

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO BYRON

Second Edition

Deeply informed and appealingly written, this revised and updated second edition gives fresh life to the enthralling sexual, poetic, and political contradictions that make Byron the first literary celebrity. Encompassing his entire oeuvre, the volume provides an authoritative guide for students and points to emerging new areas of research, highlighting Byron's ongoing relevance in an increasingly complex world, both within academia and beyond. Published to coincide with the 200th anniversary of his death, new chapters cover investigations of Byron's manuscripts, his relationships with companion animals, his levity and addiction, and his dramas and their reception.

DRUMMOND BONE is Chair of the National Library of Scotland, and Chair of the Wordsworth Trust. For many years the editor of *The Byron Journal*, he became co-founding editor of the journal *Romanticism*. He is the author of *Byron* (2000) for the 'Writers and Their Work' series and currently serves as Vice-President of the Byron Society and formerly Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO BYRON

Second Edition

EDITED BY

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Balliol College, Oxford



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Preface

19 April 2024 marks the 200th Anniversary of Byron's death in Missolonghi, and this new edition of the *Cambridge Companion* celebrates the occasion with new essays on his work, his life, and his afterlife in the culture of our times. If the reputation of Byron's work has ebbed and flowed over the last two centuries, his life has been more constantly the subject of attention. But just as poetic taste has changed even when his work has been most popular – from *Childe Harold*, the Turkish Tales, and the lyrics in the nineteenth century to the ottava rima poems in the twenty-first – so the centre of attention on his life has changed. Interest has swung from speculation on his possible incestuous relationship with his half-sister to his politics (radical or Burkean, freedom-fighter or proto nation-state nationalist), to his bisexuality both as scandal and as icon, to eating disorders and sexual addiction.

The *Companion* endeavours to cover both these types of shift in fashion: on the one hand essays on his life and those who have tried to give an account of it – for example on his politics, his involvement in the East Mediterranean, more than one on his sexuality from different perspectives, his love of animals; on the other hand, essays covering the major works and developing attitudes to these both through time and critical fashion. These two hands belong to the same body, so to speak, so evidence from the life is used in discussion of the works, and evidence from the works reinforces different interpretations of the life. But the two tracks can be followed.

Limitations of space have led to one obvious element missing which I should at least signal to the reader: a consideration of Byron's prose, and in particular his letters. 'Prose' as a term to describe them has the wrong connotations of flatness. They are dashing, and a forerunner of his mature ottava rima style in *Don Juan*, *Beppo*, and *The Vision of Judgment*.

For the reader newer to Byron, it might make some sense to introduce themselves to the works by coming first to Chapters 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 14 – but the *Companion* is laid out to develop that sense of richness,

complexity, and downright contradictoriness and changeability (*mobilité*, in his own adoption of the French term) which mark Byronic phenomena from his own first marks on a page (and for the importance of the Byron manuscript, see Chapter 2). If one can talk of a message from this Companion, it is – to adapt another Byron phrase – that to be truthful one has to accept contradictions.

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Chronology

Byron's Life		Historical Context
John Byron elopes with Amelia D'Arcy, Marchioness Carmarthen.	1778	William Hazlitt b.; Voltaire d.; Rousseau d.
John Byron marries Marchioness Carmarthen.	1779	Thomas Moore b.; John Galt b.; David Garrick d.
	1780	Gordon Riots.
	1781	British surrender at Yorktown; Schiller's <i>Die Räuber</i> ; Kant's <i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i> (<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>).
	1782	Laclos, <i>Liaisons Dangereuses</i> ; James Watt patents his double-acting steam engine.
Birth of Augusta Byron, daughter of John Byron and Amelia D'Arcy.	1783	Peace of Versailles; The Paris Peace Treaty; Britain recognises United States of America; Stendhal b.; Crabbe's <i>The Village</i> ; Montgolfier brothers' hot-air balloon flights in Paris.
Lady Carmarthen dies.	1784	Leigh Hunt b.; Samuel Johnson d.; Diderot d.; Wesley establishes Methodism.
John Byron marries Catherine Gordon (13 May).	1785	Thomas de Quincey b.; Thomas Love Peacock b.; Lady Caroline Lamb b.
	1786	John Cam Hobhouse b.; Robert Burns, <i>Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect</i> ; Mozart's <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> .
	1787	Signing of the American Constitution; Schiller's <i>Don Carlos</i> ; Mozart's <i>Don Giovanni</i> .
George Gordon Byron, son of John Byron and Catherine Gordon, born on 22 January at 16 Holles Street, Cavendish Square, London. Christened 29 February in Marylebone Parish Church.	1788	Kant's <i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</i> (<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>); <i>The Times</i> first published.

(cont.)

Byron's Life		Historical Context
	1789	First colony established in Australia; Fall of the Bastille, 14 July; the beginning of the French Revolution; George Washington becomes first president of United States; Edmund Kean b.; Jeremy Bentham's <i>Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> .
	1790	Edmund Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> ; Adam Smith, author of <i>Wealth of Nations</i> (1776), d.
Death of Byron's father, John Byron.	1791	Mozart d.
	1792	Percy Shelley b.; Samuel Rogers' <i>Pleasures of Memory, with Other Poems</i> ; Wollstonecraft's <i>Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> ; Tom Paine escapes to France whilst British government prepares for his treason trial.
	1793	Louis XVI executed; John Clare b.; Blake's <i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i> .
Death of William Byron makes George Gordon heir to title and estates. Enters Aberdeen Grammar School.	1794	Edward Gibbon d.; Gifford's <i>Baviad</i> ; Godwin's <i>Caleb Williams</i> ; Southey's <i>Fall of Robespierre</i> ; Radcliffe's <i>Mysteries of Udolpho</i> .
	1795	John Keats b.; Thomas Carlyle b.; James Boswell d.; William Blake's <i>Book of Los</i> ; <i>Book of Ahania</i> and <i>Song of Los</i> ; Southey's <i>Joan of Arc</i> ; John Murray, Byron's future publisher, succeeds to his father's business.
	1796	Robert Burns d.; Coleridge's <i>Poems on Various Subjects</i> .
	1797	Franz Schubert b.; Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (Shelley) b.; Mary Wollstonecraft d.; Horace Walpole d.
Inherits title Lord Byron of Newstead and Rochdale and moves to Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire.	1798	<i>Lyrical Ballads</i> published anonymously; Malthus's <i>Essay on the Principle of Population</i> ; the Irish rebellion.
Byron travels to London. His club foot is examined by Dr Baillie and Dr Laurie. Byron enters Dr Glennie's school in Dulwich.	1799	Thomas Jefferson becomes second president of the United States; coup d'état in France sees Napoleon seize power.

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(cont.)

Byron's Life		Historical Context
	1800	Second edition of <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> published with Wordsworth's preface; Haydn's <i>The Seasons</i> ; Alessandro Volta describes the voltaic 'pile' to Sir Joseph Banks, president of the Royal Society.
Byron enters Harrow.	1801	Peace of Amiens; William Pitt resigns as Prime Minister; the Act of Union with Ireland receives royal assent; invention of the steam-powered locomotive.
	1802	War between Britain and France ends.
Byron's mother moves into Burgage Manor, Southwell. In October, Byron begins his unrequited idealised love for his cousin, Mary Chaworth.	1803	After Napoleon breaks peace treaty, Britain declares war on France; United States pays \$15 million to France for the Louisiana Territory.
In Southwell, meets Elizabeth Pigot; returns to Harrow and takes part in Speech Day.	1804	Sir Walter Scott, <i>Lay of the Last Minstrel</i> ; Schiller's <i>Wilhelm Tell</i> .
In Harrow cricket team for their match in London, 2 August. Byron arrives at Trinity College, Cambridge.	1805	Napoleon proclaimed king of Italy. Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson dies at Trafalgar; Beethoven's <i>Eroica</i> symphony first performed; Joseph Turner's <i>The Shipwreck</i> .
<i>Fugitive Pieces</i> published.	1806	John Stuart Mill b.; publication of Bowles's edition of Pope.
<i>Poems on Various Occasions</i> published, January. Keeps tame bear at Cambridge; joins Cambridge Whig club; returns to London, July; Byron's review of Wordsworth's <i>Poems in Monthly Literary Recreations</i> ; <i>Hours of Idleness</i> published.	1807	William Pitt d.; The Abolition Bill is passed, outlawing the slave trade; Crabb's <i>The Parish Register</i> ; Thomas Moore's <i>Irish Melodies</i> ; Mme De Staël's <i>Corinne</i> ; first gaslights in streets of London.
Received his MA from Cambridge; receives scathing criticism from the <i>Edinburgh Review</i> .	1808	Start of the Peninsular War; the United States bans the import of slaves; Convention of Cintra signed; Leigh Hunt founds <i>The Examiner</i> ; Goethe's <i>Faust</i> (Pt. 1); Goya's <i>Execution of the Citizens of Madrid</i> .
Takes seat in House of Lords; anonymous publication of <i>English Bards and Scotch Reviewers</i> ; Byron leaves	1809	Charles Darwin b.; Alfred Tennyson b.; Thomas Paine d.

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(cont.)		
Byron's Life		Historical Context
Falmouth on the <i>Princess Elizabeth</i> to begin his first tour of Portugal, Spain, Malta, Albania, and Greece. Reception by Ali Pasha. Byron finishes the first Canto of <i>Childe Harold</i>		
Completes <i>Childe Harold</i> Canto 11. On 16 April, Byron attempts to swim across the Hellespont but fails because of cold weather and strong currents. Successfully swims the Hellespont, 3 May.	1810	Baillie's <i>Family Legend</i> ; Hogg's <i>Forest Minstrel</i> , Goethe's <i>Pandora</i> ; H. von Kleist's <i>Käthchen von Heilbronn</i> .
Moved by hearing of the death of John Edleston, Byron writes poems addressed to 'Thyzra'. Hears Coleridge lecture. Death, on 1 August, of Byron's mother, Catherine Gordon. He writes 'Hints from Horace' and <i>The Curse of Minerva</i> .	1811	Shelley expelled from Oxford, marries Harriet Westbrook; the Prince of Wales becomes Regent; Austen's <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> ; Luddite riots.
Maiden speech in the House of Lords. <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage</i> , Cantos 1 and 11 published. In March, he meets Lady Caroline Lamb, with whom he begins a three-month affair. On 12 March, writes letter to Walter Scott apologising for <i>English Bards</i> . Writes <i>The Waltz</i> . 'Parenthetical Address, by Dr. Plagiary' printed in the <i>Morning Chronicle</i> .	1812	Robert Browning b.; Charles Dickens b.; Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons. United States declares war on Great Britain; Beethoven meets Goethe; Napoleon invades Russia.
Lionised by London society; politically active in Whig cause; Byron attends dinner at Lady Jersey's and meets Mme de Staël; speaks in the House of Lords; possible affair with half-sister, Augusta; publications of <i>The Giaour</i> , and <i>The Bride of Abydos</i> .	1813	Hobhouse's <i>A Journey Through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia to Constantinople</i> ; Austen's <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> ; Robert Southey becomes poet laureate; Leigh Hunt imprisoned.

(cont.)

Byron's Life		Historical Context
Publication of <i>The Corsair</i> and <i>Lara</i> . 10,000 copies of <i>The Corsair</i> sold in a day. Byron admires Edmund Kean's performance in <i>Richard III</i> .	1814	Napoleon abdicates; Scott's <i>Waverley</i> .
Byron marries Annabella Milbanke on 2 January. Birth, 10 December, of daughter, Ada. Publication of <i>Hebrew Melodies</i> , containing many of Byron's best-known lyrics.	1815	Riots in London against the Corn Law; restored Bourbon monarchy in France under Louis XVIII; Napoleon escapes Elba; British victory at Waterloo.
Separation of Byron and Annabella. Publication of <i>The Prisoner of Chillan</i> , <i>The Siege of Corinth</i> , and <i>Parisina</i> . Byron's books are sold in a public auction for a total of £723 12s 6d. Byron leaves England for last time. Visits the fields of Waterloo. Byron and Shelley sail around the northern shore of Lake Geneva. Spends the summer with the Shelleys in Switzerland. Views Voltaire's chateau with 'Monk' Lewis. Moves in October to Milan and meets Italian revolutionary circle. Moves in November to Venice. Completes Canto 111 of <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage</i> . <i>Childe Harold</i> Canto 111 published.	1816	Richard Sheridan d.; marriage of Shelley and Mary Godwin; Shelley's <i>Alastor</i> ; anonymous publication of Lady Caroline Lamb's <i>Glenarvon</i> ; Southey's <i>Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo</i> ; Leigh Hunt's <i>The Story of Rimini</i> ; Jane Austen's <i>Emma</i> ; Walter Scott's <i>Old Mortality</i> ; Goethe's <i>Italianische Reise</i> ; Schubert's Symphonies nos. 4 & 5.
Claire Claremont (Mary Shelley's half-sister) gives birth to Byron's illegitimate daughter, Allegra; publication of <i>Manfred</i> ; Newstead Abbey sold to Thomas Wildman for £94,500; visits Rome and <i>Childe Harold</i> Canto IV written.	1817	Jane Austen d.; Keats's <i>Poems</i> ; the 21-year-old Princess Charlotte dies in childbirth; Coleridge's <i>Biographia Literaria</i> ; Heman's <i>Modern Greece</i> ; Scott's <i>Rob Roy</i> ; Monroe becomes president of the United States; <i>Blackwood's Magazine</i> founded.
Mainly in or near Venice. Sends Murray manuscript of <i>Beppo</i> . <i>Beppo</i> is published. First meets Teresa Guiccioli. Lady Melbourne dies. <i>Childe Harold</i>	1818	Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> ; Percy Shelley's <i>Ozymandias</i> and <i>Revolt of Islam</i> ; Thomas Love Peacock's <i>Nightmare Abbey</i> ; Hazlitt's <i>Lectures on the English Poets</i> ; Keats's <i>Endymion</i> ;

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(cont.)			
Byron's Life		Historical Context	
Canto iv published. Byron wins swimming contest against Mengaldo. Begins <i>Don Juan</i> . Begins affair with Countess Teresa Guiccioli. Writes the <i>Prophecy of Dante</i> ; leaves Venice for Ravenna; arrives in Ravenna; <i>Mazeppa</i> is published with the <i>Ode on Venice</i> . <i>Don Juan</i> Cantos i and ii published anonymously by John Murray. Accompanies Thomas Moore to Venice. Gives Moore his memoirs.		Caspar David Friedrich's <i>Wanderer above the Sea of Fog</i> ; attack on Keats in <i>Quarterly Review</i> .	
Moves to Ravenna; Teresa Guiccioli separates from her husband; Byron sends Murray Cantos iii and iv of <i>Don Juan</i> ; Pope grants Teresa Guiccioli separation; Byron begins Canto v of <i>Don Juan</i> .		1819	Wordsworth's <i>Peter Bell</i> and <i>The Waggoner</i> ; Shelley's <i>Masque of Anarchy</i> ; the Peterloo massacre in which 18 are killed and over 500 injured; United States purchases Florida from Spain.
Byron follows Teresa Guiccioli's exiled family to Pisa; Byron begins his 'Ravenna Journal'; <i>Marino Faliero</i> published 21 April; writes <i>Sardanapalus</i> , <i>The Two Foscari</i> , and <i>Cain</i> , all of which are published in a single volume on 19 December; writes <i>The Blues</i> ; writes <i>The Vision of Judgment</i> ; begins <i>Heaven and Earth</i> .		1820	George III dies; George IV proclaimed king; Shelley's <i>The Cenci</i> ; Keats's <i>Lamia</i> , <i>Isabella</i> , and <i>Hyperion</i> ; Shelley's <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> published; Scott's <i>Ivanhoe</i> ; Venus de Milo discovered on Greek island of Melos.
September, Byron moves with the Gambas to Genoa; daughter, Allegra, dies in convent at Bagnacavallo; Byron begins Canto xi of <i>Don Juan</i> ; <i>Vision of Judgment</i> and <i>Werner</i> published; begins to write <i>Age of Bronze</i> .		1821	Napoleon d.; Keats d. (aged 25); Queen Caroline d.; Baillie's <i>Metrical Legends</i> ; Hazlitt's <i>Table Talk</i> ; Southey's <i>A Vision of Judgement</i> ; Michael Faraday demonstrates electromagnetic rotation; Greek War of Independence begins.
Byron sails for Greece, July; arrives in Cephalonia on 3 August; <i>Heaven and Earth</i> , <i>Age of Bronze</i> , and <i>The Island</i> published.		1822	Shelley publishes <i>Hellas</i> ; Shelley drowns off the coast of Viareggio, Italy; Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, commits suicide; Heine's <i>Gedichte</i> .
		1823	Ann Radcliffe d.; Carlyle's <i>Life of Schiller</i> ; Lamartine, <i>Nouvelles Méditations</i> ; Hazlitt's <i>Liber Amoris</i> and <i>Characteristics</i> ; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

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(cont.)

Byron's Life		Historical Context
Byron arrives in Missolonghi, Greece on 5 January; develops fever; dies, aged 36, on 19 April; public attend Byron's lying in state, 10 and 11 July; buried at Hucknall Church, England, 16 July.	1824	James Hogg's <i>Confessions of a Justified Sinner</i> ; Thomas Medwin's <i>Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron</i> ; Scott's <i>Redgauntlet</i> ; Southey's <i>Book of the Church</i> .
	1825	Dallas's <i>Correspondence of Lord Byron</i> ; Moore's <i>Life of Sheridan and Evenings in Greece</i> ; Hazlitt's <i>Spirit of the Age</i> ; John Quincy Adams becomes President of the United States; opening of the Stockton and Darlington railway in England.
	1830	Thomas Moore publishes <i>Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of His Life</i>

Abbreviations

The following short titles have been used throughout this volume:

- BLJ* *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols.
 (London: John Murray, 1973–94)
CMP *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew
 Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)
CPW *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome
 J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980–93)
DJ *Don Juan*
CHP *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

All quotations from Byron's writings are available in *BLJ*/*CMP*/*CPW* unless otherwise stated.