

BYRON IN CONTEXT

George Gordon, the sixth Lord Byron (1788–1824), was one of the most celebrated poets of the Romantic period, as well as a peer, politician and global celebrity, famed not only for his verse, but for his controversial lifestyle and involvement in the Greek War of Independence. In thirty-seven concise, accessible chapters, by leading international scholars, this volume explores the social and intertextual relationships that informed Byron's writing; the geopolitical contexts in which he traveled, lived and worked; the cultural and philosophical movements that influenced changing outlooks on religion, science, modern society and sexuality; the dramatic landscape of war, conflict and upheaval that shaped Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic Europe and Regency Britain; and the diverse cultures of reception that mark the ongoing Byron phenomenon as a living ecology in the twenty-first century. This volume illuminates “Byron” not only in context but also *as* context.

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EDITED BY

CLARA TUITE

University of Melbourne



Cambridge University Press
978-1-316-63267-3 — Byron in Context
Edited by Clara Tuite
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/99781316632673
DOI: 10.1017/9781316850435

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First published 2020
First paperback edition 2021

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-18146-5 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-316-63267-3 Paperback

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In memoriam Rolf P. Lessenich (1940–2019)

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Chronology

- 1788 January 22: Born George Gordon Byron in London to Captain John Byron (1756–91) and his second wife, Catherine Byron, *née* Gordon (1765–1811).
- 1789 Mrs. Byron takes son to spend his early years in Aberdeen, Scotland.
 July 14: Storming of the Bastille marks beginning of French Revolution.
- 1790 Captain Byron abandons family and moves to Valenciennes, France.
- 1791 Captain Byron dies in France.
- 1794–8 Attends Aberdeen Grammar School.
- 1796 Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* published.
- 1798 Inherits baronetcy and title of 6th Baron Byron of Rochdale through the death of his great-uncle, Lord William Byron, the fifth Baron Byron.
 May: Napoleon leads French invasion of Egypt.
 August: Accompanies mother to ancestral estate at Newstead Abbey.
 September: William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge publish *Lyrical Ballads*.
- 1799 Enrolled at Dr. Glennie's School in Dulwich.
- 1800 Falls in love with first cousin, Margaret Parker, during summer holiday in Nottingham and Newstead.
- 1801–5 Enters Harrow School.
- 1801 Thomas Moore's *Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Little, Esq.* published.
- 1803 February: Newstead leased by Lord Grey de Ruthyn.
 September–November: Falls in love with Mary Ann Chaworth.

- November: Lives at Newstead under the care of Lord Grey de Ruthyn.
- 1804 Breaks with Lord Grey, returns to Harrow.
 December: Napoleon crowned Emperor of France.
- 1805 June: Charlotte Dacre publishes *Hours of Solitude*.
- 1805–7 Goes into residence at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he meets John Edleston, John Cam Hobhouse and Charles Skinner Matthews.
 October 21: Admiral Lord Nelson defeats French and Spanish naval forces at the Battle of Trafalgar.
- 1806 November: First volume of poetry, *Fugitive Pieces*, privately printed by John Ridge of Newark; Byron immediately suppresses it.
- 1807 January: *Fugitive Pieces* reworked and privately published as *Poems on Various Occasions*.
 June: *Hours of Idleness* published by Ben Crosby in London.
 June: Joins the Cambridge Whig Club.
 October: Returns to Trinity.
 Germaine de Staël publishes *Corinne, ou l'Italie* and Thomas Moore publishes the first of his *Irish Melodies*, to appear in ten parts 1807–34.
- 1808 Leaves Cambridge and is awarded his MA.
 Engages Robert Charles Dallas as intermediary with his publishers.
- 1809 March: Takes his seat in the House of Lords.
 March: *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* published by James Cawthorn.
 June: Commences grand tour to Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar, Malta, Greece, Albania and Turkey, accompanied by Hobhouse.
- 1810 July: Hobhouse returns to England from the Continent, while Byron remains in Greece.
- 1811 February: The Prince of Wales is installed as Prince Regent after his father, King George III, is afflicted permanently by mental illness.
 May: Learns of the death of his Harrow school friend John Wingfield.
 June: Returns to England.
 August 1: Death of Byron's mother, followed two days later by his Cambridge friend Charles Skinner Matthews.

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- October: Learns of the death of his close Cambridge companion John Edleston.
 November: Meets Thomas Moore at dinner with Samuel Rogers.
 November: Offers *Hints from Horace* to James Cawthorn before requesting its suppression. The work is eventually published posthumously.
- 1812 February: Delivers maiden speech in the House of Lords on the Frame Work Bill.
 March 10: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Cantos I and II) published by John Murray.
 March 25: First sees future wife, Annabella Milbanke.
 April: Begins relationship with Lady Caroline Lamb.
 May 11: Prime Minister Spencer Perceval assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons.
 June: Lord Castlereagh appointed Foreign Secretary.
 July: Considers eloping with Lady Caroline Lamb.
 October: Proposes to Annabella Milbanke, but is rejected.
- 1813 January 23: Coleridge's *Remorse* premieres at Drury Lane.
 January: Jane Austen publishes *Pride and Prejudice*.
 May: Visits Leigh Hunt in Surrey Jail, Southwark, where he has been imprisoned for libelling the Prince Regent in the *Examiner*.
 June 1: Gives final speech to House of Lords, presenting Major John Cartwright's petition for liberal reform.
 June 5: *The Giaour* published, the first of Byron's Eastern tales.
 June 20: Meets Madame de Staël.
 December: *The Bride of Abydos* published.
- 1814 February 1: *The Corsair* published, sells 10,000 copies in a day.
 April: Napoleon abdicates and is exiled to Elba.
 July: Walter Scott's *Waverley* published.
- 1815 January 2: Marries Annabella Milbanke.
 March: Napoleon escapes from Elba and rallies forces in France.
 April: *Hebrew Melodies* published.
 May: Elected to Committee of Drury Lane Theatre.
 June 18: Napoleon defeated at the Battle of Waterloo, marking the end of the Napoleonic Wars.
 October: Napoleon abdicates a second time and is exiled to St. Helena.
 December: Birth of Ada, Byron's child by Annabella Milbanke.

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Chronology

- December: Jane Austen's *Emma* published.
- 1816 January 15: Annabella leaves Byron, and Byron agrees to a legal separation (formalized on April 21), leading to the public controversy of the Separation scandal.
 February 13: *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina* published together.
 April 23: Leaves Britain for the Continent.
 May: Lady Caroline Lamb publishes *Glenarvon*.
 May: Coleridge's *Christabel* published with *Kubla Khan* and *The Pains of Sleep*.
 May 27: Meets Percy Shelley at Sécheron.
 June: Rents Villa Diodati in Geneva. An evening with John Polidori, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley leads to the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819).
 October: Arrives in Italy, at Milan.
 November 10: Arrives in Venice.
 November 18: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Canto III) published.
 December: *The Prisoner of Chillon* published.
- 1817 January 12: Birth of Allegra, Byron's daughter by Claire Clairmont.
 March–May: Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* published.
 June 16: *Manfred* published.
 July: Jane Austen dies.
 July: Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* published.
 November: Newstead Abbey sold to Major Thomas Wildman.
 December: Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* published and immediately suppressed. Revised and published as *The Revolt of Islam* the following year.
 December: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* published posthumously.
- 1818 February 28: *Beppo* published.
 April 28: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Canto IV) published.
 July: Begins writing *Don Juan*.
 September: Finishes writing first canto of *Don Juan*.
- 1819 January 22: First encounter with Countess Teresa Guiccioli (*née* Gamba), with whom he begins an affair.
 June 28: *Mazeppa* published.
 July 15: *Don Juan* (Cantos I–II) published anonymously. John Murray declines to be identified as publisher.
 August 16: Peterloo massacre in Manchester.
 October: Gives Moore his "Memoirs."

Chronology

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- 1820 January: Death of George III. The Prince Regent is crowned George IV the following year.
 February: Moves into the Palazzo Guiccioli, Ravenna, home of Count and Countess Guiccioli.
 March: Becomes the Cavaliere Servente of Teresa Guiccioli.
 March 15: Begins *Some Observations Upon an Article in* Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.
 July: Meets Teresa's brother, Count Pietro Gamba.
 July: Count and Countess Guiccioli separate; she leaves the Palazzo and moves into her father's country house in Filetto.
 July: Keats publishes *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*.
 August: Becomes involved in the Carbonari revolutionary society through his friendship with the Gambas.
 August: Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* published.
- 1821 January: Begins the "Ravenna Journal."
 February: Planned Carbonari uprising fails.
 March 31: Publishes *Letter to John Murray Esqre*, the first installment of the Pope–Bowles controversy.
 April 21: *Marino Faliero* and *The Prophecy of Dante* published together.
 May 5: Napoleon dies on St Helena.
 June: Lady Morgan's *Italy* published.
 July: Teresa's father, Count Gamba, arrested and banished, followed by her brother Pietro.
 July: Teresa leaves Ravenna to join her brother and father.
 August: Shelley arrives in Ravenna.
 August: *Don Juan* (Cantos III–V) published.
 October 15: Begins *Detached Thoughts*.
 October 29: Leaves Ravenna with Shelley to join Teresa and the Gambas in Pisa.
 December 19: *Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari* and *Cain* published together.
- 1822 January: Article by Robert Southey (then Poet-Laureate) attacking Byron appears in the *Courier*.
 February: Replies to Southey's attack.
 February: Challenges Southey to a duel in an undelivered note.
 April: Byron's five-year-old daughter by Claire Clairmont, Allegra, dies in a convent at Bagnacavallo (near Ravenna), where she had lived since March 1821.
 July 8: Shelley drowns in Bay of Spezia.

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Chronology

- August: Attends Shelley's cremation at Viareggio.
 August: Lord Castlereagh commits suicide.
 October 15: John Hunt publishes Byron's *The Vision of Judgment* in the *Liberal*, no. 1.
 October–November: Breaks with John Murray after Murray refuses to publish further cantos of *Don Juan*. Subsequent cantos and other works are published by John Hunt.
 November 23: Murray publishes Byron's *Werner*.
- 1823
 January 1: *Heaven and Earth* published in the *Liberal*, no. 2.
 April 1: *The Age of Bronze* published.
 April 26: *The Blues* published in the *Liberal*, no. 3.
 Byron's friend John Cam Hobhouse is involved in the creation of the London Greek Committee.
 May–July: Learns that he has been formally elected a member of the London Greek Committee.
 June 26: *The Island* published.
 July 15: *Don Juan* (Cantos VI–VIII) published.
 July 16: Sails for Greece on the brig *Hercules*, along with Pietro Gamba and a small fighting force under his command.
 July 30: Byron's translation of Luigi Pulci's *Morgante Maggione* published in the *Liberal*, no. 4.
 August 3: Arrives in Greece.
 August 29: *Don Juan* (Cantos IX–XI) published.
 November: Lends £4,000 to the Greek government.
 December 17: *Don Juan* (Cantos XII–XIV) published.
 December 29: Sails for Missolonghi.
- 1824
 January 22: Writes "On this day I complete my thirty sixth year" to mark his birthday.
 February 15: Suffers fits, supposed to be epileptic convulsions.
 February 20: *The Deformed Transformed* published.
 March 26: *Don Juan* (Cantos XV–XVI) published.
 April 19: Dies of fever in Missolonghi, aged thirty-six.
 July: Hobhouse and others destroy the manuscript of Byron's "Memoirs."
 The fragment of *Don Juan* Canto XVII is found among Byron's papers after his death, and is published in 1903.

Abbreviations and Note on the Text

Works by Byron

- BLJ* *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1973–94)
- CHP* *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*
- 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*
- DJVE* *Byron's Don Juan: Variorum Edition*, ed. Truman G. Steffan and Willis W. Pratt, 4 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957)
- Moore *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of His Life*, ed. Thomas Moore, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1830). Available via hathitrust.org
- WLB* *The Works of Lord Byron: With His Letters and Journals, and His Life*, ed. Thomas Moore, 17 vols. (London: John Murray, 1832–3). Available via archive.org

Other Works

- BCH* *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970)
- Blackwood's* *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*
- Blessington *Conversations of Lord Byron with the Countess of Blessington* (London: Henry Colburn, 1834). Available via archive.org
- Dallas Robert Charles Dallas, *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron* (London: Charles Knight, 1824) Available via archive.org

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<i>ER</i>	<i>Edinburgh Review</i>
Guiccioli	Teresa Guiccioli, <i>My Recollections of Lord Byron and those of Eye-Witnesses of His Life</i> , trans. Hubert E. H. Jerningham (London: Richard Bentley, 1869). Available via archive.org
<i>HVSV</i>	<i>His Very Self and Voice: Collected Conversations of Lord Byron</i> , ed. Ernest J. Lovell, Jr. (New York: Macmillan, 1954)
<i>LJM</i>	<i>The Letters of John Murray to Lord Byron</i> , ed. Andrew Nicholson (Liverpool University Press, 2007)
<i>LMWS</i>	<i>The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley</i> , ed. Betty T. Bennett, 3 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983)
<i>LPBS</i>	<i>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i> , ed. Frederick Lafayette Jones, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964)
<i>Liberal</i>	<i>The Liberal: Verse and Prose from the South</i>
MacCarthy	Fiona MacCarthy, <i>Byron: Life and Legend</i> (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002)
Marchand	Leslie A. Marchand, <i>Byron: A Biography</i> , 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1957)
Medwin	Thomas Medwin, <i>Conversations of Lord Byron</i> , ed. Ernest J. Lovell Jr. (Princeton University Press, 1966)
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>QR</i>	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers, Part B: Byron and Regency Society Poets</i> , ed. Donald H. Reiman, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1972)
Southey	Robert Southey, <i>The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, Collected by Himself</i> , 10 vols. (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1838). Available via archive.org and Google Books

All quotations from Byron's poetry, unless stated otherwise, are taken from the *Complete Poetical Works* (CPW), ed. Jerome J. McGann. They are indicated by in-text references to CPW followed by page number and line number. Block quotations are indicated by canto, stanza and line number (followed by page number). All other editions are noted in the individual chapters. Block quotations from dramas are by act, scene and line number. Quotations from prose writings are by volume and page number for *BLJ* and *CPW* and by page number for *CMP*.

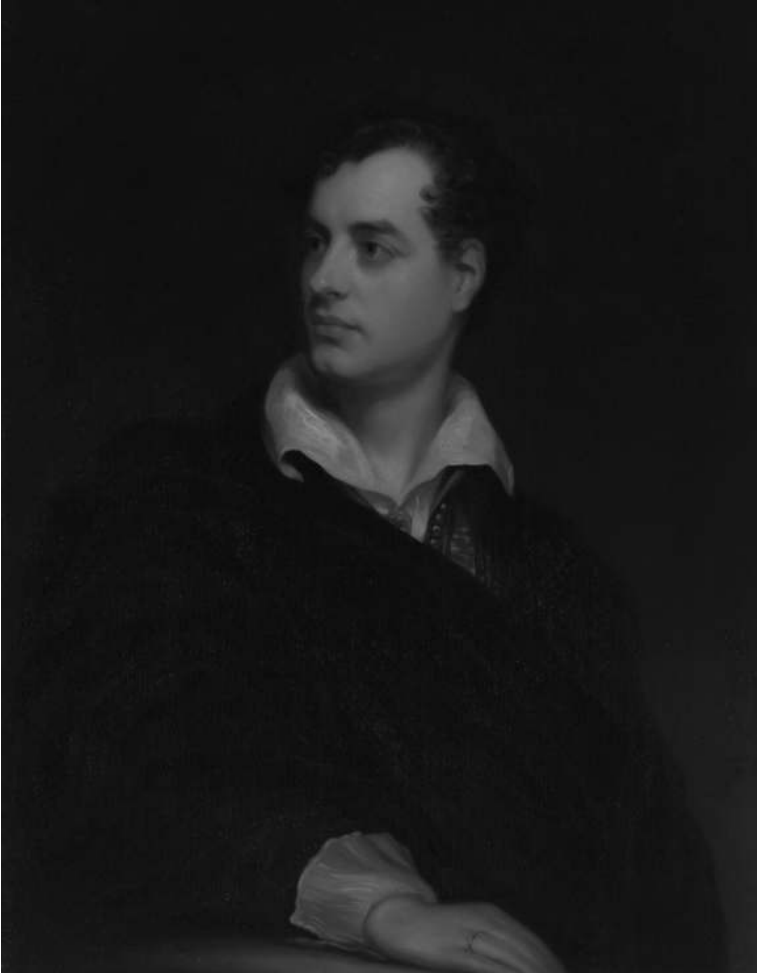


Figure I.1 Thomas Phillips, *Portrait of a Nobleman*, 1813, 88 x 70.5 cm, oil on canvas. Newstead Abbey Collection, Nottinghamshire, inv. no. NA 532 BLDIDNA000454-1.