Notes on the Mechanics of Documentation
Erik Simpson

1. Either name your source as you introduce a quotation or put the author's name with the page number in parenthesis.

Example 1: As Erik Simpson notes in *Journal of Stuff I Say in Class*, "Oedipus is certainly a wacky guy" (63).

Example 2: This is clear evidence supporting the conception of Oedipus as "wacky guy" (Simpson 63).

2. When the quoted passage is contained within the main body of the text, put the punctuation of your sentence after the closed parenthesis. If a question mark or exclamation point is part of the quotation, leave it with the quoted text and put the punctuation of your text, if any, after the closed parenthesis.

Example 1: Why does Oedipus say, "Ah, Kithairon!" (Sophocles 71)?

Example 2: I get very excited when the choragos says, "I do not know how I can answer you" (71)! (Note that you need not include periods at the end of quoted passages.)

See also examples for point 1.

3. When the quoted passage is set out from the main text, two things change: first, you need no quotation marks, because the fact of quotation is self-evident; second, all punctuation is put before the parenthesis. You should set off quotations of four or more lines in this way (indented ten spaces, or twice the indentation of a new paragraph).

Example 1:

Martin Dysart opens *Equus* by introducing himself as a man who is questioning his faith, that of the Freudian psychology of the Normal. He has met the "breaker" that Zarathustra describes, but no creative process has taken place; instead, he has merely been made aware of the limitations of his thought, that he is

wearing that horse's head myself. That's the feeling. All reined up in old language and old assumptions, struggling to jump clean-hoofed on to a whole new track of being I only suspect is there. (Shaffer 18)

He recognizes that this questioning is "subversive" (18), robbing him . . .

4. All quoted works should be listed under the centered heading of "Work[s] Cited." We will cover this in more detail as it becomes necessary, but your edition of *Oedipus Rex* will look like this in a works cited list:

Work Cited

In a recent article on "The Remix Aesthetic," Scott Simpkins neatly outlines the two dominant critical approaches to the accretive form of Byron's *The Giaour:

The expansion of the poem thus appears less like a publicity stunt (although this would not be beyond Byron) and more like a sincere effort to delay the release of the final version of a poem whose continued expansion attests to its earlier incompletion in terms of Byron's apparent overall plan. (Simpkins 204)

I agree with the dismissal of the theory that Byron's additions to the poem constituted a mere "publicity stunt," but I am no more convinced by the alternative Simpkins offers. He is typical of critics of *The Giaour*, from Regency England to the present, in conceiving it as a series of experiments leading up to the seventh edition, when the poem "had everything it needed" and thus corresponded to Byron's "apparent overall plan." Most critics do not state this opinion directly, but they imply it by making passing mention of Byron's changes to the text and then speaking of its final incarnation as "*The Giaour,*" thereby leading the reader to believe that the "snake of a poem" (Byron 26 August 1813 to Murray *SLJ* 359) we now know now constituted a logical and consistent expansion of the earliest drafts of the work.

I will contend here, however, that following *The Giaour* through the process of its
composition and reception allows a very different reading, one that traces Byron’s exploration of the efficacy of poetry in the immediate aftermath of the effective end of his parliamentary career. As Byron wrote the first versions of *The Giaour* he was for the first time composing with the awareness that he was a famous poet and he was also nurturing a promising political career. The early history of *The Giaour* reveals a clear pattern: as Byron’s political ambitions fell away, his desire to make his poem public came to be. His "disillusion [with his career as a politician] began to appear openly" in March 1813 (McGann *DJIC* 17-18), and he decided to publish the poem in May (*CPW*, McGann’s note, 413). According to Marchand’s biography, he made the speech that "he recognized . . . as his swan song in Parliament and as a farewell to the career in public life that he had so long contemplated" on June 1, and he immediately "turned his attention to the publication of *The Giaour* . . . " (143), the first edition of which was issued four days later. Consciously or not, Byron was remaking himself. No longer the radical politician who would change England, he would be the radical poet who did so.

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1 Although we do not know precisely when Byron composed the first incarnation of *The Giaour*, Jerome McGann has narrowed the timeline significantly, saying that "it must have been written between Sept[ember] 1812 and Mar[ch] 1813, and it probably belongs to late 1812 (see BLJ III. 40 and Marchand, l. 386-7) . . . " (*CPW*, McGann’s note, 413). For my purposes, the date within this range is not particularly important. Whenever the writing of the draft took place, it certainly happened after Byron unexpectedly became famous as the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* but before his "disillusion [with his career as a politician] began to appear openly" in March 1813 (McGann *DJIC* 17-18).

2 Martin notes that "at the time of [Childe Harold]’s publication he was naively unaware of just how deeply his poetry was to embroil him in the affairs of the literature trade. After reading Murray's letter, it must have occurred to Byron that as a successful poet and a lord his position was unique" (Martin 43).


