

Byron & politics

'born for opposition'

of money - I wish
to have gathered the
heirly - and high
lady's have
of gathered



National Library
of Scotland
Leabharlann Nàiseanta
na h-Alba

KING'S
College
LONDON

Byron & politics *'born for opposition'*

An exhibition held in the Weston Room, Maughan Library, King's College London, Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1LR, in conjunction with the 39th International Byron Conference at King's College London (1-6 July 2013).

Jointly mounted by the John Murray Archive of the National Library of Scotland and the Foyle Special Collections Library of King's College London.

24 JUNE – 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

EXHIBITION ORGANISED & CATALOGUE PREPARED BY

David McClay
National Library of Scotland

Stephanie Breen, Katie Sambrook
Foyle Special Collections Library, King's College London

Roderick Beaton
Centre for Hellenic Studies, King's College London

Christine Kenyon Jones
Department of English, King's College London

The organisers would like to record their grateful thanks to the following for their generous help and support in the preparation of this exhibition:
Geoffrey C Bond OBE DL, Lord Byron, the International Byron Society, John and Virginia Murray, The John R Murray Charitable Trust, King's College London, the National Library of Scotland and Eric Wishart.

Published under the imprint of the School of Arts & Humanities,
King's College London

Catalogue design by Susen Vural Design
www.susenvural.com

Printed by Newnorth

ISBN 978-1-897747-25-4

Foreword

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 39TH INTERNATIONAL BYRON CONFERENCE, held this year at King's College London from 1 to 6 July, we are delighted to introduce this catalogue for the exhibition *Byron & politics: 'born for opposition'*. Jointly mounted by the John Murray Archive of the National Library of Scotland (NLS) and the Foyle Special Collections Library of King's College London (KCL), the exhibition takes place in the College's Maughan Library in Chancery Lane from 24 June to 25 September 2013, and will be shown online thereafter.

While the exhibits themselves throw light on the many aspects of Byron's involvement in politics, the exhibition also brings together several aspects of his life through the associations of the institutions involved.

The oldest of these, the National Library of Scotland, was founded in the 1680s as the Advocates Library in Edinburgh and was already in existence in this form in Byron's time. The NLS's involvement reminds us of Byron's Scottish heritage – 'half a Scot by birth, and bred / A whole one' (*Don Juan* x.17), as he said – and of the importance to him of this aspect of his birth and upbringing. The John Murray publishing house, founded in 1768 by the first (Scottish) John Murray, was of course Byron's publisher. It was to John Murray II that many of his most remarkable letters were addressed, and subsequent distinguished John Murrays have continued to be notable collectors and publishers of Byroniana of all kinds.

King's College London was founded five years after Byron's death, in 1829, by King George IV and the first Duke of Wellington: establishment figures about both of whom Byron was notably critical. He would, however, have recognised the Strand site of King's, because it was next door to the premises in Somerset House where two of his portraits were displayed in 1814 as part of the Royal Academy's summer exhibition. He would perhaps have been interested to know that King's was one of the first university institutions in England to have a department of English, and to teach English literature at degree level. He might also have noted that one of his contemporary Romantic poets, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (whose 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel' Byron persuaded John Murray II to publish) was associated with the establishment of the College.

The Maughan Library and the Foyle Special Collections Library occupy the building on the Rolls Estate that formerly accommodated the Public Record Office. Known as 'The Strong Box of the Empire', it was constructed from 1847 as a repository for parliamentary records after the fire which in 1834 destroyed much of the Palace of Westminster that Byron knew. It was there, as a member of the House of Lords, that he gave his famous maiden speech in 1812 in support of the Nottinghamshire 'frame-breakers': an early instance of his involvement in politics that is explored in this exhibition.

Professor Sir Richard Trainor
Principal
King's College London

Robin Byron
13th Lord Byron
President, the Byron Society



Introduction

‘The Consequence is, being of no party,
I shall offend all parties: – never mind!’
Don Juan ix.26

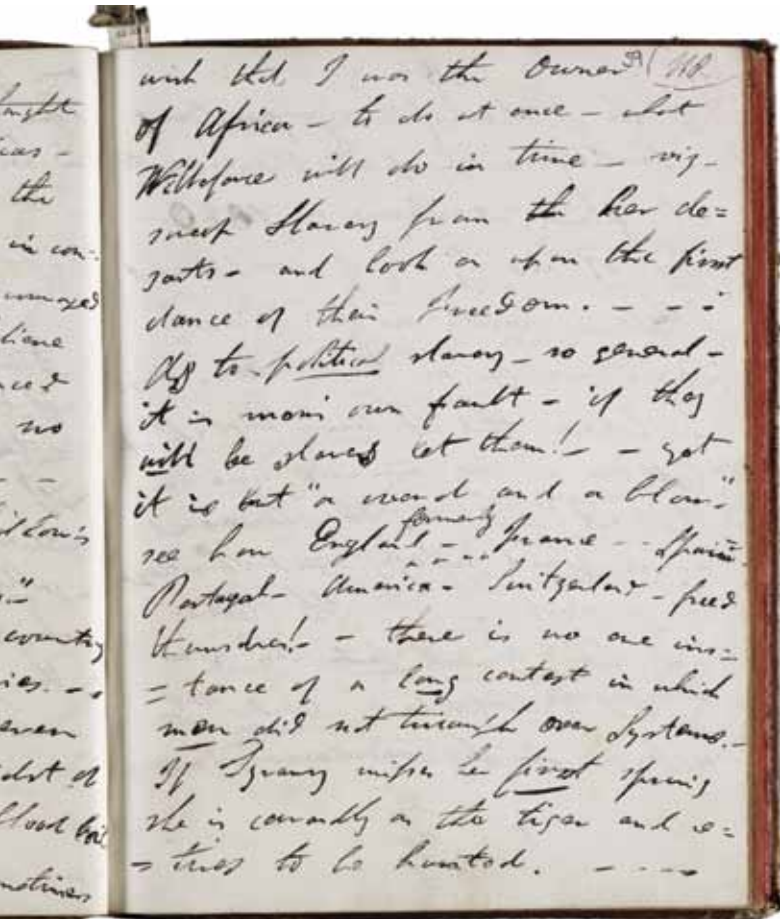
GEORGE GORDON, SIXTH LORD BYRON (1788-1824), WAS, LIKE HIS OWN Don Juan, ‘born for opposition’ (*Don Juan* xv.22). In his relatively humble childhood in Scotland we can perhaps trace the beginnings of his association with radical reform and the rights of the disadvantaged and oppressed, whether Nottinghamshire textile workers or Italian and Greek patriots. Byron’s elevation to the British peerage in 1798 complicated his political outlook, however, as it brought with it the right to sit in the House of Lords. Byron was initially earnest in pursuing a parliamentary career, but although he detested the ruling Tory party he was unable or unwilling to find political harmony with the opposing Whigs. A scathing review of his early poetry in the Whig-orientated *Edinburgh Review* certainly did not help to strengthen his party allegiance.

The growing success of his poetry offered him an alternative to Parliament and party as an outlet for political expression. Although his early and politically radical short poems were often published anonymously, he increasingly incorporated political themes and issues openly into his later and larger works, published under his name or known to be by him.

Byron’s youthful travels in the Mediterranean between 1809 and 1811 laid the foundation for his interest in national and patriotic causes, which were agitated all over Europe by the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. Byron’s later Napoleonic verses worked out his disappointment at the fall of the era’s greatest political reformer and, when he left Britain in 1816, one of his first continental destinations was the battlefield of Waterloo, where he again reflected on his hero’s downfall.

Travel liberated and enlivened Byron in many ways, including politically. He became involved in patriotic movements in Italy and subsequently in Greece, and the difficulties and frustrations of enacting political change are reflected in his letters, journals and poetry. Despite a growing pragmatism, however, he retained an optimism and passion for political causes right up to his death in Missolonghi in western Greece, whilst supporting the Greek struggle for independence.

Frontispiece by Robert Seymour to William Parry’s book *The Last Days of Lord Byron*. See item 49.



1

Manuscript of Byron's 'Detached Thoughts', number 84

NLS Ms.43352, ff.58v-59r

Byron's journal of 'Detached Thoughts' (1821-2) recorded his opinions on a wide range of subjects, including many political issues, such as slavery and the overthrow of tyranny.

But there is no freedom – even for Masters – in the midst of slaves. – – it makes my blood boil to see the thing. – I sometimes wish that I was the Owner of Africa – to do at once – what Wilberforce will do in time – viz – sweep Slavery from her desarts – and look on upon the first dance of their Freedom. – – – As to political slavery – so general – it is men's own fault – if they will be slaves, let them! – – Yet it is but "a word and a blow" – see how England ^{formerly} – France – Spain – Portugal – America – Switzerland – freed themselves! – – there is no one instance of a long contest, in which men did not triumph over Systems. – If Tyranny misses her first spring she is cowardly as the tiger, and retires to be hunted.

2

Manuscript copy of Byron's 'Detached Thoughts', annotated by Sir Walter Scott, 1825

NLS Ms.43358

Sir Walter Scott annotated a copy of Byron's 'Detached Thoughts', number 112, which reads: 'There is nothing left for Mankind but a Republic – and I think that there are hopes of Such – the two Americas (South and North) have it – Spain and Portugal approach it – all thirst for it – Oh Washington!'

Scott wrote:

How does this accord with the violent aspirations after a Republic? Scattered over this very book & all over all Lord B's later poems. I think I observed Lord Byrons feelings were strongly aristocratic He could talk of a republic as a general undefined theory but if you proposed to him that the people who passed under the window should share in the cares of government he repelled the idea with scorn.

3

Letter from Byron to John Cam Hobhouse, 27 February 1808

NLS Ms.43438, letter 3, page 3

Byron was devastated by a scathing review of his *Hours of Idleness* (1807) in the Whig-orientated *Edinburgh Review* in 1808. He discussed this, and his leaving the Cambridge Whig Club, with his friend and fellow undergraduate John Cam Hobhouse.

As an author, I am cut to atoms by the E- Review, it is just out, and has completely demolished my little fabric of fame, this is rather scurvy treatment from a Whig Review, but politics and poetry are different things, & I am no adept in either, I therefore submit in Silence. –

Thomas Medwin. *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron*. London: Henry Colburn, 1824, pages 352-3
NLS AB.2.87.8

Thomas Medwin published a popular but controversial account of his conversations with Byron during their time together in Italy. He recorded many of Byron's thoughts on politics, including his progress from parliamentary failure to an interest in international politics.

Below: A manuscript copy of Byron's 'Detached Thoughts' annotated by Walter Scott. See item 2.

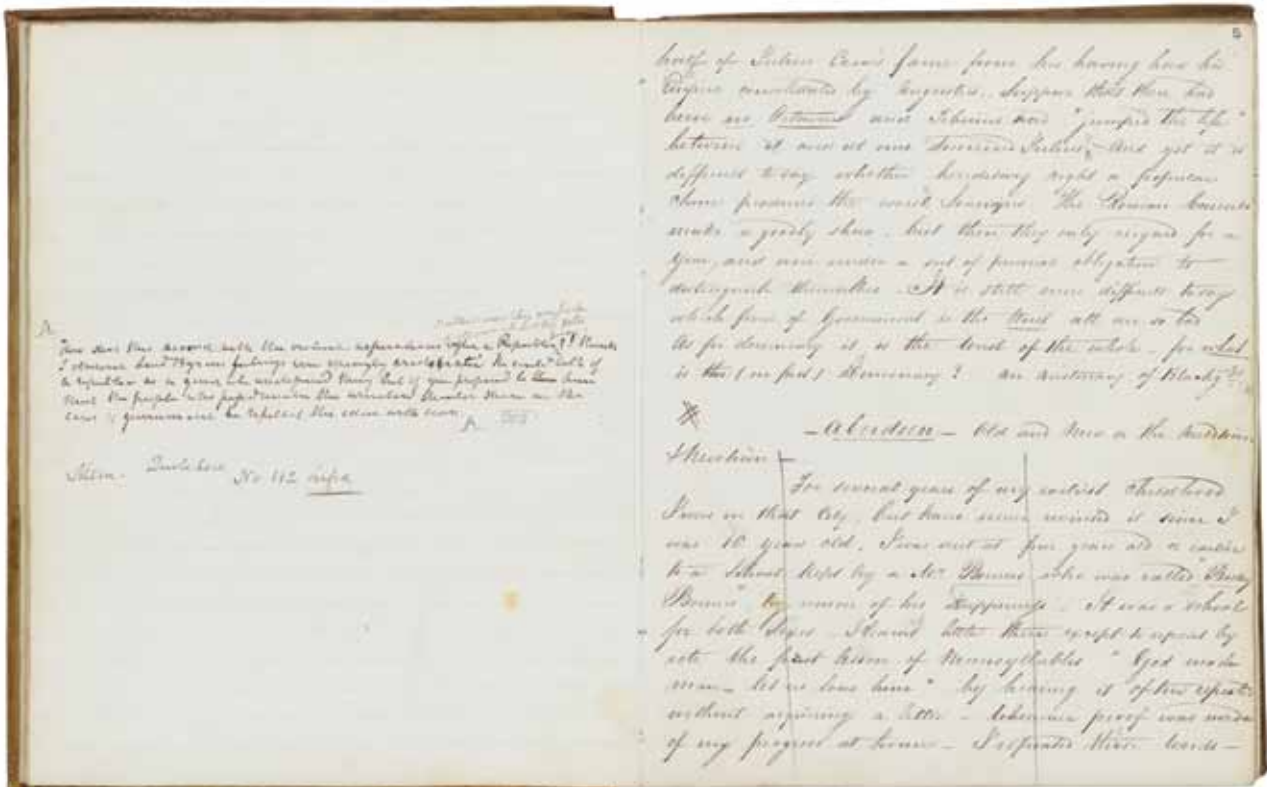
Next page: 'Ruins of Hadrian's Temple, with a view of the south-east angle of the Acropolis and Parthenon.' John Cam Hobhouse. *A Journey through Albania*, 1813. See item 5.

'Ruins of Hadrian's Temple, with a view of the south-east angle of the Acropolis and Parthenon.' In John Cam Hobhouse. *A Journey through Albania, and other provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, during the years 1809 and 1810*. London: James Cawthorn, 1813. Volume 1, plate facing page 322
KCL Rare Books Collection DR425 HOB

Byron and Hobhouse first visited this site (actually the Temple of Olympian Zeus, as they both knew) together on the afternoon of 28 December 1809. Byron had not yet visited the Acropolis itself when he wrote, in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* ii.10, on 3 January 1810:

Here let me sit upon this massy stone,
The marble column's yet unshaken base;
Here, son of Saturn! was thy fav'rite throne.

In the following stanza he launched into his famous tirade against 'of all the plunderers of yon fane / ... the last, the worst, dull spoiler' – referring to the removal of the sculptures from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin in 1801-2.







My Lords,

~~I shall say nothing on the question before
the house, I have to draw your attention not only to a change
to the opinion in general, but also to every individual of whom
I have heard. - You are connected with party, I am not
but the application of each of the house, we will not
be bound to say the bill I have to offer is without
offer to either, & the other object of my motion is a petition
leaving. - - My voice & my vote must be for the
Catholics. - The ^{Catholic} question itself has been so often, so fully
& ably discussed, that it would be difficult to urge a
new argument for or against ~~it~~. - But with such
succinct discussion a difficulty has been removed, objections
& have been canvassed & answered, & some of the warmest opposi-
- tions to their petitions have at length admitted the neces-
- sity of their ~~measures~~ ^{relief}. - - But granting that they ^{present}
another obstacle, perhaps of no very formidable nature, & which
whether so or not will one day prove or prove an ^{obstacle} ^{impediment} to
the Catholics, or it may now seem an argument against them,
I mean, my Lords - Time - it is not the time, say
they - it is an improper time, or there is time enough
yet. - - In this, I in some measure concur with the
temporizers, inasmuch, as it is not the time to ^{wait for} ^{wait for}
the accomplishment of Catholic emancipation, that time
is past my Lords, the Catholics should have been a~~

Britannia: Parliament, party & the Prince

‘I am a little apprehensive that your Lordship will think me too lenient towards these men, and half a frame-breaker myself.’
Letter from Byron to Lord Holland, 25 February 1812

A PARLIAMENTARY CAREER WAS A NATURAL ASPIRATION FOR AN EARLY 19th-century aristocrat, who as a member of the House of Lords was entitled to act as an hereditary legislator. Byron attended the House 48 times, speaking on three occasions. His maiden speech on 27 February 1812, on the Frame Work Bill, opposed the death penalty for industrial sabotage. The Luddite movement began in Byron’s home county of Nottinghamshire, and he was one of the Luddites’ few prominent defenders.

Byron’s second speech supported Roman Catholic emancipation, and his third defended Major Cartwright, who was being persecuted for agitating for parliamentary reform. These speeches failed, however, to establish him in a parliamentary career. Byron’s style of oratory was criticised, but it was principally his inability to conform to party politics that thwarted his parliamentary ambitions.

The Tories maintained control over Parliament throughout Byron’s lifetime, with the Whigs in opposition. Although at Cambridge University Byron was a member of the Whig Club, he was proud of his independence. His political opinions (which were too radical to be comfortable even in Whig circles) and his animosity towards prominent Whigs such as Henry Brougham, made a career within the Whig party impossible.

Despite his ideological opposition to Tory politics, Byron sustained a number of important literary friendships with Tory supporters, including Sir Walter Scott, his publisher John Murray II and the editor and critic William Gifford. In June 1812 he was flattered to meet the Prince Regent, the future George IV, and to discuss poetry and literature with him. However, the Prince’s abandonment of his Whig supporters in favour of the Tories had, earlier in 1812, led to Byron’s attack on him in ‘Lines to a Lady Weeping’.

Byron’s parliamentary disillusionment coincided with the beginning of the unprecedented publishing success of his poetry, starting with *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* Cantos I and II in 1812. However, some of his political poems of this period, including ‘An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill’ (1812), were published anonymously in newspapers and therefore had less impact than if they had been published with his other poetical works.

Whilst expressing his preference for a life of action over writing poetry, Byron actively pursued both, especially after 1816, when the scandals over his marital separation, his amorous affairs and his growing debts drove him into self-imposed exile on the Continent.

Byron’s draft parliamentary speech on Roman Catholic emancipation, 1812. See item 6.

Byron's draft parliamentary speech on Roman Catholic emancipation, 1812

NLS Ms.43354, f.7r

Byron was one of eight speakers in the House of Lords debate on the Earl of Donoughmore's *Motion for a Committee on the Roman Catholic Claims*, on 21 April 1812. Catholic emancipation was not in fact achieved until 1829 (see exhibit 15). This early manuscript draft of his speech has significant variations from the published account, including Byron's deleted opening remarks which were written when he thought that this (rather than the Frame Work Bill speech) would be his maiden speech.

My Lords,

~~In delivering my sentiments on the question before the house, I have to claim your indulgence not only as a stranger to this assembly in general, but almost to every individual of whose attention I solicit — Unconnected with party, I can neither claim the approbation of one part of the house, nor incur the animadversions of the other, I wish to say the little I have to offer without offence to either, & the sole object of my ambition is a patient hearing. — My voice & my vote must be for the Catholics. —~~

The Catholic question itself has been so often, so fully & ably discussed, that it would be difficult to urge a new argument for or against them^{it}. — But with each succeeding discussion a difficulty has been removed, objections & have been canvassed & conquered, & some of the warmest opponents to their petitioners have at length admitted the expediency of their [unclear] relief — — But granting this, they present ~~have~~ another obstacle, perhaps of no very formidable nature, & which whether so or not will one day prove as great an ~~friend~~ assistance to the Catholics, as it may now seem an argument against them, I mean, my Lords — Time — it is not the time, say they, — or it is an improper time, or there is time enough yet. — — In this, I in some measure concur with the temporizers, inasmuch, as it is not the time I ^{could have} wished for the ~~re~~ accomplishment of Catholic emancipation, that time is past my Lords, the Catholics should have been e=

Letter of Lord Sligo to Byron, 20 February 1812

NLS Ms.43408, f.32r-v

To avoid attending the House of Lords, Byron often paired off with Lord Sligo, a Cambridge contemporary whom he had met in Athens. As he explained in a letter of 1 February 1812 to Francis Hodgson, 'Lord Sligo and myself, being tired, paired off, being of opposite sides, so that nothing was gained or lost by our votes.' Despite Sligo's praise, Byron's speeches were not generally well received.

Albany Friday Fy 20th 1812

My Dear Byron

Give me leave to congratulate you on the safe delivery of your first political bantling which has set the whole town talking. I have just heard the highest Eulogium pronounced on it which I assure you gave me the greatest pleasure.

Do you go to the house to night or not? Are you inclined to pair off as usual: I have a most delightful toothache which makes me rather wish to stay at home.

Yours truly Sligo



8

The Parliamentary Speeches of Lord Byron. London: Rodwell and Martin, 1824, pages 4-5 NLS ABS.3.92.2

Despite the claim in the title that these speeches were ‘Printed from the copies prepared by his lordship for publication’, Byron never in fact intended them to be published. They were first recorded in *Cobbett’s Parliamentary Debates* (1812) and republished from that source after Byron’s death.

9

Byron’s manuscript of ‘Note to the annexed stanzas on Brougham’, 7 December 1818 NLS Ms.43354, f.24r

Although they were fellow Whigs, Byron despised and detested Henry Brougham (later first Baron Brougham and Vaux): both for the personal and legal advice Brougham gave to Lady Byron during the marital separation, and for the rumours and gossip spread by him during and after the separation. Byron was unaware that Brougham was also the author of the highly critical review of *Hours of Idleness* in the *Edinburgh Review*, which he wrongly believed was by Francis Jeffrey. Byron’s stanzas on Brougham were originally intended to be included in *Don Juan* Canto I, to follow stanza 189 and stand in place of Donna Julia’s letter. The ‘Note’ was suppressed, and remained unpublished until 1957.

~~Doubted~~ Distrusted by the democracy – disliked by the Whigs – and detested by the Tories – too much of a lawyer for the people – and too much of a demagogue for Parliament – a contestor of counties – and a Candidate for cities – the refuse of half the Electors of England – and ^{representative} at last upon sufferance of the proprietor of some rotten borough, which it would have been more independent to have purchased – a speaker upon all questions – and the outcast of all parties – his support has become alike formidable to all his enemies – (for he has no friends –) and his vote can be only valuable when accompanied by his silence. – A ^{disappointed} man with a bad temper – he is endowed with considerable but not first-rate abilities – and has blundered on through life – remarkable only for a fluency, in which he has many rivals at the bar and in the Senate and an eloquence in which he has several Superiors. – ‘Willing to wound and not afraid to strike’ – till he receives a blow in return – he has not yet betrayed any illegal ardour, or Irish alacrity, in accepting the [defiances?] and resenting the disgraceful terms – which his proneness to evil-speaking have brought upon him. – In the cases of [Mackinnon?] and Manners he sheltered himself behind those parliamentary privileges

which – Fox – Pitt – Castlereagh – Canning – Tierney – Adam – Shelburne – Grattan [Cary?] – Curran – and Clare – disdained to adopt as their buckler. — ^{In Italy after provoking Parliament} The House of Commons became the Asylum of his Slander – as the Churches of Rome were once the Sanctuary of Assassins.

The note ends with a thinly-veiled threat to take their dispute to a duel: ‘In the case the prose or verse of the above should be actionable, I put my name, that the man may rather proceed against me than the publisher – – not without some faint hope that the brand with which I blast him may induce him, however reluctantly, to a manlier revenge.’

10

Letter from Byron to Lady Melbourne, 21 September 1813 NLS Ms.43470, letter 77

Lady Melbourne (1751-1818) was a leading society figure whom Byron came to know through his affair with her daughter-in-law, Lady Caroline Lamb, and his marriage to her niece, Annabella Milbanke. He developed a close relationship with Lady Melbourne and they were frequent and intimate correspondents.

I passed through Hatfield the night of your ball – suppose we had jostled at a turnpike!! – At Bugden I blundered on a Bishop – the Bishop put me in mind of ye Government – the Government of the Governed – & the governed of their indifference towards their governors which you must have remarked as to all parties – these reflections expectorated as follows – you know I never send you my scribblings & when you read these you will wish I never may. –

Tis said – Indifference marks the present time
Then hear the reason – though ’tis told in rhyme –
A King who can’t – a Prince of Wales who don’t –
Patriots who shan’t – Ministers who won’t –
What matters who are in or out of place
The Mad – the Bad – the Useless – or the Base?

you may read the 2d. couplet so if you like –

A King who cannot – & a Prince who don’t –
Patriots who would not – ministers who won’t –

11

Byron's 'Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill,' 1812, *Morning Chronicle*, 2 March 1812. Transcript

Byron's 'Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill' was published anonymously in the *Morning Chronicle* four days after his speech on this topic in the House of Lords on 27 February 1812.

12

Manuscript of Byron's 'Lines to a Lady Weeping,' 1812 NLS Ms.43348, f.12v

'Lines to a Lady Weeping' was first published anonymously on 7 March 1812 in the *Morning Chronicle*. It attacked the Prince Regent for his abandonment of his Whig supporters in favour of the Tory party. The poem refers to an incident when Princess Charlotte, the Regent's young daughter and heir, wept when she heard her father openly abusing the Whigs.

Weep, Daughter of a royal line,
A Sire's disgrace, a realm's decay;
Ah happy, if each tear of thine
Could wash a father's fault away!

Weep – for thy tears are Virtue's tears
Auspicious to these suffering Isles;
And be each drop in future years
Repaid thee by thy People's Smiles! –

13

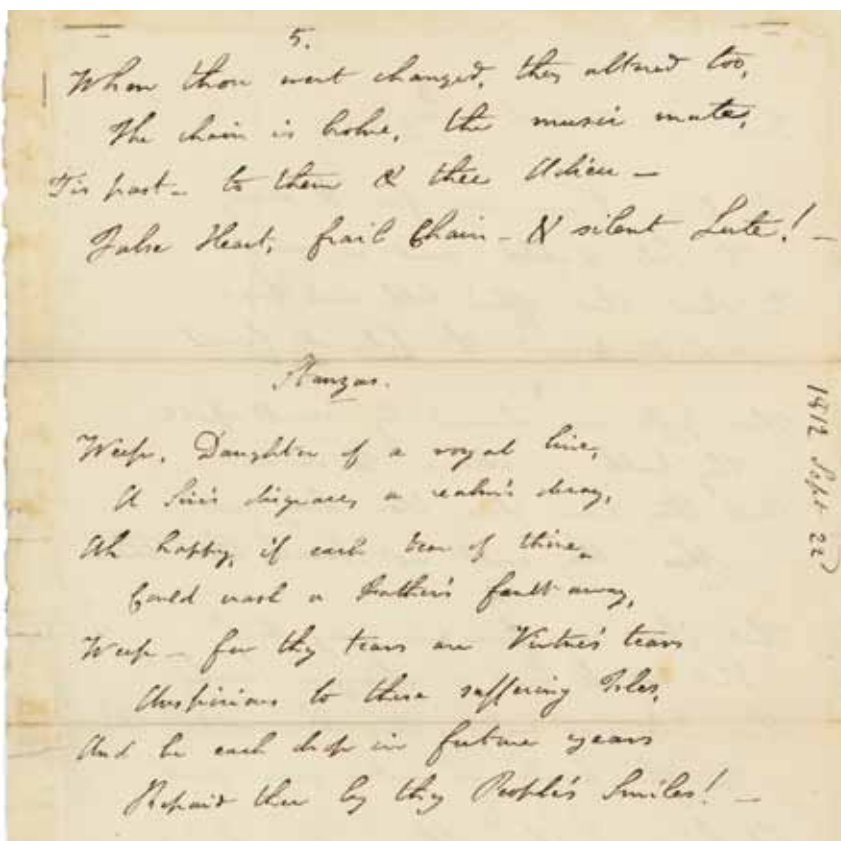
Letter from Byron to John Murray II, 22 January 1814 NLS Ms.43488

Following Byron's initial requests to his publisher to make public his authorship of 'Lines to a Lady Weeping' by publishing the verses with *The Corsair*, Murray cautioned on 20 January 1814 that 'as the present work is to be read by women & the lines would disturb the political feeling', they should instead be slipped quietly into a volume republishing *Childe Harold* Cantos I and II. Byron reacted, in this letter, by insisting that the verses be published with *The Corsair*. 'The lines "to a Lady weeping" must go with the Corsair – I care nothing for consequences on this point – my politics are to me like a young mistress to an old man the worse they grow the fonder I become of them'. When the authorship of 'Lines' became known, it provoked a vicious backlash against Byron in the Tory press.

14

'Song for the Luddites.' Thomas Moore. *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with notices of his life ... In two volumes*. London: John Murray, 1830. Volume 2, page 58 Private collection

'Song for the Luddites' was sent as part of a letter to Thomas Moore dated 24 December 1816, but not published until 1830 when Moore included it in the second volume of his biography of Byron.





15

Thomas Howell Jones. *King's Colledge [sic] to wit: a practical essay.* London: SW Fores, 1829. Facsimile KCL

On 21 March 1829 the Duke of Wellington confronted the Earl of Winchilsea in a duel in Battersea Fields. Earlier that year Wellington, as Prime Minister, had suddenly changed his long-standing opinion on the Catholic question and lent his support to the Roman Catholic Relief Act. His actions angered Tory Anglicans, including Winchilsea. At the same time, Wellington was closely involved in the founding of King's College London, conceived as a Church of England alternative to the largely secular 'London University' (later University College London). In a letter to the Duke which he also sent to be published in the *Standard*, Winchilsea furiously criticised Wellington's advocacy of Catholic emancipation and his simultaneous support of the establishment of an Anglican King's College, accusing him of using his King's College role as a cloak for his 'insidious designs for the infringement of our liberties and the introduction of popery into every department of state.' Following an angry exchange of correspondence, Wellington

demanded a duel. Pistol shots were fired, although it appears that both men aimed wide.

Byron intensely disliked Wellington and his Tory policies. It is therefore ironic that it should have been under the premiership of his arch enemy that two of Byron's political goals were achieved: first the Roman Catholic Relief Act, which was given royal assent on 13 April 1829, and then, on 3 February 1830, the signing of the Protocol of London by the foreign ministers of Great Britain, France and Russia, recognising the sovereign independence of Greece and finally setting the seal on Byron's dream of Greek freedom.

But the power would be a thing -
~~A~~ ~~Man~~ had near the people rest
 As if that foolish robe could ~~bring~~ ^{winning}
~~them~~ ^{them} ~~away~~ ^{from} the heart -
~~There~~ ^{There} ~~is~~ ^{is} that ~~fatal~~ ^{fatal} gambit - ~~where~~
 The geyans thou wilt find to wear
 The ~~same~~ ^{laurel} ~~commanding~~ ^{aided} crest!
~~What - all thy playthings torn away -~~
~~Thine~~ ~~spoils~~ ~~of~~ ~~empire~~
~~Thy~~ ~~spoils~~ ~~of~~ ~~empire~~ say
 The 'all thy playthings torn away! -

Napoleon: Emperor, expectation & exile

‘It is impossible not to be dazzled and overwhelmed by his character and career.’

Letter from Byron to Thomas Moore, 27 March 1815

NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE DOMINATED EUROPE AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH century. As a military, political and philosophical figure he was seen to embody the greatness of human potential, ambition and reform, and his remarkable successes and dramatic failures fascinated Byron throughout his life. The two men’s lives produced many parallels and coincidences, including a youthful rise to greatness, great fame and a subsequent ‘fall’ and exile. Byron’s early enthusiasm led him to defend his bust of Napoleon against his Harrow schoolmates, and in the House of Lords he voted against renewing war with the French.

Byron’s letters and journals reveal the anguish and exhilaration with which he followed Napoleon’s life, and this is particularly evident between 1814 and 1816: the period of Napoleon’s abdication, return, defeat at Waterloo and second exile. Byron was deeply shocked by Napoleon’s abdication, and railed against his fallen hero in a number of poems including ‘Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte’, ‘Napoleon’s Farewell (From the French)’, ‘On the Star of the “Legion of Honour”’, ‘Ode (From the French)’ and the Waterloo stanzas of Canto III of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. Byron was further devastated by the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo by the Allies under the Duke of Wellington, whom he described in *Don Juan* as a ‘cut-throat.’

Byron amassed many Napoleonic items. When leaving England in 1816 he commissioned an expensive (though unpaid-for) replica of Napoleon’s coach to travel in, and that summer he visited the field of Waterloo and collected relics of the battle, which were later given to John Murray. Murray in turn gave Byron an expensive Napoleonic snuff box featuring miniature portraits of the Emperor, his wife and son. In 1822 when Byron’s mother-in-law died and his terms of inheritance required him to adopt the surname Noel, he was delighted to sign himself NB in imitation of Napoleon.

Both Emperor and poet possessed extraordinary energy, egoism and the power to fascinate. Byron scoffed to Murray about the comparisons and associations being made between them, but with what one can perhaps detect as secret delight; and in stanza 55 of *Don Juan* Canto XI he described himself as ‘the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme’.

Napoleon’s defeat enabled Byron to travel across continental Europe in 1816, and it also precipitated nationalistic and patriotic uprisings throughout Europe, including in Italy and Greece, where Byron was to become politically involved.

Manuscript of Byron’s additional stanzas to ‘Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte,’ 1814. See item 18.



16 & 17

Byron's collection of Waterloo spoils (objects and livret)

Private collection and NLS Ms.43545, page 1

These spoils were collected by Byron from the field of Waterloo during his visit on 4 May 1816, and include a French soldier's shot and cap badge and the livret of Louis Marie Joseph Monsigny, 43 Regiment of Line. That day Byron composed 26 stanzas, including ones on Waterloo, for Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. He wrote to Murray on 15 February 1817: 'As the Waterloo spoils are arrived – I will make you a present of them – if you choose to accept them – pray do.'

18

Manuscript of Byron's additional stanzas to 'Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte,' 1814

NLS Ms.43348, f.30v

The first and perhaps finest of Byron's Napoleonic poems, the 'Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte', was begun the day after Byron received news of Napoleon's abdication. Byron was devastated by the Emperor's fall and his failure to fulfil his grand destiny, in politics and as a human being. Rather than eulogising Napoleon, Byron criticises him for accepting abdication rather than taking his own life.

The original poem was published anonymously on 16 April 1814. Three further stanzas were written at the encouragement of John Murray, but not, as some have suggested, for the avoidance of stamp duty. Byron added a stanza (5) to the third edition but suppressed three additional stanzas (17-19) which were not published

until after his death. 'I don't like the additional stanzas at all – and they had better be left out,' Byron wrote to Murray on 26 April 1814. Stanza 18 is quoted below. Byron had previously admired Napoleon's imperial regalia, writing in his journal on 27 February 1814 that the Emperor 'became his robes as if he had been hatched in them', and he had a framed engraving of Napoleon wearing them. Here however he mocks his 'foolish robe' and decorations.

But thou forsooth must be a King –
 A Man And wear the purple vest
 As if that foolish robe could bring ^{wring}
 One sorrow ^{Remembrance} from thy breast –
 Look on Where is that tattered faded garment – now where
 The gewgaws thou wert fond to wear
 The word commanding ^{laurel circled} crest?
 What – all thy playthings torn away –
 Vain Child of empire –
 Vain ^{froward} Child of Empire say
 Are all thy playthings torn away? –

19

Letter from Byron to John Murray II, 10 April 1814 NLS Ms.43488

Byron assures Murray that the 'Ode To Napoleon Buonaparte' is not pro-Bonaparte. Despite being offered the 'Ode' as a gift, Murray paid a remarkable 1,000 guineas for the copyright of this short work. It was first published on 22 April 1814 and sold for one shilling and sixpence a copy. Murray published it anonymously at first (only the 10th and later editions carried Byron's name). It ran through 10 editions in 1814, and 14 in all. Despite the large number of editions, the relatively modest print run of 9,500 copies meant that Murray made less than £200 sales profit: nowhere near enough to cover the copyright payment. The letter is dated 10 April but has a manuscript amendment of 11 April.

I have written an ode on the fall of Napn. which if you like I will copy out & make you a present of – Mr. Merivale has seen part of it & likes it – you may shew it to Mr. G[ifford]. & print it or not as you please – it is of no consequence. – It contains nothing in his favour – & no allusion whatever to our own Government or the Bourbons.

20

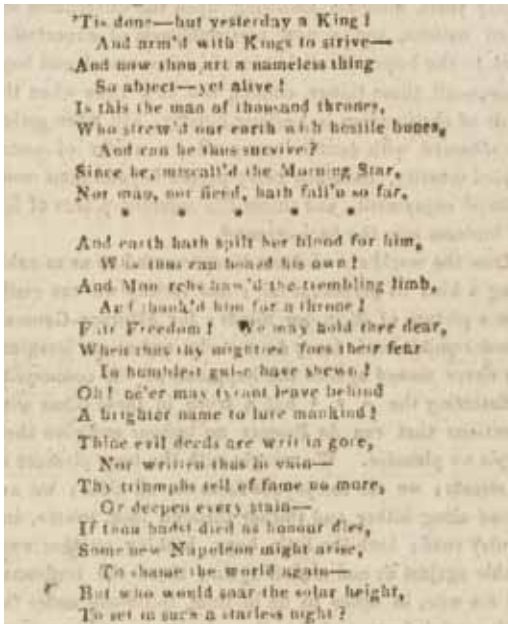
Don Juan, Canto IX, stanza 4. Don Juan in Sixteen Cantos by Lord Byron. Complete in One Volume. London: J Thompson, 1826, pages 256-7
NLS ABS.1.86.121

This stanza directly addresses the Duke of Wellington, then much celebrated in Britain as the victor over Napoleon, but whom Byron denigrated as a defender of the old monarchies.

You are 'the best of cut-throats:' do not start;
The phrase is Shakespeare's and not misapplied: –
War's a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art,
Unless her cause by Right be sanctified.
If you have acted *once* a generous part,
The World, not the World's masters, will decide,
And I shall be delighted to learn who,
Save you and yours, have gained by Waterloo?

21

Byron's 'Ode to Napoleon' in *The Examiner* number 330, page 258 (Sunday 24 April 1814)
NLS Ms.43562



Because Murray initially published the 'Ode to Napoleon' anonymously, it was easier for the press to republish it freely. Only two days after Murray's publication of the first edition it appeared in *The Examiner*, a radical weekly newspaper founded in 1808 by John and Leigh Hunt which supported

reforming politicians and causes, whilst regularly publishing poetry. In 1812 the Hunts were imprisoned for libel (in an article criticising the Prince Regent). Leigh Hunt continued to edit from his prison cell, where he was visited by Byron.

22

Bill for a Napoleonic snuff box, 7 November 1818
NLS Ms.43553

In 1818 John Murray purchased from the jeweller, Love, a Napoleonic snuff box featuring the Emperor, his wife and son, which he presented to Byron. It is described in the bill as 'A rich chased gold Snuff Box with fine Enamel paintings of Napoleon Maria Louisa & the King of Rome £105.' Unfortunately for Murray, Byron repeatedly forgot who had given him this expensive gift, and when he was raising funds to support his revolutionary efforts in Greece this and other snuff boxes were sold off.

23

Letter from Byron to John Murray II, 4 December 1821
NLS Ms.43492

Byron's letter to Murray reports on a newspaper's unflattering comparison of his and Napoleon's vanity.

By extracts in the English papers in your holy Ally – Galignani's messenger – I perceive that the "two greatest examples of human vanity – in the present age" – are firstly "the Ex=Emperor Napoleon" – and secondly – "his Lordship ^{the noble poet} &c." – meaning your humble Servant – "poor guiltless I" – – Poor Napoleon! – he little dreamed to what "vile comparisons" the turn of the Wheel would reduce him! – I cannot help thinking however that had our learned brother of the Newspaper Office – seen my very moderate answer to the very scurrile epistle of my radical patron John Hobhouse M.P. – he would have thought the thermometer of my "Vanity" reduced to a very decent temperature.

**Manuscript of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*,
Canto III, stanzas 19-21**
NLS Ms.43325, ff.9v-10r

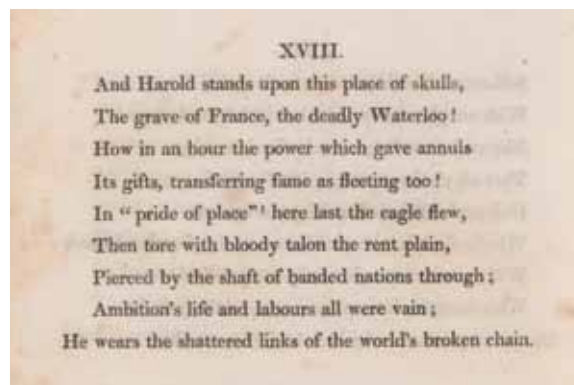
Following the success of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812, Byron followed up with the third and fourth cantos in 1816 and 1818. Canto III was the only part of the poem Byron did not correct in proof; and Murray, to Byron's annoyance, removed his political notes. The text of these stanzas in McGann's edition (based on multiple sources) reads as follows:

Fit retribution – Gaul may champ the bit
And foam in fetters – but is Earth more free?
Did nations combat to make *One* submit;
Or league to teach all kings true Sovereignty?
What! shall reviving Thralldom again be
The patched-up Idol of enlightened days?
Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
Pay the wolf homage? proffering lowly gaze
And servile knees to thrones? No; *prove* before ye praise!

If not, o'er one fallen despot boast no more!
In vain fair cheeks were furrowed with hot tears
For Europe's flowers long rooted up before
The trampler of her vineyards; in vain years
Of death – depopulation – bondage – fears,
Have all been borne, and broken by the accord
Of roused-up millions; all that most endears
Glory, is when the Myrtle wreathes a Sword
Such as Harmodius drew on Athens' tyrant Lord.

There was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gather'd then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage-bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

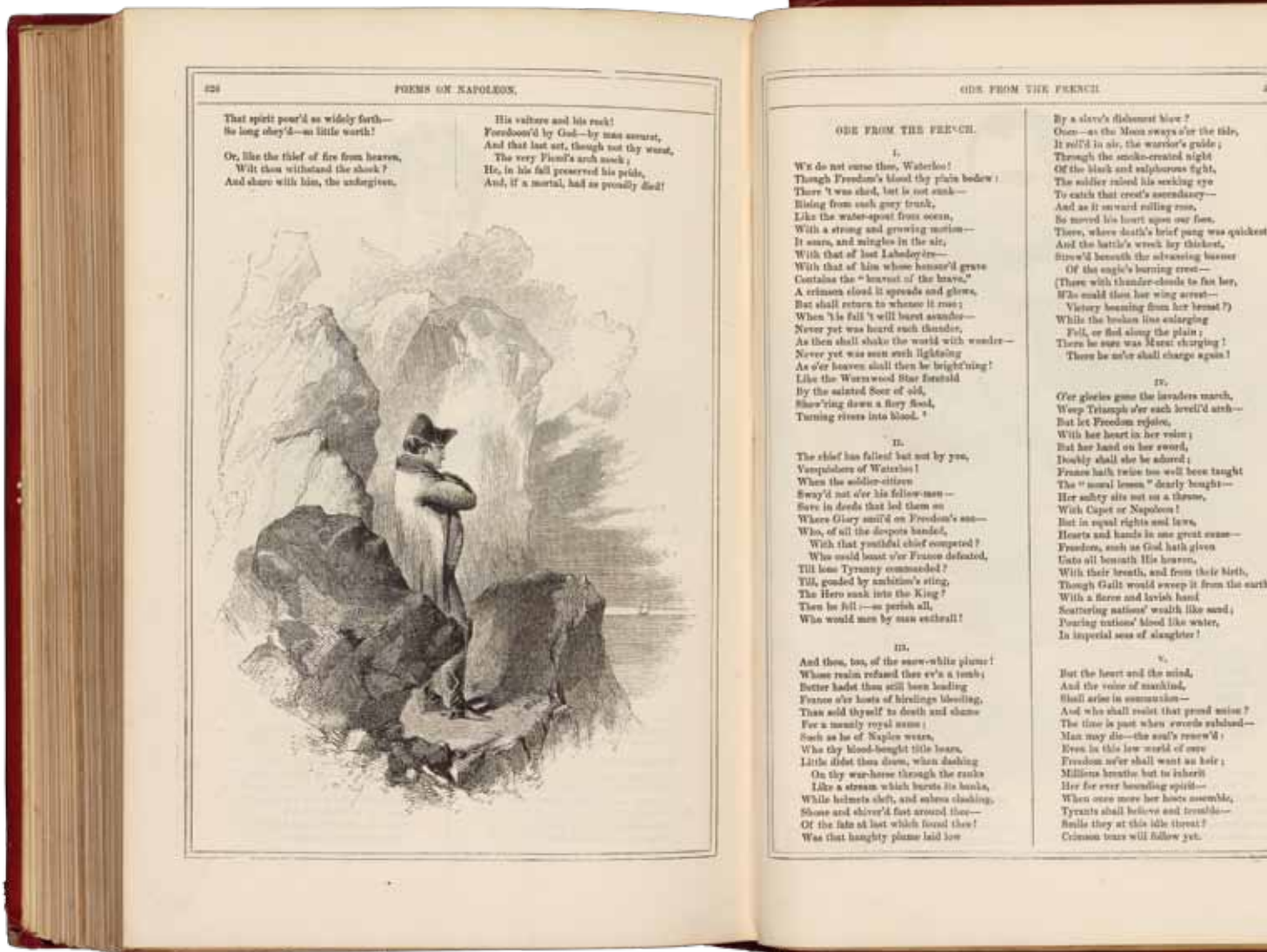
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Canto the third.
London: John Murray, 1816, pages 12-13
KCL Rare Books Collection PR 4372.F2



At the end of August 1816 the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley bade farewell to Byron at Geneva and transported a fair copy, written out by Claire Clairmont, of Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* back to England to John Murray. On 12 September Murray reported to Byron that William Gifford had praised it as 'the most splendid original & interesting ... the most finished' of his writings. The poem was published on 18 November 1816 and Byron received news of its publication in January 1817. In various letters, however, he expressed concerns about any editorial changes. For example on 13 January 1817 he wrote to Augusta Leigh: 'If Murray has mutilated the MS. with his *Toryism*, or his notions about *family* considerations I shall not pardon him & am sure to know it sooner or later & to let him know it also.'

Commenting on the Waterloo stanzas in the *Quarterly Review* 16, pages 191-4, Walter Scott lamented:

That Lord Byron's sentiments do not correspond with ours is obvious, and we are sorry for both our sakes ... we cannot trace in Lord Byron's writings any systematic attachment to a particular creed of politics, and he appears to us to seize the subjects of public interest upon the side in which they happen to present themselves for the moment, with this qualification, that he usually paints them on the shaded aspect, perhaps that their tints may harmonize with the sombre colours of his landscape.



26

'On the Star of "The Legion of Honour" (From the French)', 1815, in *Poems* [by Lord Byron]. London: John Murray, 1816, pages 34-5 NLS NG.1583.d.23

The inspiration for this poem may have been a cross of the Légion d'honneur sent to Byron from Paris by Lady Caroline Lamb in September 1815. Napoleon had instituted the order of the Légion d'honneur in 1802 as a decoration for exceptional civil or military conduct. The poem was published six months after it was written, first anonymously in *The Examiner* and then by Murray in Byron's *Poems* (1816). The publication of the poem on the eve of his self-imposed exile from Britain may be seen as a parting declaration of Byron's continuing obsession with Napoleon and his rejection of the ruling Tory party and the society he felt had rejected him.

27

Poems on Napoleon, in The Illustrated Byron: with upwards of two hundred engravings from original drawings by Kenny Meadows [and others]. London, Henry Vizetelly, 1854, pages 526-7 NLS AB.4.75.12

Byron's Napoleonic poems continued to appear in collected editions of his works including this lavishly illustrated edition of 1854. The pages displayed contain the end of 'Ode to Napoleon' and the beginning of 'Ode (From the French)', with one of the book's three illustrations of Napoleon.

**Letter from Byron to John Murray II,
22 January 1814**
NLS Ms.43488

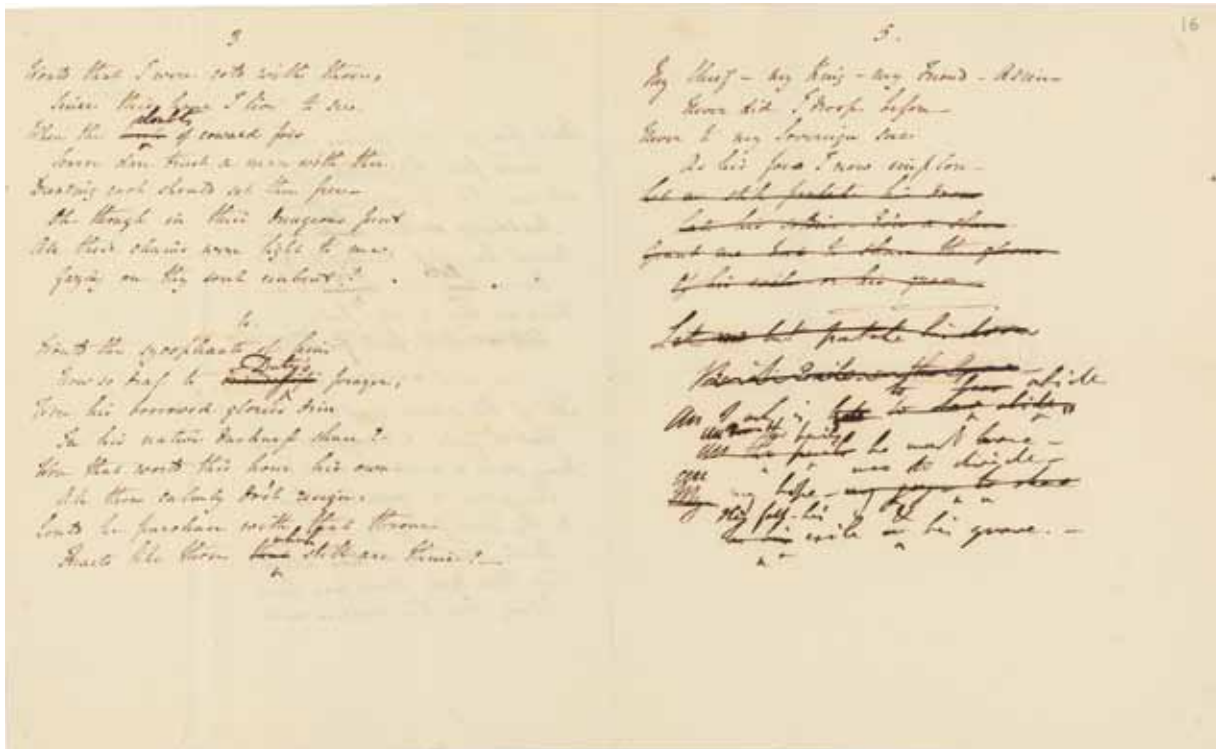
Byron wrote frequently to friends, including Murray, requesting political and military reports on Napoleon's successes or failures.

P.S. – If you hear any news of Battle or retreat on ye. part of the Allies (as they call them) pray send it – he has my best wishes to manure the fields of France with an invading army – I hate invaders of all countries – & have no patience with the cowardly cry of exultation over him at whose name you all turned whiter than the Snow to which (under Providence and that special favourite of Heaven Prince Regency) you are indebted for your triumphs. – – –

**Manuscript of Byron's 'From the French,'
stanzas 3-5, in the hand of Augusta Leigh with
annotations by Byron, 1815**
NLS Ms.43348, f.16r

Byron revised this manuscript copied by his half-sister Augusta Leigh. Like most of his Napoleonic poems it was titled or sub-titled 'From the French', a device to allow the poet to speak in a French character. In this poem one of Napoleon's loyal soldiers despairs at his commander's exile and laments that he is not to be one of the three officers to accompany him. Stanza 5 reads:

My Chief – my King – my Friend – Adieu.
Never did I droop before –
Never to my Sovereign sue,
As his foes I now implore –
All I ask is to abide
All the perils he must brave –
All my hope was to divide –
His fall – his exile & his grave.



Italy: politics, patriotism & plays

‘ ... supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed. It is a grand object – the very *poetry* of politics. Only think – a free Italy!!!’
Ravenna Journal, 18 February 1821

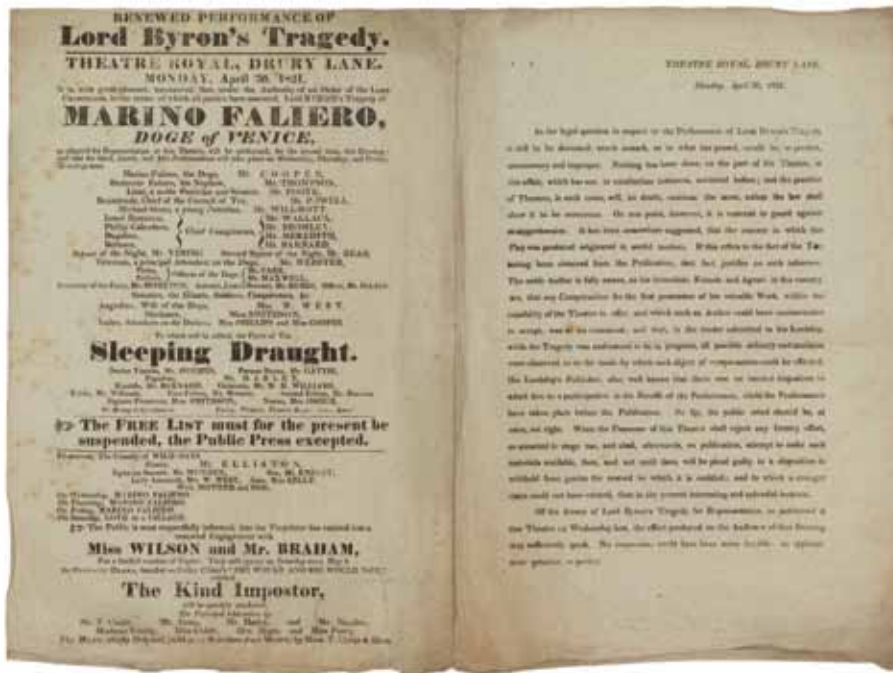
IN ITALY BYRON BECAME IMMERSSED IN LOVE AFFAIRS, POLITICS AND literature, and his time there was one of his most creatively productive. His literary output included eight dramatic poems, two of which were based on Renaissance Venetian politics: *Marino Faliero* (1820) and *The Two Foscari* (1821). Despite Byron’s assertion to Murray that these were not political plays, the works made obvious references to contemporary political issues both in Britain and Italy.

Marino Faliero was written between April and July 1820 while Byron was in Ravenna. However, he had been interested in the story of this fallen Doge since 1816, when he discovered Faliero’s obscured portrait on the wall of the Great Hall of the Doge’s Palace, painted over with a drawn curtain. By carefully adapting historical facts, Byron created a tragic hero in this Doge who was decapitated for conspiring with the people against the Venetian oligarchy. This was also a hero who fulfilled Byron’s political vision of a radical revolution combined with aristocratic leadership. *The Two Foscari* is another bleak vision of Venetian politics, with a Doge who sacrifices his family for the interests of the state and is rewarded by the state with demotion.

Byron strongly and frequently asserted that none of his plays was intended for the stage. In London he had been a member of the Management Committee of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and this experience left him disillusioned with the London stage and influenced him in developing a new style of poetic drama, following the ancient Greek model and its revival in Italy, rather than the Shakespearean free model which he professed to deplore. The only one of his plays to be performed during his lifetime was *Marino Faliero*, and Byron ordered Murray to get the production stopped. Despite injunctions from the Lord Chancellor, however, some performances at Drury Lane did go ahead, although to generally poor reviews.

Whilst in Italy Byron became increasingly involved in radical and revolutionary activities. These included his writings for the radical British periodical *The Liberal*, edited by Leigh Hunt, who joined Byron in Italy in 1822, and, in Ravenna, his joining the Carbonari, a secret society of Italian nationalists whose object was to create a united Italy, free from Austrian control (an aim that would not be achieved until the 1860s).

Despite being under suspicion from the authorities, Byron wrote frequently to Hobhouse and Murray about the political and military situation in Italy. His initial optimism soon turned to disillusionment and bitterness when the Italian uprising was easily crushed. The collapse of the Carbonari and of Italian nationalism, and the relative commercial and critical failure of his Italian plays, prompted him to develop a more pragmatic, although perhaps no less optimistic, approach to another political cause: the Greek struggle for national independence against the Ottoman Empire, to which he would next direct his energies and hopes.



Playbill for a performance of *Marino Faliero* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 1821, with accompanying letter defending the performance. See items 31 & 32.

30

Marino Faliero, fragmentary proof for the first edition, 1820, corrected by Byron
NLS Ms.43396

Marino Faliero deals with the history of this Doge who, in 1354, hatched a conspiracy in Venice and tried to seize power against the aristocratic oligarchy ruling the city. He was executed for his actions.

31 & 32

Playbill for a performance of *Marino Faliero* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 1821, with accompanying letter defending the performance
NLS Ms.43396

This playbill included a letter defending the performance against the objections of author and publisher. Against the charge that the work was unsuited to the stage it was claimed that 'the effect produced on the Audience ... may sufficiently speak. No impression could have been more forcible: no applause more genuine, or perfect.'

33

Public notice that a performance of Byron's *Doge of Venice* will go ahead in defiance of an injunction by the Lord Chancellor, 1821
NLS Ms.43396

Drury Lane Theatre April 1821
THE Public are respectfully informed that the representation of LORD BYRON'S TRAGEDY, THE DOGE OF VENICE, this Evening takes place in defiance of an Injunction of the Lord Chancellor, which was not applied for until remonstrance of the Publisher, at the earnest desire of the Noble Author, had failed in protecting this drama from its intrusion on the Stage, for which it was never intended.

34

Letter from Byron to John Murray II, 28-9 September 1820
NLS Ms.43490

Byron tried both to persuade Murray that *Marino Faliero* was not a political play, and also to warn him that he would not like the politics in it, attempting to argue (unconvincingly) that the poem dealt only with historical politics.

P.S. – Politics here still savage and uncertain – however we are all in “our bandaliers” to join the “Highlanders if they cross the Forth” i.e. to crush the Austrians if they pass the Po. – The rascals! – and that Dog Liverpool to say that their subjects were happy – what a liar! – if ever I come back I’ll work some of these [*tear*]

... I suspect that in Marino Faliero you and yours won’t like the politics which are perilous to you in these times – – but recollect that it is not a political play – & that I was obliged to put into the mouths of the Characters the sentiments upon which they acted. – I hate all things written like Pizarro to represent France England & so forth – all I have done is meant to be purely Venetian – even to the very prophecy of it’s present state.

35 & 36

Letters from Byron to John Cam Hobhouse, 26 April and 12 October 1821 NLS Ms.43440

Byron wrote frequent letters to Hobhouse about his political and military ambitions and failures in Italy. He was disgusted by the abject failure of the Italian patriots and, whilst venting his anger and disappointment at the situation, he expanded his commentary to encompass wider political ideas and ideals.

26 April 1821

You know by this time with all Europe – the precious treachery and desertion of the Neapolitans. I was taken in like many others by their demonstrations – & have probably been more ashamed of them than they are of themselves. – I can write nothing by the post – but if ever we meet I will tell you a thing or two – of no great importance – perhaps – but which will serve you to laugh at. – I can’t laugh yet – the thing is a little too serious; – if the Scoundrels had only compromised themselves – it would matter little – but they were busy every where – and all for this! The rest of the Italians execrate them as you will do, & all honest men of all nations. – – Poland and Ireland were Sparta and Spartacus compared to these villains. – But there is no room to be sufficiently bilious – nor bile enough to spit upon them – –

... Pray write when it suits you, I did not write because there was nothing to say – that could be said – without being pried into in this country of tyrants and Spies and foreign barbarians, let loose upon it again.

12 October 1821

I see nothing left for it – but a republic now – an opinion which I have held aloof as long as it would let me. – Come it must – they do not see this – – but all this driving will do it – it may not be in ten or twenty years but it is inevitable – and I am sorry for it. – When we read of the beginnings of revolutions in a few pages – it seems as if they had happened in five minutes – whereas years have always been and must be their prologues – – it took from eighty eight to ninety three – to decide the French one – and the English are a tardy people. – – I am so persuaded that all English one is inevitable – that I am moving Heaven and earth – – (that is to say Douglas Kinnaird – and Medea’s trustee) to get me out of the funds. – – I would give all I have to see the Country fairly free – but till I know that giving – or rather losing it – would free it – you will excuse my natural anxiety for my temporal affairs. – –

Still I can’t approve of the ways of the radicals – they seem such very low imitations of the Jacobins. – – I do not allude to you and Burdett – but to the Major and to Hunt of Bristol & little Waddington &c. &c. – If I came home (which I never shall) I should take a decided part in politics – with pen and person – & (if I could revive my English) in the house – but am not yet quite sure what part – except that it would not be in favour of these abominable tyrants. – – – I certainly lean towards a republic – all history – and experience is in it’s favour even the French – for though they butchered thousands of Citizens at first, yet more were killed in any one of the great battles than ever perished by a democratical proscription. – – – – America is a Model of force and freedom & moderation – with all the coarseness and rudeness of it’s people. – I have been thinking over what you say of Italian tragedy – but have been rather surprized to find that I know very little about it – and I have so little turn for that kind of disquisition that I should only spoil your sager lucubrations. – I believe I said as much in a former letter. – You will make a better thing of it without me.



37

The Two Foscari. An historical tragedy. Dicks' Standard Plays. London: J Dicks, 1877
NLS T.37.f.3

J Dicks published over 1,000 cheap editions of plays, each including a light cover and an illustration. These included Byron's *Cain*, *Manfred*, *Werner*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Deformed Transformed*, *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*, and also a *Don Juan*, described as 'a romantic drama, in three acts, founded on Lord Byron's celebrated poem.'

38

Notes in Italian, in an unknown hand, used by Byron for *Marino Faliero*
NLS Ms.43385

Although based on historical events and characters, Byron adapted the story of *Marino Faliero* to fit a dramatic story-line and to support his ambition of seeing popular political change brought about through aristocratic leadership.

39

'Foscari' by John Rogers Herbert in *Charles Heath's Illustrations to the works of Lord Byron*. London: A Fullarton & Co., 1846
NLS H.37.b.4

Herbert was one of the 19 leading artists who contributed illustrations to this collection of engravings of Byron's life and work. Early in his career Herbert specialised in Italian subjects and Romantic literature, so Byron's *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari* had obvious appeal to him. Herbert's painting depicts the scene where the elderly Doge has just witnessed the death of his son, whom he has been obliged by his sense of civic duty to condemn to exile, and grieves with his daughter-in-law.

40

Pencil and watercolour sketch of Byron at Genoa, attributed to Count Alfred D'Orsay, April or May 1823. Facsimile
Private collection



This drawing shows Byron wearing everyday dress and carrying a cane similar to the stick shown as exhibit 41. D'Orsay (an amateur artist and glamorous dandy, whom Byron described as 'un cupidon déchaîné,') was the



companion of the Earl and Countess of Blessington, who sought out Byron in Genoa, meeting him several times. Lady [Marguerite] Blessington subsequently serialised an account of her *Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron* in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1832. By the time this sketch was made, Byron was in the throes of making up his mind to go to Greece and take a role in the fight for Greek freedom.

41

Byron's swordstick Private collection

Although Byron was proficient in the use of pistols, his lameness and his need to defend himself in some potentially dangerous situations made a swordstick doubly useful to him. He received lessons in London from the fencing master Henry Angelo and owned a number of swordsticks, some of which were supplied by his boxing instructor 'Gentleman' John Jackson. The name NOEL BYRON on the ferrule of this one indicates that it was used after 1822, when Byron added the surname 'Noel' after the death of his mother-in-law.

There are several references to swordsticks in the correspondence of Byron and his circle. Byron wrote to Hobhouse from Switzerland on 23 June 1816 asking him to 'Bring with you also for me – some bottles of Calcined Magnesia – a new Sword cane – procured by Jackson – he alone knows the sort – (my last tumbled into this lake –) some of Waite's red tooth-powder – & tooth-brushes – a Taylor's Pawrsanias [Pausanias] – and – I forget the other things.' Hobhouse responded on 9 July: 'Your commissions shall be punctually fulfilled whether as to muniments for the mind or body – pistol brushes, cundums, potash Praftsanias [Pausanias] tooth powder and sword stick.'



In the entry for 22 September 1816 in Byron's 'Alpine Journal' he describes how, at the foot of the Jungfrau,

Storm came on – thunder – lightning – hail – all in perfection – and beautiful – I was on horseback – Guide wanted to carry my cane – I was going to give it him when I recollected it was a Swordstick and I thought that the lightning might be attracted towards him – kept it myself – a good deal encumbered with it & my cloak – as it was too heavy for a whip – and the horse was stupid – & stood still every other peal.

In a letter to Maria Gisborne of 6-10 April 1822, Mary Shelley described the 'Pisan affray' of 24 March, in which Sergeant-Major Masi was pitch-forked by one of Byron's servants. She recounted how Byron 'rode to his own house, [and] got a swordstick from one of his servants'.

London 8th March 1823.
Brown and Anchor Tavern, Strand

My Lord

I have the pleasure to inform you that several Friends of the Greeks have met together for the purpose of advancing by all the means in their power that most important Cause.

It is their primary wish to give action and effect to that sympathy which they have reason to believe is very widely diffused over the Country, and on this ground they venture to calculate on your co-operation, and to hope that you will allow your name to be added to the Committee, a List of whom accompanies this.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord, Your obed^t. humble Servant,

Wm Mitche
in the Chair

P.S. The Committee will be obliged
by an early answer addressed to
"The Chairman of the Greek Committee."
"at the Brown and Anchor, Strand"

At Home Lord Byron
Genoa Villa Saluzzi

Greece: Hellenism & heroism

REVOLUTION AGAINST OTTOMAN TURKISH RULE BROKE OUT IN GREECE IN March 1821. But it was only after the death of Percy Shelley in a boating accident in July 1822, that Byron began to take seriously an idea that had perhaps begun with Shelley – that he should himself take ‘some part’ in the struggle for Greek independence.

The catalyst was an approach, in the spring of 1823, from the newly-formed London Greek Committee. The Committee asked no more of Byron than to lend his name and give moral support to the cause. But when two emissaries from the Committee arrived in Genoa on 5 April 1823, they found Byron already declaring his intention to go to Greece and take an active role. On 16 July 1823, Byron and his entourage sailed from Genoa with letters of introduction addressed to prominent individuals and institutions in Greece from the spiritual leader of the Greeks in Italy, Bishop Ignatios.

After leaving Italy, Byron wrote almost no more poetry. The poem written at Missolonghi on his 36th birthday is the only one that he finished in Greece. In taking up the Greek cause, Byron transformed himself from a Romantic poet into a statesman and man of action. Once in Greece, as we know from the accounts of William Parry and Colonel Leicester Stanhope, he quickly mastered the complex political realities of the revolution and began to promote a coherent programme to create a new kind of political organisation in free Greece, that of the self-governing nation-state.

While he was getting to grips with the politics of Greece, Byron kept his distance from Greece itself. From August to December 1823 he made his headquarters on the island of Cephalonia, at that time part of the British protectorate of the Ionian Islands. It was not until the last days of December that he set off on the hazardous voyage to Missolonghi, the chief town on the north side of the Gulf of Patras. There he made common cause with the foremost of the ‘modernisers’ among the Greek leaders, Alexandros Mavrokordatos, who shared his vision of a future Greece governed by the rule of law.

Byron spent less than four months in Missolonghi. He gave large amounts of money to support the Greek fleet and a brigade of the picturesque Souliot warriors whom he had admired on his first visit to the country. In return, Mavrokordatos assigned the command of these troops to Byron. But soldiering at Missolonghi in winter-time was little more than a diversionary tactic. Byron and Mavrokordatos expected that they would soon move to the capital, at Nafplio in the Peloponnese, once the internal divisions among the Greeks were resolved by the arrival of a huge loan from London that Byron’s fame had helped to raise.

But before this could happen, Byron died of fever, in Missolonghi, on Monday 19 April. A eulogy was spoken over his body by the prominent citizen and future historian of the Revolution, Spiridion Tricoupis. His remains were then embalmed and transported to England for burial in the parish church of St Mary Magdalene in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire.

Letter to Byron from the
London Greek Committee,
8 March 1823. See item 43.

Two years later, Missolonghi was overwhelmed by the Turks after a year-long siege. Many of the inhabitants blew themselves up rather than surrender; others broke out of the besieged town in a doomed act of desperate defiance, known ever since in Greece as the 'Exodus' of Missolonghi. The fate of Missolonghi, and of Lord Byron who had made the town famous, reverberated around the world. It would prove a turning point in the Greek war of independence, and assure the success of the policy that Byron and Mavrokordatos had fought for: to make of Greece a modern European nation-state.

Letter of Metropolitan Ignatios to Mavrokordatos, in Greek, introducing Lord Byron, dated 21 June [ie 3 July] 1823. See item 44.



42

Sculpted portrait bust medallion of Byron in Albanian dress by Nikolaos Kotziamanis, 1992, after Thomas Phillips' portrait, 1813 Private collection

This medallion is modelled after Thomas Phillips' famous 'Portrait of a Nobleman in the dress of an Albanian.' The original oil painting was commissioned by Byron in 1813 and shows him in a costume he purchased in Albania in 1809. The portrait was exhibited, along with Phillips' other portrait of Byron in a dark cloak, in the Royal Academy summer exhibition in 1814 in Somerset House, next door to where King's College London's Strand Campus now stands. Phillips made further copies in 1835 and 1841, and the image was also reproduced in engravings. In 1992 Nikolaos Kotziamanis produced a limited edition of the medallion, inscribed 'Lord Byron, Philhellene,' before undertaking a full length statue of Byron which stands in Missolonghi outside Byron House, the home of the Missolonghi Byron Research Centre.

43

Letter to Byron from the London Greek Committee, 8 March 1823 NLS Ms.43530

The London Greek Committee met for the first time at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand (on the corner of Arundel Street, close to the site now occupied by King's College London's Strand Campus). One of its prominent members was Byron's old friend Hobhouse. At that meeting it was agreed that Byron should be asked to lend his 'kind and cordial support in this good cause' and allow his name to be added to the list of supporters. The letter shown is the earliest in date of several addressed by members of the Committee to Byron. Overleaf it lists the 25 members who had signed up by that date.

London 8th March 1823
Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand

My Lord
I have the pleasure to inform you that several Friends of the Greeks have met together for the purpose of advancing by all the means in their power that most important Cause.

It is their primary wish to give action and effect to that sympathy which they have reason to believe is very widely diffused over the Country, and on this ground they venture

to calculate on your cooperation, and to hope that you will allow your name to be added to the Committee, a List of whom accompanies this.

I have the honor to be My Lord,
Your obed^t humble Servant.

Wm Smith
In the Chair

P.S. The Committee will be obliged by an early answer addressed to To the Chairman of the Greek Committee "at the Crown and Anchor, Strand"

44

Letter of Metropolitan Ignatios to Mavrokordatos, in Greek, introducing Lord Byron, 21 June [ie 3 July] 1823 NLS Ms.43550, letter 14

This is one of a package of six letters of introduction for Byron addressed to prominent leaders in Greece, by Metropolitan [Bishop] Ignatios of Hungary and Wallachia, the spiritual leader of the Greek Orthodox exiles living in Italy. It is dated 21 June 1823 according to the 'Old Style' used in Greek documents at this time, which was 12 days earlier than dates in use in western Europe, and is therefore equivalent to 3 July. Byron received these letters in Genoa on 7 July. While his ship lay at anchor in the harbour of Livorno from 22 to 24 July, he declined a meeting with the Metropolitan but did receive his secretary, Dimitrios Mostras, aboard. A second copy of the letters may have been delivered then. Byron appears to have made no use of them. If he had, they would not have remained ever since with his own papers. The letter is addressed on the outside, below the seal, 'À Monsieur le Prince Alexandre Maurocordato etc. etc.'

Manuscript of 'On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year', in Byron's Cephalonia Journal, 1824
NLS Ms.43353, pages 20-21

Byron composed little poetry while in Greece, although his journal of that time contains his poignant reflection on his unrequited love for his 15-year-old pageboy Loukas Chalandritsanos.

January 22d. 1824

Messalonghi

On this day I complete my thirty-sixth year. –

'Tis Time this heart should be unmoved
Since others it hath ceased to move –
Yet, though I cannot be beloved
Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf
The flowers and fruits of love are gone –
The worm – the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some Volcanic Isle,
No torch is kindled at its blaze
A funeral pile!

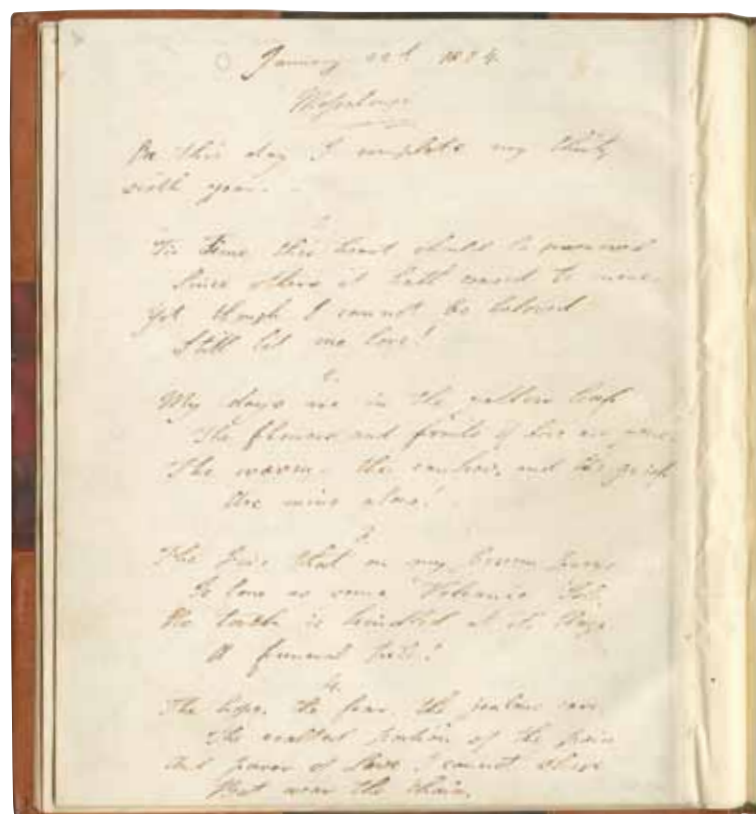
The hope, the fear, the jealous care
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of Love I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

But 'tis not thus – and 'tis not here
Such thoughts should shake my Soul, nor now
Where Glory decks the hero's bier
Or binds his Brow.

The Sword, the Banner – and the field —
Glory and Greece around me see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield
*Was not more free.

Awake! – (not Greece – She is awake! –)
Awake, my Spirit! Think through whom
Thy Life-blood tracks its' parent lake,
And then Strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down –
Unworthy Manhood!; unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.



If thou regret'st thy youth, why Live?
The Land of honourable Death
Is here; – Up to the Field! And Give
Away thy Breath.

Seek out – less often sought than found,
A Soldier's Grave – for thee the best,
Then Look around, and choose thy Ground,
And take thy Rest!

*The Slain were borne on their shields witness the Spartan
mother's speech to her son delivered with his buckler – "either
with this or on this."

Commission giving Lord Byron charge of a group of artillery signed by Alexandros Mavrokordatos
NLS Ms.43550, f.1r

This document is in a scribal hand and carries the stamp of the Provisional Government of Greece, showing Athena, the ancient goddess of wisdom, with helmet and spear and flanked by the traditional symbol of the olive branch. It carries the autograph signatures of Mavrokordatos (in roman script) and (in Greek) of his factotum at Missolonghi, Georgios Praidis. It uses the 'Old Style' Greek dating, and the 'New-Style' dates familiar to Byron and his entourage have therefore been added in square brackets in the transcription below.

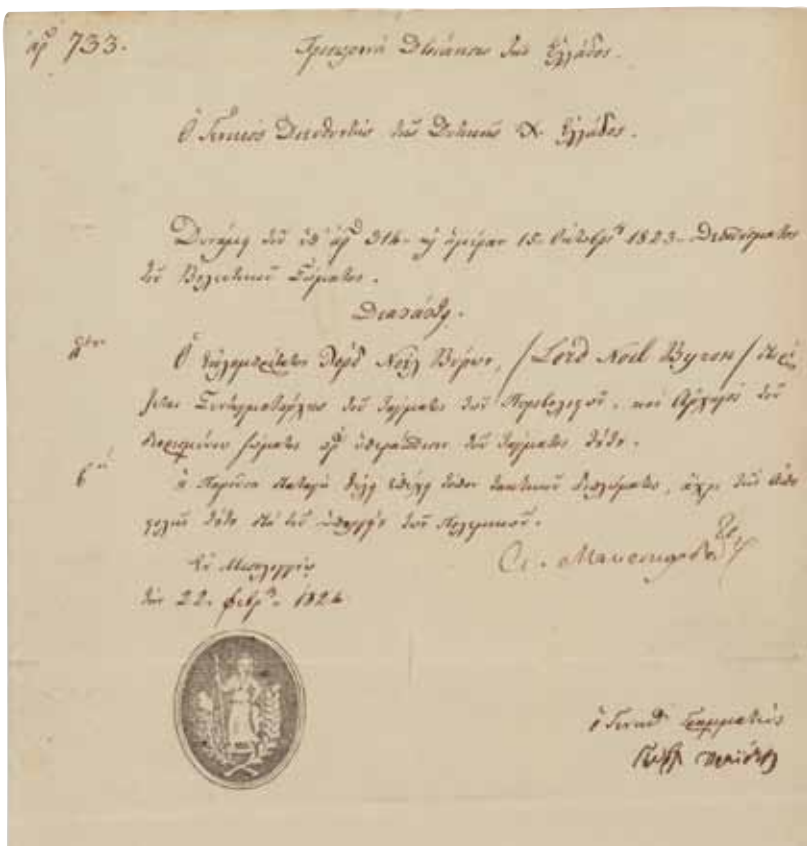
no. 733
Provisional Government of Greece
The Director General of Western Greece
By virtue of Resolution no. 314, dated 15 [ie 27] October 1823 of the Legislative Body It is Decreed that
1. His Excellency Lord Noel Byron, / Lord Noel Byron [in English] / is appointed Colonel of the Artillery brigade, and Commander of the said corps for the defence of this brigade.
2. The present order will take the place of a regular commission pending despatch of the same by the Ministry of War.
Missolonghi
A. Maurocordato
22 February [ie 5 March] 1824
Secretary General
Georgios Praidis

'View of Albanian palikars in pursuit of an enemy.' In Thomas Smart Hughes. *Travels in Sicily, Greece and Albania ... In two volumes.* London: J Mawman, 1820. Volume 2, plate facing page 99
KCL Rare Books Collection DF723 H89

Thomas Smart Hughes published this two-volume work in 1820, based on his travels to Sicily, Greece and Albania in 1813-4. The illustrations were drawn by the architect Charles Robert Cockerell, who moved in Byron's circle in Constantinople and Athens in 1810-11. Hughes describes a typical Albanian palikar, an armed follower of a military chief:

he carries a musket over his shoulder, a pistol and an ataghan in his belt, with a narrow crooked sabre slung at his side ... thus equipped and shorn after the fashion of the Abantes, with his little red skull-cap on his head, his fleecy capote thrown carelessly over his shoulder, his embroidered jacket, his white camise, or kilt, and his scarlet buskins embossed with silver, he calls himself a palikar, or warrior ... His school of war is one of unbridled licence more than of military discipline, of cunning more than magnanimity.

This was exactly the dress and armament of the Souliots, tough warriors from north-west Greece who had earned Byron's admiration when they rescued him and Hobhouse after their ship was wrecked in 1809. When Byron reached Missolonghi at the beginning of 1824, there were approximately 3,000 of these soldiers encamped in and around the town. He at once agreed to pay the wages of a corps that would soon become known as the 'Byron Brigade'.





48

Part of a letter or memorandum from Mavrokordatos to Byron, in French, 21 or 22 March 1824 NLS Ms.43530

On 22 March 1824 Byron wrote to his banker in Zante, Samuel Barff:

M[avrocordato] is almost recalled by the new Govt. to the Morea [Peloponnese] – (to take the lead I rather think) and they have written to propose to me to go either to the Morea with him – or to take the general direction of affairs in this quarter ... I am willing to serve them in any capacity they please – either commanding or commanded – it is much the same to me – as long as I can be of any presumed use to them.

The Greek government, temporarily housed in the small village of Kranidi in the north-eastern Peloponnese, was at this time taking the field against Greek rebels in the interior. Mavrokordatos and Byron seem to have preferred to keep their distance from the centre of power while these hostilities lasted, and to wait, instead, for the

arrival of the promised loan of £800,000 that had been raised in London, to resolve the internal dissensions of the Greeks by peaceful means.

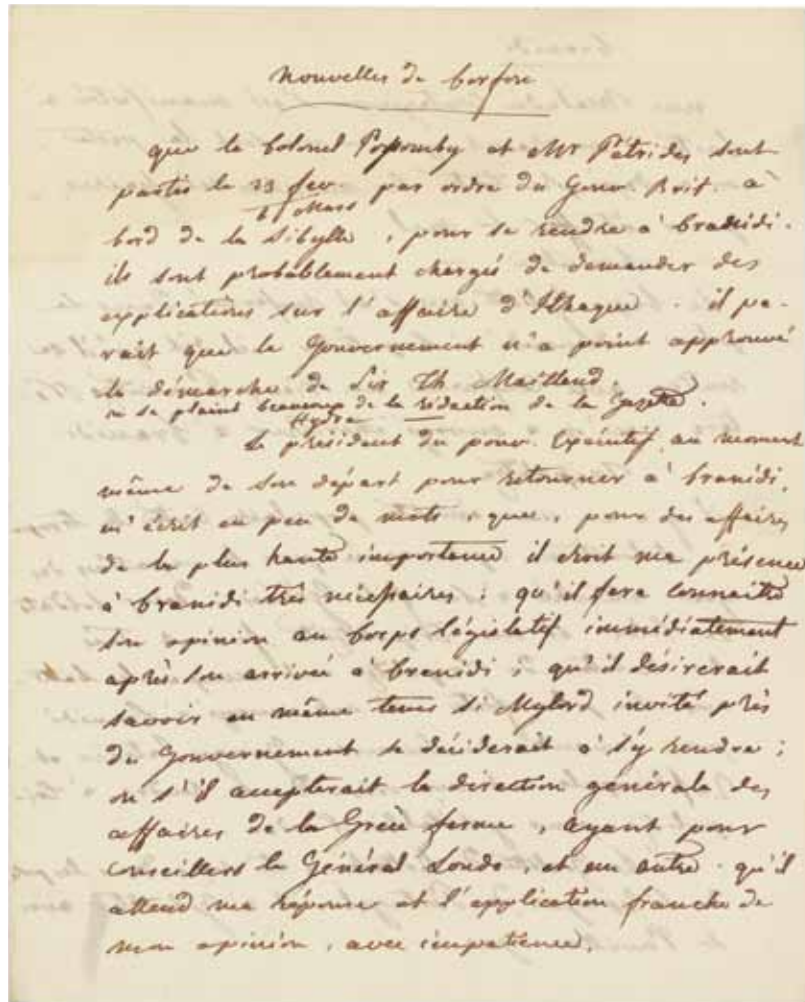
The letter or memorandum shown here is the only surviving document that testifies to this offer made by the Greek government to Byron. It also shows that the offer was not made directly, but only through Mavrokordatos. Other than honorary Greek citizenship (which he received on 5 April), no rank or position seems ever to have been conferred on Byron by the authority of the provisional government of Greece. All such documents as survive (see number 46 in this exhibition) are signed by or on behalf of Mavrokordatos at Missolonghi. The present document is unsigned and may not be complete. It is written in French, in Mavrokordatos' handwriting, and is evidently addressed to Byron. The second paragraph reads (in translation):

The president of the Executive power, on the point of returning to Kranidi himself, writes to me in short that, for affairs of the highest importance, he believes my presence at Kranidi very necessary; that he will make known his opinion to the Legislative Body immediately upon his arrival at Kranidi; that he would wish to know at the same time whether Mylord, were he to be invited to attend the

Left: 'View of Albanian palikars in pursuit of an enemy' by Charles Robert Cockerell. In Thomas Smart Hughes. *Travels in Sicily, Greece and Albania*, 1820. See item 47.

Right: Part of a letter or memorandum from Mavrokordatos to Byron, in French, 21 or 22 March 1824. See item 48.

Next page: 'Divers sièges de Missolonghi' by Panagiotis Zografos. In Ioannis Makrygiannis. *Histoire Picturale de la Guerre de l'Indépendance Hellénique*, 1926. See item 51.



Government, would decide to go there; or whether he would accept the general direction of the affairs of mainland Greece, with General Londos and one other to advise him; that he awaits my response and the frank exercise of my opinion, with impatience.

Had Byron and Mavrokordatos set out for the drier and healthier climate of the Peloponnese immediately, the story of Byron's life, and perhaps also of the Greek Revolution, might have been very different.

49

William Parry. *The Last Days of Lord Byron: with his Lordship's opinions on various subjects, particularly on the state and prospects of Greece*. London: Knight and Lacey, 1825
Private collection

Captain William Parry was the 'Fire-master' or engineer sent out by the London Greek Committee to organise Byron's artillery in Missolonghi, and he arrived there on 5 February 1824. Byron described him as 'a fine rough subject', and 'a sort of hardworking Hercules'.

Parry and Byron got drunk together frequently, and *The Last Days of Lord Byron* provides a convincing (though ghost-written) account of Parry's time in Missolonghi. The illustrations were drawn to Parry's descriptions by Robert Seymour, and the frontispiece shows Byron in Missolonghi with his second Newfoundland dog, Lyon. Parry (page 75) describes how 'With Lyon Byron was accustomed not only to associate, but to commune very much, and very often.'

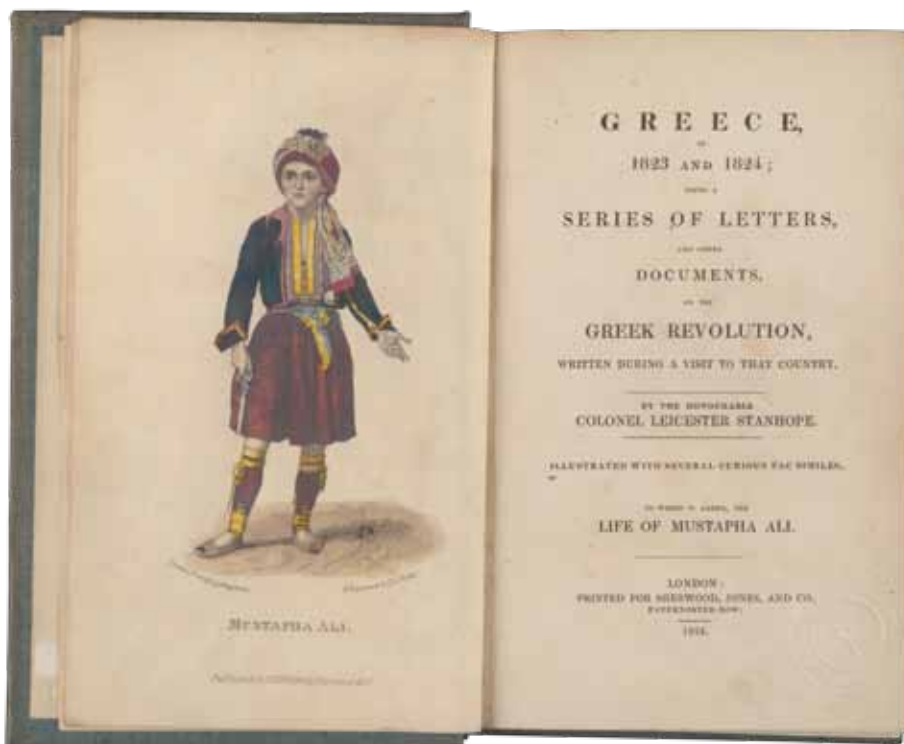
50

Leicester Stanhope. *Greece, in 1823 and 1824; being a series of letters, and other documents, on the Greek revolution, written during a visit to that country*. London: Sherwood, Jones, and Co, 1824
KCL Rare Books Collection DF806.H3

Leicester Stanhope, a lieutenant-colonel in the British Army, became the appointed agent of the London Greek Committee. A follower of the reformer Jeremy Bentham and an advocate of the liberty of the press, Stanhope was an energetic supporter of one of the first Greek newspapers, the *Greek Chronicle*, which he







Left: Leicester Stanhope. *Greece in 1823 and 1824*. See item 50.

helped to set up in January in 1824, in Missolonghi. At the end of that month he clashed with Byron and Mavrokordatos over what he saw as their interference with the newspaper. The following month he left for Athens, where he met, and was captivated by, the warlord of eastern Greece, Odysseus Andritzou (later known as Androutsos). In a letter to Byron of 6 March, Stanhope supported Odysseus' proposal to hold a congress of Greek leaders at Salona (modern Amfissa, near Delphi), 'to unite the interests of eastern and western Greece'. Byron and Mavrokordatos promised to attend, but torrential rain, infighting among the Greek factions, and, finally, Byron's death intervened to frustrate the initiative.

Byron and Stanhope were nominated by the London Greek Committee as commissioners to oversee the distribution of the large loan raised for the Greek government from private sources in England. Problems arose, however, when the gold sovereigns reached Zante in late April 1824; Byron had died on 19 April and Stanhope, as a serving army officer, was ordered home to England by the Foreign Secretary George Canning and travelled back on the *Florida* with Byron's body. The loan was eventually dispatched to the Greek government but spent without any intervention from the Committee.

Stanhope's letters to the Committee's secretary John Bowring were published in September 1824. The Turkish boy shown on the frontispiece, Mustapha Ali, lost his family during the war and Stanhope brought him back to a school in England.

51

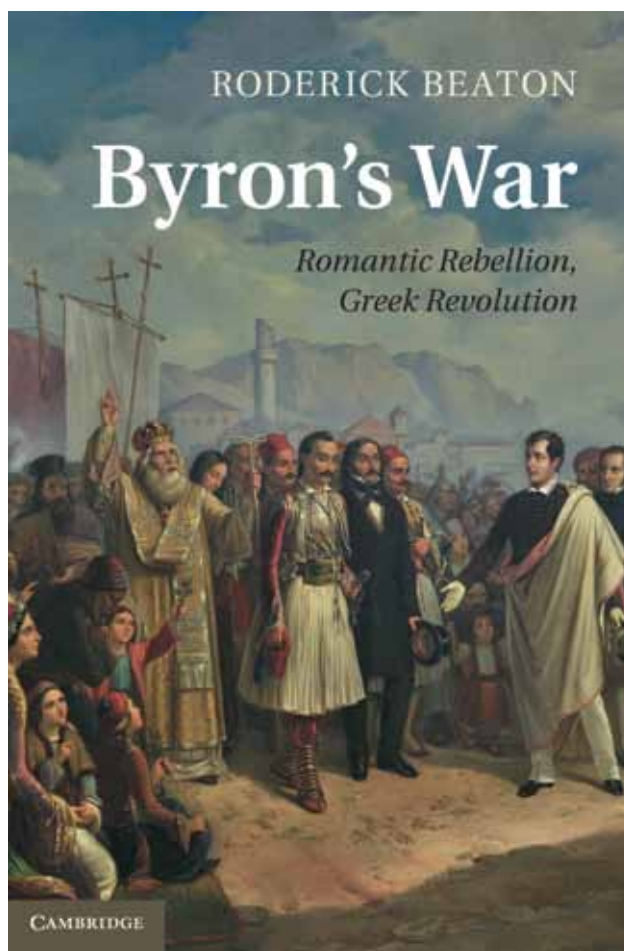
'Divers sièges de Missolonghi.' In Ioannis Makrygiannis. *Histoire Picturale de la Guerre de l'Indépendance Hellénique*. Geneva: Editions d'Art Boissonnas; Paris: Jean Budry & Cie, 1926, plate 15. Facsimile
KCL Rare Books Collection

During the Greek War of Independence General Ioannis Makrygiannis led the Greeks to victory in numerous battles against the Turks. In the late 1830s he commissioned a series of paintings from the Greek painter Panagiotis Zografos depicting episodes from the war. This facsimile is reproduced from a large published edition of the series and depicts the various sieges at the town of Missolonghi.

In the late autumn of 1822 the Turks reached Missolonghi. Mavrokordatos resisted their assaults during the first siege in winter, forcing them to retreat on Christmas Day. Later, in 1825, Ottoman forces again besieged the town and, in January 1826 Ibrahim, the son of the Egyptian viceroy, provided reinforcements on the Turkish side. The Greeks resisted until April, but, faced with starvation, they planned a mass exodus for the eve of Palm Sunday. As the inhabitants attempted their escape under the cover of darkness, the Turkish and Egyptian forces attacked. Only a minority managed to flee, while the remainder were captured or slaughtered in the town. A description for the plate lists the parties involved in the sieges, identifying the Turkish and

Roderick Beaton. *Byron's War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013

The cover of this new study reproduces the painting by Theodoros Vryzakis (1819-78), *The Reception of Lord Byron at Missolonghi* (oil on canvas, 155 x 213 cm, Athens: National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum, inv. 1298). Though painted long afterwards, in 1861, it faithfully reproduces portraits of many of those who were there, including Mavrokordatos (identifiable as the only one of the receiving party in European dress). The painter has chosen to present Byron as the poet of *Childe Harold*, in civilian clothes. In reality, he wore a scarlet military uniform that had been specially tailored for him before he left Genoa, to emphasise that it was as a man of action that he came to Greece.



Theodoros Vryzakis, *The Reception of Lord Byron at Missolonghi*. See item 53.

FUNERAL ORATION

*Delivered in Greek by M. SPYRIDION TRI-
COUPI,* at Missolonghi, on Thursday in
Easter Week, 1824, in honour
of the late LORD BYRON.*

UNLOOKED-FOR event! Deplorable misfor-
fortune! But a short time has elapsed
since the people of this deeply suffering
country, welcomed with unfeigned joy and
open arms this celebrated individual to
their bosoms: to-day, overwhelmed with
grief and despair, they mourn over his
funeral couch. On Easter Sunday, the
happy salutation of the day, "Christ is

* Now Minister of His Grecian Majesty to the Court
of St. James.

Egyptian forces (1) and the town and Greek camp (2). Lord Byron is listed among the brave philhellenes present during the first siege; the first siege took place, however, before the poet had landed on Greek soil.

'Translation of the funeral oration delivered in Greek by M Spiridon Tricoupi ... in honour of the late Lord Byron.' London: William Davy, 1836
NLS Ms.43551

Byron's death from fever, in Missolonghi, on 19 April 1824 caused an outpouring of grief. A eulogy was spoken over his body by the prominent citizen and future historian of the Revolution, Spyridon Trikoupis (Spiridon Tricoupis). His words of despair were echoed throughout Greece.

UNLOOKED-FOR event! Deplorable misfortune! But a short time has elapsed since the people of this deeply suffering country, welcomed with unfeigned joy and open arms this celebrated individual to their bosoms: to-day, overwhelmed with grief and despair they mourn over his funeral couch.

EDITIONS USED AS SOURCES FOR THIS CATALOGUE

Byron's Letters and Journals, ed Leslie A Marchand. 13 volumes. London: John Murray, 1973-94

Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works, ed Jerome McGann. 7 volumes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-93

Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose, ed Andrew Nicholson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991

Byron's Bulldog: The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron, ed Peter W Graham. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984

The Letters of John Murray to Lord Byron, ed Andrew Nicholson. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007

The Letters of Mary W Shelley, ed Frederick L Jones. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944.

Source available online:

Byron [poems and correspondence, edited with commentary], *Hobhouse's Diary* [edited with commentary], included on *Peter Cochran's Website*, <http://petercochran.wordpress.com>

~~of the~~ way
~~in a~~ sound

And Belgium's path

The Beauty of her P

Lamps, have on