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Preface

This is not a survey of Byron's verse, whatever the conventional arrangement of its chapters may suggest. Certain works are untouched, and I have not discussed *The Vision of Judgement*, because I believe it to be a poem justly appreciated, and I have little to contribute to the current evaluation. Neither has this study any pretensions to conclusiveness. Although it challenges many of the current readings of Byron, I am attempting to open, rather than close, an argument offering a new perspective. Perhaps this is the place to say that in developing my view of Byron, my greatest critical debt is to W. W. Robson's 'Byron as Poet', and in the early stages of my thinking, Paul West's *Byron and the Spoiler's Art* forced me to consider some essential questions. The argument developed here differs from those of these two studies as much as they differ from each other, and there is no attempt to preclude them. Here the emphasis is on the poetry and the influences which shaped it. I have tried to see Byron not simply as a Romantic, but as a Romantic poet of the second generation, whose sense of his historical position heightened his consciousness of his modernity and his anxiety about his relation to those of his contemporaries (Wordsworth, Shelley, and Goethe, in particular) in whom he thought he recognized the new spirit of the age.

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A note on the text

Quotations from Byron's poetry outside of *Don Juan* are taken from Coleridge's edition; those from *Don Juan* are taken from the edition edited by Steffan, Steffan, and Pratt. References are given in brackets after each quotation. For Byron's letters and journals, Marchand's edition has been cited wherever possible, supplemented by Prothero's. All these works are listed in full in the Bibliography, section I. For quotations from contemporary reviews and recorded conversations I have cited the most readily available source.

Works in a language other than English are usually quoted in the original. Translations have been used when it seems likely that Byron did not read these works in the original.

This book was researched before McGann's new edition of Byron's poetry was produced.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations for Byron sources are used in the notes:

CC: Lovell's *Collected Conversations*
CH: Rutherford's *Critical Heritage*
Lj: Marchand's letters and journals
Medwin: Medwin's *Conversations*
Prothero: Prothero's letters and journals
PW: Coleridge's edition of the poetry

These works are listed in full in the Bibliography.