Jane Stabler offers the first full-scale examination of Byron’s poetic form in relation to historical debates of his time. Responding to recent studies of publishing and audiences in the Romantic period, Stabler argues that Byron’s poetics developed in response to contemporary cultural history and his reception by the English reading public. Drawing on extensive new archive research into Byron’s correspondence and reading, Stabler traces the complexity of the intertextual dialogues that run through his work. For example, Stabler analyses Don Juan alongside Galignani’s Messenger – Byron’s principal source of news about British politics while in Italy – and refers to hitherto unpublished letters between Byron’s publishers and his friends revealing a powerful impulse among his contemporaries to direct his controversial poetic style to their own political ends. This fascinating study will be of interest to Byronists and, more broadly, to scholars of Romanticism in general.

Jane Stabler is Lecturer in English at the University of Dundee. She is the author of The Longman Critical Reader on Byron (1998) and Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie 1790–1830 (2001).
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BYRON, POETICS AND HISTORY

JANE STABLER
For NHR
and MGQR
all these things – like most things are a lottery – it may be as well at least to have the ticket drawn.

(βiv, x, pp. 92–3)
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**Introduction: Byron and the poetics of digression**

1. ‘Scorching and drenching’: discourses of digression among Byron’s readers

2. ‘Breaches in transition’: eighteenth-century digressions and Byron’s early verse

3. Erring with Pope: *Hints from Horace* and the trouble with decency

4. Uncertain blisses: *Don Juan*, digressive intertextuality and the risks of reception

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Acknowledgements

My work has involved many debts of gratitude and it is a pleasure to acknowledge them here. I am grateful to the staff of the following institutions: the Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire of Lille, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, the Brotherton Library, Dundee University Library, Edinburgh University Library, Glasgow University Library, the House of Lords Record Office, the National Library of Scotland, Stirling University Library, St Andrews University Library, the Special Collections Department, University of St Andrews. Like many other people who have worked on Byron, I am indebted to Virginia Murray for her kind help in locating manuscripts and I would like to thank JOHN MURRAY for permission to consult and quote from material in the John Murray Archive. I would also like to thank the Earl of Lytton for permission to consult and quote from the Lovelace Papers deposited in the Bodleian Library.


I have received kindly encouragement and advice from many friends and colleagues during the writing of this book. I would particularly like to thank Alex Alec-Smith, Michael Alexander, Bernard Beatty, Alison Chapman, Peter Cochran, Robert Crawford, Richard Cronin, Jonathan Cutmore, Tom Duncan, Peter Easingwood, Fiona Gaman, Marilyn Gaull, Jo-Anne George, Jill Heydt-Stevenson, Abi Holt, Gwen Hunter, Peter Isaac, Molly Lefebure, Ralph Lloyd Jones, Malcolm Kelsall, Sally Kilmister, Peter Kitson, Gregory P. Kucich, Michael O’Neill, Sarah Poynting, David Robb, Andrew Roberts, Bill Ruddick, Victor
Acknowledgements

Skretkowicz, Jean Spence, Jim Stewart, Peter Vassallo, Stephen Wall, Rob Watt, Tim Webb, Mary Wedd, Jonathan Wordsworth, Keith Williams and Duncan Wu. My family, my husband’s family, Drummond and Vivian Bone, David Fairer, Lawrence and Mary James, Seamus Perry and Nicola Trott have offered generous hospitality, vigorous conversation and good cheer over many years and they have seen my work on Byron through all its digressions.

I am deeply indebted to Drummond Bone, Richard Cronin, David Fairer, Andrew Nicholson, Nicholas Roe and Susan Wolfson for reading and commenting on different chapters at various stages. Their scholarly expertise, generously shared knowledge and shrewd criticism have greatly improved the book; any clumsiness or errors which remain are my responsibility. I benefited from the work of two anonymous Cambridge University Press readers and owe the first one in particular a great deal for his or her detailed editorial observations and suggestions. I am most grateful to Rose Bell and Rachel De Wachter for seeing the book through the press. Finally I would like to thank Josie Dixon, former commissioning editor of Cambridge University Press, for her initial interest in the book and her successor, Linda Bree, and the Cambridge Studies in Romanticism Series Editors for carrying the book forward with continued enthusiasm.
Note on texts

All quotations from Byron’s poetry unless otherwise stated are taken from CPW. *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan* are referred to by canto and stanza numbers; all other poems are referred to by line reference or stanza and line reference.


All quotations from the Bible are from the Authorised Version.
Abbreviations


ELH English Literary History

GM Galignani's Messenger

GLG Galignani's Literary Gazette

HLRO House of Lords Record Office

OED Oxford English Dictionary

PMLA Publication of the Modern Language Association of America


SEL Studies in English Literature

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