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Editing Byron's Don Juan

Jane Stabler

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EDITING BYRON'S *DON JUAN*

Jane STABLER (*University of St Andrews, Scotland*)
js102@st-andrews.ac.uk

ABSTRACT: This paper explains the editorial rationale for a completely new edition of Lord Byron's poetry for the Longman Annotated English Poets series. This edition returns to Byron's manuscripts to establish a new text, using the manuscript as a musical score to replace the punctuation that was imposed on the first editions by Byron's nineteenth-century editors. I offer a brief report of my editorial scholarship on *Don Juan*, which I am editing with the assistance of Dr Gavin Hopps (University of St Andrews); this will be the first volume in the new edition and my paper discusses some of the challenges and delights that are hidden in the archive.

RIASSUNTO: L'articolo spiega la logica editoriale adottata per giungere a una edizione del tutto nuova delle poesie di Byron, redatta per i tipi della casa editrice Longman, nella collana «Annotated English Poets». Questa nuova edizione ritorna ai manoscritti di Byron per stabilire un nuovo testo, che utilizza il manoscritto originale come fosse una partitura musicale per una revisione della punteggiatura che era stata imposta dagli editori del XIX secolo nelle prime edizioni delle poesie di Byron. Il testo offre quindi un breve resoconto del sapere editoriale da me acquisito per il testo del *Don Juan*, che sto pubblicando con l'assistenza del Dr Gavin Hopps, dell'University of St Andrews. Questo lavoro costituirà il primo volume nella nuova edizione, e il mio articolo illustra alcune delle sfide e dei piaceri che stavano nascosti nell'archivio esaminato.

KEY WORDS: Byron, *Don Juan*, editorial scholarship, manuscripts, annotation

PAROLE CHIAVE: Byron, *Don Juan*, sapere editoriale, manoscritti, annotazioni editoriali



EDITING BYRON'S *DON JUAN*

Jane STABLER (*University of St Andrews, Scotland*)

In his lifetime, Lord Byron (1788-1824) was recognized as a singular genius and he played up the idea of the solitary author in *Don Juan* («I pass my evenings in long galleries solely, / And that's the reason I'm so melancholy»: V, 58). He was advised by friends such as Thomas Moore (1779-1852) that his reputation would suffer if he were seen to write collaboratively. «You are, single-handed, a match for the world», Moore remarked about the prospect of Byron joining in the «Liberal», «but, to be so, *you must stand alone*».¹ Yet Byron never stood alone when it came to finishing any of his poems for the press. He routinely delegated presentational labour, such as punctuation and orthographic standardization, to his editors, and he acquiesced in their normalization of his texts. Byron complained about «eternal blunders» and «damned cutting & slashing» in his published work, but throughout his career he was happy to entrust his editors with the job of preparing his poems for the audience of the day, with the proviso that they should «Consult the M.S. *always*».²

We are now familiar with the idea of the socialisation of texts and the recognition that as a poem progresses from manuscript to print other people besides the author exert an influence on its contents, meaning, and eventual appearance. When Byron was writing up the fair copy of the *Dedication* to *Don Juan* in September 1818, for example, he anticipated his publisher's reluctance to publish the attack on the Foreign Secretary, Viscount Castlereagh (1769-1822). In an often-overlooked note to his publisher in the margin Byron offered an alternative couplet ending to stanza 11: «Mr John Murray – As publisher to the Admiralty and of various Government works – if the five Stanzas concerning Castlereagh should risk your ears or the *Navy List* you may omit them in the publication». In the event the whole *Dedication* was withheld from the public in 1819, but Byron's marginal compromise alerts us to the way that he could deputize responsibility for content as well as style. How widely, if at all, should we apply his

- 1 Wilfred S. Dowden (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, 2 vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964, ii, 502.
- 2 Leslie A. Marchand (ed.), *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 13 vols, London, John Murray, 1980-1994, (hereafter *BLJ*), vi, 8; 105; 71.

partial instruction of «you may omit them»? Since Byron's death, some of these concessions to nineteenth-century taste have been overturned, but many others have been retained. All existing editions of Byron's poems, up to and including Jerome McGann's *Complete Poetical Works* (1980-93), perpetuate editorial interventions that were instigated to meet the needs of particular classes of reader between one and two hundred years ago.

Byron's poems were very sociable documents. He hated the task of preparing neat copies for the press (*BLJ* vii, 77), and so his poetry passed through the hands of a number of different amanuenses. During 1815-16, for example, he used Lady Byron (1792-1860), Claire Clairmont (1798-1879) and Mary Shelley (1797-1851) to make fair copies of his work and at times he employed two scribes to work on the same text, which he then scrawled over to make final corrections (the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was copied by Mary as well as Claire). From the hands of his copyists, Byron's texts were delivered to friends and editors who had wildly varying literary tastes. Percy Shelley (1792-1822) and William Gifford (1756-1826), for instance, were both commissioned to see Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* through the press. After the work of the in-house copy editor(s), the printer could (and often did) implement a further layer of alterations. Page proofs were not always cleared by the author. In June 1823, when he was preparing to leave for Greece, Byron wrote to John Hunt (1775-1848): «you must print the 16th Canto [of *Don Juan*] as correctly as you can from the M.S.S. without forwarding the proofs [...] and so God speed you» (*BLJ* x, 206). It was not unusual for Byron to hand over editorial responsibility in this way and even if he saw the proofs, his attention was limited – as he confessed to his publisher: «I do really detest the sight of proofs – it is an absurdity – but comes from laziness» (*BLJ* vii, 182).

In the early nineteenth century, the role of the publisher was gradually becoming professionalized and distinct from the trade of the bookseller. The publisher who made Byron famous, John Murray II (1778-1843), exercised considerable control over the appearance and marketing of literary works. His influence amounted to skilful manipulation of the readership at a time when the number of literary publications was increasing at an exponential rate.³ When the first Cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* appeared, they looked very different from Byron's first privately printed collections of

3 See Mary O'Connell, *Byron and John Murray: A Poet and His Publisher*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2014.

lyrics and the duodecimo satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, published by James Cawthorn (?-1833). The differences went beyond Murray's famously expensive quarto format and his use of better quality paper. Murray's editors and printers worked according to their own sets of grammatical conventions, which were a combination of eighteenth-century notions about rhetorical 'pointing' and the newer nineteenth-century practice of logical punctuation. There was no commonly accepted standard of normalization, and practices varied from editor to editor.

In 1822, while working on the «Liberal» with Shelley and Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), Byron changed publishers from the house of John Murray, publisher to the Admiralty and of the «Quarterly Review», to the radical John Hunt, publisher of the leading opposition newspaper, the «Examiner». Just before he brought out the first number of the «Liberal», John Hunt had spent his second spell in gaol for an article denouncing parliamentary corruption. Lord Byron's change of publisher thus carried social as well as editorial significance. The serial composition of *Don Juan* straddled Byron's move between two very different publishers with the first editions of Cantos I-V being produced by John Murray and his printer, Thomas Davison (1766?-1831) of Whitefriars, while Cantos VI-XVI came out from the firm of John Hunt with his printer Charles Reynell (dates not known) of Broad Street, Golden Square. Not surprisingly, there are conspicuous differences in the ways in which the Murray and Hunt publishing houses prepared Byron's manuscripts for publication, and their divergent modifications to Byron's work have left their mark on all subsequent editions.

After Byron's death, the first major collection of his works was edited by John Wright (1770/71-1844), the editor of Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*. Commissioned by John Murray II, this edition (1832-33) appeared with Thomas Moore's *Life*. Following works such as William Warburton's edition of Pope (1751) and Moore's biography of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1825), the notion that a holograph manuscript might offer insights into authorial creativity was gaining currency. Wright used the first edition of Byron's works as the basis for his text, but he made it a rule, where possible, to «compare the printed copy with the original manuscripts». ⁴ On returning the manuscript of *Don Juan* Canto V, Wright told Murray: «I have gone over it carefully, and have extracted matter for at least thirty notes.

4 Wright to John Murray, 24 October 1832, MS. 41309, 47r; 48r.

Let me intreat you peruse the M.S. of the four First Cantos».⁵ In his editing of Byron's works, Wright included material that had not been published before, such as Byron's first draft of the third act of *Manfred* and a note quoting Byron's response to the omission of *Manfred's* last line from the first edition. The draft *Preface* and *Dedication* to Southey, which had been dropped from the first edition of *Don Juan*, were made available to readers for the first time. Wright's annotations to *Don Juan* included a generous selection of manuscript variants, extracts from critical reviews of particular passages, biographical information supplied by Augusta Leigh (1783-1851) and the Countess Guiccioli (1800?-1873), contextual detail gleaned by 'book hunting' (such as the parallel passages from Dalyell's *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea* (1812) that Byron had culled for the account of the sinking of the *Trinidad* in Canto II), and brief glosses on selected allusions.⁶ He pleaded with Murray to allow more space for notes: «The *D. Juan* will really be *ruined* if you do not allow me elbow-room»; and he argued that the notes would remove misapprehensions about the nature of the poem:

As to *Don Juan*, it is a work of such intrinsic merit and beauty, that it must always find its way into every library – but, when you see the Notes with which it will be published, you will agree with me, that there can be little or no danger in the circulation of it. The «bane and antidote» will go together. There has, besides, been much exaggeration on this head. I am not aware that there is a gross indelicacy in all Lord Byron's writings. You cannot say this for Pope – or even for Doctor Johnson.⁷

In the end, Murray did not allow the extra volume, but Wright remained convinced that «the new arrangement of the Poetry, with the explanatory Notes &c. will do more for the character of Lord Byron than all the writings respecting him that have hitherto appeared»; he was the first scholarly editor of Byron's poems.⁸

At the end of the nineteenth century, E.H. Coleridge (1846-1920) was commissioned by John Murray IV (1851-1928) to re-edit Byron for a new six-volume edition of his *Poetical Works* (1898-1904). Coleridge re-punctuated all the poems, working from Murray's 1831 edition, and added, with

5 *Ibid.*

6 Wright to Murray, MS. 41309, 73v.

7 Wright to Murray, 3 December 1832, MS. 41309, 59v.

8 Wright to Murray, MS. 41309, 36r.

late Victorian thoroughness, many more commas, colons and semi-colons. He edited for other gentlemen readers who did not need classical or military allusions to be extensively glossed. So, for example, where Wright had included translations after Latin allusions, Coleridge supplied the Latin only. He included occasional manuscript variants, but his notes were most valuable for their detailed bibliographical material and the generous extracts from Byron's letters and other documents in the papers of John Cam Hobhouse (1786-1869) and the Murray archives to which Coleridge had access. Almost a century later, the American academic, Jerome J. McGann, was commissioned to produce the seven-volume Clarendon edition of Byron's works. This edition drew on Wright's and E.H. Coleridge's notes, and on subsequent single text editions such as the University of Texas variorum edition of *Don Juan* (1957; 1971) edited by T.G. and E. Steffan and Willis W. Pratt, the single volume edition of *Cain* (1968) edited by T.G. Steffan, and *Hebrew Melodies* (1972) edited by Thomas L. Ashton.

McGann set out to edit over eighty Byron poems or fragments that had come to light since Coleridge's edition, and to correct what he saw as a «seriously corrupt» corpus.⁹ Recognizing the complicated social history of each text, McGann established a new text, based on printed editions. He consulted Byron's manuscripts and proofs to weed out the substantive errors that crept in after Byron delivered his copy to the press. Not surprisingly, given the volume of the material and the timespan of the edition, McGann did not find all of them and his editorial rationale carried certain systemic inconsistencies, caught between an old allegiance to authorial intention and a newer commitment to the social history of the texts. Before Byron left England in 1816 he continued to make changes to his poems as they went through multiple editions. When he was living abroad in 1816-24, however, Byron exercised far less control over the evolution of the printed text. For his pre-1816 works, therefore, McGann favoured the last edition that Byron had worked on, whereas for post-1816 works such as *Don Juan*, he in most cases returned to the first edition as copy text. Owing to the multiplicity of hands and the divergent models of syntactic propriety that helped constitute these texts, the Clarendon edition presents an eclectic array of styles of punctuation, none of which can be said to be Byron's.

9 Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. with Introduction, Apparatus, and Commentaries by Jerome J. McGann, 7 Vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980-1993, I, xxvii (hereafter *McG CPW*).

McGann provided a detailed textual apparatus with substantive variants and cancellations, but he could not, of course, routinely record variants in accidentals because of the breadth of difference between Byron's manuscripts and the first nineteenth-century editions. (Steffan and Pratt's variorum *Don Juan* takes two full volumes to record the substantive variants alone). Byron's voice is often obscured in the Clarendon annotation at points where McGann mixes Byron's footnotes into the modern editorial commentary. The Clarendon edition drew heavily on the annotations of previous editions and was designed to «identify all of Byron's explicit literary allusions and echoes, and as many of his less explicit ones» as possible (*McG CPW I*, xlv). McGann's ideological position in the late 1970s and 80s, however, meant that the greater part of his annotation and commentary was dedicated to his assiduous detection of political references, with the result that Byron's extraordinarily rich and allusive literary textuality was not always fully described. Rather than quoting lines from the Bible, for example, McGann's commentary is sometimes limited to the single word «Biblical» (*McG CPW V*, 734, 735, 753, 755).

McGann's bibliographic work identified the location of all Byron's known manuscripts at the end of the twentieth century, and it provided an historical account of the way Byron's poems had been presented to the early nineteenth-century readership. His important evaluations of different manuscripts led to a great deal of new Byron scholarship from the 1980s onwards, but ten years after the completion of his edition, McGann was remarkably honest about the shortcomings of the Clarendon annotation:

Do you want me to itemize some of my horrid gaffes and blunders? [...] The many, many times, in the Byron edition, when I cut corners in my editorial notes – because it was clear, having at last learned what scholarly editing entailed, I began to realize the true impossibility of the task I had blithely, and ignorantly, undertaken.¹⁰

There are problems, as have been indicated above, with the poetic text as well as the notes. Donald Reiman concluded his review of the full Clarendon *Complete Poetical Works* by calling for a new edition of Byron that would re-check every fact from McGann's version, and perhaps ed-

10 Jerome J. McGann, *Byron and Romanticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 294.

it on different principles so as «to allow Byron's personal orthography and punctuation to shine through».¹¹ Reiman did not label the Clarendon text corrupt as such, but he supported the possibility of a text of Byron's poems that would be based on the manuscript (the point where the author is closest to standing alone), rather than a print version that has passed through various intervening hands. The Longman edition is indebted to all previous editors, including McGann, whose detailed calendar of manuscripts is invaluable; but twenty years after the completion of the Clarendon edition, the need for a completely new edition of Byron's poems was greater than ever.

The Longman Annotated English Poets edition of Lord Byron's poetry is not based on any single previous edition. Each poem has been edited afresh, and the edition sets out to produce a reliable reading text, edited on coherent and consistent principles, with full literary annotation. With the help of a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2014-17), the edition begins with *Don Juan*.

The new text of *Don Juan* is now complete and we are in the process of final checking. The literary annotation is also completed in draft. This is the result of three years of solitary scholarship: consulting the archives of Byron's manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland, John Murray's 50 Albemarle Street, The Pforzheimer Collection (New York Public Library), the Berg Collection (New York Public Library), the Beinecke (Yale University), The Pierpont Morgan Collection (New York) and the Manuscripts and Rare Books collection of the British Library. In addition, I have read as much as possible of Byron's library sale catalogues in order to track down missing allusions and possible sources. Regency period maps of London and early nineteenth-century travel guides have helped with geographical and architectural glosses; dictionaries of slang and the 'vulgar tongue' have decoded some of Byron's more obscure *double entendres*. Electronic searching through on-line data bases has been useful in some areas, particularly the history of commercially manufactured goods, and the on-line *Oxford English Dictionary* has been vital resource throughout.

The difference made by full literary annotation is illustrated when we consider Byron's defiant address to the reader in Canto X stanza 4: «In the wind's eye I have sailed and sail [...] But at the least I have shunned the common shore». This is usually received as one of Byron's nautical met-

11 «Nineteenth-Century Literature», 50, 2, 1995, p. 271.

aphors of self-assertion, but consultation of the *OED* indicates that, as well as advertising a bold determination not to hug the coast, Byron wryly acknowledges his ability to avoid the Regency equivalent of shit creek: throughout the eighteenth century, as the *OED* makes clear, the «common shore» was the «common sewer». Likewise, Canto IV stanza 53 is enriched when full detailed annotation accompanies Byron's play on the word «rack»:

I would take refuge in weak punch, but rack
 (in each sense of the word), whene'er I fill
 My mild and midnight beakers to the brim,
 Wakes me next morning with its synonym.

McGann's note is: «Byron means “rack” in the sense of “distilled spirits” as well as the more usual meaning of “mental or physical torment”» (*McG CPW*, 704). More precisely, Byron's lines point to rack punch for which I have identified a period recipe; its lethal mix of sugar and alcohol explains the hangover.¹² In this case, the *OED* fills out what Byron meant by «rack» (in each sense of the word); from the 1500s onwards, the word «rack» supplies a wonderful set of cognates for the various stages of a hangover:

a band of rope, a rush; a rapid advance, esp. towards or into collision with something; a hard blow or push. Also: a noise as of a collision; a crash; a mass of cloud moving quickly; a bank of cloud, fog, or mist; a frame on which cloth, parchment, etc., is stretched, usually before drying; something which causes acute physical or mental suffering; the result of this; intense pain or anguish; an instrument of torture, usually consisting of a frame on which the victim was stretched by turning two rollers fastened at each end to the wrists and ankles; destruction, the skin of a young rabbit, a state of total neglect, disrepair, or ruin; anything that is washed up by the sea on to the shore.

The Leverhulme Fellowship has permitted what is now almost impossible in an academic post – time for slow, careful reading and checking

12 Rack punch was mix of arrack (made from local sugar cane or palm sugar), lemon juice, sugar and water: «One teaspoonful of Coxwell's acid salt of lemons, a quarter of a pound of sugar, a quart of boiling water, half a pint of rum, and a quarter of a pint of brandy» (Thomas Cosnett, *The Footman's Directory and Butler's Remembrancer*, London, Hatchard, 1823, p. 251).

that has restored countless lost allusions. Another editor warned me that the greatest amount of work lies behind the note in any edition that says «Unidentified» because that word usually means at least two days of fruitless searching through electronic and print sources. I am happy to report that all of the allusions which were «unidentified» in McGann's Clarendon edition of *Don Juan* have now been found, pinpointed and recorded in the annotation. A lot of printed material has been digitized since McGann's work on the poem, but much of Byron's reading remains hidden in books which are long out of print and omnivorous browsing through a reconstruction of his library has turned up as much as electronic trawling. Some of my library work has involved reading something in order to determine that Byron probably didn't use it; this is painstaking, necessary research; it all becomes worth it when one finds something that solves a mystery which has baffled readers for centuries.

For example, in Canto XIV stanza 48, Byron wryly refers to the dispensable nature of friends: «When your affairs come round, one way or t'other / Go to the coffee house and take another». Byron's own note to these lines reads: «In Swift or Horace Walpole's letters I think it is mentioned that somebody regretting the loss of a friend was answered by a universal Pylades: "When I lose one, I go to the St James's Coffee-house, and take another"». McGann's note reads: «this anecdote is neither Swift nor Walpole, and I have not been able to trace it» (*McG CPW V*, 761). Careful research shows that it is actually Walpole, but it turns up in one of the footnotes to a nineteenth-century edition of letters by a female contemporary, Madame du Deffand (Leverhulme research has revealed the previously unacknowledged extent to which Byron was familiar with the work of women writers): «This alludes to a story Mr Walpole had told her of an English gentleman who going to console some one for the death of a friend said, when I have the misfortune to lose a friend, I always go directly to the St James's Coffee-house and get an other».¹³ As is often the case, Byron's memory is almost *verbatim*.

13 *Letters of the Marquise du Deffand to the Hon. Horace Walpole*, London, Longman, 1810, I, p. 117n; see also George Hardinge, *Expostulatory Remarks on "Letters of Madame du Deffand to the late Earl of Oxford"*, in Id., *The Miscellaneous Works, in Prose and Verse*, London, Nichols and Bentley, 1818, III, p. 203: «This alludes to an admirable story, told her by Mr Walpole, of a gentleman who condoled with another upon the loss of his friend. "For my part," said he, "when I lose a friend, I go to the St James's Coffee-house, and pick up another"».

I have also found the source for Byron's note 8 for Canto XVI: «See the account of the Ghost of the Uncle of Prince Charles of Saxony». McGann's note reads: «Where Byron read of the anecdote [...] has not been determined» (*McG CPW V*, 769). Leverhulme research has traced this allusion to the story «Apparition of the Chevalier de Saxe raised by Schrepfer»:¹⁴ «From this form issued a loud and angry voice, which exclaimed in German, "Carl, was wolte du mit mich?" [*sic*] "Charles, what wouldst thou with me? Why dost thou disturb me?"».¹⁵ This story also provides us with the source for line 953: «A noise like to wet fingers drawn o'er glass» (see «At length, a loud clatter was heard at the window on the outside; which was soon followed by another noise, resembling more the effect produced by a number of wet fingers drawn over the edge of glasses»),¹⁶ and line 49: «I merely mean to say what Johnson said» because Jarvis's book begins with the quotation from *Rasselas* that Wright first identified as the Johnson passage to which Byron refers:

There is no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which, perhaps, prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth: those, that never heard of one another, would not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible.¹⁷

As in the stormy year without a summer of 1816, just before he set sail for Greece in 1823, Byron passed the time by turning over a book of ghost stories.

Annotating Byron's *Don Juan* for the past three years has been a delight and an education. From Wright to Coleridge to Steffan and Pratt and McGann, each new edition of Byron has brought out different contexts and different clusters of allusion. The contribution of the Leverhulme Trust and the Longman series to Byron's textual history means that transmission errors that have obscured the poem for two centuries have been cleared and the poem's full richness is now accessible for the first time to contemporary readers. Of course we encountered problems along the way. Using manuscripts for copy text with a writer as volatile as Byron necessitates an

14 In T. M. Jarvis, *Accredited Ghost Stories*, London, J. Andrews, 1823, pp. 175-90.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

unusually high level of editorial intervention in matters of punctuation. Byron's dashes are perhaps the most challenging aspects of his style, but I cite another mark of punctuation as an example: Byron's wayward apostrophes pose problems for any editor and show the extent to which 'accidental' matters of punctuation inform substantive issues of meaning. As with his habit of random capitalization, Byron sprinkles apostrophes around very casually. When he tells us that he is about to begin his poem in Canto XII and that «These first twelve books are merely flourishes» (XII, 54), the plural «books» in manuscript has an apostrophe jauntily before the 's'. In two separate allusions to the Old Testament story of Daniel in the lions' den, Byronic inconsistency means that one den contains one lion but there is a plurality of lions in the other (we have standardized to keep plural lions at both points). Two instances of ambiguity with the same word will show how the Leverhulme manuscript research has approached and solved this sort of puzzle.

In Byron's description of Norman Abbey in Canto XIII stanza 62, the ruined abbey's stained glass is evoked wonderfully:

A mighty window, hollow in the centre,
 [...]

 Through which the deepened glories once could enter

 Streaming from off the sun like seraphs wings

In Byron's manuscript, the apostrophe hovers exactly over the centre of the final 's' – so the editor has to decide how many seraphs are involved. Following the first edition, McGann's Clarendon edition settles for «seraph's» (one seraph), but the lack of an article and internal evidence from another canto suggests that a different reading is more likely. In Canto XV stanza 45, Byron presents the character of Aurora as:

Early in years and yet more infantine

 In figure, she had something of the sublime

 In eyes which sadly shone, as seraphs shine

In the manuscript here, the apostrophe is in exactly the same position, hovering over the middle of the final 's' of «seraphs», but close inspection shows that this apostrophe has been erased by Byron's little horizontal pen marks. The editor has to make a choice. Following first edition, McGann decided on possessive plural – «as seraphs' [eyes] shine», but this read-

ing ignores Byron's correction. When I excitedly sent an image from New York of the deleted apostrophe to my co-editor, we both agreed that although Byron was careless about adding apostrophes, there is something unusual and important about his deletion of an apostrophe which would mean, in this case, that Aurora's eyes shine not just as one or more seraph's eyes, but as a multitude of seraphs in their entirety. In both cases a difficult editorial decision has to be made; one cannot just leave the apostrophe on top of the 's' and moving it one way or another subtly alters the effect of the image. It is a daunting responsibility, but getting to grips with it has made the last three years the most intellectually rewarding time of my whole career. I am immensely grateful to the Leverhulme Trustees and the Longman general editors and I am confident that they will be justly proud of this new edition of Byron's most important poem when it appears in time for the 2024 bicentenary of Byron's death.