

**DON JUAN**  
**Canto 15**

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**Don Juan Canto Fifteenth**  
*edited by Peter Cochran*

M<sup>h</sup>. 8<sup>th</sup>. 1823.

1.

Ah! – what should follow slips from my reflection;<sup>1</sup>  
 Whatever follows ne’ertheless may be  
 As à *propos* of hope or retrospection  
 As though the lurking thought had followed free;<sup>2</sup>  
 All present Life is but an Interjection<sup>3</sup> – 5  
 An “Oh!” or “Ah!” of Joy or Misery –  
 Or a “Ha! Ha!” – or “Bah!” – a Yawn – or “Pooh!” –  
 Of which perhaps the latter is most true.<sup>4</sup>

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**1:** *Ah!* – what should follow slips from my reflection: compare above, IX ll.282-3: *I have forgotten what I meant to say, / As sometimes have been greater Sages’ lots*: both lines echo Polonius at *Hamlet* II i 49-51: *And then, sir, ’a does this – ’a does – What was I about to say? By the Mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave?*

**2:** *What should follow slips from my reflection; / Whatever follows ne’ertheless may be / As à propos of hope or retrospection / As though the lurking thought had followed free*: although B. cannot remember what he intended to say next, he’s so confident of his inspiration that what he does say next will, he knows, be highly pertinent. Easy to say in the first stanza of a new canto, before the theme has been stated. *Followed free* is from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, l.104: *The furrow followed free*.

**3:** *an Interjection*: interjections are the humblest parts of speech, lying at the point where verbal signification and verbal gesture overlap. They are also the most powerful, because most visceral and economical. *Don Juan* embraces them wholeheartedly. Compare Pushkin, *The Little House at Kolomna*, third stanza (my translation):

*No Word shall be thrown out here, All shall pass;  
 No Draft-dodgers shall here have cold rejection,  
 Nor any spavined Mule, nor jade, nor Ass;  
 Conjunction, preposition, interjection,  
 I’ll take them all on, huddling in a Mass –  
 Untouchability is no Infection –  
 The Dictionary don’t disdain, so why should you?  
 This is War, not a military Tattoo.*

**4:** “Oh!” ... “Ah!” ... “Ha! Ha!” ... “Bah!” – a Yawn – or “Pooh!” – / *Of which perhaps the latter is most true*: joy, misery, laughter, contempt and boredom are all declared inferior to aristocratic disdain.

## 2.

But more or less – the whole's a Syncopé,<sup>5</sup>  
 Or a Singultus<sup>6</sup> – – emblems of Emotion – 10  
 The grand Antithesis to great Ennui,<sup>7</sup>  
 Wherewith we break our bubbles on the Ocean,<sup>8</sup>  
 That watery Outline of Eternity –  
 Or miniature, at least – as is my notion,  
 Which ministers unto the Soul's delight 15  
 In seeing matters which are out of Sight.<sup>9</sup>

## 3.

But all are better than the Sigh suppress –  
 Corroding in the cavern of the heart –  
 Making the Countenance a Masque of rest  
 And turning Human Nature to an Art; 20  
 Few Men dare show their thoughts of worst or best –  
 Dissimulation always sets apart  
 A Corner for Herself; and therefore Fiction  
 Is that which passes with least Contradiction.<sup>10</sup>

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**5:** *a Syncopé*: a sudden cessation or interruption. It can mean either on the one hand a fainting fit or a heart-stoppage, or on the other a dash used between letters to mute the effect of an objectionable word, as in *G—d* or *d—n*. There is no stress on the final syllable, but B. needs one for his metre.

**6:** *a Singultus*: either a hiccup or a sob.

**7:** *The grand Antithesis to great Ennui*: emotions (as expressed in interjections, syncopes or singulti) may only constitute hiccups, or enigmatic dashes between letters rendering language a riddle: but they are preferable to the explicit and unambiguous Ennui or tedium which life would be without them.

**8:** *our bubbles on the Ocean*: either the bubbles of a drowning man or (perhaps) a fart in a bath.

**9:** *The Ocean, / That watery Outline of Eternity – / Or miniature, at least – as is my notion, / Which ministers unto the Soul's delight / In seeing matters which are out of Sight*: *my notion*, not *The Ocean*, is the noun governing ministers. B.'s notion is a microcosmographic miniature which reveals the unseen beyond and thus delights the Soul rather than the senses.

**10:** *therefore Fiction / Is that which passes with least Contradiction*: B. provides himself with a motive for writing *Don Juan*.

## 4.

Ah! who can tell? – or rather who can not 25  
 Remember, without telling Passion's errors? –  
 The Drainer of Oblivion, even the Sot,  
 Hath got Blue Devils<sup>11</sup> for his Morning mirrors;  
 What though on Lethe's stream he seems to float?  
 He cannot sink his tremors or his terrors – 30  
 The ruby Glass that shakes within his hand<sup>12</sup>  
 Leaves a sad sediment of Time's worst Sand.

## 5.

And as for Love – Oh Love! – we will proceed. –  
 The Lady Adeline Amundeville –  
 A pretty name as one would wish to read – 35  
 Must perch harmonious on my tuneful quill;<sup>13</sup>  
 There's Music in the sighing of a reed –  
 There's Music in the gushing of a rill –  
 There's Music in all things; if Men had ears,  
 Their Earth is but an Echo of the Spheres.<sup>14</sup> 40

## 6.

The Lady Adeline, right honourable  
 And honoured, ran a risk of growing less so,  
 For few of the soft Sex are very Stable  
 In their resolves; Alas! that I should say so!  
 They differ as Wine differs from its label, 45  
 When once decanted; I presume to guess so,  
 But will not swear – yet both upon occasion,  
 Till old, may undergo Adulteration.<sup>15</sup> –

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**11:** *Blue Devils*: depression. See above, X, 38, 8 and n, or XIV, 79, 8 and n. Here, a reference to hangovers (though DJV thinks that it refers to the DTs).

**12:** *The ruby Glass that shakes within his hand*: a reference to “the hair of the dog” cure for hangovers – see the rejected *Hock and Soda Water* stanza from Canto I, on which these lines furnish a sad comment.

**13:** *The Lady Adeline Amundeville – / A pretty name as one would wish to read – / Must perch harmonious on my tuneful quill*: see above, XIII 1.9n.

**14:** ... *if Men had ears, / Their Earth is but an Echo of the Spheres*: see *Pericles* V i 222-32.

**15:** ... *yet both upon occasion, / Till old, may undergo Adulteration*: compare above, XII, 63, 8: *merely innocent Flirtation – / Not quite Adultery, but Adulteration*.

## 7.

But Adeline was of the purest Vintage,  
 Th'unmingled Essence of the Grape;<sup>16</sup> and yet 50  
 Bright as a new Napoleon<sup>17</sup> from its mintage,  
 Or glorious as a Diamond richly set;  
 A page where Time should hesitate to print age,  
 And for which Nature might forego her debt –  
 Sole Creditor, whose process doth involve in't 55  
 The luck of finding every body Solvent.

## 8.

Oh Death, thou dunnest of all duns!<sup>18</sup> – thou daily  
 Knockest at doors – at first with modest tap,  
 Like a meek tradesman when approaching palely  
 Some splendid debtor he would take by sap<sup>19</sup> – 60  
 But, oft denied, as patience 'gins to fail, he  
 Advances with exasperated rap –  
 And (*if* let in) insists in terms unhandsome  
 On ready money, or a draft on Ransom.<sup>20</sup> –

## 9.

Whate'er thou takest, spare awhile poor Beauty!<sup>21</sup> 65  
 She is so rare – and thou hast so much prey –  
 What though She now and then may slip from duty?  
 The more's the reason why You ought to stay;  
 Gaunt Gourmand! With whole Nations for your Booty,  
 You should be civil, in a modest way – 70  
 Suppress then some slight feminine diseases! –  
 And take as many heroes as Heaven pleases.

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**16:** *But Adeline was of the purest Vintage, / Th'unmingled Essence of the Grape:* echoes above, XIII st.37, *passim*.

**17:** *a new Napoleon:* a Napoleon was a French gold coin worth twenty francs.

**18:** *Oh Death, thou dunnest of all duns:* for duns, see above, XII, 67, 8.

**19:** *take by sap:* to undermine; in this case, to approach with politeness and discretion.

**20:** *a draft on Ransom:* a cheque drawn on Ransom and Morley's bank, Pall Mall. Here B. had his London account during his exile, managed by his friend Douglas Kinnaird.

**21:** *Whate'er thou takest, spare awhile poor Beauty:* CPW, borrowing the idea without acknowledgment from DJV, which does acknowledge borrowing from S.C.Chew, refers us to Propertius, *Elegies* II, xxvii, ll 49-50: *sunt apud infernos tot milia formosarum: / pulchra sit in superis, si licet, una locis!* (There are already so many thousands of beauties in Hades: please let one remain here above!)

## 10.

Fair Adeline, the more ingenuous –  
 Where she was interested (as was said)  
 Because she was not apt, as some of us, 75  
 To like too readily, or too high bred  
 To show it<sup>22</sup> – – (points we need not now discuss)  
 Would give up artlessly, both heart and head,  
 Unto such feelings as seemed innocent –  
 For objects worthy of the Sentiment. 80

## 11.

Some parts of Juan's History which Rumour,  
 That Live Gazette, had scattered to disfigure,<sup>23</sup>  
 She'd heard – but women hear with more good humour  
 Such aberrations than we Men of Rigour –  
 Besides, his conduct since in England grew more 85  
 Strict, and his Mind assumed a manlier vigour –  
 Because he had, like Alcibiades,<sup>24</sup>  
 The art of living in all climes with ease.

## 12.

His manner was perhaps the more seductive  
 Because he ne'er seemed anxious to seduce – 90  
 Nothing affected, studied, or constructive  
 Of Coxcombry, or Conquest; No Abuse  
 Of his attractions marred the fair perspective  
 To indicate a Cupidon<sup>25</sup> broke loose –  
 And seem to say "resist us if you can" – 95  
 Which makes a Dandy, while it spoils a man.<sup>26</sup> –

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**22:** We must understand the repetition or (because she was) *too high bred* / *To show it ...*

**23:** *Rumour*, / *That Live Gazette*: for B. on gazettes, compare above, I, 3, VIII, 18 and B.'s note, or VIII 993-4.

**24:** *Alcibiades*: Athenian statesman (c.450-404 BC) lover of Socrates, exiled for alleged sacrilege and spent much of his life wandering foreign courts, to the manners and morals of any of which (according to Plutarch) he was able to adapt with treacherous ease: *For among other qualities and properties he had (whereof he was full) this as they say was one, whereby he most robbed men's hearts: that he could frame altogether with their manners and fashions of life, transforming himself more easily to all manner of shapes, than the chameleon. For it is reported, that the chameleon could not take the white colour: but Alcibiades could put upon him any manners, customs, or fashions, of what nation soever, and could follow, exercise and counterfeit them when he would, as well the good as the bad. For in Sparta, he was very painful, and in continual exercise: he lived sparingly with little, and led a strait life. In Ionia, to the contrary: there he lived daintily and superfluously ...* and so on (North's Plutarch).

**25:** *Cupidon*: the OED credits B. with the importation of this French diminutive, meaning, it asserts, "an Adonis". See BLJ X 136, where B. describes the Count D'Orsay as a *Cupidon déchainé* ("unchained Cupid"). For another use, see T.S.Eliot, *The Waste Land*, line 80.

**26:** *a Dandy*: a man of ostentatious style; a fop. In B.'s day, an identifiable social type of whom Brummel was the epitome. See above, XI, 78, 1, or *Beppo* ll.410 or 474. B. may here be thinking of Count Alfred D'Orsay, who visited him in Genoa with the Blessingtons as this canto was being written.

## 13.

They're wrong – that's not the way to set about it,  
 As, if they told the truth, could well be shown;<sup>27</sup>  
 But, right or wrong, Don Juan was without it –  
 In fact, his manner was his own alone; 100  
 Sincere he was – at least you could not doubt it,  
 In listening merely to his voice's tone;  
 The Devil hath not in all his Quiver's choice  
 An arrow for the heart like a sweet voice.

## 14.

By Nature soft, his whole Address held off 105  
 Suspicion; though not timid, his regard  
 Was such as rather seemed to keep aloof,  
 To shield himself, than put *you* on your guard;<sup>28</sup>  
 Perhaps 'twas hardly quite assured enough,  
 But Modesty's at times its own reward, 110  
 Like Virtue – and the absence of pretension  
 Will go much further than there's need to mention.

## 15.

Serene, accomplished, cheerful – but not loud –  
 Insinuating without insinuation –  
 Observant of the foibles of the Crowd, 115  
 Yet ne'er betraying this in conversation –  
 Proud with the Proud, yet courteously proud,  
 So as to make them feel he knew his Station,  
 And theirs, without a struggle for priority;  
 He neither brooked nor claimed Superiority. 120

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**27:** They are presumably women, unwilling to tell men what formula makes men attractive to them.

**28:** *though not timid, his regard / Was such as rather seemed to keep aloof, / To shield himself, than put you on your guard:* DJV contrasts Juan's shy aloofness with the off-putting, aloofness of the earlier Byronic heroes such as Conrad, or his sequel, B.'s previous Spanish aristocrat, Lara:

*Around him some mysterious circle thrown  
 Repell'd approach, and show'd him still alone;  
 Upon his eye sate something of reproof,  
 That kept at least frivolity aloof;  
 And things more timid that beheld him near,  
 In silence gaz'd, or whisper'd mutual fear;  
 And they the wiser, friendlier few confess'd  
 They deem'd him better than his air express'd. (Lara I 107-14).*

## 16.

That is, with Men; with Women he was what  
 They pleased to make or take him for – and their  
 Imagination's quite enough for that;  
 So that the Outline's tolerably fair  
 They fill the Canvass up – and – "Verbum sat."<sup>29</sup> 125  
 If once their Phantasies be brought to bear  
 Upon an object whether sad or playful,  
 They can transfigure brighter than a Raphael.<sup>30</sup>

## 17.

Adeline, no deep Judge of Character,  
 Was apt to add a colouring from her own; 130  
 'Tis thus the Good will amiably err,  
 And eke the Wise, as has been often shown;  
 Experience is the Chief philosopher,  
 But saddest when his Science is well known –  
 And persecuted Sages teach the Schools 135  
 Their folly in forgetting there are fools.

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**29:** "Verbum sat": "a word is enough to the wise" (verbum sat sapienti – Coleridge cites Plautus, *Truculentus* ii 8.14).

**30:** *playful / Raphael*: whether in B.'s day this rhyme would have sounded correct or comical, is not clear to me. The allusion is to Raphael's painting *The Transfiguration*, in the Vatican – a joke up to which the artistic references in ll.123-4 have been leading.

## 18.

Was it not so, great Locke? And greater Bacon?  
 Great Socrates? And thou Diviner still<sup>31</sup> –  
 Whose lot it is by Man to be mistaken?  
 And thy pure Creed made Sanction of all Ill? – 140  
 Redeeming Worlds to be by Bigots shaken,  
 How was thy toil rewarded? We might fill  
 Volumes with similar sad illustrations,  
 But leave them to the Conscience of the Nations.

\* As it is necessary in these times to avoid ambiguity, I say, that I mean, by “Diviner still,” CHRIST. If ever God was Man – or Man God – he was *both*. I never arraigned his creed, but the use – or abuse – made of it. Mr. Canning one day<sup>32</sup> quoted Christianity to sanction Negro Slavery, and Mr. Wilberforce had little to say in reply. And was Christ crucified, that black men might be scourged? If so, he had better been born a Mulatto, to give both colours an equal chance of freedom, or at least salvation.

## 19.

I perch upon an humble promontory 145  
 Amid Life’s infinite Variety,<sup>33</sup>  
 With no great care for what is nick-named Glory,  
 But speculating as I cast mine eye  
 On what may suit or may not suit my Story;  
 And never straining hard to versify, 150  
 I rattle on exactly as I’d talk  
 With Any body in a ride or walk.

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**31:** *persecuted Sages ... Locke ... Bacon ... Socrates? And thou Diviner still:* From Adeline’s naivety, B. digresses fast and far. Socrates and Christ were persecuted for their sagacity; Bacon and Locke were “persecuted” for political reasons, not because of any threat their wisdom posed.

**32:** E.H.Coleridge quotes the relevant debate, in which Canning does not quite use Christianity as B. would have him. On May 15 1823 (two months before B. started this canto) he was replying to Fowell Buxton’s motion for the abolition of slavery, and said: “God forbid that I should contend that the Christian religion is favourable to slavery ... but if it be meant that in the Christian religion there is a special denunciation against slavery, that slavery and Christianity cannot exist together,—I think that the honourable gentleman himself must admit that the proposition is historically false” – Parliamentary Debates, N.S. vol.ix pp.278-9.

**33:** *Life’s infinite Variety:* echoes Enobarbus on Cleopatra: *Age cannot wither her, / Nor custom stale her infinite variety* (*Antony and Cleopatra* II ii 239-40).

## 20.

I don't know that there may be much ability  
 Shown In this sort of desultory rhyme,  
 But there's a conversational facility 155  
 Which may round off an hour upon a time;  
 Of this I'm sure – at least there's no Servility  
 In mine irregularity of Chime,  
 Which rings what's uppermost of new or hoary,  
 Just As I feel the "Improvvisatore."<sup>34</sup> 160

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**34:** *rings what's uppermost of new or hoary, / Just As I feel the "Improvvisatore"*: an Improvvisatore was a poet who composed on his feet, in public, often to themes given him. See the Count at *Beppo*, ll.257-8: *He patronised the Improvisatori, / Nay, could himself extemporize some stanzas ...* But the reference is self-deflating. At BLJ V 119 B., describing Tommaso Sgricci (1788-1836) *an authentic improvvisatore*, refers to the skill as *not an amusing though a curious effort of human powers*. At BLJ V 119 he records Sgricci as receiving a cry of *Seccatura!* ("Boring!"). Despite the evidence of his words as recorded at Medwin 137 ("But Sgricci! To extemporize a whole tragedy seems a miraculous gift") B. probably thought of Improvisatori as charlatans. Sgricci was perceived by Ludovico di Breme, and B.'s other liberal friends in Milan, as a plaything of reactionaries. Hobhouse's diary for Saturday December 20 1817 records: *in evening went to S. Lucia and heard Sgricci again, he was still in yellow slippers, his flux was as great as before, but there was a very thin house - his tragedy was his 43d. extempory it was the Earl of Essex x x [sic] whom he called Odvardo he pretended to know nothing of the story and had it told to him by a gentleman in the stage box, this Rizzo said was a sham - however he talked of Elizabeth making war on France and did seem most extraordinarily ignorant, his tragedy had lasted nearly two hours when we came away at twelve o'clock, he had talked out many of his then audience ...* (B.L.Add.M.S. 47234 f.40). There is a note by Hobhouse on improvisatori for *CHP* IV 54 7 (CPW II 236-7).

## 21.

“Omnis Vult *belle* Matho dicere, dic aliquando”  
 “Et *bene*, dic *neutrum* – dic aliquando *male*;<sup>35</sup>  
 The first is rather more than mortal can do<sup>36</sup> –  
 The second may be sadly done or gaily<sup>37</sup> –  
 The third is still more difficult to stand to<sup>38</sup> – 165  
 The fourth – we hear and see, and say too, daily;<sup>39</sup>  
 The whole together is what I could wish  
 To serve in this Conundrum of a dish.<sup>40</sup> –

## 22.

A modest hope! but Modesty’s my forte,  
 And Pride my feeble – let us ramble on;<sup>41</sup> 170  
 I meant to make this poem very short,  
 But now I can’t tell where it may not run;  
 No doubt if I had wished to pay my Court  
 To Critics, or to hail the *Setting Sun*  
 Of Tyranny<sup>42</sup> of all kinds, my Concision 175  
 Were more; but I was born for Opposition. –

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**35:** “Omnis Vult *belle* Matho dicere, dic aliquando” / “Et *bene*, dic *neutrum* – dic aliquando *male*”: B. quotes Martial, Epigrams X 46, complete: “If, Matho, you want to express everything beautifully, speak well sometimes, in a neutral way sometimes, and badly sometimes”. For *speak* read *write*.

**36:** *The first is rather more than mortal can do*: no-one can speak well all the time.

**37:** *The second may be sadly done or gaily*: good speaking can be done in various tones and styles.

**38:** *The third is still more difficult to stand to*: speaking in a middling, common way, is hardest of all. Compare the Horatian epigraph to *Don Juan*, from the *Ars Poetica*: *Difficile est proprie communia dicere*, and B.’s three tries at translating it, which prove his point: *’Tis hard to sketch with skill from vulgar life ... Of common things ’tis difficult to write ... ’Tis no slight task to write on common things* and his eventual substitution *’Tis hard to venture where our betters fail, / Or lend fresh interest to a twice-told tale* (CPW I 296).

**39:** *The fourth – we hear and see, and say too, daily*: bad speaking is around us all the time, and we are responsible for much of it.

**40:** *The whole together is what I could wish / To serve in this Conundrum of a dish*: B.’s ambition is to write well according to Martial’s prescription, but easily, in the manner of a virtuoso Improvvisatore (see above, I.160). The result will, however, remain inscrutable, a *Conundrum* or riddle. See above, XIV, 173-6: *The grand Arcanum’s not for men to see all; / My Music hath some mystic diapasons, / And there is much which could not be appreciated / In any manner by the uninitiated*.

**41:** *Modesty’s my forte, / And Pride my feeble*: by feeble B. intends foible, weakness.

**42:** *to hail the Setting Sun / Of Tyranny*: compare Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens* I ii 139: *Men shut their doors against a setting sun*.

## 23.

But then 'tis mostly on the weaker side,  
 So that I verily believe if they<sup>43</sup>  
 Who now are basking in their full-blown pride  
 Were shaken down, and "Dogs had had their day,"<sup>44</sup> 180  
 Though at the first I might perchance deride  
 Their tumble, I should turn the other way,  
 And wax an Ultra-royalist in loyalty –  
 Because I hate even democratic Royalty.

## 24.

I think I should have made a decent Spouse, 185  
 If I had never proved the soft condition;  
 I think I should have made monastic vows,  
 But for my own peculiar Superstition;  
 'Gainst rhyme I never should have knocked my brows,  
 Nor broken my own head, nor that of Priscian,<sup>45</sup> 190  
 Nor worn the motley mantle of a poet –  
 If Some one had not told me to forego it.<sup>46</sup>

## 25.

But "Laissez aller"<sup>47</sup> – knights and dames I sing,<sup>48</sup>  
 Such as the times may furnish; 'tis a flight  
 Which seems at first to need no lofty wing, 195  
 Plumed by Longinus or the Stagyrte;<sup>49</sup>  
 The difficulty lies in colouring,  
 (Keeping the due proportions still in sight)  
 With Nature, manners which are artificial,  
 And rendering general that which is especial. 200

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**43:** *they:* tyrants.

**44:** "Dogs had had their day": Hamlet's words to Laertes at, V i 285-6: *Let Hercules himself do what he may, / The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.*

**45:** *Nor broken my own head, nor that of Priscian:* Priscianus (fl. AD 500) Latin's greatest grammarian, much revered during the Middle Ages. B. implies his own verse to be a systematic affront to all for which Priscian stood. See *Holofernes* at *Love's Labours Lost*, V i 26: *Priscian a little scratched – 'twill serve.*

**46:** *Nor worn the motley mantle of a poet – / If Some one had not told me to forego it:* normally (see DJV IV 271, CPW V 763, MSYR *Byron* X 134) taken as a reference to Brougham's review of *Hours of Idleness*: but B., carrying through the marriage theme from lines 185-6, is also thinking of Annabella, against whom *Don Juan* is, in a sense, written. On January 17 1816 Augusta reports him as complaining, "why does Pip object to my versifying?": at another time she is reported as saying "... don't give yourself up to the abominable trade of versifying – nor to brandy – nor to any thing or any body that is not lawful & right". Annabella was, however, being playful.

**47:** "Laissez aller": "it matters not".

**48:** *knights and dames I sing:* compare *Aeneid* I 1, *The Faerie Queene* I, 1, 5, *Whistlecraft* III, 3, 8, or above, VII 57-60.

**49:** *Longinus or the Stagyrte:* Longinus or Aristotle, classical literary critics previously mocked above at I 1.333 and nn, I ll.959-960, I l.1631-2, and III, final line.

## 26.

The difference is that in the days of Old,  
 Men made the Manners – Manners now make men,<sup>50</sup>  
 Pinned like a Flock, and fleeced too, in their Fold –  
 At least Nine and a Ninth beside of ten;<sup>51</sup>  
 Now this at all events must render cold 205  
 Your writers, who must either draw again  
 Days better drawn before – or else assume  
 The present, with their common-place costume.

## 27.

We'll do our best to make the best on't – March!  
 March, my Muse!<sup>52</sup> – if you cannot fly, yet flutter, 210  
 And when you may not be sublime, be arch –  
 Or starch – as are the edicts Statesmen utter;  
 We surely shall find something worth research –  
 Columbus found a new World in a Cutter,  
 Or brigantine, or pink<sup>53</sup> – of no great tonnage 215  
 While yet America was in her Non-age.<sup>54</sup>

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**50:** *in the days of Old, / Men made the Manners – Manners now make men:* the assertion that where ancient heroes created their own idioms, modern ones are restricted by convention, may place Juan, a man of excellent “manners” (see above, this canto, sts.11-15) in an unheroic light. Andrew Nicholson (*MSYR Byron* 135) is the only commentator to locate the origin of the phrase “Manners maketh Man” in the motto of New College Oxford.

**51:** *At least Nine and a Ninth beside of ten:* schoolbook maths expression: “nine and one-ninth”.

**52:** *We'll do our best to make the best on't – March! / March, my Muse:* further evidence that Pushkin may have read this Canto, and taken a joke from it for *The Little House at Kolomna* (see above, this canto, 5 n):

*It's quite a thrill to drill such tuneful Numbers,  
 To see them all march past, their Heads held high –  
 Not straggling out of line, with jolts and lumbers,  
 Advancing against odds, all doomed to Die;  
 Each syllable, each Foot, each line encumbers  
 Its Neighbour not a jot; I tell no lie –  
 The poet feels himself the Sword of Fate,  
 Like Bonaparte, or Tamburlaine the Great. (st.5 – my translation)*

**53:** *Columbus found a new World in a Cutter, / Or brigantine, or pink:* for B.'s previous comparison of himself to Columbus, see above, XIV 101, 7-8: *The new World would be nothing to the old, / If some Columbus of the moral Seas / Would show Mankind their Souls' Antipodes.* Here, he develops the idea to convey the risk involved in enlarging the world's self-image, whether nautically or poetically. A brigantine is a small vessel which can be either sailed or rowed, and a pink is simply a small sailing vessel. Exactly what design the Pinta, the Nina and the Santa Maria were is still a matter for conjecture among naval historians – but they were small.

**54:** *Non-age:* normally *nonage*: the legal period of infancy.

**28.**<sup>55</sup>

When Adeline, in all her growing sense  
 Of Juan's merits and his situation,  
 Felt on the whole an interest intense –  
     Partly, perhaps, because a fresh sensation – 220  
 Or that he had an air of innocence,  
     Which is for Innocence a sad temptation –  
 As Women hate half measures, on the whole,<sup>56</sup>  
 She 'gan to ponder how to save his Soul. –

**29.**

She had a good opinion of Advice, 225  
     Like all who give and eke<sup>57</sup> receive it gratis –  
 For which small thanks are still the Market price,  
     Even when the Article at highest rate is;  
 She thought upon the subject twice or thrice,  
     And morally decided the best state is, 230  
 For morals, marriage – and, this question carried,  
 She seriously advised him to get married.

**30.**

Juan replied, with all becoming deference,<sup>58</sup>  
     He had a predilection for that tie,  
 But that at present, with immediate reference 235  
     To his own circumstances, there might lie  
 Some difficulties – as – in his own preference –  
     Or that of her to whom he might apply –  
 That still he'de wed with such or such a Lady,  
 If that they were not married all already. 240

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**55:** St.28: The self-delusion Adeline experiences is similar to that of Donna Julia in Canto I.

**56:** *on the whole*: as CPW remarks, “obscene wordplay”. Compare above, IX ll.458-9: *Forgetting quite the woman (which composed / At least three parts of this great whole)*.

**57:** *and eke*: here, as everywhere, tautologous.

**58:** *Juan replied, with all becoming deference*: compare Johnson's reaction to Baba's suggestion that he and Juan turn Moslems, above, V, st.71.

## 31.

Next to the making matches for herself,  
 And daughters – brothers – sisters – kith or kin,  
 Arranging them like books on the same shelf,  
 There's Nothing Women love to dabble in  
 More (like a Stockholder in growing pelf)<sup>59</sup> 245  
 Than Matchmaking in general; 'tis no sin,  
 Certes, but a preventative – and therefore,  
 That is, no doubt, the only reason wherefore.<sup>60</sup> –

## 32.

But never yet (except of course a Miss  
 Unwed – or Mistress never to be wed – 250  
 Or Wed already, who object to this)  
 Was there chaste dame who had not in her head  
 Some Drama of the Marriage unities,  
 Observed as strictly, both at board and bed,  
 As those of Aristotle,<sup>61</sup> though sometimes 255  
 They turn out melodramas, or pantomimes. –

## 33.

They generally have some only son –  
 Some heir to a large property – some friend  
 Of an old family – some gay Sir John,  
 Or grave Lord George – with whom perhaps might end 260  
 A Line, and leave Posterity undone;  
 Unless a Marriage was applied to mend  
 The prospect, and their morals; and, besides,  
 They have at hand a blooming glut of brides.

## 34.

From them they will be careful to select 265  
 For this an heiress, and for that a beauty –  
 For one a Songstress who hath no defect –  
 For t'other, one who promises much duty –  
 For this, a Lady no one can reject,  
 Whose sole Accomplishments were quite a booty – 270  
 A Second for her excellent connections –  
 A third – because there can be no objections.

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**59:** *pelf*: riches.

**60:** *'tis no sin, / Certes, but a preventative – and therefore, / That is, no doubt, the only reason wherefore:* the hesitations imply fake-uncertainty or -diffidence. Women enjoy matchmaking because it enables them to realise, vicariously, their sexual fantasies.

**61:** *Some Drama of the Marriage unities, / Observed as strictly, both at board and bed, / As those of Aristotle:* if matchmakers were dramatists, whose ideal stage was one which observed the Aristotelian unities of time, place and action, the play would, for example, end on the wedding night and never stray from the honeymoon suite.

## 35.

When Rapp the Harmonist<sup>62</sup> embargoed marriage  
 In his harmonious Settlement (which flourishes  
 Strangely enough, as yet, without miscarriage – 275  
 Because it breeds no more mouths than it nourishes,  
 Without those sad expences which disparage  
 What Nature naturally most encourages)  
 Why called he “Harmony” a State sans Wedlock? –  
 Now here I’ve got the Preacher at a dead lock. – 280

\* This extraordinary and flourishing German colony in America does not entirely exclude marriage – as “the Shakers” do – but lays such restrictions upon it as prevent more than a certain quantum of births within a certain number of years, which births (as Mr. Hulme<sup>63</sup> observes) generally arrive “in a little flock, like those of a farmer’s lambs – all within the same month perhaps”.<sup>64</sup> These Harmonists (so called from the name of their settlement) are represented as a remarkably flourishing, pious, and quiet people. – – See the various recent writers on America. – –

## 36.

Because he either meant to sneer at Harmony –  
 Or Marriage – by divorcing them thus oddly;  
 But whether Reverend Rapp learned this in Germany  
 Or No, ’tis said his Sect is rich and godly<sup>65</sup> –  
 Pious and pure beyond what I can term any 285  
 Of ours – although they propagate more broadly;  
 My Objection’s to his title, not his ritual –  
 Although I wonder how it grew habitual. –

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**62:** *Rapp the Harmonist*: B. here plays games with American Utopias still more unscrupulous than those he plays in the section on Daniel Boone (above, VIII sts.61-7). George Rapp (1770-1847) born in Württemberg, emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1803, and established the colony of Harmonie (sic). Subsequent colonies were New Harmony (Indiana) and Economy (Pennsylvania again). A reader of Swedenborg and Jacob Böhme, he believed in amassing wealth for use at the Second Coming, and he and his followers practised property-sharing and celibacy to that end. They were fond of poetry, painting, and especially of music. As CPW says, B. would have read about them in the *Quarterly Review* XXVII of 1822, on p.96 – although that article refers to the Shakers’ prohibition of marriage, not to the Harmonists’. The Harmonists’ choice of celibacy had nothing to do with a distaste for marital strife. Couples married already still refrained from carnal contact.

**63:** *Mr. Hulme*: CPW refers us to *Hints to Emigrants ... with copious extracts from the journal of T[homas]. H[ulme]*. (1817): but there is no reference either to Rapp or to Harmony in that pamphlet.

**64:** Aaron Williams, an Harmonist, refutes B.’s assertion here in *The Harmony Society of Economy Pennsylvania* (1866, p.59) saying that the celibacy practised by the Harmonists was absolute, and that no children had been born in the colony for years. The Austrian poet Nikolaus Lenau spent some time with the Harmonists during the 1830s.

**65:** *’tis said his Sect is rich and godly*: the Harmonists ate five nourishing meals a day. They manufactured wine, whiskey and woollens.

## 37.

But Rapp is the reverse of zealous matrons –  
 Who favour, malgré Malthus, generation;<sup>66</sup> 290  
 Professors of that genial art, and patrons  
 Of all the modest part of propagation,  
 Which, after all, at such a desperate rate runs  
 That half its produce tends to Emigration,  
 That sad result of Passions and Potatoes<sup>67</sup> – 295  
 Two weeds which pose our economic Catos.<sup>68</sup> –

## 38.

Had Adeline read Malthus? I can't tell,  
 I wish she had – his book's the eleventh Commandment,  
 Which says "thou shalt not marry" unless *well*;  
 This (he as far as I understand) meant; 300  
 'Tis not my purpose on his views to dwell,  
 Nor canvas what "so eminent a hand" meant; \*  
 But certes it conducts to lives ascetic,  
 Or turning Marriage to Arithmetic.<sup>69</sup>

\* Jacob Tonson, according to M<sup>r</sup>. Pope, was accustomed to call his writers "able pens" – "persons of honour" – and, especially, "eminent hands." – – Vide Correspondence, &<sup>c</sup>. &<sup>c</sup>.<sup>70</sup>

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**66:** *malgré Malthus*: Malthus is, in B.'s demonology, the man who wants all working-class fucking to cease. See above, XI, 30, 7, and XII, sts.14 and 20.

**67:** *Emigration, / That sad result of Passions and Potatoes*: much emigration – especially from Ireland – was a consequence of potato-crop failure; not so much, as B. may imply, of boredom at having potatoes as one's staple diet. See above, I 130, 1.

**68:** *Two weeds which pose our economic Catos*: a Cato is an uncompromising, law-making conservative leader. Marcus Portius Cato (234-149 BC) is the best or worst example, though what he felt about *passion* is not recorded, and he never saw a single *potato* in his life.

**69:** *turning Marriage to Arithmetic*: a reference to Annabella's maths.

**70:** "*so eminent a hand*": Jacob Tonson (1656-1736) published Dryden, Pope, Addison, Steele and Otway. Pope to Steele, November 29 1712: *Perhaps I should myself be much better pleased, if I were told you called me your little friend, than if you complimented me with the title of a "great genius," or an eminent hand, as Jacob does all his authors.*

## 39.

But Adeline – who probably presumed 305  
 That Juan had enough of maintenance -  
 Or *separate* maintenance – in case 'twas doomed –  
 As on the whole it is an even chance,  
 That Bridegrooms, after they are fairly *groomed*,  
 May retrograde a little in the Dance 310  
 Of Marriage (which might form a Painter's fame,  
 Like Holbein's "Dance of Death"<sup>71</sup> – but 'tis the same); –

## 40.

But Adeline determined Juan's wedding  
 In her own mind, and that's enough for woman –  
 But then with *whom?* – there was the sage Miss Reading – 315  
 Miss Raw, Miss Flaw, Miss Showman and Miss Knowman,  
 And the two fair Co-heiresses Giltbedding;<sup>72</sup>  
 She deemed his merits something more than common –  
 All these were unobjectionable matches –  
 And might go on, if well wound up, like watches. 320

## 41.

There was Miss Millpond – smooth as Summer's Sea<sup>73</sup> –  
 That usual paragon, an only daughter  
 Who seemed the Cream of equanimity,  
 Till skimmed; and then there was some milk and water,<sup>74</sup>  
 With a slight shade of Blue<sup>75</sup> too it might be, 325  
 Beneath the surface, but what did it matter?  
 Love's riotous, but Marriage should have quiet –  
 And being Consumptive, live on a Milk Diet.

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**71:** *Holbein's "Dance of Death"*: Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543) created his series of woodcuts entitled *Dance of Death* in 1538. He was Henry VIII's portrait-painter, in which capacity he painted such doomed figures as Sir Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, and Jane Seymour. B. would have known the *Dance of Death* via engravings.

**72:** ... *the sage Miss Reading* – / *Miss Raw, Miss Flaw, Miss Showman and Miss Knowman*, / *And the two fair Co-heiresses Giltbedding*: Miss Reading sounds learned; Miss Raw either undisguisedly passionate or inexperienced; Miss Flaw has a programmed-in error; Miss Showman seems an exhibitionist of some kind; Miss Knowman either has wisdom and undertanding, or thinks she does; and the Giltbedding sisters will bring either monetary or sexual riches to Juan if he marries them.

**73:** *Miss Millpond*: Annabella Milbanke, Lady Byron. The name suggests unexplored or dangerously unrevealed depths beneath a deceptively calm surface.

**74:** *and then there was some milk and water*: compare *Beppo*, ll.633-8:

*Oh, Mirth and Innocence! Oh, Milk and Water!*  
*Ye happy mixtures of more happy days!*  
*In these sad centuries of sin and slaughter,*  
*Abominable Man no more allays*  
*His thirst with such pure beverage. No matter,*  
*I love you both, and both shall have my praise ...*

**75:** *a slight shade of Blue*: that is, with an intellectual bent.

## 42.

And then there was the Miss Audacia Shoestring<sup>76</sup> –  
 A dashing Demoiselle of good estate, 330  
 Whose Heart was fixed upon a star or blue string;  
 But whether English Dukes grew scarce of late,  
 Or that she had not harped upon the true string  
 By which such Sirens can attract our great –  
 She took up with some foreign younger brother<sup>77</sup> – 335  
 A Russ – or Turk – the one’s as good as t’other.

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**76:** *Miss Audacia Shoestring*: apart from the implication of poverty in her surname, she is a version of Mercer Elphinstone (1788-1867) the heiress known as “Miss Mercenary” and “the fops’ despair” because of the type of beau she attracted. B. was friends with her, and even flirted with her in a letter on the day he nearly eloped with Caroline Lamb. She was a close friend of Princess Charlotte.

**77:** *She took up with some foreign younger brother*: Mercer Elphinstone finally married the Comte de Flahaut, one of Napoleon’s aides-de-camp and the illegitimate son of Talleyrand – and was disinherited for doing so. B., who might have married her himself and been much happier than he was with Annabella, probably felt peeved.

## 43.

And then there was – but why should I go on?  
 Unless the ladies should go off? There was,  
 Indeed, a certain fair and fairy One  
 Of the best Class – and better than her class – 340  
 Aurora Raby<sup>78</sup> – a young star who shone  
 O'er Life – too sweet an image for such Glass –  
 A lovely Being scarcely formed or moulded –  
 A Rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded.

## 44.

Rich, noble, but an Orphan,<sup>79</sup> left an only 345  
 Child to the care of Guardians good and kind –  
 But still her aspect had an air so lonely;  
 Blood is not water – and where shall we find  
 Feelings of youth like those which overthrown lie  
 By Death, when we are left, Alas! behind, 350  
 To feel, in friendless palaces, a home  
 Is wanting – and our best ties in the tomb?<sup>80</sup>

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**78:** *Aurora Raby*: the most-discussed name of the most-discussed heroine in *Don Juan*. See first above, II st.142, which her name seems to echo, connecting her with Haidee:

*And down the Cliff the Island Virgin came,  
 And near the Cave her quick light footsteps drew,  
 While the Sun smiled on her with his first flame,  
 And young Aurora kissed her lips with dew,  
 Taking her for a Sister; just the same  
 Mistake you would have made on seeing the two,  
 Although the mortal, quite as fresh and fair,  
 Had all the advantage of not being Air.*

Other parallels scouted are Miranda in *The Tempest* (another parallel with Haidee) and Annabella, Lady Byron herself – as B. saw her at first. *Aurora* would convey an aetheriality on her, but *Raby* the suggestion of something rich (“ruby”) but diseased (as in “rabied”). Some say that, being pure and a Catholic, she is destined to be Juan’s salvation: others, from the same evidence, that she is bound to be his downfall. She is an outsider, in terms both of religion and (it seems) moral seriousness, in the world of Norman Abbey, and perhaps to the world of *Don Juan* – a medieval throwback. Bernard Beatty suggests that her name derives from Raby Castle in County Durham, where the unsuccessful Catholic Insurrection, the Rising of the North, started in 1569. How B. would have enlarged his poem to accommodate her we shall never know.

**79:** *an Orphan*: compare below, XVII, l.1: *The World is full of Orphans*.

**80:** *we are left, Alas! behind, / To feel, in friendless palaces, a home / Is wanting – and our best ties in the tomb?*: B. identifies with the thought, having been left at Newstead without his mother in 1811, and at Ravenna without his daughter Allegra in 1822.

## 45.

Early in years – and yet more infantine  
 In figure – she had something of sublime  
 In eyes which sadly shone as Seraphs shine, 355  
 All Youth, but with an aspect beyond Time –  
 Radiant and grave as pitying Man’s decline –  
 Mournful – but mournful of another’s crime –  
 She looked as if she sate by Eden’s door,  
 And grieved for those who could return no more.<sup>81</sup> 360

## 46.

She was a Catholic too, sincere – austere –  
 As far as her own gentle Heart allowed –  
 And deemed that fallen worship far more dear  
 Perhaps because ’twas fall’n;<sup>82</sup> her Sires were proud  
 Of deeds and days when they had filled the ear 365  
 Of Nations, and had never bent or bowed  
 To novel Power;<sup>83</sup> and as she was the last,  
 She held their old faith and old feelings fast.

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**81:** *She looked as if she sate by Eden’s door, / And grieved for those who could return no more:* CPW refers to “Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh* (1817) 1-6” which should read “Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh* (1817) *Paradise and the Peri*, 1-6”. The lines show a clear echo:

*One morn a Peri at the gate  
 Of Eden stood, disconsolate;  
 And as she listened to the Springs  
 Of Life within, like music flowing,  
 And caught the light upon her wings  
 Through the half-open portal glowing,  
 She wept to think her recreant race  
 Should e’er have lost that glorious place!*

The reference is apt, for the Peri gains redemption via the remorse of a man resembling one of B.’s oriental protagonists – just as Aurora may redeem herself and Juan. Thomas Moore was a Catholic.

**82:** ... *deemed that fallen worship far more dear / Perhaps because ’twas fall’n:* *fallen* in two senses – (i) political: being no longer in a position of power (ii) theological: flawed, sinful.

**83:** ... *had never bent or bowed / To novel Power:* had never been defeated by Protestants.

## 47.

She gazed upon a World she scarcely knew  
 As seeking not to know it;<sup>84</sup> silent – lone 370  
 As grows a Flower<sup>85</sup> – thus quietly she grew,  
 And kept her heart serene within its zone;  
 There was awe in the homage which she drew –  
 Her Spirit seemed as seated on a throne  
 Apart from the surrounding world, and strong 375  
 In its own strength – most strange in one so young! –

## 48.

Now it so happened, in the Catalogue  
 Of Adeline,<sup>86</sup> Aurora was omitted –  
 Although her birth and Wealth had given her vogue  
 Beyond the Charmers we have already cited; 380  
 Her beauty also seemed to form no clog  
 Against her being mentioned as well fitted,  
 By many virtues, to be worth the trouble  
 Of single Gentlemen who would be double.

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**84:** *She gazed upon a World she scarcely knew / As seeking not to know it:* not at all like Miranda in *The Tempest: Oh wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! Oh, brave new world, / That hath such people in't!* (V I, 181-4).

**85:** *silent – lone / As grows a Flower:* a suspicious echo of Wordsworth's *She dwelt among the untrodden ways: A violet by a mossy stone / Half hidden from the eye!*

**86:** *in the Catalogue / Of Adeline, Aurora was omitted:* compare Macbeth's words to the murderers at III i 90-4:

*Aye, in the catalogue ye go for men,  
 As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
 Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves are clipt  
 All by the name of dogs!*

## 49.

And this omission – like that of the Bust 385  
 Of Brutus at the pageant of Tiberius<sup>87</sup> –  
 Made Juan wonder, as no doubt he must;  
 This he expressed, half smiling and half serious,  
 When Adeline replied, with some disgust,  
 And with an air, to say the least, imperious, 390  
 She marvelled “What he saw in such a baby  
 “As that prim, silent, cold Aurora Raby?”

## 50.

Juan rejoined “She was a Catholic,  
 And therefore fittest, as of his persuasion –  
 “Since he was sure his Mother would fall sick, 395  
 “And the Pope thunder excommunication,  
 “If – –” but here Adeline, who seemed to pique  
 Herself extremely on the inoculation  
 Of others with her own opinions, stated,  
 As usual, the same reason which she late did. – 400

## 51.

And wherefore not? A reasonable reason,  
 If good, is none the worse for repetition –  
 If bad – the best way’s certainly to teaze on  
 And amplify – you lose much by concision;<sup>88</sup>  
 Whereas insisting, in or out of Season, 405  
 Convinces all men<sup>89</sup> – even a politician –  
 Or what is just the same, it wearies out;  
 So the end’s gained – what signifies the route?

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**87:** ... *this omission – like that of the Bust / Of Brutus at the pageant of Tiberius:* Tacitus (*Annals* III 76) writes that in the reign of Tiberius, at the funeral of Junia Tertullia, niece of Cato, wife of Gaius Cassius and sister of Brutus, “The effegies of twenty highly distinguished families, Manlii, Quinctii, and other equally aristocratic, headed the procession. But Cassius and Brutus were the most gloriously conspicuous – by their absence” (tr. Michael Grant). Note that B.’s memory gets the nature of the procession wrong. He had used the idea previously – with the same misremembering – at *CHP* IV, 59, 3-4:

*The Caesar’s pageant, shorn of Brutus’ bust,  
 Did but of Rome’s best Son remind her more ...*

**88:** *concision:* for a previous use of this word to mean “conciseness” (still a novel usage in B.’s day: it had previously meant “a cutting away”) see above, this canto, L.175.

**89:** *insisting, in or out of Season, / Convinces all men:* CPW refers us to II Timothy, 4, 2, where Paul makes the same point: *Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

## 52.

Why Adeline had this slight prejudice –  
 For prejudice it was – against a creature 410  
 As pure as Sanctity itself from Vice,  
 With all the added charm of form and feature –  
 For me appears a question far too nice,  
 Since Adeline was liberal by Nature;  
 But Nature's Nature, and has more caprices 415  
 Than I have time, or will, to take to pieces. –

## 53.

Perhaps she did not like the quiet way  
 With which Aurora on those baubles looked  
 Which charm most people in their earlier day –  
 For there are few things by Mankind less brooked – 420  
 And Womankind, too, if we so may say –  
 Than finding thus their Genius stand rebuked,  
 Like "Anthony's by Cæsar",<sup>90</sup> by the few \*  
 Who look upon them as they ought to do. –

## 54.

It was not envy – Adeline had none – 425  
 Her place was far beyond it, and her Mind;  
 It was not Scorn – which could not light on one  
 Whose greatest *fault* was leaving few to find;  
 It was not Jealousy – I think – but shun  
 Following these "Igles fatui" of Mankind;<sup>91</sup> 430  
 It was not – but 'tis easier far, alas!  
 To say what it was not – than what it was.<sup>92</sup>

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**90:** *their Genius stand rebuked, / Like "Anthony's by Cæsar"*: another *Macbeth* quotation (see above, this canto, ll.377-8n) and it is from the same scene:

*There is none but he,  
 Whose being I do fear! and under him,  
 My Genius is rebuked, as it is said  
 Mark Antony's was by Caesar. (III i, 53-6)*

**91:** ... *these "Igles fatui" of Mankind*: for further examples of this Byronic commonplace, see *The Prisoner of Chillon* ll.34-5; *Manfred* I i 195; *The Deformed Transformed* I i 477-9 and stage direction; *TVOJ* 1.837; this poem, VII ll.365-8, VIII ll.252-3, XI ll.214 -16, and the present lines.

**92:** *'tis easier far, alas! / To say what it was not – than what it was*: Andrew Nicholson adduces Johnson's words to Boswell, asked the innocent question, 'Then, Sir, what is poetry?': 'Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all *know* what light is; but it is not so easy to *tell* what it is' (*Life*, II 26 – not I, as Nicholson writes).

## 55.

Little Aurora deemed she was the theme  
 Of such discussion; she was there, a guest,  
 A beauteous ripple of the brilliant stream 435  
 Of rank and youth – though purer than the rest,  
 Which flowed on for a moment in the beam  
 Time sheds a moment o'er each sparkling Crest;  
 Had She known this, she would have calmly smiled –  
 She had so much – or little – of the Child.<sup>93</sup> 440

## 56.

The dashing and proud Air of Adeline  
 Imposed not upon her; she saw her blaze  
 Much as she would have seen a Glowworm shine –  
 Then turned unto the Stars for loftier rays;  
 Juan was something she could not divine, 445  
 Being no Sybil in the new World's ways –  
 Yet she was nothing dazzled by the Meteor,  
 Because she did not pin her faith on feature.<sup>94</sup>

57.<sup>95</sup>

His fame too – for he had that kind of fame  
 Which sometimes plays the deuce with Womankind – 450  
 A heterogeneous mass of Glorious blame –  
 Half virtue and whole vices being combined –  
 Faults which attract because they are not tame –  
 Follies tricked out so brightly that they blind –  
 These Seals upon her Wax made no impression – 455  
 Such was her coldness, or her Self-possession.<sup>96</sup> –

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**93:** *Had She known this, she would have calmly smiled – / She had so much – or little – of the Child:* Aurora's imagined indifference, whether chaste or childlike, to being the subject of such conversation, makes her appear almost clinically detached.

**94:** *Being no Sybil in the new World's ways – / Yet she was nothing dazzled by the Meteor, / Because she did not pin her faith on feature:* recalls Miranda again (see above, this canto, 369-70n) except that the "dazzled" Miranda has just seen "the new World" in one split-second, and must of necessity "pin her faith on feature" for the time being. See Prospero's immediate comment: *'Tis new to thee.*

**95:** As CPW comments, the account of the rumours surrounding Juan *Recalls the figure Byron himself cut in his Years of Fame.*

**96:** *These Seals upon her Wax made no impression – / Such was her coldness, or her Self-possession:* one model for Aurora whom no-one has mentioned is Anne Elliott in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, for B.'s reading of which see above, I st.194 and n. *Persuasion* had been published by Murray in 1818. The difference is that where we know Anne, behind her stoic façade, to be full of loneliness and love, B. keeps Aurora's real feelings hidden, as if he cannot read them himself. She is of course younger than Anne.

## 58.

Juan knew nought of such a Character –  
 High, yet resembling not his lost Haidée –  
 Yet each was radiant in her proper sphere;  
 The Island Girl – bred up by the lone Sea, 460  
 More warm, as lovely, and not less sincere –  
 Was Nature's all; Aurora could not be,  
 Nor would be, thus – the difference in them  
 Was such as lies between a flower and Gem.

## 59.

Having wound up with this sublime comparison, 465  
 Methinks we may proceed upon our narrative –  
 And, as my friend Scott says, "I sound my Warison"<sup>97</sup> –  
 Scott, the Superlative of my Comparative –  
 Scott – who can paint your Christian knight or Saracen,  
 Serf, Lord, Man,<sup>98</sup> with such skill as none would share it, if 470  
 There had not been one Shakespeare and Voltaire<sup>99</sup> –  
 Of one or both of whom he seems the heir.

## 60.

I say, in my slight way, I may proceed  
 To play upon the surface of Humanity;  
 I write the World,<sup>100</sup> nor care if the World read – 475  
 At least for this I cannot spare its vanity;  
 My Muse hath bred, and still perhaps may breed,  
 More foes, by this same scroll; when I began it, I  
 Thought that it might turn out so – *now I know* it –  
 But still I am, or was, a pretty Poet. 480

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**97:** *as my friend Scott says, "I sound my Warison":* he says it – or rather, he causes the Herald of Lords Howard and Dacre to say it – at *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1810) IV 24, 17-22:

*"Either receive within these towers  
 Two hundred of my master's powers,  
 Or straight they sound their warrison,  
 And storm and spoil thy garrison;  
 And this fair boy, to London led,  
 Shall good King Edward's page be bred."*

Scott and B. both misuse the word, Scott with no excuse other than the need for a rhyme for *garrison*, B. with the excuse that if Scott used it to mean "War cry – signal for attack", it must mean just that. In fact it means "a reward given by a superior".

**98:** *Scott – who can paint your Christian knight or Saracen, / Serf, Lord, Man:* B. seems principally to be thinking of *Ivanhoe* (1819) about which all he able to say elsewhere is that it is *good* (BLJ VII 113). For Scott's borrowing from *Don Juan* in *Ivanhoe*, see above, II sts.149-151.

**99:** *Shakespeare and Voltaire – / Of one or both of whom he seems the heir:* the Tory Scott would have been pleased at the comparison with Shakespeare; less so at that with Voltaire.

**100:** *I write the World:* an immodest ambition. See Jerome J. McGann, *The Book of Byron and the Book of a World*, in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory*, Oxford 1985.

## 61.

The Conference, or Congress (for it ended  
 As Congresses of late do)<sup>101</sup> of the Lady  
 Adeline and Don Juan, rather blended  
 Some Acids with the sweets,<sup>102</sup> for she was heady;  
 But ere the matter could be marred or mended 485  
 The Silvery Bell rung – not for “dinner ready” –  
 But for that hour – called *half-hour* – given to dress –  
 Though Ladies’ robes seem scant enough for less.<sup>103</sup>

62.<sup>104</sup>

Great things were now to be atchieved at table,  
 With massy plate for Armour, knives and forks 490  
 For weapons; but what Muse since Homer’s able  
 (His feasts are not the worst part of his works)<sup>105</sup>  
 To draw up in array a single day-bill  
 Of modern dinners? – where more Mystery lurks  
 In soups and sauces, or a sole ragoût,<sup>106</sup> 495  
 Than witches, b-tches, or physicians brew.

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**101:** *The Conference, or Congress (for it ended / As Congresses of late do)*: the OED gives 1589 as the earliest use of *congress* to mean sexual union; but B. is also thinking of the Congress of Verona (October 1822): see *AoB*, ll.8-10 and 16-17: though the joke doesn’t work, for that Congress *did* end in a significant act, namely the French invasion of Spain to support the legitimatist Carlists against the parliamentary liberals.

**102:** *blended / Some Acids with the sweets*: prepares us for the massive culinary section which is about to start with the next stanza.

**103:** *Ladies’ robes seem scant enough for less*: compare *TVOJ*, ll.527-8: ... *the petticoat / Almost as scanty of days less remote*. –

**104:** It was E.H.Coleridge who first pointed out that during the writing of sts.62-74, B. seems to have had open by him *The French Cook, a system of fashionable, practical and economical Cookery, adapted to the use of English families* by Louis Eustache Ude (John Murray, 1813): I find no evidence that he had looked beyond the plates, illustrating various table-layouts, at the front of the book. Ude had emigrated during the French Revolution. He describes himself on the title-page as “Ci-devant chef to Louis XVI, and the Earl of Sefton, and steward to his Royal Highness the Duke of York”; he had also been *maître d’hôtel* at various clubs in London. His is not a plain person’s cookery-book, but one for conspicuous consumers, whose guests would expect three courses, each with several different dishes, in enormous quantities, and as much variety of choice as possible. The section should be compared with the poem’s previous feast, at III sts.62-3. There in the East, Haidee is hostess; here in the West, Aurora, her “double”, is a guest; but in both cases the food is grossly labour-intensive in preparation and digestion.

**105:** ... *Homer’s table / (His feasts are not the worst part of his works)*: see above, II, 123, 7-8: ... *the best dish that e’er was cooked since Homer’s / Achilles ordered Dinner for new Comers*.

**106:** *a sole ragoût ...witches*: B. associated this French dish with transgression. See *The Devil’s Drive* (1813) l.3, where Satan *dined on some homicides done in Ragoût*: also above, V ll.251-2, XIII ll.789-92, and *Beppo*, ll.68-70: *If ... You ... Would rather dine in sin on a ragout*.

## 63.

There was a goodly “*Soupe à la bonne femme*”<sup>107</sup> –  
 Though God knows whence it came from – there was, too,  
 A Turbot for relief – of those who cram;  
 Relieved with a *dindon à la Périgieux*;<sup>108</sup> 500  
 There also was – the Sinner that I am!  
 How shall I get this Gourmand stanza through?  
*Soupe à la Beauveau*,<sup>109</sup> whose Relief was Dorey –<sup>110</sup>  
 Relieved itself by Pork, for greater Glory.<sup>111</sup>

## 64.

But I must crowd all into one grand mess – 505  
 Or Mass – for should I stretch into detail,  
 My Muse would run much more into Excess  
 Than when some squeamish people deem her frail;  
 But though a “*bonne Vivante*”, I must confess  
 Her stomach’s not her peccant part; this tale, 510  
 However, doth require some slight refection –  
 Just to relieve her Spirits from dejection.

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**107:** “*Soupe à la bonne femme*” (Ude pl.2, top): minced sorrel and cabbage melted in butter, moistened with broth and boiled; sugar added, and then thickened with egg-yolk and cream.

**108:** *dindon à la Périgieux* (Ude pl.2, top): roast turkey stuffed with chopped truffles and bacon, seasoned. Served with chestnut purée.

**109:** *Soupe à la Beauveau* (Ude, pl.2, bottom): balls of turnip blanched and boiled with clarified consommé (Ude has this last as a separate item) and sugar. Served with bread.

**110:** B. borrows from Ude *Soupe à la Bonne Femme, relevée avec le Turbot, relevé avec le Dindon à la Périgieux*. *Relevé*, writes Ude, means “removed by”, but B. translates it with ironic literalness. A sufferer himself from acute indigestion, he knew that one huge dish was not likely to “relieve” another.

**111:** B. borrows from Ude *Soupe à la Beauveau, relevée avec le Dorey, relevé avec le porc*.

## 65.

Fowls *à la Condé*,<sup>112</sup> Slices eke of Salmon,  
 With *saucés Genevoises*<sup>113</sup> and haunch of Venison;  
 Wines, too, which might again have slain young Ammon<sup>114</sup> – 515  
 A man like whom I hope we shan't see many soon;  
 Also they set a glazed Westphalian Ham<sup>115</sup> on,  
 Whereon Apicius<sup>116</sup> would bestow his benison;  
 And then there was Champagne with foaming whirls,  
 As white as Cleopatra's melted pearls.<sup>117</sup> 520

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**112:** Fowls *à la Condé* (Ude, pl.4, mid-left): fowls trussed and stuffed with butter and lemon-juice, placed in a stew-pan trimmed with layers of bacon, covered, and having drained through a hair sieve over them a *poële* made from veal, bacon and ham fried in butter; moistened with pale broth, seasoned with parsley, salt and pepper; then stewed for three-quarters of an hour, drained, and served with a tongue *à l' écarlate* and sauce *à la financière*.

**113:** *Slices eke of Salmon, / With saucés Genevoises* (Ude, pl.6, mid-left): shalots, parsley, thyme and bay-leaves are fried in butter, moistened with white wine, and boiled for three-quarters of an hour. The resulting marinade is drained through a tammy over the salmon, which stews in it. The scales are picked off and the salmon returned to the vessel. The marinade is then reduced, kneaded with flour, and served over the now-drained salmon. Lemon juice optional.

**114:** *young Ammon*: Alexander the Great. See above, V l.248.

**115:** *a glazed Westphalian Ham* (Ude, pl.1, top picture, bottom dish): the Westphalian ham is trimmed, kept for two days in water, and boiled for four hours. The rind is removed and the ham is rounded, put in the oven for a few minutes, glazed and served under an essence.

**116:** *Apicius*: a famous gourmet of the early Roman Empire. According to Martial (Epigrams III 22) he killed himself when reduced circumstances threatened to force him to eat more plainly. See also Juvenal, Satire IV, 23, *TVOJ* 46, 4, and *AoB*, XII ll.514-17.

**117:** *Cleopatra's melted pearls*: CPW and Nicholson refer us to Pliny, *Natural History*, IX 58, in which, to win a bet with Antony as to who can give the finest banquet, Cleopatra simply melts a pearl into vinegar (a fable, for pearls do not "melt" in vinegar). For another Pliny reference, see above, V l.483 and B.'s note.

## 66.

Then there was God knows what à l'Allemande<sup>118</sup> –  
 A l'Espagnole; timballe and salpicon,<sup>119</sup>  
 With things I can't withstand – or understand,<sup>120</sup>  
 Though swallowed with much zest upon the whole;  
 And Entremets to piddle with at hand, 525  
 Gently to lull down the subsiding soul;<sup>121</sup>  
 While great Lucullus' robe triumphal muffles \*  
 (There's fame!) young Partridge filets decked with truffles.

\* A dish à la Lucullus: this hero, who conquered the East, has left his more extended Celebrity to the transplantation of Cherries (which he first brought into Europe) and the nomenclature of some very good dishes; and I am not sure that (barring indigestion) he has not done more service to mankind by his cookery than by his conquests. A Cherry-tree may weigh against a bloody Laurel; besides, he has contrived to earn celebrity from both.<sup>122</sup> –

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**118:** *God knows what* à l'Allemande: *La grenade de filets mignons de poulets gras à l'Allemande* (Ude, pl.6, bottom right). *God knows what* is B.'s impatience at the illegibly minute print.

**119:** *A l'Espagnole*: (Ude, pl.6, top left) has *Le Turban de filets de lapreaux à l'Espagnole*: small pieces of ham and veal are moistened and sweated, moistened again with *consommé*, and have liquified *purée* poured over them. They are then boiled for half an hour, drained, and served with mushroom, parsley and onions.

**120:** *timballe and salpicon*, / *With things I can't withstand – or understand*: (Ude, pl.4, top left) has *Petites timballes d'un Salpicon, à la Monglas*, that is, "little dishes of stew à la Monglas". The print here is legible (see above, this canto, l.521n).

**121:** *Entremets to piddle with at hand*, / *Gently to lull down the subsiding soul*: *Entremets to piddle with* are side plates to amuse oneself with. Compare Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Satire II ii 137-8 and 79-80: *I can piddle here / On Broccoli and mutton, round the year ...The Soul subsides; and wickedly inclines / To seem but mortal, ev'n in sound Divines*.

**122:** *While great Lucullus' robe triumphal muffles* / *(There's fame!) young Partridge filets decked with truffles*: Lucius Lucinius Lucullus (c.110-c.57BC) defeated Mithridates, King of Pontus, in 74, and Tigranes, King of Armenia, in 69 and 68. His legions grew mutinous, and he was replaced by Pompey. He lived the rest of his life in "indolence and luxury". He did indeed bring the first cherries into Europe – see Pliny, *Natural History* again, XV 25. B. appears inspired here by Ude, who writes: *Lucullus was one of the most renowned of antiquarian gourmands; it is therefore natural to assign the name of a man who has brought the art of cookery into so high a repute, to a sauce requiring so much pains, attention, and science to perfect; a sauce which can only be sent up to the table of the wealthy and true connoisseur* (Ude p.29).

## 67.

What are the *fillets* on the Victor's brow<sup>123</sup>  
 To these? They're rags or dust; where is the Arch 530  
 Which nodded to the Nations' spoils below?  
 Where the triumphal Chariots' haughty march?  
 Gone – to where Victories must, like dinners, go;<sup>124</sup>  
 Further I shall not follow the research –  
 But Oh! ye modern Heroes with your Cartridges, 535  
 When will your names lend lustre even to Partridges?<sup>125</sup>

## 68.

Those truffles, too, are no bad accessories –  
 Followed by *petits puits d'Amour*, a dish \*  
 Of which, perhaps, the Cookery rather varies,  
 So every one may dress it to his wish, 540  
 According to the best of dictionaries  
 Which encyclopedize both flesh and fish;  
 But even, sans *Confitures*, it no less true is –  
 There's pretty picking in those *petits puits*.

\* *Petits puits d'Amour garnis de Confitures*: a classical and well-known dish for part of the flank of a second course.<sup>126</sup>

## 69.

The mind is lost in mighty contemplation 545  
 Of intellect expended on two courses,  
 And indigestion's grand multiplication  
 Requires Arithmetic beyond my forces;<sup>127</sup>  
 Who would suppose from Adam's simple ration  
 That Cookery could have called forth such resources 550  
 As form a science and a nomenclature  
 From out the commonest demands of Nature? –

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123: *the fillets on the Victor's brow*: a fillet is either a headband or a piece of de-boned meat.

124: *Where the triumphal Chariots' haughty march? / Gone – to where Victories must, like dinners, go*: for more lavatorial mirth, compare above, III, st.89, *passim*:

... *Some dull M.S. oblivion long has sank,  
 Or Graven Stone found in a barrack's station  
 In digging the foundations of a Closet,  
 May turn his name up, as a rare deposit.*

125: *But Oh! ye modern Heroes with your Cartridges, / When will your names lend lustre even to Partridges?*: Wellington has given his name to a Place, and to a boot: which seems to prove B.'s point.

126: *petits puits d'Amour*: "Petits puis d'Amour garni de confitures" (Ude pl.1, second picture, top right): cream puffs with jam. Ude suggests either cherry or apricot jam.

127: *And indigestion's grand multiplication / Requires Arithmetic beyond my forces*: B. suffered from indigestion; but during the time he was writing this canto – his later Italian years – he was on a stricter diet.

## 70.

The glasses jingled, and the palates tingled –  
 The Diners of celebrity dined well –  
 The Ladies, with more moderation, mingled 555  
 In the feast – pecking less than I can tell –  
 Also the younger men, too, for a Springald<sup>128</sup>  
 Can't, like ripe Age, in Gourmandise<sup>129</sup> excel,  
 But thinks less of good eating than the whisper  
 (When seated next him) of some pretty Lisper. 560

## 71.

Alas! I must leave undescribed the *Gibier*,  
 The *Salmi*, the *Consommé*, the *Purée*,<sup>130</sup>  
 All which I can use to make my rhymes run glibber  
 Than could Roast Beef, in our rough John Bull way;  
 I must not introduce even a spare rib here – 565  
 “Bubble and Squeak”<sup>131</sup> would spoil my liquid lay;  
 But I have dined – and must forego, Alas!  
 The chaste description even of a *Becasse*,<sup>132</sup>

## 72.

And fruits, and ice, and all that Art refines  
 From Nature for the service of the *goût*;<sup>133</sup> 570  
*Taste* or the *Gout*<sup>134</sup> – pronounce it as inclines  
 Your stomach – *ere* you dine, the French will do,  
 But *after* – there are sometimes certain signs,  
 Which prove plain English truer of the two:  
 Has't ever *had* the *Gout*? I have not had it – 575  
 But I may have; and you, too, Reader – dread it. –

**128:** *Springald*: young man. “Recovery” by Sir Walter Scott of a medieval word which also signified a heavy-action war catapult. Compare “warison”, above, this canto, l.467 and n.

**129:** *like ripe Age, in Gourmandise excel*: to gormandise is to eat gluttonously: see Henry V to Falstaff, *Henry IV II*, V v 54: ... *leave gormandising*.

**130:** ... *the Gibier, / The Salmi, the Consommé, the Purée*: the game, the game stew, the strong broth, and the paste created by straining the last.

**131:** “Bubble and Squeak”: like Roast Beef (l.564) a common term for a common meal: fried bacon and cabbage would not be served at Norman Abbey, nor included on the menu or in his cookery-book by a “*ci-devant chef* to Louis XVI”.

**132:** *Becasse*: woodcock, a bird which, according to B., lived *upon Suction* (above, II l.531).

**133:** *goût*: taste – that for which Ude writes – pronounced as in the French, to suit.

**134:** *Gout*: painful swelling disease of the lower limbs and feet, peculiar to men who drink too much port – pronounced as in the English, amongst whose aristocracy it was common.

## 73.

The simple Olives, best allies of Wine,  
 Must I pass over in my bill of fare?  
 I must, although a favourite “plat” of mine<sup>135</sup>  
 In Spain, and Lucca,<sup>136</sup> Athens – every where – 580  
 On them and bread ’twas oft my luck to dine,  
 The grass my table-cloth, in open air,  
 On Sunium or Hymettus<sup>137</sup> – like Diogenes<sup>138</sup> –  
 Of whom half my philosophy the progeny’is. –

## 74.

Amidst this tumult of fish, flesh, and fowl,<sup>139</sup> 585  
 And vegetables – all in masquerade<sup>140</sup> –  
 The guests were placed according to their roll,  
 But various as the various meats displayed;  
 Don Juan sate next an *à l’Espagnole*<sup>141</sup> –  
 No damsel, but a dish, as hath been said – 590  
 But so far like a Lady, that ’twas drest  
 Superbly, and contained a world of zest. –

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**135:** *a favourite “plat” of mine*: despite his apparent disapproval of French (see ll.572-4) B. admits his penchant for the language, at least, of “Gourmandising”.

**136:** *Lucca*: small Italian town north-east of Pisa. B. never lived there, but visited it when at Pisa and Genoa.

**137:** *On Sunium or Hymettus*: Sunium, site of the temple of Neptune on the coast east of Athens – see above, III, ll.779. Hymettus, hilly area in the environs of Athens itself. B. was often there in 1809-11.

**138:** *Diogenes*: unsystematic Greek Cynic philosopher (412-323 BC) who started life as a rake but gave it up and lived as sparsely as possible, living finally in a tub. He would not have approved of meals cooked by Eustache Ude. See above, XI, st.28; *AoB* ll.476-8, or *CHP* III, 41, 8.

**139:** *fish, flesh, and fowl*: a phrase borrowed by W. B. Yeats in *Sailing to Byzantium*, l.5 (the poem is in ottava rima) and further developed by T. S. Eliot at *East Coker*, l.7, into *flesh, fur and faeces*.

**140:** *all in masquerade*: the food prepared *à la Ude* is only food *à la Diogenes* in deceptive dress.

**141:** *Don Juan sate next an à l’Espagnole*: we expect this to refer to a woman, remembering the *Romagnole* with whom he is chained above, at III l.745: but it is a dish.

## 75.

By some odd chance, too, he was placed between  
 Aurora, and the Lady Adeline<sup>142</sup> –  
 A situation difficult, I ween, 595  
 For man therein with eyes and heart to dine;  
 Also the conference which we have seen  
 Was not such as to encourage him to shine,  
 For Adeline, addressing few words to him,  
 With two transcendent eyes seemed to look through him. 600

## 76.

I sometimes almost think that eyes have ears;  
 This much is sure, that out of earshot, things  
 Are somehow echoed to the pretty dears,  
 Of which I can't tell whence their knowledge springs,  
 Like that same mystic Music of the Spheres<sup>143</sup> – 605  
 Which no one hears, so loudly though it rings;  
 'Tis wonderful how oft the Sex have heard  
 Long dialogues which passed without a word!

## 77.

Aurora sate with that indifference  
 Which piques a preux Chevalier<sup>144</sup> – as it ought; 610  
 Of all offences that's the worst offence  
 Which seems to hint you are not worth a thought;  
 Now Juan – though no coxcomb in pretence –  
 Was not exactly pleased to be so caught  
 Like a good Ship entangled among ice<sup>145</sup> – 615  
 And After so much excellent advice. –

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**142:** *he was placed between / Aurora, and the Lady Adeline:* Andrew Nicholson refers us to a letter from Annabella to B. of September 29 1812, in which she writes of one supper party, "... where you sat between Lady Melbourne and me, but conversed only with her, I heard you say, "Thank God, I have not a friend in the world." You knew not the pang you inflicted on a friend so near. Those words of bitterness chilled me. When I returned home to solitude I wept over the recollection of them, and prayed that you might receive consolation from a friend below, as well as a friend above (*Lord Byron's Wife*, p.216).

**143:** *that same mystic Music of the Spheres:* see above, this canto, ll.39-40. "That same" is B.'s way of signalling the self-quotation.

**144:** *a preux Chevalier:* a valiant knight – see above, XIII, 86, 3.

**145:** *a good Ship entangled among ice:* among ice is odd, requiring *-floes* or *-bergs* to complete the sense. The *Salsette*, the commanded by Captain Bathurst, in which B. had sailed in 1810, had in January 1809 been stuck fast in the ice of the Baltic and almost lost. B. at no point refers to the fact, but it is hard to believe that he had not been told about it either by Bathurst or the ship's officers. See also *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ll.59-62.

## 78.

To his gay nothings, nothing was replied;  
 Or something which was nothing, as Urbanity  
 Required; Aurora scarcely looked aside,  
 Nor even smiled enough for any Vanity; 620  
 The devil was in the girl – could it be pride?  
 Or modesty – or absence – or inanity?  
 Heaven knows – but Adeline’s malicious eyes  
 Sparkled with her successful prophecies,

## 79.

And looked as much as if to say “I said it”, 625  
 A kind of triumph I’ll not recommend,  
 Because it sometimes – as I’ve seen – or read it –  
 Both in the case of lover and of friend –  
 Will pique a Gentleman for his own credit,  
 To bring what was a jest to a serious end;<sup>146</sup> 630  
 For all men prophesy what *is*, or *was*,  
 And hate those who won’t let them come to pass.

## 80.

Juan was drawn thus into some attentions,  
 Slight but select, and just enough to express,  
 To females of perspicuous comprehensions, 635  
 That he would rather make them more than less;  
 Aurora, at the last (so History mentions –  
 Though probably much less a fact than guess)  
 So far relaxed her thoughts from their sweet prison  
 As once or twice to smile, if not to listen. 640

## 81.

From answering she began to question – this  
 With her was rare – and Adeline, who as yet  
 Thought her predictions were not much amiss,  
 Begun to dread she’d thaw to a Coquette –  
 So very difficult, they say, it is 645  
 To keep extremes from meeting<sup>147</sup> when once set  
 In motion; but she here too much refined –  
 Aurora’s Spirit was not of that kind.

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**146:** *To bring what was a jest to a serious end:* the opposite of what B. writes above, at IV ll.23-4: ... *the sad Truth which hovers o’er my desk / Turns what was once Romantic to burlesque.* –

**147:** *So very difficult, they say, it is / To keep extremes from meeting:* Aurora’s behaviour has been so reserved so far that we are unable to tell whether she and Juan are *extremes* or not.

## 82.

For Juan had a sort of winning way –  
 A proud humility, if such there be – 650  
 Which showed such deference to what females say,  
 As if each charming word were a decree;  
 His tact,<sup>148</sup> too, tempered him from grave to gay,<sup>149</sup>  
 And taught him when to be reserved or free;  
 He had the art of drawing people out 655  
 Without their seeing what he was about.

## 83.

Aurora – who, in her indifference,  
 Confounded him in common with the crowd  
 Of Flutterers – though she deemed he had more sense  
 Than whispering foplings or than witlings loud, 660  
 Commenced<sup>150</sup> (from such slight things will great commence)  
 To feel that flattery which attracts the proud,  
 Rather by deference than Compliment,  
 And wins even by a delicate dissent.

## 84.

And then he had good looks – that point was carried 665  
*Nem. con.*<sup>151</sup> amongst the women – which, I grieve  
 To say, leads oft to *Crim. con.*<sup>152</sup> with the married,  
 A Case which to the Juries we may leave,<sup>153</sup>  
 Since with Digressions we too long have tarried;  
 Now, though we know of old that looks deceive, 670  
 And always have done, somehow these good looks  
 Make more impression than the best of books. –

**148:** *His tact...*: see above, I, 178, 2 and n, for B.'s previous (1818) estimate of this relatively new usage: tact / (*That modern phrase appears to me sad stuff*). Now in 1823 it seems his mind has changed. See also above, XII, 66, 8 and n; and XIV, 41, 6.

**149:** ... *tempered him from grave to gay*: B. may be remembering the words of Francis Cohen, sent to Murray on July 16 1819, the day after *Don Juan* I and II were published, and criticising the flexible ottava rima style: *But Lord B. should have been grave & gay by turns; grave in one page & gay in the next; grave in one stanza & gay in the next; grave in one line, & gay in the next. And not grave & gay in the same page, or in the same stanza, or in the same line.* – Juan has the same virtuoso facility, in conversation, not in verse.

**150:** *Aurora ... Commenced ... to feel*: “Commenced” is questionable stylistically. Should be “started.”

**151:** *Nem. con.*: unanimously (“nemine contradicenti,” “no-one disagreeing”).

**152:** *Crim. con.*: adultery (“criminal conversation”).

**153:** *A Case which to the Juries we may leave*: compare jokes above at I l.120 and V, 61, 8, and at *Beppo*, ll.295-296: *Heaven preserve Old England from such courses, / Or What becomes of damage, and divorces?*

## 85.

Aurora – who looked more on Books than faces –  
 Was very young, although so very sage,  
 Admiring more Minerva than the Graces,<sup>154</sup> 675  
 Especially upon a printed page;  
 But Virtue’s Self, with all her tightest laces,  
 Has not the natural Stays of strict old Age;<sup>155</sup>  
 And Socrates, the Model of all duty,  
 Owned to a penchant – though discreet – for Beauty.<sup>156</sup> 680

## 86.

And Girls of sixteen are thus far Socratic –  
 But innocently so, as Socrates –  
 And really, if the Sage sublime and Attic  
 At seventy years had phantasies like these,  
 Which Plato in his dialogues dramatic 685  
 Has shown, I know not why they should displease  
 In virgins – always in a modest way,  
 Observe – for that with me’s a “sine quâ.” – \*

\* Subauditur – “*Non*” omitted for the sake of Euphony.<sup>157</sup> –

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**154:** *Admiring more Minerva than the Graces*: Aurora prefers wisdom to beauty (Minerva – goddess of Wisdom; the Graces – goddesses of beauty).

**155:** *the natural Stays of strict old Age*: stays – (i) moral restraints (ii) corsets.

**156:** *Socrates, the Model of all duty, / Owned to a penchant – though discreet – for Beauty*: see some of his (perhaps tactical) statements in the *Symposium*, for example: “I declare that love is the only subject that I understand” (tr. W. Hamilton, p.41).

**157:** *that with me’s a “sine quâ”*: a *sine qua non* is something without which a given situation is unthinkable, an indispensable condition (“sine qua non potest esse” – that without which the thing cannot be). *Subauditur* (“let it be heard beneath”) is an invitation to the reader to supply a hidden or implicit word or meaning, in this case the “non”, which B. has to leave out because with it his rhyme wouldn’t work – but it doesn’t work to modern ears anyway.

87.<sup>158</sup>

Also observe that, like the great Lord Coke,  
 (See Littleton)<sup>159</sup> whene'er I have exprest 690  
 Opinions two, which at first sight may look  
 Twin opposites, the second is the best;  
 Perhaps I have a third, too, in a nook –  
 Or none at all, which seems a sorry jest;  
 But if a writer should be quite consistent, 695  
 How could he possibly show things existent? –

## 88.

If people contradict themselves, can I  
 Help contradicting them and every body,  
 Even my veracious Self? but that's a lie –  
 I never did so – never will – how should I? 700  
 He who doubts all things, nothing can deny;  
 Truth's fountains may be clear, her streams are muddy –  
 And cut through such Canals of Contradiction  
 That she must often navigate o'er Fiction.

## 89.

Apologue, Fable, Poesy, and Parable, 705  
 Are false, but may be rendered also true  
 By those who sow them in a land that's arable;  
 'Tis wonderful what Fable will not do –  
 'Tis said it makes reality more bearable;  
 But what's reality? – who has its Clue? – – 710  
 Philosophy? No – she too much rejects –  
 Religion? – *Yes* – but which of all her Sects? –

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**158:** St.87 is a late rephrasing in verse of a Journal entry for December 6 1813: *This journal is a relief. When I am tired – as I generally am – out comes this, and down goes every thing. But I can't read it over; – and God knows what contradictions it may contain. If I am sincere with myself (but I fear one lies to one's self more than to any one else), every page should confute, refute, and utterly abjure its predecessor* (BLJ III 233). For a philosophical basis for B.'s perpetual need for doubt and denial, see above, IX sts.17 and 18 and nn, on Montaigne and the Pyrrhonists.

**159:** *the great Lord Coke, / (See Littleton): DJV notes, Lord Coke's commentary on Littleton, Institutes of the Laws of England (1628-44), known as "Coke upon Littleton," long remained the principal authority on English real property law. No-one seems to have researched the joke further, and thus cannot comment on the justice or otherwise of the attribution. CPW refers us to Montaigne. Sir Edward Coke (pronounced "Cook": 1552-1634) was the most famous of seventeenth century jurists. Sir Thomas Littleton (1402-81) was a famous fifteenth century jurist. In fact it is only the first of Coke's Institutes which is known as "Coke upon Littleton".*

## 90.

Some millions must be wrong, that's pretty Clear –  
 Perhaps it may turn out that all were right<sup>160</sup> –  
 God help us! since we have need, on our career, 715  
 To keep our holy beacons always bright;  
 'Tis time that some new Prophet should appear,  
 Or old indulge man with a second sight;  
 Opinions wear out in some thousand years,  
 Without a small refreshment from the Spheres.<sup>161</sup> 720

## 91.

But – here again – why will I thus entangle  
 Myself with Metaphysics? none can hate  
 So much as I do any kind of wrangle –  
 And yet such is my folly, or my fate –  
 I always knock my head against some angle, 725  
 About the present, past, or future state;  
 Yet I wish well to Trojan and to Tyrian<sup>162</sup> –  
 For I was bred a moderate Presbyterian.

## 92.

But though I am a temperate theologian,  
 And also meek as a Metaphysician – 730  
 Impartial between Tyrian and Trojan<sup>163</sup>  
 As Eldon on a lunatic commission<sup>164</sup> –  
 In politics my duty is to show John  
 Bull something of the lower world's condition;  
 It makes my blood boil like the Springs of Hecla<sup>165</sup> 735  
 To see Men let these Scoundrel Sovereigns break law.

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**160:** *Some millions must be wrong, that's pretty Clear – / Perhaps it may turn out that all were right:* for more thoughts on this issue, see below, XVII St.5.

**161:** *a small refreshment from the Spheres:* a recurrent theme of this canto: see above, ll.40 and 605.

**162:** *I wish well to Trojan and to Tyrian:* that is, to all contending parties whatsoever. Troy and Tyre were never, to my knowledge, contending parties, although “Tyrian” is another word for “Carthaginian”, and after Aeneas’ departure and Dido’s death the two did not cohabit happily. B. needs a rhyme for *Presbyterian*, and finds one in the words of Dido at *Aeneid*, I 574: *Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur* (“Both Trojans and Tyrians shall be treated by me on equal terms”).

**163:** *Impartial between Tyrian and Trojan:* B., perhaps forgetting, in his additions, just how close his previous use of this phrase from Virgil is (it is at l.727) repeats it.

**164:** *Eldon on a lunatic commission:* in 1822 Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, heard a petition put by Henry Wallop Fellowes that a commission should be set up to enquire into the sanity of his uncle, Lord Portsmouth, who was son-in-law to B.’s solicitor John Hanson – B. had given the bride away at the wedding in 1814. *The Jury brought their verdict in, “Insanity”*, in February 1823 – the month before B. started writing this canto – and the marriage was annulled five years later.

**165:** *the Springs of Hecla:* Hecla is a geyser in Iceland. See above, X, 59, 8.

## 93.

But Politics, and policy, and piety,  
 Are topics which I sometimes introduce  
 Not only for the sake of their variety,  
 But as subservient to a moral use – 740  
 Because my business is to *dress Society*,  
 And stuff with *Sage* that very verdant Goose;<sup>166</sup>  
 And now that we may furnish with some matter all  
 Tastes, we are going to try the Supernatural.

## 94.

And now I will give up all Argument – 745  
 And positively henceforth no temptation  
 Shall “fool me to the top up of my bent”;<sup>167</sup>  
 Yes – I’ll begin a thorough reformation<sup>168</sup> –  
 Indeed I never knew what people meant  
 By deeming that my Muses’s conversation 750  
 Was dangerous – I think she is as harmless  
 As some who labour more, and yet may charm less.

## 95.

Grim reader! – did you ever see a Ghost?  
 No – but you’ve heard; I understand – be dumb! –  
 And don’t regret the time you may have lost, 755  
 For you have got that pleasure still to come –  
 And do not think I mean to sneer at most  
 Of these things – or by ridicule benumb  
 That Source of the Sublime and the mysterious;  
 For certain reasons – my belief is serious. – 760

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**166:** *my business is to dress Society*, / *And stuff with Sage that very verdant Goose*: B. is a political Ude, bringing to the job, however, the gastronomic taste of Diogenes. *Sage* implies sagacity, and *verdant Goose*, foolish innocence. Compare above, Dedication 133: *My Politics, as yet, are all to educate*.

**167:** ... *no temptation* / *Shall “fool me to the top up of my bent”*: B. quotes Hamlet’s annoyed aside during the scene with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (III ii 374-5) with *up* added for the scansion.

**168:** *Yes – I’ll begin a thorough reformation*: compare above, I ll.951-2:

*I’m very sorry, very much ashamed –  
 And mean, next winter, to be quite reclaimed.*

## 96.

Serious? – you laugh – you may; that will I not –  
 My smiles must be sincere, or not at all;  
 I say I do believe a haunted Spot  
 Exists – and where?<sup>169</sup> – that shall I not recall,  
 Because I'de rather it should be forgot; 765  
 “Shadows the Soul of Richard”<sup>170</sup> may appall<sup>171</sup> –  
 In short upon that subject I've some qualms very  
 Like those of the Philosopher of Malmesbury. – \*

\* Hobbes, who, doubting of his own Soul, paid that Compliment to the Souls of other people as to decline their visits – of which he had some apprehension.<sup>172</sup> – – –

## 97.

The Night (I sing by Night – sometimes an Owl,  
 And now and then a Nightingale) is dim, 770  
 And the loud Shriek of sage Minerva's fowl<sup>173</sup>  
 Rattles around me her discordant hymn;  
 Old portraits from old walls upon me scowl<sup>174</sup> –  
 I wish to heaven they would not look so grim;  
 The dying Embers dwindle in the grate – 775  
 I think too that I have sate up too late,

## 98.

And therefore – though by no means my way  
 To rhyme at Noon, when I have other things  
 To think of – if I ever think; I say  
 I feel some chilly Midnight shudderings – 780  
 And prudently postpone until Mid-day  
 Treating a topic which, Alas! but brings  
 Shadows – but you must be in my condition  
 Before you learn to call this Superstition.

**169:** *a haunted Spot / Exists – and where?:* for the answer, see above, XIII st.63.

**170:** *“Shadows the Soul of Richard” may appall:* Richard's words to Ratcliffe at *Richard III* V iii 216-19, after he has been visited by the ghosts of those he has killed: *By the apostle Paul, shadows tonight / Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard / Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers / Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond.*

**171:** *appall:* carries two meanings here as in Blake, *London*, ll.9-10: *How the Chimney-sweepers cry / Every blackning church appalls.* The shadows (and the cry) (i) strike awe and horror (ii) drop a black funeral-cloth over the coffin (a metaphorical cloth in the case of Richard, though he is dead by the end of the day).

**172:** *some qualms very / Like those of the Philosopher of Malmesbury:* Thomas Hobbes, a materialist in philosophy, was said by his enemies to be superstitious in practice. He denied it.

**173:** *sage Minerva's fowl:* we remember from above, this canto, l.675, that Aurora is described as *Admiring more Minerva than the Graces.* If Minerva's owl hoots, disaster threatens.

**174:** *Old portraits from old walls upon me scowl:* compare above, XIII sts.67-72. B. seems to be writing *Don Juan* at Norman Abbey.

## 99.

Between two worlds Life hovers, like a Star 785  
 'Twi'xt Night and Morn – upon the horizon's verge;  
 How little do we know that which we are!<sup>175</sup>  
 How less what we may be! the Eternal Surge  
 Of Time and tide rolls on, and bears afar  
 Our bubbles – as the old burst, New emerge, 790  
 Lashed from the foam of Ages – while the Graves  
 Of Empires heave but like some passing waves. –

End of Canto 15th. March 25th 1823.

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**175:** *How little do we know that which we are! / How less what we may be!*: a pessimistic paraphrase of Ophelia's mad words at *Hamlet* IV iv 40-2: *Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be!*