Love! in such a wilderness as this,  
Where transport and security entwine,  
Here is the empire of thy perfect bliss,

<sup>2</sup> *inter nos* Latin: between us; *entre nous* French: between us.

<sup>3</sup> *seraph way* I.e., angelic way.

700 And here thou art a god indeed divine.<sup>1</sup>  
The bard I quote from does not sing amiss,  
With the exception of the second line,  
For that same twining "transport and security"  
Are twisted to a phrase of some obscurity.

89

705 The poet meant, no doubt, and thus appeals  
To the good sense and senses of mankind,  
The very thing which every body feels,  
As all have found on trial, or may find,  
That no one likes to be disturbed at meals  
710 Or love.—I won't say more about "entwined"  
Or "transport," as we knew all that before,  
But beg "Security" will bolt the door.

90

Young Juan wandered by the glassy brooks,  
Thinking unutterable things; he threw  
715 Himself at length within the leafy nooks  
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;  
There poets find materials for their books,  
And every now and then we read them through,  
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,  
720 Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

91

He, Juan (and not Wordsworth), so pursued  
His self-communion with his own high soul,  
Until his mighty heart,<sup>2</sup> in its great mood,  
Had mitigated part, though not the whole  
725 Of its disease; he did the best he could  
With things not very subject to control,  
And turned, without perceiving his condition,  
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Byron's note] Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming*, (I think) the opening of Canto II; but quote from memory. [Thomas Campbell, *Gertrude of Wyoming* 3.1.1-4.]

<sup>2</sup> so pursued ... heart See Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" (1802), 14.

<sup>3</sup> turned ... metaphysician See Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" 87-93.

92

He thought about himself, and the whole earth,  
730 Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,  
And how the deuce they ever could have birth;  
And then he thought of earthquakes, and of wars,  
How many miles the moon might have in girth,  
Of air-balloons, and of the many bars  
735 To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies;  
And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

93

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern  
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,  
Which some are born with, but the most part learn  
740 To plague themselves withal, they know not why:  
'Twas strange that one so young should thus concern  
His brain about the action of the sky;  
If *you* think 'twas philosophy that this did,  
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

94

745 He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,  
And heard a voice in all the winds; and then  
He thought of wood nymphs and immortal bowers,  
And how the goddesses came down to men:  
He missed the pathway, he forgot the hours,  
750 And when he looked upon his watch again,  
He found how much old Time had been a winner—  
He also found that he had lost his dinner.<sup>4</sup>

95

Sometimes he turned to gaze upon his book,  
Boscan, or Garcilasso;<sup>5</sup>—by the wind  
755 Even as the page is rustled while we look,  
So by the poesy of his own mind  
Over the mystic leaf his soul was shook,  
As if 'twere one whereon magicians bind  
Their spells, and give them to the passing gale,  
760 According to some good old woman's tale.

<sup>4</sup> lost his dinner I.e., was so late for dinner that he had missed it entirely.

<sup>5</sup> Boscan Spanish poet Juan Boscán (1500-44); Garcilasso Spanish poet Garcias Lasso or Garcilaso de la Vega (1503-36).

96

Thus would he while his lonely hours away  
Dissatisfied, nor knowing what he wanted;  
Nor glowing reverie, nor poet's lay,  
765 Could yield his spirit that for which it panted,  
A bosom whereon he his head might lay,  
And hear the heart beat with the love it granted,  
With—several other things, which I forget,  
Or which, at least, I need not mention yet.

97

Those lonely walks, and lengthening reveries,  
770 Could not escape the gentle Julia's eyes;  
She saw that Juan was not at his ease;  
But that which chiefly may, and must surprise,  
Is, that the Donna Inez did not tease  
Her only son with question or surmise;  
775 Whether it was she did not see, or would not,  
Or, like all very clever people, could not.

98

This may seem strange, but yet 'tis very common;  
For instance—gentlemen, whose ladies take  
Leave to o'erstep the written rights of woman,  
780 And break the—Which commandment is't they  
break?<sup>1</sup>  
(I have forgot the number, and think no man  
Should rashly quote, for fear of a mistake.)  
I say, when these same gentlemen are jealous,  
They make some blunder, which their ladies tell us.

99

785 A real husband always is suspicious,  
But still no less suspects in the wrong place,  
Jealous of some one who had no such wishes,  
Or pandering blindly to his own disgrace  
By harbouring some dear friend extremely vicious;  
790 The last indeed's infallibly the case:  
And when the spouse and friend are gone off wholly,  
He wonders at their vice, and not his folly.

<sup>1</sup> Which commandment ... break? They break the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

100

Thus parents also are at times short-sighted;  
Though watchful as the lynx, they ne'er discover,  
795 The while the wicked world beholds delighted,  
Young Hopeful's mistress, or Miss Fanny's lover,  
Till some confounded escapade has blighted  
The plan of twenty years, and all is over;  
And then the mother cries, the father swears,  
800 And wonders why the devil he got heirs.<sup>2</sup>

101

But Inez was so anxious, and so clear  
Of sight, that I must think, on this occasion,  
She had some other motive much more near  
For leaving Juan to this new temptation;  
805 But what that motive was, I shan't say here;  
Perhaps to finish Juan's education,  
Perhaps to open Don Alfonso's eyes,  
In case he thought his wife too great a prize.

102

It was upon a day, a summer's day;—  
810 Summer's indeed a very dangerous season,  
And so is spring about the end of May;  
The sun, no doubt, is the prevailing reason;  
But whatsoe'er the cause is, one may say,  
And stand convicted of more truth than treason,  
815 That there are months which nature grows more  
merry in,  
March has its hares, and May must have its heroine.

103

'Twas on a summer's day—the sixth of June:—  
I like to be particular in dates,  
Not only of the age, and year, but moon;  
820 They are a sort of post-house, where the Fates  
Change horses, making history change its tune,  
Then spur away o'er empires and o'er states,  
Leaving at last not much besides chronology,  
Excepting the post-obits<sup>3</sup> of theology.

<sup>2</sup> got heirs I.e., begot children, heirs to his estate.

<sup>3</sup> post-obits Latin: after death; here, referring to a legacy, that which comes after a death.