

ENG 582/ FINAL PAPER**Identity through Text as Embodied Context: Being Author Amidst Pirates in the Romantic Era***Rinita Banerjee*

Written text: thoughts through words of the writer, quired between preliminary pages—spelling out the identities of the author, printer, illustrator, the author’s dedications, among other elements—and, end pages that achieve a denouement for the text. Where does it begin? Where does it end? Does it begin with the lifting of the front cover of the artefact, and end with turning over the last page? The life of the written text, contrarily, and curiously has had a much more complex beginning and a further confounded end, if an end there ever is. From being found guilty of murdering memory to recently being meted out the death sentence, the printed word has witnessed quite a labyrinthine plot driven by several protagonists—authors, publishers, booksellers, the cast not bereft of pirates—illegitimate adaptors and producers of original works—and readers.

Drawing from Jerome McGann’s understanding of the text as social, as a canvas on which tangible (human) and intangible elements negotiate their presence in complex and non-linear ways (“Texts and Textualities”), this paper attempts to situate the role of pirates—unauthorized and radical publishers and booksellers—in the nineteenth-century book trade in England. I seek to understand how, in a world beyond the publication of an author’s texts, symbolic of his or her intentions, and indicative of corrosive inputs from significant others like the publisher, bookseller, reader, and others, pirates were adding to, affecting and twisting the author’s intentionalities and also transforming the identity of the creator, the creation and even that of the receptors. Through a close study of anecdotal and fact-based narratives related to the publication histories of the pirated editions of nineteenth-century Romantic poetry, I explore how they demonstrated both political and pecuniary motives of pirate publishers, how the latter shaped the literary reputations of authors, bringing into question the legitimacy of the author’s individuation as creator, and how in many covert ways there was an unwanted smudging of the seeming divide between the dissenter in the pirate and the creator in the author/poet.

In 1817, William Hone published an unauthorized adaptation of Lord Byron's *The Corsair*. The year 1817 is significant, writes Peter Manning. Post 1814, the year which saw seven editions of the poem brought out, selling at a huge scale, sale gradually dropped; although there were the eighth and ninth editions in 1815, and the poem was thereafter available in collected editions brought out by Byron's publisher John Murray, for a whole year "there had been no separate issue" of it (217). Manning attempts to investigate the "renewed interest" in *The Corsair*, and suggests that Byron's poem had assumed a relevance quite separate from what perhaps the author had intended with it. He informs that in February of 1817, Hone is arrested on three counts of "blasphemous libel," owing to his "twopenny pamphlets [that] put crude parodies of the liturgy to forceful satirical use" (219). Insisting on his political intentions behind publishing the pamphlets, Hone successfully acquits himself from the prosecutions by reading aloud parodies that had never been prosecuted, parodies written by cabinet ministers and churchmen. Ironically, what the jury wanted to suppress were being read by thousands as part of the descriptions of the trials in newspapers. Secondly, while the jury expresses their fear over the readership saying that the lower prices of the pamphlets was making available matter that the lower classes were unfit to read, Hone is able to point out that "he knew that the wealthy as well as the poor had purchased the pamphlet" (Manning 220). The government with Tory sympathies is defeated at the face of acquittals representative of the "freedom of the press" (220). Thereafter, Hone was to publish several editions of the three trials, and among the materials sold would also be found his adaptation of Byron's *Poems on His Domestic Circumstances* "and a shilling portrait of the poet" (221).¹

Manning points to one other incident that makes the untimely publication of the unauthorised edition of *The Corsair*, poignant. In the wake of the radical leaders involved in an uprising against unemployment in Pentridge, Jeremiah Brandreth and William Turner, among others, being indicted for

¹ Jason Kolkey points out how in Hone's edition of Byron's *Poems on His Domestic Circumstances*, even a radical like Hone would see the efficacy in emphasizing the poet's controversial and luring personal life first and downplaying the poems that were politically relevant (25-26).

“high treason” in July 1817, Thomas Denman, as part of their defense, equaled Brandreth’s “magnetism” to that of *Corsair’s* Conrad (221). Tracing a similarity between Conrad’s “magic of the mind” (qtd in Manning 221) and Brandreth’s power over his followers, although unconvincing to the jury, provided a historical effectiveness to Byron’s poem. While Manning reads in this the transcendence of Brandreth as an identity beyond the radicalism he was found guilty of, it was also illustrative of “how history shaped the significance of Byron’s poem” (222). Hereafter, amidst news of other booksellers being charged of publishing libelous parodies, by December 1817, Hone’s trials would also form part of the newspapers.

Hone’s “Lord Byron’s *Corsair*” (Manning 222) assumes a definite importance since it was produced by a reformist as opposed to Tory-loyalist John Murray. Hone’s adaptation of Byron’s *Corsair* was also available to the “working class” since he priced it at “less than [a] sixteenth” of Murray’s “five shillings six pence” (223). What is interesting to note here is Hone’s adapted text was far removed in its aesthetics from Byron’s original: not only did Hone’s version rid itself of all the “exotic words” that fascinated the aristocratic readers, it also provided antecedents to Conrad’s present, which in the original are elided. Hone also drew from another of Byron’s tale, *The Siege of Corinth*, to set his version of Conrad. In fact, Hone says all that Byron attempted to keep secret from the pirates in the poem. Moreover, while Byron does not precede or develop Medora’s being Conrad’s love interest, Hone “adds [details] ... to establish it” (226). Several of the descriptions in the poem that spoke of Byron’s transgressive attitude towards sexual matters is reversed in Hone’s version, in that it becomes moralised and traps Byron’s “dazzling hero” into the conventional mold of righteousness (226). Also, Hone deletes the notes—“glosses on the poem’s esoteric vocabulary and the length of Greek twilights” (Manning 228)—that form part of the original *Corsair*, the latter seen by Manning as being representative of the “presence of Byron himself” (228). In this context projecting the interplay of the author’s identity and pirates’ role in affecting it in significant ways, I concur with Jason Kolkey when he puts forth: “The straightforward exposure of a figure Byron rendered as alluringly obscure is appropriate as Hone proved that the poet’s claim over his intellectual property was

particularly slippery. Pirate publishers could capitalise on Byron's name and writing, whether to spread ideals of liberalism and *noblesse oblige*, simply turn a profit from his fame and attendant controversy, or some combination of those motivations" (27).

The facts above bear importance if one is to be informed of the distance between the author's intention in writing for an educated audience, and the artefact and its content being used by unauthorized publishers like Hone to provide a face to the "radical resonances" that the poem even in its adaptation retained. When I write "retained" I recognize the palpability of the author's liberal creativity that sets him against that very liberality. Moreover, it is ironical that despite the fact that poets like Byron and Wordsworth (as we shall later) were conscious of their status as poets for the aristocracy and middle-class, unwilling to stoop to readers who lay below and beyond (see Manning 231, and Owens, "Wordsworth, Galignani and the Aesthetics of Piracy"), owing to the role of the pirates their works were being disseminated to a larger public in myriad ways. That way, authors had a wider reach. For instance, priced at one shilling, William Hone's "compilations" of Byron's *Poems on His Domestic Circumstances* had twenty-three editions by 1817. As Graham Pollard points out, it was to the credit of Hone and other pirates that the circulation of Byron's works achieved such a circulation (in Manning 217). Amidst the politics of how texts chose not only their readers but also through "what" was being adapted, the pirates, besides it revealing the authors' unwillingness to consider readers according to their merit in absorbing the intrinsic, and instead let class dictate the same, the identity of the Romantic poet defined as manifestation of the sublime and esoteric was being reinvented at the hands of the pirates. As the *history* of the publication of Byron's *Don Juan* will demonstrate further, the author and his work were being constantly challenged to be forced out of a simplistic creator-creation nexus; there was an unconscious negotiation which the author's identity was being pulled into through the pirates' purposeful adaptation of his texts for benefits that were political in nature, and additionally were economically desirable.

In 1819, John Murray published the first two cantos of Byron's *Don Juan*, a poem that parodied the ten commandments of God. Byron had been forced to leave England a few years earlier owing to his accumulating debts, his tumultuous relationship with his wife, Anna Isabella Noel Byron, and questionable affinity towards his half-sister Augusta. *Don Juan*, much like the fanatic lack of nobility, and flamboyance in the poet's own life, embodied not only "women [who were] not chaste," and "seducers," but also "poured scorn on admirals, generals, politicians, and fellow writers" (St Clair 323). As William St Clair observes of Byron's publisher Murray, he was acutely aware of the divine gentry forming Byron's audience, ones who were against "democracy, rights of women, reform of parliament," and so he brought out the cantos with stanzas and lines replaced with asterisks, and the title page devoid of the author's or his own name save the printer Thomas Davison's (323-24). The book was in an "expensive quarto format" (323). This subversive tactic bore a significant indication for the pirate publishers since they came to fathom the fears of the publisher, and thus, in what was to form a considerable part of the history of *Don Juan*'s publication (till even after Byron's death in 1824), it continued to be brought out in cheaper editions including twopenny magazines, in smaller sizes, on poor-quality paper, and small type (St Clair 328). As Collette Cooligan points out, by 1822 the poem was already considered common property. Injunctions at courts hardly mattered, since the content was considered undeniably "injurious," like pirate and pornographer John Dugdale in 1823 was to argue in court (St Clair 324-25).

The year 1823 was also the year the excruciatingly indecent and shameless harem cantos were published, by which time Byron had broken off from Murray and agreed to be with John Hunt, towards whom his attitude was to be of "ambivalence" (Manning 231). Cooligan observes that the harem cantos were an amalgamation of the poet's fascination with the luring East allowing its expression in the free flowing erotic desires, the ideation of "non-normative sexuality" (443), comparing enslaved women from different racial backgrounds on the basis of sexual "voracity" and "frigidity" (444) in the poem, thereby "perpetuat[ing] popular orientalist fantasies to the masses" (457). The cantos allowed the "mobility of

desires and cultural identities” (445), and as Cooligan argues, this is what made *Don Juan* easy prey for piracy, and even more importantly, it was to help “shape the covert operations of London’s obscene print culture” (456). Obscenity was being used in turn to advance political satire (447); radical pressmen like William Benbow would appropriate Byron’s harem cantos in order to satirise, for instance, King George IV’s “sexual misconduct” (Cooligan 448) through cleverly lurid pamphlets that would sell in good numbers (see Cooligan 447-51). Further, Byron’s *Don Juan* apart from being multiplied in terms of its pirated versions, also led to other “underground publications” (437) like *Memoirs of Harriette Wilson*. Byron thus became the center over whose unclaimed property lay various debates over the meaning of obscene for the classes and masses, the legitimacy therefore of piracies, the tricky position of the legitimate publishers, and most importantly the ambiguous rights of authors who produced the works.

As the elucidation of the publishing of *Don Juan* highlights, at the hands of the radical pirate publishers, even the most frank, audacious and non-chalant Byron was to be constantly affected because the work that was created in an individuated and literary space, dismembered of its layered allegories, was opposed to the societal standards of the time. St Clair notes how “Byron offered to refund his fee. But he knew that if *Don Juan* was pronounced ‘injurious’, the law might try to deprive him of his rights as a father, as it had done in Shelley’s case” (324). St Clair records how the court decided against giving Shelley the rights over custody of his children since he could have authored something as impossible as *Queen Mab*;² Shelley’s children were instead to be “brought up by foster parents ... and Shelley never saw them again” (319)! When Hone brought out a spurious third canto of his poem, the voice of Byron’s imploring Murray “You should not let those fellows publish false ‘Don Juans,’” was to be silenced given that the copyright law

² Written in his teens, *Queen Mab* was to become Shelley’s “most easily available, most frequently printed, cheapest, and most widely read book” (St Clair 320). Shelley’s verse was “a ride into the heavens to reveal the world as it is and ... a vision of what it might be” (St Clair 317-18). The book was seditious not only because of its blasphemous content but also because it had a false imprint. While after being distributed by Shelley himself in 1813, it was to be disregarded by the poet himself, it was to be brought up during the trial over the custody of his children in 1817. By 1819 pirated editions began to be out. In the years to follow, “despite political seizures” (St Clair 319) the sale of pirated cheaper editions of *Queen Mab* were to continue their presence in the literary marketplace, for the libertine ideals in Shelley’s verse reflected the repressed wishes of the low, the literate, and the liberal, in and outside England (St Clair 320-21).

at the time needed only to be proven to, that a text was seditious. In 1823, when “Dugdale argued for the dissolution of the injunction against his publication of cantos six to eight of *Don Juan*, he based his argument on its putative obscenity” (Cooligan 453). He not only brought up the point of how it would adulterate the middle-class reader, but how the publication history of *Don Juan* also manifested the vicious publishing practices of those like Murray who disavowed the moral laxities of the literature they brought out (454). The wider dissemination of texts due to the pirates, who considered themselves “the advance guard of a new political consciousness among the excluded” (St Clair 307), thus came with a price.

I suggest that the very identity of the author that dictated the works they produced was alarmingly setting the stage for the rejection of the identity. With French revolution as burning example, early nineteenth-century England was haunted by the possibility of philosophies emanating from ideals of freedom and equality. In a society favouring limiting minds and “repressive legislation[s]” (St Clair 308), the notion of “author” was being trampled, its interiorities sacrificed. The emergence of the pirate publishers who were at the crux making available canons (although cropped, culled, adapted and sometimes coloured to suit their mocking tone justifying the subjugation of legitimate booksellers)³ was revealing the cracks and holes that the fears of those upholding convention and morals were disallowing in terms of oughts and

³ In a 1955 article by Charles H. Taylor Jr., I find a curious detail that brings across an instance where the editions pirates came up with had authentic material, one that was drawn from the original editions. What evidence presents itself indicates that not all that pirated editions contained were specious. This article cites the corrections from an Errata leaf that was believed to have been tipped in in some of the 1824 editions of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems* collected by Mary Shelley. What is interesting is that although the Errata appears only in some of the original editions, in many of the pirated editions of the book, the corrections drawn from the Errata have been introduced, the “most fully corrected” one being John Ascham's 1834 two-volume edition titled *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Charles Daly's 1836 pirated edition reprints drawing from the Ascham edition. The author observes that nineteen of the corrections written on the Errata leaf also appeared in the 1839 edition of the *Posthumous Poems*, by which time Timothy Shelley, Mary Shelley's father-in-law, had altered his decision to disallow future publication of his son's works. Based on an astute comparison of the several editions of the *Poems* – original and pirated - Taylor points out that many of the corrections assumed to have appeared first in the 1839 edition had actually been part of Ascham's 1834 and also Galignanis' 1829 editions. Although there is evidence through a letter from Mary Shelley to the editor of the Galignanis' that the latter had derived the corrections from the errata sent to them by Mary Shelley, for many of the firsts that appear in the Ascham edition, no precursor exists. Taylor attempts to prove that many of the corrections inserted in Mary Shelley's 1839 edition derive from the unauthorized edition of Ascham's and some from Galignanis' edition. Further, that Mary Shelley probably never used any 1824 edition which was inclusive of the Errata leaf is proved by the fact that in “Lines to a Critic” she never changed 1817 to 1819 despite the correction present in the leaf. Taylor of course gives a few possible interpretations of that in the article. She did correct, Taylor writes, many of the “unauthorized changes” (416) introduced in the Ascham and Galignani editions.

shoulds. The poet, as identity, was thus being shaped and re-shaped by the culture it made its creation available for. What was being produced by the author and what reached the reader was being interjected and interrupted by forces that authors were at times unable to control. How then was one to determine the *origin* of a piece of work? How was it to be credible? Does socialization of a text render authorial freedom null?

In a very interesting article titled “Mischievous Effects: Byron and Illegitimate Publications and Byron,” Jason Kolkey argues that although Byron would not involve himself much in the business aspect of his books, he was very conscious of the “content and production” (24) of his works. With the publication of *Don Juan* however, it proved increasingly difficult for Byron to keep himself out of the business aspect of his own publications (27). There were attempts from the publisher’s end to bring out the work in quarto as well as octavo formats; in fact, in 1821, Cantos III, IV and V were published in both “demy octavo at 9s. 6d. and a ‘small paper’ (foolscap octavo, 5 14 x 7”) 7s. version” (28). In 1822, the differences between the pirated editions and original publisher’s editions were to be smudged further when as a strategy to meet the demands of the literary marketplace Byron would suggest Murray to bring out a *A Vision of Judgment* “in a very cheap edition so as to baffle the pirates by a low price” (28). Even with cantos VI to XVI, which Byron published with John Hunt, they would come out in three versions: “The demy octavo, matching the format of the Murray editions, cost 9s. 6d., the ‘small paper’ version 7s., and the ‘common’ octodecimo (3 1/2 x 5 3/8”) edition one shilling” (29). However, as Kolkey derives from Gary Dyer’s meticulous reading of the versions, there are innumerable textual discrepancies across the versions (29). Unfortunately, Byron’s increasing intervention in the process of the book’s production did little to contest the sway that pirated editions held for the reading public for the latter still preferred the one-volume editions made available at cheaper prices than be caught in the mesh of separate editions by Murray and Hunt. Moreover, the author’s active participation in the production of his own work further established the illegitimacy of the text’s nature distancing the author from exercising copyright on it (Kolkey 29). This brought Byron’s work closer to the realm of being radical.

The wider dissemination of literary texts that should have been any author's prerogative, on the contrary, did poorly to conjure an image that would aid the author, rather rendering it ambiguous. This finds support in Kolkey's contention that the repeated production of the unauthorised, smaller and cheaper editions with almost unreadable type-size informed the audience of the luridness of the text. Besides, while Byron's identity was being used as a means to advertise the radical sentiments, the value of his creativity was being subverted; this paradox was being played in the undemarcated space of morality, politics and their very enemies (Kolkey 30). Further, while pirated editions allowed greater spread and also challenged the hypocrisies of conservative publishers who would have mellowed down parts of the author's works that were likely to cause political or social turbulence to save themselves, these editions allowed critics to engage with Byron as not only a poet but also the man, for it was the facets of his very colourful and controversial personal life that were filling the introductory pages before one could reach the politically relevant ones (Kolkey 23). This echoes my thesis wherein I argue that in the manner in which the texts of the authors were presented through the pirates, the author's texts in their perceived connotations would become unconsciously complicit in the realm of the radical. In Byron's case in particular, his works would offer a layered and covert stomping of the very social hierarchy that he was part and parcel of, a dualism that radical publishers would take full advantage of (Kolkey 27).

William St Clair points out: "The text of *Don Juan* which almost all readers read was not the text Byron wrote, but the self-censored version put out by his publisher Murray. Some pirate editions were further bowdlerised, omitting stanzas and phrases that even Murray had permitted" (329). He also argues how *Don Juan* "was read by more people in its first twenty years than any previous work of English literature" and how, apart from the regular editions, the pirate editions had sold in "thousands," as claimed by William Benbow in 1822 (329). In the two observations made by St Clair, I see a sense of ironical disdain in the literary culture—that a larger circulation does not quite guarantee the authentication of the author as author. It may, and did in many cases, perpetuate the fame that makes an author, canonized him to put it

conventionally, but being part of the canon could not take away from the anxieties that a tenuous copyright law foreshadowed, one which led to the severe segregation of the author from having a right over his own works.

Much before the publication of *Don Juan*, 1817 witnessed the controversy following the unauthorized publication of Robert Southey's poem "Wat Tyler," brought out by Sherwood, Neely and Jones 23 years after it was written (Hoadley 81). Although unfazed by the publication in the initial period, Southey, no longer a republican radical, was to take notice of the aftermath of the publication when Hon. William Smith, MP of Norwich, asked the Parliament to deem the poem seditious and prosecute the author (Hoadley 83). The injunction that Southey had presented in court against Sherwood, Neely and Jones for "breach of copyright under the civil law" (St Clair 317) was rejected by Lord Chancellor Seldon since the work was considered to be seditious and therefore Southey's right over his work was ruled out. While Sherwood et al. fled from the scene "in deference to the Lord Chancellor's opinion of its mischievous tendency" (Manning 218), pirates like Hone wasted no time to take advantage of publishing that which was not protected by copyright. Several editions till 1850 were published. In fact, "[t]he piece which Southey later refused to reprint among his *Collected Works* sold twice or three times as many copies as all his other works put together. . . . [T]he readership span[ning] the whole nation" (St Clair 317).⁴ The very law that denied injunctions so that the author was penalized for producing content that was injurious allowed the pirates to make the apparent contaminant reach the mass—the latter composed of those who were considered unfit to read a certain kind of literature or even none at all. It would not be until 1842, following five years of public and parliamentary debate that would take an intense and intricate form, that the author

⁴ William Benbow (who, as William St Clair describes as "one of the most persistent pirates" [307]) "defended the deceased Byron against an attack from Southey, while justifying his own reprint of *Wat Tyler* in an 1825 tract, *A Scourge for the Laureate*, by explaining, 'my motives were different from the writer's—mine were to do good; his to accomplish evil'" (Kolkey 30). This suggests a certain perceived commonality in the implications that an author's work might have in relation to the aims of a radical publisher like Benbow. In 1822, he had also named his shop "The Byron's Head" (ibid.).

would be granted full right over his works instead of it being at the hands of the bookseller or printer or publisher (see Seville, *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England*).

This event becomes significant for highlighting the effect of social currents on literary output. That literary productions are not alienated from the time and society in which they are read also vocalizes the politics that accompany or become inherent in the author's intent to create. The author's intentionality is subverted to how it gets to be perceived by an existing culture, although elevated if it conforms. In this case, however, one finds that the author's ideals had undergone a change; Southey, at the time of the poem's publication was no longer unsupportive of the republican. The author's innovation seems to be in succumbing, or embracing the accepted; going against the latter was considered unlawful. In labeling what *caused* injury, led thus to the disintegration of the author from the individual he or she was (although in this case, Southey was complicit in accepting the court's definition of "Wat Tyler"⁵ being seditious). Literary output is driven by the social not individual for it is the former that decides its fate. Otherwise, how does legality apply to works of imagination or perception?

Contrary to the picture drawn above, unauthorised publications that led to greater dissemination also transformed the author's view of the reader. In this the author began also to see the reader as cutting across the hierarchies that he had set for his text, and used the pirated text as reflective of how the authorized text could be democratised. In the context of understanding the reversal in William Wordsworth's attitude to participating in the literary marketplace of the times, something that he was averse to earlier, Thomas Owens diligently investigates the differences between the unauthorised 1828 text of Wordsworth's poems titled *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* produced in France by Galignani, "proprietors of the most famous bookstore in Paris" (24) and Edward Moxon's 1845 edition of the author's *The Poems of William Wordsworth* produced in England. While on the one hand, he covers in detail the

⁵ Hoadley calls "Wat Tyler" "a ridiculously juvenile work" (95-96). In understanding the relevance of a text in relation to the cultural expectations and in that how the author as an identity gets represented in fact transforms the literal quality of the text drastically. That is because the latter becomes justifiable or unjustifiable in a social context.

bibliographical structures of the dated and dateless editions of Galignani's 1828 one-volume *Poetical Works* trying to arrive at its evolution in the pirate's hands, for the purposes of my paper I will draw from his reading of the differences he encounters between Wordsworth's 1845 edition and 1828 Galignani edition the latter priced at 20 francs, a price that was to go down further to 8 francs (in an undated Galignani edition, [29]).⁶ Owens points to how Galignani's "portable" edition of the poet's works "beautifully printed in royal octavo on superfine paper, in clear, bold, legible type; with very fine Portraits, copious Biographical Memoirs" (qtd from Galiganani's advertisements in Owens 31), had created a readership beyond the elite that Wordsworth had shaped, and in doing so had pushed Wordsworth to consider transforming the way he saw his works being produced (31). Wordsworth felt an unavoidable urge to break out of the tendency to control and narrow down his readers where he could exercise an authorial power, a power that "manifes[ted] itself aesthetically as well" (33). Owens writes: "During a memorable dinner at Benjamin Robert Haydon's in March 1824, Wordsworth informed Humphrey Davy that 'the reason [he] published [his] *White Doe in Quarto*' was 'to express [his] own opinion on it'" (33). Expensive quartos thus embodied the author's perception of the reader with relation to his work, a perception that was to change. Reiterating my argument in this context, authorial identity was undergoing a change of immense proportions. Increasingly aware of the failure of a sale strategy that patronised his domination of the class of readership for whom his works were meant, considering Galignani's 1828 edition was half the price of his 1827 original edition, Wordsworth was seen now to place "all prefatory and prosaic material to the back of the work" (34) in his 1845 edition. Moreover, while Galignani's edition begins with an applause to the poet through his "Memoirs," Wordsworth's 1845 edition begins with his "juvenilia," which Owens refers to as a more "humble opening" (34). Moreover, there would be seen "geographical and narratological connections by keeping together poems whose narratives take place in the Lake District" (34) which expresses a certain

⁶ The low price would have been owing to the International Treaty between England and France of 1852 which made selling of pirated works in France illegal (Owens 30), and this indicates that this 8-franc-edition must have been reissued not before 1850, writes Owens.

consciousness on the author's part to engage deeply with the readers belonging beyond the boundaries Wordsworth had set for his own works. The presence of double columns not seen previously and the bulk of a one-volume edition would bring about discontent from the elite readers, especially his women friends, and so despite keeping his works in a single volume, Wordsworth would be insistent on "fewer lines in a page than Murray and Longman"; 'the paper to be stouter'; the margin to be 'broad enough for binding'; 'the columns of each page more uniform'; and the stanzas 'not [to be] broken'" (35) and his margins, as compared to Galignani's edition, would be broader.

While pirated copies of Wordsworth's works were being made available in huge quantities in off-shore markets and also the literary marketplace in England, the author's experience of his own works was changing. Once reluctant to be part of the process of the production of his works, he was taking greater interest in how he could aesthetically distinguish his work from the pirates' and in that he was bringing into the fold of his earlier, classed ideation of his readership, a greater number and a mixed hierarchy. However, given the evidence from Owens's article, I suggest that this ideation appears to be a peripheral consequence of the author's wanting to separate his edition aesthetically. There was no conscious or willing change in Wordsworth's perception of who his readers should be. But that piracy was affecting the author's perspective of the book trade, and interfering and transforming the strangulated lens through which he viewed the reachability of his own creations, is undeniable. Contrary to Byron's works being in many ways complicit in advancing the radical pirates' unconventional interests, Wordsworth's prove to exemplify a different angle to the theme of authorial identity, involving little of the complexities that the negotiations between Byron or Southey, and the unauthorized publishers portrayed. Firstly, off-shore publishers like Galignani (and Baudry) were authorized to publish English works in France; they were "qualified for copyright protection" (St Clair 296). Although sale of these piracies was restricted beyond the continent, the vast difference in "street prices" made it "impossible to keep the pirates out" of London (St Clair 299). Owing to the loss of markets at the hands of these piracies and constant complaints from publishers, the

1852 Anglo-French copyright convention was arrived at wherein “almost all of the books Galignani and Baudry ever produced [that] were still available [had to be sold], their prices reduced to a twelfth of London prices” (St Clair 301). Despite Wordsworth’s condescending lament (in 1835) of “those vile French Piracies” (Owens 27), Galignani editions were not only owned by “members of the same upper- and middle-income groups who bought new books at the full price and who joined book clubs and subscription libraries” but also by “half pay officers, poorer clergymen, students, higher-paid artisans, and others previously excluded or deterred by the high prices” (St Clair 302), making up much of the printed editions sold.

My investigations reveal a flip-side to the success that pirate publishers derived out of their publications too. As revealed by Neil Freistat, radical publisher William Benbow’s pirated edition of Shelley’s *Posthumous Poems* brought out on low-cost paper in a duo-decimo format with narrower margins available at five shillings, six pence, in 1826 as opposed to Mary Shelley’s 1824 edition of her husband’s *Posthumous Poems* printed by C.H. Reynell in “octavo format on fine ribbed paper with wide margins” (412) for fifteen shillings, failed to sell as much as the original though the latter existed in the market for a brief period of time. Freistat succinctly points towards how the nature of Shelley’s poetry was legitimising the divides within the social hierarchies, and in that brings to light the cultural contexts that dictate the acceptance of literature, which (at times) the transforming networks of production and distribution in terms of piracy cannot affect. Ironically, this was possible because of Mary Shelley’s appropriation of Shelley’s poetry and identity as “etherialized, disembodied, and ... depoliticized” (410) in an effort to make the author appeal to the existing social and political climate of the times. Mary Shelley’s 1824 edition was an act of recuperating Shelley’s identity from the throttling it had been subjected to owing to the 1821 reviews of his pirated *Queen Mab*, pirate William Clark’s trial in relation to it, and also the “controversy in the obituary notices in 1822 over the significance of Shelley’s life and work” (410). Interestingly, as Freistat notes, the text of the 1824 edition did *not* include Shelley’s “The Mask of Anarchy” and “the volume of ‘popular songs’

written for the working-class reformers,” while Mary Shelley added paratexts containing a biographical sketch of Shelley along with an epigraph from Petrarch wherein she “cross-dresse[d] a description of Laura so it bec[ame] one of Shelley’s” (411) (both of which Benbow deleted from his edition), among other matter. The thirteen out-of-print poems, five translations, and sixty-five unpublished poems “a quarter” of which “were fragments” that were included were considered conducive to the church and state and established Shelley as “a lyric writer” (Freistat 411). As the recorded sale of Mary Shelley’s edition shows, Shelley had been “monumentalized” through his poems voicing the rhetoric cut out for the high-culture of the times, meant for the middle- and upper-classes and not for the “working-class and artisan traders” (412). In Coleridge’s response to Benbow’s failure to sell Shelley’s *Posthumous Poems*, Freistat reads “that the linguistic codes of *Posthumous Poems* resist appropriation by the bibliographical codes of the piracy, whose failure in the marketplace is not merely a legitimation of Shelley but also—as may be inferred—the justification of an entire social hierarchy” (417).

I argue that the infiltrations that pirates made possible due to their adaptations and in other cases honest reprints of poets’ works put into perspective and perhaps also a quandary the definition of the term “author.” That is because the conception that the author or poet or novelist has of him or herself seems to be distinct from who he or she is situated as in the readers’ eyes. One is uncertain of which version of an author’s work is reaching which audience, for given the evidence gathered above, it does not stand to reason that the works produced with the author’s permission by his or her original publisher were the ones the elite audience (for whom the text was ideally meant) bought. Piracies were adding to the number, being illegal and cheaper, and were not only defining a new readership threatening the market meant for the “topmost income groups” (St Clair 307) but also shaping the literary marketplace dictated earlier by monopolies of the conservative publisher and prejudiced author. In such a scenario, the author, the creator of a piece of work, poetry, prose, etc., no longer seems to be able to adhere to his intentions—neither regarding his text nor in relation to his ideal of the reader. Then how is he author? I contend that while the beginning of a life of a

text commences with an author, most certainly that, the trajectory that the text assumes is never read, perceived, understood, recognized and cognized bereft of the influences that it brings along. The influences that an author's creation is a composition of, is what is responded to by the publisher, the Court, the pirate, the critic, and finally the reader being the receptor of the desires of all these characters betrayed of the author's own, original, nascent voice. Perhaps, in lamenting the loss of individuation I am denying a text its rightful growth and maturity. However, I suggest that what reaches a reader, is far from the author's creation, for creation is a metaphor for innovation. When (and if) an author's text, considered seditious or harmful by an outside agency, separates the author's right over what he has created, it severs the author the subjectivity that the creation allows. The author is further abandoned of his independence, which is his identity, when his texts removed from him, are subjected to the censorship of the publisher due to the concomitant fears that drive and help sustain its publishing what they have been given, and out of its hands in the coteries of unauthorized pirates and booksellers who use the texts, modify them, add to them, and by those tropes paint a picture of the author that serves their pecuniary and political, social and moral investments and interests. How and in what light the reader's gaze defines the author, is another story, and if one should let the record of sales of a text inform the gaze of the reader is debatable.

Further, as seen through the examples above (especially in the case of Byron), once certain texts are stripped of the obscurities which form the aesthetics of a thought and a text, they are divorced from the inputs that made them the author's own in the first place. However, in the very selection of a text for adaptation lay concealed possibilities of it containing the seeds of the dangerous and culpably erotic, immoral and fluid transgressions that threatened the orthodoxies of a cloistered and conventional society. In this, I see a merging of the dissenter in the pirate and the creator in the author. While it may be in the fictionalizing of the realistic that allows words to perform a certain spectacle through which is the author's justification of his or her identity as author, it is in the disrobing of that fictive that forms the origin and the further layering of it within a narrative that is informed by the social and cultural politics of the time, that

allow the obliteration of the author. Poetry then does not remain the projection of the Romantic sublime that an author's creative capacity allows; instead it becomes the displaced vessel that contains the ideals of pirates and through the textual unconscious is also revealed the author's separateness from the societal hypocrisies that he or she wished to veil. Even in his obliteration, while the author's creative identity suffers a quiet erasure, he continues—whether in the critics' dismissals or in the readers' hands, or even in the personifications that the characters (though unreal) take on in reality. Then, is this where the author is supposed to be? Moreover, is the author the extension of the being he is, or the poet he aspires to be? Are the two separate? In fact, do forces like pirates and society help keep them apart? It certainly seems so.

Emphasizing the need to study texts as “embodied” (14) of their linguistic and bibliographical features, Jerome McGann attends to the difference between “meaning” and “message” in poetry (15). “[M]eaning” in poems, he writes, is “mistakenly conceived if it is conceived as a ‘message’” (15). Drawing from this theory in the context of my argument, I see authorial identity being conjectured or re-recognised in the transmission that the poetical medium is misconceived in. In making a message of the meaning that Romantic poetry stood for, was the development of an author's identity that was quite distinct from the individual or creative subject responsible for the genesis of the original imagination. In that, imagination betrays itself of agency. If text is social, then the subjective is only a seeming object, since meaning is fluid and being constantly bestowed upon the object by the ones who receive the shapeable subjective. The “author” therefore is identity embodied of the messages (created by the pirate publishers, as well as publishers, apart from other forces outside the author) that have been derived from the meaning that was originally conceived by the author, which eventually loses existence. There are instances of course, as illustrated by the case of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems* (see above), where piracy fails to outweigh established cultural and social codes. But even in that, authorial identity is, because it conforms, despite the fact that in monumentalizing Shelley, Mary Shelley was appealing to the poems that were devoid of political significance, and so devoid of a message. Interestingly, adhering to only the meaning of his poems in terms

of them implying “pure poetry” (Freistat 410), she was perhaps separating the man and the poet and this rendered authorial identity ambiguous. Ambiguity would in turn make moot the subjective.

With regard to the weakening of the government machinery’s control over what should be read and who should read it in 1839, William St Clair concludes one of the chapters in his book titled *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* saying: “[I]n Britain the poets and the pirates had helped to bring about a shift that remains, for the most part, unreversed” (338). I would conclude that *through* pirates there occurred an irreversible shift in the gaze that defined the author too, in a way that texts, in their embodied contexts, *authored* authorial identity and not the other way round.

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