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Byron

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Chronology</i>	x
1 The making of <i>Don Juan</i>	1
Byron and the Don Juan tradition	3
Byron as narrator	5
The historical setting	8
2 Style and form	13
The Italian influence	13
Byron and <i>ottava rima</i>	15
Comic rhymes	17
Epic and satire	19
3 The poem	24
‘Fierce loves and faithless wars’	24
‘The vast, salt, dread, eternal deep’	29
‘Passion’s child’	34
‘You’ve heard of Raucocanti?’	40
‘Our hero and third heroine’	46
‘A brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art’	53
‘In royalty’s vast arms’	59
‘The thousand happy few’	64
‘The fair most fatal Juan ever met’	73
4 The after-life of <i>Don Juan</i>	79
Byron and the ‘atrocious reader’	79
English imitations, forgeries and continuations	84
<i>Don Juan</i> and the spirit of revolution	90
Epilogue	98
<i>Guide to further reading</i>	102

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Preface

The section headings of chapters 1, 2 and 4 in this volume are intended as straightforward descriptions of their contents. The long central chapter (3) offers a chronological reading of *Don Juan*, the quotations from the poem which serve as titles for the nine sections indicating the principal area of concern in each.

Some parts of sections three and four in chapter 3 were originally given as a paper, 'Don Juan Re-considered: The Haidée Episode', at the conference on *Byron e la Cultura Veneziana* at Mira and Venice in September 1986, and subsequently printed in the proceedings of that conference (Università degli studi di Venezia, edited by Giulio Marra, Angelo Righetti, Anna Rosa Scrittori and Bernard Hickey) and in *The Byron Journal*, 15, 1987. I am grateful to the editors concerned for permission to re-use this material.

I should also like to thank David Woodhouse, who read this book in typescript and, as well as locating some elusive quotations, commented on it helpfully.

The edition of *Don Juan* used in this book (quotations are identified by canto and stanza number) is that prepared by Jerome J. McGann, volume V of *Lord Byron, The Complete Poetical Works*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986. Quotations from Byron's letters and journals (BLJ), giving volume and page number, refer to *Byron's Letters and Journals*, edited by Leslie Marchand, vols. I–XI, John Murray, London, 1973–82.

This was one of the last Landmark volumes edited by Peter Stern. Although gravely and, as he was aware, terminally ill, he read and commented on it with his customary insight and care. The book is much the better for his constructive criticism and suggestions. At that time, he graciously permitted me to dedicate it to him. It is dedicated now, in gratitude and sorrow, to his memory.

Chronology

	<i>Byron's life and works</i>	<i>Important literary events</i>	<i>Important historical events</i>
1788	Birth, in London, on 22 January, of George Gordon Byron. He is born with a club-foot, about which he will remain extremely sensitive all his life	Publication of final volumes of Gibbon's <i>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i> ; Goethe's <i>Egmont</i>	
1789	Mrs Byron and her son settle in lodgings in Aberdeen	Blake's <i>Songs of Innocence</i>	Storming of the Bastille in Paris
1790		Burke's <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>	<i>Fête de la Fédération</i> in France
1791	Death (possibly by suicide) of John Byron, the poet's father, in France	First part of Paine's <i>The Rights of Man</i> (second part published in 1792)	
1792			Unsuccessful denouement of Robespierre
1793		Godwin's <i>An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice</i>	Execution of Louis XVI. War declared between France and England
1794	Byron becomes heir to the peerage, following the death of the grandson of the fifth Lord Byron	Blake's <i>Songs of Experience</i> ; Paine's <i>The Age of Reason</i> ; death of Gibbon	Reign of Terror and fall of Robespierre. Treason Trials in London, and suspension of Habeas Corpus
1795			British Government acts to limit all forms of political association and expression

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|------|--|---|---|
| 1796 | | Coleridge publishes <i>Poems on Various Subjects</i> | |
| 1798 | Byron inherits the title after the death of his great-uncle, the fifth Lord Byron. He and his mother visit Newstead Abbey, in Nottinghamshire, the family seat | Publication by Wordsworth and Coleridge of <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> ; first version of Malthus' <i>Essay on the Principle of Population</i> | |
| 1799 | Byron is sent to Dr Glennie's school in Dulwich to be prepared for Harrow | Schiller's <i>Wallenstein's Tod</i> | Napoleon made First Consul of France for ten years |
| 1800 | Byron enters Harrow | Death of Cowper | The French defeat Austria and retake Italy |
| 1801 | | Second edition of <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> , with Preface by Wordsworth; Chateaubriand's <i>Atala</i> | |
| 1802 | | Scott's <i>Border Minstrelsy</i> ; first issue of <i>The Edinburgh Review</i> | Peace of Amiens; Napoleon becomes First Consul for life |
| 1803 | | Schiller's <i>William Tell</i> ; Wordsworth completes <i>Ode: Intimations of Immortality</i> | Renewal of war with France |
| 1804 | | Chateaubriand's <i>René</i> ; Scott's <i>Lay of the Last Minstrel</i> | Napoleon crowns himself Emperor |
| 1805 | Enters Trinity College, Cambridge, and begins to run up serious debts | Wordsworth's <i>Poems in Two Volumes</i> ; Mme de Staël's <i>Corinne</i> | Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz |
| 1806 | Has his first volume of poems, <i>Fugitive Pieces</i> , privately printed | | |
| 1807 | <i>Poems on Various Occasions</i> privately printed, followed a few months later by the public appearance of <i>Hours of Idleness</i> . Leaves Cambridge for London and a life of debt and dissipation | | |

	<i>Byron's life and works</i>	<i>Important literary events</i>	<i>Important historical events</i>
1808	<i>Hours of Idleness</i> savaged by Henry Brougham in <i>The Edinburgh Review</i>	Goethe's <i>Faust</i> , Part I	Beginning of the Peninsular War
1809	Takes his seat in the House of Lords. Publishes his first satire, <i>English Bards and Scotch Reviewers</i> , and then leaves England with his Cambridge friend, John Cam Hobhouse, to travel in Portugal, Spain, Malta, Greece, Turkey and Albania. Begins <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage</i>	<i>Quarterly Review</i> founded by Scott and Murray	
1810	Byron swims the Hellespont from Sestos to Abydos. Hobhouse returns to England but Byron remains in Greece. He writes the first version of <i>Hints from Horace</i> , and also <i>The Curse of Minerva</i> , protesting against the removal of the Elgin Marbles	Crabbe's <i>The Borough</i>	
1811	Returns to England in July. Death of his mother, his Cambridge friend Matthews, and his Trinity protégé, the choirboy John Edleston	Austen's <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	Prince of Wales becomes Regent
1812	Delivers his maiden speech (on the Frame-breaking Bill) in the House of Lords. Thinks of leaving England again and settling in the East. <i>Childe Harold</i> , published in March, is a huge success.		Beginning of the French retreat from Moscow

- Second speech in the House of Lords (Catholic Claims Bill). Affairs with Lady Caroline Lamb and Lady Oxford. Proposes to Annabella Milbanke, and is rejected
- 1813 Shelley's *Queen Mab*; Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Battle of Leipzig
- 1814 Austen's *Mansfield Park*; Scott's *Waverley*; Wordsworth's *The Excursion* Napoleon abdicates; First Treaty of Paris; Congress of Vienna
- 1815 Marries Annabella, in January, at a private ceremony in her parents' house in Yorkshire. Publication of *Hebrew Melodies*. Byron joins the sub-committee of management of Drury Lane Theatre. His daughter, Augusta Ada, is born in December. His creditors become pressing Wordsworth's *The White Doe of Rylstone* and collected edition of *Poems* Napoleon's return from Elba; Battle of Waterloo; Restoration of the Bourbons; Second Treaty of Paris; Napoleon exiled to St Helena
- 1816 Lady Byron and Ada leave London for her parents' home, and Byron eventually agrees to a legal separation. Coleridge's *Christabel and Other Poems*; Constant's *Adolphe*; Austen's *Emma*; Lady Caroline Lamb's Spa Fields riots in London; Depression and discontent

<i>Byron's life and works</i>	<i>Important literary events</i>	<i>Important historical events</i>
<p>Publication of <i>The Siege of Corinth</i> and <i>Parasina</i>. Affair with Claire Clairmont. In April, after being snubbed at Lady Jersey's party, he leaves England, never to return. Travels through Belgium, visits the field of Waterloo, and begins a third canto of <i>Childe Harold</i>. Settles in the Villa Diodati, near Geneva, and becomes friendly with Shelley, who lives nearby. Writes <i>The Prisoner of Chillon</i>. In the autumn, Byron and Hobhouse set off on a tour of Italy, and Byron settles in Venice. Affair with Marianna Segati. Third canto of <i>Childe Harold</i> published</p>	<p><i>Glenarvon</i>; Scott's <i>Old Mortality</i>; Goethe's <i>Italienische Reise</i></p>	
<p>1817 Allegra, his daughter by Claire Clairmont, is born in England. Byron finishes his drama, <i>Manfred</i>. In April, he travels to Rome, returning to Venice at the end of May. Begins Canto IV of <i>Childe Harold</i> in June. Affair with Margarita Cagni. Finishes <i>Beppo</i> in October</p>	<p>Coleridge's <i>Biographia Literaria</i> and <i>Sybilline Leaves</i>; <i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i> started; first two cantos of Frere's <i>The Monks and the Giants</i> ('Whistlecraft'); Moore's <i>Lallah Rookie</i>; Scott's <i>Rob Roy</i>; Keats' <i>Poems</i>; death of Austen and de Staël</p>	<p>Serious social unrest in Britain; Death of the Princess Charlotte</p>
<p>1818 <i>Beppo</i> published (anonymously) and Canto IV of <i>Childe Harold</i>. He begins <i>Don Juan</i> in July. Moves into the Palazzo Mocenigo on the Grand Canal.</p>	<p>Publication of Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i>; Keats' <i>Endymion</i>; Shelley's <i>The Revolt of Islam</i> and <i>Julian and Maddalo</i>; Peacock's</p>	<p>Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle; European Alliance</p>

- Writes his 'Memoirs'. Reads Canto I of *Don Juan* to Shelley. Begins Canto II in December
- 1819 Newstead Abbey is sold. Byron falls in love with the young Countess Guiccioli. Cantos I and II of *Don Juan* published (anonymously) in July. Byron follows the Countess Guiccioli to Ravenna. He gives his 'Memoirs' to Thomas Moore. Finishes Cantos III and IV of *Don Juan* in November
- 1820 Settles in Ravenna. Translates first canto of Pulci's *Morgante Maggioro*. Involvement with the Italian Carbonari movement. Writes his first neo-classical tragedy, *Marino Faliero*. The Pope agrees to the separation of the Countess Guiccioli and her husband. Byron finishes Canto V of *Don Juan* in November
- 1821 Begins his 'Ravenna Journal'. Writes *Sardanapalus*. *Marino Faliero* performed at Drury Lane, despite Byron's objections. Tells Murray he has decided, at the Countess Guiccioli's request, to abandon *Don Juan*. Writes *The Two Foscari* and the biblical drama *Cain*. Cantos III–V of *Don Juan* are
- Nightmare Abbey*; Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*; posthumous publication of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*
- Shelley's *The Cenci*; Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall*; Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* and *The Waggoner*
- 'Peterloo Massacre' in Manchester
- Keats' *Lamia and Other Poems*;
 Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*; Clare's *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*; Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques*
- Death of George III; Accession of George IV; Trial of Queen Caroline; Cato Street Conspiracy; Royalist reaction in Europe; Revolution in Spain and Portugal
- De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*; Southey's *A Vision of Judgement*; Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*; H. von Kleist's *Der Prinz von Homburg*; Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais*;
 Clare's *The Village Minstrel*; death of Keats

	<i>Byron's life and works</i>	<i>Important literary events</i>	<i>Important historical events</i>
1821	published in August. Writes <i>Heaven and Earth</i> and <i>The Vision of Judgement</i> . Begins another journal, 'Detached Thoughts'. He and the countess and her family join the Shelleys in Pisa. Byron meets Captain Medwin, who keeps a record of his conversation		
1822	Byron finishes <i>Werner</i> , begins <i>The Deformed Transformed</i> , and also secretly resumes work on <i>Don Juan</i> in January. In April, his daughter Allegra dies of a fever. Shelley is drowned in the Bay of Spezia. By the end of August, Byron has written nearly four more cantos of <i>Don Juan</i> . He moves to Genoa with the Guiccioli family in September, where he finishes Canto X. <i>The Vision of Judgement</i> is published anonymously in <i>The Liberal</i> . Cantos XI and XII of <i>Don Juan</i> are finished by December	Heine's <i>Gedichte</i> ; Hunt starts <i>The Liberal</i> ; death of Shelley; Stendhal's <i>De l'Amour</i>	Suicide of Castlereagh
1823	Writes <i>The Island</i> , his last verse tale. Finishes Canto XIII of <i>Don Juan</i> in February, and XIV and XV in March. Meets the countess of Blessington in April, who records his conversation.	Stendhal's <i>Racine et Shakespeare</i> ; Lamb's <i>Essays of Elia</i> published as a book; Scott's <i>Quentin Durward</i>	Agricultural discontent; War between France and Spain

Finishes Canto XVI of *Don Juan* in May and begins XVII. John Hunt publishes Cantos VI–VIII in July after Byron has broken off publishing relations with Murray. Byron receives a message from The Greek Committee in London, decides to go to Greece, and arrives in Cephalonia in August. Hunt publishes Cantos IX–XI of *Don Juan* in this month, and XII–XIV in December

1824 Byron goes to Missolonghi in January, and prepares for active operations. Writes 'On this Day I Complete my Thirty-Sixth Year'. Hunt publishes Cantos XV–XVI of *Don Juan*. On 9 April, Byron is caught in heavy rain while out riding, becomes feverish, then gravely ill, and dies on Easter Monday, 19 April. The body is embalmed and shipped back to England. In May, his 'Memoirs' are burned. The fragment of *Don Juan*, Canto XVII, found among Byron's papers after his death, is first published in 1907