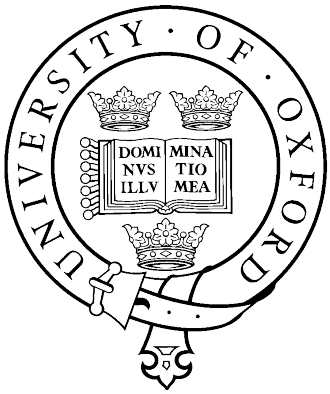
‘I’m classic now’: Byron’s Engagement with Antiquity



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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Trinity term 2018

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Abstract

Against the background of current debate within the academy about a less rigid demarcation between British Neoclassical and Romantic writing generally, and about the place of Rome among the Romantics specifically, this thesis examines Byron’s engagement with antiquity.

It reveals Byron as a sophisticated reader and inventive re-imaginer of classical texts and approaches. A significant component of his literary aesthetic was the extensive, and often highly creative, substratum of classical intertextuality in his writings throughout his life. By contrast, his exploitation of ancient texts as formal models fell largely into two periods, with an intense engagement in his apprentice years until 1812 and again in his artistic maturity from 1818, but a comparative hiatus during his ‘Years of Fame’ when he published *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and the Oriental tales. His instincts in this regard were not academic or antiquarian. The value of the classical to Byron was not primarily to recover the past, but to illuminate the present and to enrich the reading experience.

A key contention of this thesis is that, notwithstanding Byron’s libertarian support of Greek independence from Turkey and a Hellenophilic culture in Britain in the early nineteenth century, his Hellenism—in the sense of being influenced by ancient Greek culture—and his expertise in ancient Greek have in general been over-emphasised. Conversely, the influential role of Latin texts and the Roman world in his self-construction and literary development has been under-appreciated. There is a preponderance of Latin source material in Byron’s classical translations and ‘imitations’, forms largely confined to his early years. Moreover, Roman writers emerge as central to the great works of his maturity in satire, epic and even tragedy, where the thesis argues that the principal classical dramaturgical influences on Byron’s three, professedly Greek, closet dramas of 1820–21—*Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*—were in fact the tragedies of the contemporaneously unfashionable Roman writer, Seneca.

As revealed by his poetry and letters, what is most striking about Byron’s engagement with classical literature, once he left behind the enforced requirements of school and university, is his predominant Latinity.

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Abbreviations

BLJ	L.A. Marchand (ed.), *Byron's Letters and Journals,* Vols. 1–12 (London, 1973–1982) plus supplementary volume (London, 1994).
CHP	Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*
CMP	A. Nicholson (ed.), *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose* (Oxford, 1991).
CPW	J.J. McGann (ed.), *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works,* Vols. 1–7 (Oxford, 1980–1993).
DJ	Byron, *Don Juan.*
EBSR	Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.*
FP	Byron, *Fugitive Pieces* (Newark, 1806).
HI	Byron, *Hours of Idleness, A Series of Poems Original and Translated* (London, 1807).
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd. edn., online Aug. 2018.
OLD	P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary,* 2nd. edn. (2012).
POT	Byron, *Poems Original and Translated* (London, 1808).
POVO	Byron, *Poems on Various Occasions* (Newark, 1807).
Sard.	Byron, *Sardanapalus*
VoJ	Byron, *The Vision of Judgment.*

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Working on this thesis has been a happy combination of intellectual challenge and the sheer pleasure of living simultaneously with texts from the ancient world and Byron's brilliant play with them. On both fronts, I owe more than I can express to the inspiring scholarship, unfailing support and personal kindness of my supervisors, Fiona Macintosh and Stephen Harrison. The words are conventional but the sentiment is deeply felt.

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Finally, my loving thanks go to my husband who has borne the irruption of Byron into our lives with unByronic good humour.

Notes on orthography and texts

Byron's orthography, like his life, was idiosyncratic and inconsistent. He adopted an entertainingly liberal approach to dashes, commas, accents, capitalisation and other punctuation marks. Similarly, his quotations in Latin and Greek (and indeed English) are sometimes careless, or plainly erroneous. Those traits will be reflected in the quotations used in this thesis.

Wherever available, texts of Byron's poetical works are taken from Jerome McGann's *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works,* Volumes 1-7 (Oxford, 1980–1993) *(CPW);* texts of Byron's letters and journals from Leslie Marchand's *Byron's Letters and Journals,* Volumes 1-12 and their supplement (London, 1973–1994) *(BLJ);* and texts of his other prose works from Andrew Nicholson's *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose* (Oxford, 1991) *(CMP).* In line with current Byronist convention, references in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan* are to stanzas, not lines. Byron's library sale catalogues for 1813, 1816 and 1827, available on the late Peter Cochran's website, have also been an illuminating source of information https://petercochran.wordpress.com/byron-2/byrons-library/.

The text and translations of quotations from ancient sources are, unless otherwise indicated, taken from the Loeb Classical Library for ease of accessibility to readers. The bibliography contains a list of translators. Abbreviations relating to ancient texts follow the practice employed in the Oxford Classical Dictionary (4th edition, 2012), other than references to Horace's *Odes* not *Carm*.. All website addresses were valid in September 2018.



Frontispiece: Lord Byron contemplating the Coliseum (Colosseum)
by James (or possibly Arthur) Tilbitts-Willmore, after William Westall c.1850.
By kind permission of the Bibliothèque du Musée des Arts Décoratifs

Introduction: Byron the Latinist

In the early nineteenth-century, Byron and Goethe were the leading authors of Europe. Today, by contrast with Goethe's continued centrality to German culture, although Byron's image and striking phrases are often to be found in the media, his greatest works of poetry are comparatively little read by the wider British public. Within the academy, however, Byron remains a figurehead for key debates on the Romantic period. Marilyn Butler, for example, has proclaimed that 'Byron played a larger part than any other single artist in shaping the stereotype soon recognised throughout Europe, the passionate, rebellious, Romantic Poet'.[1] Joep Leerssen identifies Byron, with Walter Scott, as instrumental in the rise of Romantic Nationalism:

> In literary culture, the notions of national historicism, idealistic inspiration and demotic authenticity become ruling creative principles, linked to the names of Walter Scott and Byron and to the rise of the ballad as a serious (though folk-rooted) literary genre.[2]

Constanze Güthenke dubs Byron 'one, if not the household name of European philhellenism', a factor which *The Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe* (ERNiE) highlights as influential in the diffusion of Romantic Nationalism:

> In the decades following Macpherson's Ossian, Schiller's Wilhelm Tell and Byron's philhellenism, Romantic Nationalism spread across widely dissimilar countries, from Reykjavik to Veliko T'arnovo and from La Coruña to Moscow.[3]

Byron himself evolves as a migratory figure, 'the world's tired denizen' of the foreign countries in which he lived for the greater part of his life from the age of

[1] Butler (1981) 2-3.
[2] Leerssen (2014) 8; see also Wallace (1997) 192.
[3] Güthenke (2007) 183; ERNiE http://spinnet.humanities.uva.nl/images/2015-03/ernie_brochure_2015_lores_2.pdf

twenty-one.[4] The cosmopolitanism of the traveller and exile is inscribed in his works. Angela Esterhammer argues that 'Byron's *Don Juan*…is a text that enacts Romantic cosmopolitanism…in ways that resonate with contemporary cosmopolitan theory'.[5]

This phenomenon of Byron's being in the vanguard on issues of continuing relevance to scholarly concerns is strikingly illustrated also by the first four chapters of the 2004 *Cambridge Companion to Byron,* which deal in turn with Byron's life and life-writing, not only in his own works but in the plethora of personal memoirs and biographies about him (Paul Douglass); the business of publishing, highlighting his late innovation in offering cheap versions of his works for a new, mass readership (Peter Graham); his politics, where Malcolm Kelsall suggests that Byron foreshadows John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* of thirty-six years later in his claim that 'I wish men to be free/ As much from mobs as kings, from you as me' (*Don Juan*, 9.25); and issues of gender and sexuality, where 'Byron forces his readers to confront forms of sexuality that they had rather not admit', including same-sex love, paedophilia and incest (Andrew Elfenbein).[6] Other areas of topical interest are Byron's vehement opposition to slavery and even—witness Tom Holland's *The Vampyre: The Secret History of Lord Byron*—the vogue for vampires, which featured influentially in Byron's hugely popular *The Giaour* (line 755) of 1813, with his note that 'the Vampire superstition is still general in the Levant'.[7]

Several of these issues will feature at points in this thesis but they are not its

[4] *CHP* 2.26. Byron (1788–1824) lived abroad from July 1809 to July 1811, then April 1816 until his death.
[5] Esterhammer (2009) 114.
[6] Douglass (2004); Graham (2004); Kelsall (2004); Elfenbein (2004) 70.
[7] Holland (1995, ppbk. 2007); *Giaour*, line 755, *CPW* 3.420. Byron's incomplete *Augustus Darvell: A Fragment of a Ghost Story* informed John Polidori's *The Vampyre: A Tale* (1819), originally attributed to Byron (*CMP* 58).

central concern, because what now requires more attention is the extent of Byron's engagement with the Graeco-Roman world in his works. Against the background of current debate about a less rigid demarcation between British Neoclassical and Romantic writing generally, and about the place of Rome among the Romantics specifically, I examine the role of antiquity in Byron's creative oeuvre, with the aim of contributing to a broader understanding of the deployment and transformation of classical materials at a seminal moment in the second-wave of British Romanticism featuring Byron, Shelley and Keats.

Commentaries such as E.H. Coleridge's late nineteenth-century *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, Jerome McGann's indispensable *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works* (1980–93) and papers by the late Peter Cochran, particularly on his website, are invaluable in identifying classical elements in Byron's work.[8] However, these works are not comprehensive nor does their range facilitate a concentrated focus on ancient sources. Equally, while there is commentary on Byron's reception of individual classical authors, particularly Horace and Juvenal, there is no substantial work of synthesis to examine the issue in the round. The published proceedings from the International Byron Society's 2011 conference on *Byron and Latin Culture* carry an introduction by Cochran on 'Byron and Latin Poetry' which considers references to selected Latin poets and to Anacreon and Sappho but does not attempt an overview. The proceedings as a whole are primarily concerned with non-classical aspects of Latin culture (as for example in Italy, Spain and France) and contain only two papers on Byron's relationship to Roman authors: Allan Gregory's

[8] See https://petercochran.wordpress.com/

'Juvenalian Satire and Byron' and Itsuyo Higashinaka's 'Byron the Epigrammatist' on Byron and Martial.[9]

Most recently, Timothy Webb has drawn on Byron's poetry and letters to portray Byron as 'The Unexpected Latinist':

> [G]iven [Byron's] commitment to the cause of Greece and his passionate and uncompromising Hellenism (or philhellenism), it may be hard to recognize that Byron was also recurrently drawn to Latin examples, especially those of four leading Roman satirists—Juvenal, Persius, Martial and, predominantly, Horace. This…allegiance is easy to miss.[10]

Webb's chapter is an important contribution but this thesis undertakes a more exhaustive scrutiny of Byron's classical engagement of all kinds—formal features, content, quotations, allusions overt and covert—throughout his writings. The magnitude of the target material for examination, though a challenge, has been essential, not to critique the evolutionary curve of Byron's development as a writer *per se* but to assess how his classical reading informed his work over the course of his writing life.

The conclusions of my research emphasise the critical importance of classical, and above all of Roman, texts and history in Byron's literary imagination. Like Roman authors before him, Byron employed intertextuality as a mode of creativity.[11] Lady Blessington recorded him as saying that 'he rarely ever read a page that did not give rise to chains of thought'.[12] His poems, like his letters, are mosaics of quotation and allusion. Widely read and retentive of what he read, Byron drew eclectically on a diverse range of literary sources, with references to the Bible and Shakespeare standing beside those to contemporary plays and novels. And

[9] Cochran (2013); Gregory (2013); Higashinaka (2013b).
[10] Webb (2015) 387. Persius does not in fact figure significantly in Byron's work (see Chapter 4).
[11] For a discussion of allusion and intertextuality in Roman literature, see Hinds (1998).
[12] Lovell (1969) 82.

conspicuously, from his school days to his end, allusions to classical texts constituted a significant strand in the variegated texture of his works. In addition, as the chapters below demonstrate, he looked to ancient literature for models of form and content in two key periods particularly: his apprentice years up to the publication of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812, and the years of his artistic maturity from 1818 on, when he concurrently published satire, epic and tragedy in works like *The Vision of Judgment, Don Juan* and his classically-structured 'historical tragedies', *Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*.

At the same time, the thesis as a whole challenges the overlay in much of the secondary literature of Byron as a proficient classical scholar and his works as strongly Hellenist as well as philhellenic. Güthenke in her examination of 'Romantic Hellenism' defines Hellenism as 'an umbrella term that includes the valuation of, especially ancient, Greek culture', while philhellenism signifies 'the external support of modern Greece as an independent national and cultural entity'.[13] The traditional presentation of Byron as totemic of both these terms has been powerful and pervasive, but there is a clear distinction to be made, as I argue later in this Introduction. If Byron's early travels undoubtedly roused his libertarian support for the contemporary Greek nationalist movement and demonstrated his acute sense of place and declared passion for ancient history, Byron's Hellenism in the sense of looking to ancient Greek culture as an artistic model is more nuanced and there is scant evidence that his visit to Greece in 1809–11 stimulated his interest in working creatively with ancient Greek literature.

A key contention of my thesis is that, notwithstanding Byron's acclaimed philhellenism and a Hellenophilic culture in Britain in the early nineteenth century,

[13] Güthenke (2008) 6.

his Hellenism and his expertise in ancient Greek have until very recently been over-emphasised. Conversely, the extensive role of Latin texts and the Roman world in his self-construction and his literary development has been under-appreciated. Byron, like most men of his class and generation, was educated primarily in the classics, and his reading of classical history and literature, whether in the original or translation, informed his world view and provided him with a fundamental platform to play upon, and at times against, in his own writings. In so doing, *contra* widespread presumptions, he looked principally to ancient Rome rather than Greece.

Rome and Greece in the Romantic period

This revisionist view of Byron is consistent with the recent broader reappraisal of the position of Rome and Greece in the Romantic period. Scholarship has begun to challenge notions of a simplistic opposition between a classically-influenced 'Augustan' age of English literature under Pope and Addison and a subsequent anti-classical Romantic revolution; or, alternatively, of a widespread shift of interest in the late eighteenth century from the Rome of the Augustans to a social and/or politically radical 'Romantic' Hellenism. Notable in this broader shift is Jonathan Sachs' timely *Romantic Antiquity* of 2010 which observes that, by contrast with the perception of British fascination with Roman literature and history during the eighteenth century:

> the Romantic period has traditionally been conceived as constituting a modernity distinguished either by its embrace of Greece at the expense of Rome or by its rejection of classical precedents, especially the literary authority of the ancients.[14]

[14] Sachs (2010) 3.

One example of this 'traditional' critical interpretation can be found in David Ferris' forcefully expressed view:

> [N]owhere has such a divorce of the present from the past been more emphatically asserted than with respect to romanticism and its break with the classicism of the eighteenth century. The development of romantic Hellenism…marks a divorce from a classicism that looked more to Rome than Greece even when it turned its attention to Homer.[15]

Tanya Caldwell's 2008 *Virgil Made English: The Decline of Classical Authority* likewise states bluntly that 'for obvious poetic and political reasons the British Romantic period is not associated with classical emulation or, where the Romans are concerned, even admiration'.[16] Contesting assessments of this nature, Sachs' argument is that 'Rome remained equally if not more important during the Romantic period, though its increasingly vexed role during this time has been little noted'.[17]

In *Romans and Romantics*, a 2012 volume edited by Timothy Saunders and others, the preface similarly describes as myth the notion that 'the Romantics rejected anything classical and that this rejection was, indeed, precisely what defined them as Romantics'. Rather it advances the argument of 'a varied, vital and mutually sustaining…interaction' between Romans and Romantics.[18] Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace, in the introduction to their substantial 2015 fourth volume of *The Oxford History of Classical Reception* covering 1790–1880, raise the pertinent question of:

> whether a fashionable Hellenism in the first half of the period, which has caught the attention of recent historians of classical reception, temporarily replaced the long-standing interest in Rome or masked its continuing influence'.[19]

[15] Ferris (2000) 52.
[16] Caldwell (2008) 189.
[17] Sachs (2010) 3.
[18] Saunders et al. (2012) vi, v.
[19] Vance and Wallace (2015) 2.

They note that 'traditionally' the period 1790–1830—broadly the period of Byron's lifetime and a little beyond—has been seen as the age of Hellenism, with interest in ancient Greece revitalised in part by archaeological and material rediscoveries, and in part 'by a new demand for beauty, freedom, and a primitive innocence, all of which the projected image of Greece seemed to symbolize'. Nonetheless, Vance and Wallace point to the evidence in their edited volume (which includes Webb's chapter on 'The Unexpected Latinist: Byron and the Roman Muse' cited above) that 'Rome was still powerful in the British cultural imagination during the nineteenth century'.[20]

Both Sachs and Saunders et al. highlight the sparse attention paid hitherto to the influence of Rome on the Romantics. In *Romans and Romantics*, Glenn Most suggests a number of 'partial explanations (not justifications)' as to why the historiography of scholarship and literature has tended to focus so much more on the Romantic image of ancient Greece than on that of ancient Rome.[21] One is the preference of German classical scholars for Greek subjects, perhaps because of Greek superiority in the more prestigious genres of tragedy and philosophy, a preference which Most sees as 'unhesitatingly' taken over by modern historians, following German scholars' dominance over European rivals in the nineteenth century. Another is that 'certain thinkers (once again, mostly Germans)…admired Greece for its putative liberty and artistic achievements, crushed beneath the lumbering historical juggernaut of Roman imperialism and legal administration'.[22]

As David Roessel comments, 'in the nineteenth-century Western mind, modern Greece, although contemporary, stood at a further remove than the Greece of antiquity'.[23] It was a disparity that Byron perceived and sought to highlight in the

[20] Vance and Wallace (2015) 3-7; Webb (2015) 385-412.
[21] Most (2012) 386-87.
[22] Most (2012) 386.
[23] Roessel (2002) 44.

text and notes of the second canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, mostly written during his early travels. The prevailing mindset was the product of the male élite's largely classical education which ensured that the 'magic word' of Marathon (*CHP* 2.89) along with Thermopylae and Salamis—names plentifully wielded by Byron—stood as generic symbols of a nation's struggle for liberty, and they acquired renewed resonance in Byron's day with modern Greece's movement for independence from Turkish domination which culminated in the War of Independence of 1821–29.[24] Plus, as Christopher Stray reflects, 'the unique authority of Greece as a charismatic exemplar of individuality made it a congenial mirror for nationalist self-recognition in both Germany and England'.[25]

Disentangling Hellenism from philhellenism

The identification of Byron with Greece, ancient and modern, is so systemic in Anglo-American and European culture that it has to be addressed at the outset. If Romantic Hellenism was embraced unhesitatingly by his fellow second wave Romantics, Shelley and Keats, neither of whom set foot in Greece, Byron, who travelled there extensively in 1809–11 and returned in 1823–24, took a characteristically individualistic stance. Over seventy years ago, M.L. Clarke concluded that 'the name of Byron is inevitably associated with Greece…But the inspiration came from modern rather than from ancient Greece'.[26] This view has recently been endorsed by Alexander Grammatikos who argues that, at the time Byron first went to Greece, the idea among Greeks of belonging to a Hellenic nation,

[24] For emotionally charged references in Byron's poetry to Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis, see for example *CHP* 2.73, 2.88, 2.89, 3.64; *The Curse of Minerva* line 12; *The Giaour* lines109-15; verses of the 'Isles of Greece' song, *Don Juan* canto 3, lines 701-12 and 725-30; and the poem *Thermopylae*.
[25] Stray (2007) 23.
[26] Clarke (1945) 166.

rather than to a Romaic heritage linking them back to the Eastern Roman Empire, was emerging but not yet popular or dominant:

> [T]his allowed Byron to move away from the predominantly classical impulses of European scholarship and to think about Modern Greek culture apart from the ancient Hellenic past, something that would come to seem impossible for almost all European writers once the Greek War of Independence began one decade later.[27]

Stephen Cheeke similarly suggests that Byron and his companion, John Cam Hobhouse, '"discover" and present Albania to their readership as a challenge to the hegemony of the classical'.[28]

Byron made a point of studying Romaic in 1811 during his prolonged stay in Athens and publicly evidenced his interest in contemporary Greece and its Romaic language in the second canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, particularly in the (often omitted or truncated) notes and appendices.[29] In note II to that canto, he reflected critically on the attitudes of Europe, and the education of its young men, in relation to ancient and modern Greeks:

> Of the ancient Greeks we know more than enough; at least the younger men of Europe devote much of their time to the study of the Greek writers and history, which would be more usefully spent in mastering their own. Of the moderns, we are perhaps more neglectful than they deserve; and while every man of any pretensions to learning is tiring out his youth, and often his age, in the study of the language and of the harangues of the Athenian demagogues in favour of freedom, the real or supposed descendants of these sturdy republicans are left to the actual tyranny of their masters, although a very slight effort is required to strike off their chains.[30]

This is certainly an exaggerated posture, in that Byron's poetry and prose evidence the powerful impact that ancient Greek (though even more substantially, Roman) history had on him, but research undertaken for this study demonstrates the limited

[27] Grammatikos (2016) 245.
[28] Cheeke (2003) 13.
[29] *BLJ* 2.32.
[30] *CPW* 2.202.

degree of Byron's engagement with ancient Greek drama and poetry once he had left university. Where Shelley was to turn direct to the classical Greek of Aeschylus' *Persae* (a play appositely depicting the aftermath of the Greeks' 480 BCE victory over Xerxes' Persians at Salamis) as the basis for his lyrical drama, *Hellas,* Byron in Athens worked at several removes, in translating the 'Famous Greek War Song', Δεῦτε παῖδες τῶν Ἑλλήνων ('Sons of the Greeks, arise!), which he noted had been 'written by Riga, who perished in the attempt to revolutionize Greece'. Roderick Beaton has clarified that the work Byron translated was not in fact the war song of Rigas Velestinlis (also called Pherraios) but a 'doggerel' imitation 'in a crude form of semi-learned Greek' of *La Marseillaise*'s 'Allons enfants de la Patrie', itself based on the shout of the ancient Greek fleet in the *Persae,* "ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων, ἴτε,/ ἐλευθεροῦτε πατρίδ'' ('Come on, sons of the Greeks, for the freedom of your homeland', 402-3).[31] On Webb's appraisal,

> Byron was politically and emotionally committed to the ideal of Greek independence from Turkish hegemony but less convinced of the virtues of ancient Greek literature and mythology and intolerant of that Platonic philosophy of love and 'intellectual beauty' Shelley wished to mediate to his contemporaries.[32]

This distinction between Byron's political philhellenism and his reservations about cultural Hellenism is often overlooked. At times, conflation of the two concepts has led to the retrospective construction of a teleological drive from his study of ancient Greek literature at Harrow to his support for the Greek War of Independence and celebrated death in Greece at the age of thirty-six, as in Clement Goode's reading:

> Byron's solicitations for Greece, to visit and know the country in 1809 and to defend it fifteen years later, were activated first and last by his ideas of ancient Greece derived from the period of his schooling. In

[31] *CPW* 1.130; Beaton (2013) 9.
[32] Webb (1993) 162.

> 1824 he was fighting more with Alcibiades than with Prince Mavrokordatos.[33]

In fact, the route of Byron's post-university travels in 1809–11 in the Iberian Peninsula and eastern Mediterranean was largely fortuitous in that Napoleon's victories on the Continent had closed off the conventional Grand Tour through France, Switzerland and Italy. Similarly, A.N. Wilson's view that 'Byron had supported Greek independence as an extension of his classical education at Harrow and Cambridge' fails to acknowledge Byron's deep-rooted libertarian sympathies for other countries like Italy, Spain and Venezuela (see below).[34]

In this respect, readings of Byron have been overshadowed by the final myth-making event of his story, his death through illness and medical malpractice in 1824 while based at Missolonghi, where he was actively involved with the London Greek Committee's support for the Greek independence movement. The shock reverberated round the world, and his image thereafter—one of self-sacrifice in the struggle for Hellenic liberty—has been indissolubly associated with Greece in a deluge of representations in art, literature and reportage. In Joseph 'Dionysius' Odevaere's 1826 *The Death of Byron,* for example, the heroic figure of the dead Byron, beautiful and improbably young, lies spotlit on a bed in a darkened room. Odevaere presents Byron as both poet and libertarian, a laurel wreath on his head, his lyre beneath his inert arm, selected poems recorded in the bed's decorative roundels and his sword in its scabbard hanging on the bedhead.[35] The setting is rich in classical trimmings, with

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[33] Goode (1923) 43 n.1. See also Bohm, 'Not content with salvaging the classical heritage of Greece in his poetry, Byron had undertaken to struggle for contemporary Greek independence, losing his life at age thirty-six' (Bohm (2004) 47); and Elizabeth Longford's amatory analogy, cited in Wallace (1997) 132: 'Byron and Greece waited for each other, like Jacob and Rachel, for seven years'.

[34] Wilson (2014) 312.

[35] Titles shown are Byron's *Ode to Napoleon, The Bride of Abydos, Childe Harold, The Corsair, The Siege of Corinth, Lara* (presumably), *The Giaour* and *The Lament of Tasso*, but not *Don Juan* or satires like *Beppo*.

a truncated statue of Eleutheria ('Liberty') in the room, and outside the window a Greek landscape with trees, water and the ruins of a Greek temple site under a lowering sky.



Fig. 1: Joseph ('Dionysius') Odevaere, *The Death of Byron* (1826)

It was this conjunction of poet and soldier that Giuseppe Mazzini later eulogised:

> I know no more beautiful symbol of the future destiny and mission of art than the death of Byron in Greece. The holy alliance of poetry with the cause of the peoples; the union—still so rare—of thought and action—which alone completes the human Word, and is destined to emancipate the world.[36]

But if Byron met with an idolatrous reception on the continent, there remained a long-lived degree of circumspection among the English establishment. On the return of his body to London and for the following 145 years, 'the open profligacy of his life prevented his commemoration in Westminster Abbey', in the words of the Abbey's current website.[37] When the Abbey relented in 1969, the

[36] Mazzini (1891) 93.
[37] http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/lord-byron [September 2018]

memorial stone provided by the Poetry Society for the Abbey's Poets' Corner demonstrated the continuing potency of the Byronic legend in its singular focus on his death at Missolonghi, Greece.



Fig. 2: Byron's memorial stone, Westminster Abbey.
Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

For almost two centuries, Byron's philhellenist affiliations have been acclaimed in superlative terms, including by current classical scholars like Paul Cartledge:

> Second to no other philhellene, whether English or French, and whether on paper or in the field of combat, was George Gordon, Lord Byron. He was and is the principal avatar of what may fairly be called the 'Age of Leonidas' in the early nineteenth century.[38]

Yet in the last few years Roderick Beaton's 'careful reconsideration of Byron's writings and actions' has shown that even his philhellenism is subject to some qualification. Beaton argues that, despite *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*'s 'conventional', if 'memorably expressed', 'musings on the decline of ancient glory' and its vivid evocation of the contemporary Greek landscape which captured the reading public's imagination, Byron was deeply ambivalent, and latterly negative, about the political prospects of the Greeks after his youthful visit. Even in his last

[38] Cartledge (2006, revd. ppbk. 2013) 186.

months at Missolonghi, he 'was far from being a typical philhellene—or even perhaps a philhellene at all'.[39]

Beaton suggests the likelihood of a reciprocal cycle of influence between Byron and Shelley, dating from their summer together in 1816 when Byron's personal experience of contemporary Greece may have broadened Shelley's view beyond an obsession with ancient Greece, and in turn Shelley's translation of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Vinctus* inspired Byron to write his poem *Prometheus* (see Chapter 6 below). Later, in 1821 in Pisa, it was Percy and Mary Shelley who became friends with Alexandros Mavrokordatos, soon to leave Italy to become one of the leaders of the Greek Revolution. On the very day that Byron, disillusioned by the Italian revolutionary movement, joined the Shelleys in Pisa, Shelley—with a prefatory cry of 'We are all Greeks'—dedicated his *Hellas* to Mavrokordatos.[40] In his *Byron's War* of 2013, Beaton argues that it was the 'Greek fever' of the Shelleys which ultimately, but only belatedly, infected Byron, who adopted no public stance for over a year after the Revolution began.[41]

There remained, though, a crucial difference between the two poets. Shelley was enthralled by the conceptual notion of a Hellenic Greece rooted in the ancient world. In 1821 the energising factor for Byron seems to have been the idea of liberty rather than Greece itself, despite the power of his poetic rhetoric in lines like 'Fair Greece! Sad relic of departed worth' in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (2.73) a decade earlier. On Lady Blessington's account of conversations with Byron the year before he died, the notoriously changeable Byron maintained 'there are but two sentiments to which I am constant—a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant'.[42] Too

[39] Beaton (2010) 3, 15.
[40] Beaton (2010) 4-6.
[41] Beaton (2013) 84-93.
[42] Lovell (1969) 220.

young for personal involvement in the revolutions in America and France, he predicted revolution in England and championed uprisings against oppression in Italy, Spain and Latin America as well as Greece. Jeffrey Cox notes 'Byron's evocation of Dante as the voice of national liberation in *The Prophecy of Dante*'.[43] Byron was particularly impressed by the struggle against the Spanish in Venezuela under its revolutionary leader, Simón Bolívar, after whom he named his custom-built schooner. In 1819, and again in 1822 after the debacle of the failed Neapolitan uprising in which he actively supported the insurgent Carbonari, he floated to his incredulous friends the idea that he might settle in Venezuela. In one of his most poignant letters, he stated simply: 'I want a country—and a home—and—if possible—a free one'; 'there is no freedom in Europe—that's certain'. With a classical analogy, he asked 'when tens of thousands of our Countrymen are colonizing (like the Greeks of old in Sicily and Italy)…does my notion seem visionary or irrational?'.[44]

It is on the basis of demythologising Byron's relationship to the Graeco-Roman world, not an assumption of Hellenism, that any examination of Byron's engagement with ancient Greek and Latin has to be conducted.

Approaches to the study

In circumstances where the enduring and distorting power of the Byronic myth exerts a formidable force field, an empirical approach to generate evidence is required. The prime methodological strategy for this study has therefore been a holistic textual analysis of Byron's reception of classical Greek and Latin literature in his key works

[43] Cox (2014) 169.
[44] *BLJ* 6.225-27; 9.173-74.

and prose writings, including his letters. The research questions are simple but fundamental. With which classical works does Byron engage, and at what points in his literary career? How, and to what effect? And what is the resultant picture, as a totality?

The project has therefore had two main components. The foundational evidence behind the six core chapters derives from mapping patterns in (i) Byron's reception of classical texts, distinguishing Latin from Greek materials; (ii) his interaction with them in works of different genres; and (iii) his engagement with them over the course of his literary career. Too often Byron's classically-oriented works are read in deracinated extracts, but the dynamic arc of his engagement with the antique can only be appreciated fully by a diachronic approach of this kind. This panoptic view has been complemented by a close analysis of selected works, located synchronically within their historical and cultural context, to illustrate how variously and effectively Byron assimilates culturally distanced classical material to his own purposes.

The picture that emerges is of Byron's extensive and often highly creative use of classical allusions and references in formal and informal writings throughout his life. As with so many of his contemporaries, it was an ingrained mode of thought and composition, including in his youth for coded terms of discourse about homoerotic impulses, as discussed in Chapter 3.

However, the mapping process has revealed a somewhat different pattern in his exploitation of classical texts as formal models, with an intense engagement in his early years until 1812 and again in his maturity from 1818, but a comparative hiatus during his 'Years of Fame' when he published *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the Oriental tales. A major issue for the structure of the thesis has been the need

for appreciable selectivity in presenting the wealth of evidence, given the volume of Byron's writings and other relevant material. Therefore, while consideration is given to examples from Byron's entire corpus, the structural focus is on his early and late phases. For the same reasons, the thesis acknowledges, but does not recapitulate in detail, well-covered topics such as the debt of *Don Juan's* Juan and Haidée episode to that of Odysseus and Nausicaa in Homer's *Odyssey*—perhaps the *locus classicus* of Byronic classical intertextuality. Instead, a reading of the immediately subsequent episode proffers the seemingly unexplored proposal that elements of Don Juan's adventures in the seraglio are drawn not from Homer but from the account of Achilles among the women on Scyros in Latin sources, principally Statius' *Achilleid* 1.198-960 and Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 1.681-704 (see Chapter 5).

The first phase covered in Part I (chapters 1, 2 and 3 below) lasted roughly until 1812 when Byron was twenty-four. This was the period of his somewhat haphazard early education and subsequent time at Harrow and Cambridge (examined in Chapter 1), followed by his determinative two years of post-university travels, most importantly to Albania and Greece. Under the influence of school and university friends who were themselves engaged in classical translation, and under the sway of literary models like Alexander Pope and the popular contemporary satirist, William Gifford, Byron exhibited a close engagement with the classics, primarily in translations and neo-classical 'imitations'. These were Byron's apprentice years when his work was largely derivative. Thomas Moore, Byron's friend and biographer, gave his judgment as a fellow poet:

> [I]n stooping…to write after established models, as well in the Satire [the Juvenalian *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*] as in his earlier poems, he showed how little he had yet explored his own original

> resources, or found out those distinctive marks by which he was to be known through all time.[45]

Individual classical translations undertaken by Byron are often decontextualised when included in anthologies or cited in books and articles and rarely acknowledge the extent to which they were self-confessedly juvenile works produced during the course of his education. Chapter 2 therefore constructs a chronological catalogue of Byron's known classical translations and 'imitations' and sets them in the context of external influences. It demonstrates that these works were taken predominantly from Latin authors and that, while Byron did undertake a few free-standing translations from three ancient Greek authors (Aeschylus, Euripides and the contemporaneously popular 'Anacreon', in fact poems from the *Anacreontea*), they were exclusively products of his time at Harrow and Cambridge. Thereafter, for Greek, he confined himself to the extremely rare incorporation of lines in Greek or in translation in his original works, most notably his unimpressive elaboration on Sappho's 'Hesperus' fragment 104a in *Don Juan* 3.107.

As explored in Chapter 3, even while living in Athens in 1810–11, he did not engage directly with ancient Greek literature but instead translated Horace and produced a witty epigram in Latin, 'Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva*'. Shortly after his return to England, he wrote what is apparently his only other known extant classical composition, *Edleston,* a Latin elegy for his beloved John Edleston, formerly a chorister at Byron's Cambridge college. The catalogue in Chapter 2 shows that after this time, Byron largely abandoned the lexically-based literary undertaking of classical translation, apart from a number of Martial translations and 'imitations', and a later return to his *Hints from Horace* at a moment of literary controversy.

[45] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.175-76.

A new, much less classically-dependent, phase opened as Byron returned from the Eastern Mediterranean to be hailed as a bestselling author on the publication in 1812 of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, meaningfully sub-titled *A Romaunt*. Initially he lived—beyond his means—in London among the *beau monde* and the literary lions of the day, including Samuel Rogers and Thomas Moore who seem to have inspired a burst of direct Latinity in a series of translations (atypical in Byron's adulthood) of Martial epigrams (see Chapter 2). In 1816 Byron left England forever, 'exiled from my country by a species of ostracism' amid lurid gossip of incest with his sister and sodomy, marital and otherwise, after the breakdown of his marriage and virtual bankruptcy.[46] Famously, he spent the summer of 1816 in Geneva in close companionship with Percy and Mary Shelley, before moving on to Italy for the rest of his life until he left for his fatal expedition to Greece.

In the period from 1812 to 1817, Byron's major works were *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, A Romaunt*, the Oriental tales (*The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair*, and *Lara*), *Hebrew Melodies, The Prisoner of Chillon*, *Manfred* and *The Lament of Tasso*. So far as the hugely successful tales are concerned, Beaton observes that 'variously described as "Turkish", "Eastern", or "Oriental", what these tales are *not* is conspicuously Greek'.[47] True, Byron wrote of his 1813 *The Bride of Abydos* that 'the finest works of the Greeks', along with Schiller's *The Bride of Messina,* Alfieri's *Mirra* and the works of earlier British dramatists*,* were 'grounded on incidents of a similar cast'. But, as McGann comments, 'none of these provided an actual model for his own treatment; Byron cited them merely as authorities for justifying the incest-theme'.[48] In the actual text of *The Bride of Abydos*, individual

[46] Lovell (1969) 73.
[47] Beaton (2012) 32.
[48] *BLJ* 3.196; *CPW* 3.436.

classical quotations were not Greek but Latin, from Horace, Ovid and Tacitus.[49] The 'Advertisement' for his less well-known *Parisina* similarly invoked 'the Greek dramatists' in support of subjects which 'the delicacy or fastidiousness of the reader' might consider 'unfit for the purposes of poetry'.[50] As Byron observed in 1818 of his previous seven volumes of poetry:

> But then I only sung of passions
> That do not suit with modern fashions
> Of incest & such like diversions
> Permitted only to the Persians—
> Or Greeks to bring upon their stages
> But that was in the earlier ages. (*E Nihilo Nihil,* 7-11)

E Nihilo Nihil's tone may have been flippant, but the poem pointed to a significant reality when, towards the poem's end, Byron (not for the last time) invoked Virgil to herald a shift from 'the Romantic' to 'sing[ing…] in a book that's bigger—/ Oh Muse! Prepare for thy Ascension' (34-35), an allusion to *Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus!,* Verg. *Ecl.* 4.1.[51] The evidence presented in Part II of this thesis (chapters 4, 5 and 6) demonstrates that his poetic declaration at line 18 of 'Whate'er I was—I'm classic now' is indeed an appropriate descriptor for Byron's final and more substantive phase of engagement with ancient texts for both serious and humorous purposes in the genres of satire, epic and tragedy.

Byron's pronouncement came in the context of his escalating crusade against 'the wrong revolutionary poetical system—or systems' of contemporary poets like Walter Scott, Robert Southey, William Wordsworth, Thomas Moore, Thomas

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[49] In *The Bride of Abydos*, lines 1.317ff. echo Hor. *Odes* 2.17.5-12; 2.454-57 paraphrase Ov. *Met.* 7.66-68; and 2.431,'He makes a solitude—and calls it—peace!', translates Tacitus' *Agricola* 30.5, *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. Lines about Hero's song (2.16-17) may refer to Ovid's *Heroides* 19.

[50] *CPW* 3.258.

[51] 'Sicilian Muses, let us sing a somewhat loftier strain', an intent Virgil returned to at *Aen.* 7.45 to introduce the grander half of his epic: *maius opus moveo* ('greater is the task I attempt'). See also Byron's *Don Juan* 12.25, 'Begin/ "Paulo Majora"'.

Campbell and himself.[52] Compared with Pope, he asserted with a classical analogy, it 'is all Horace then, and Claudian now amongst us—and if I had to begin again—I would model myself accordingly'.[53] Byron's belittling reference to Claudian fittingly savours of the encomiastic poetry for rulers which Byron abhorred in Southey's output. But that Byron holds up Horace as a literary exemplar is noteworthy, given the all but ubiquitous quotation in the literature of Byron's resounding cry, 'Then farewell, Horace, whom I hated so', taken from a passage rich in the physiological imagery of disease to express his distaste for the rote learning he endured at Harrow (*CHP* 4.74-7). In fact, Horace is a bedrock of his later work.

For Anthony Howe, Byron's declaration of the wrong poetical system is 'not a curmudgeonly or reactionary reflex; it is informed, rather, by the poet's acute sensitivity to the generic priorities of the day' at a moment when Byron was 'poised between reaction and innovation' in moving away from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and towards *Don Juan*.[54] Byron throughout his life maintained his admiration for the classical models of Milton, Dryden and Pope. His growing concern about the current state of literature in England was to flare into his impassioned support of Pope, 'the little Queen Anne's man', in the Pope–Bowles controversy of 1819–26, a lively pamphlet war among British *literati* over William Lisle Bowles's critical remarks on Pope in his 1806 edition of Pope's works.[55] In Venice too, Byron reported on 'the Devil's own row' fuelled by his friend, Hobhouse, whose 1818 'Essay on the present literature of Italy' concluded that 'a great question at this moment divides the learned world in Italy into the partisans of classical poetry, and of the poetry of romance'.[56]

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[52] *BLJ* 5.265.
[53] *BLJ* 5.265.
[54] Howe (2013) 34.
[55] See Byron's *Letter to John Murray, Esqre.* and *Observations upon Observations of the Revd. W.L.B. &c. &c. &c.* of 1821 (*CMP* 120-83).
[56] *BLJ* 5.265 and 6.96; Hobhouse (1818) 484-85.

The following year Byron referred in his preface to *The Prophecy of Dante* to 'the present bitterness of the classic and romantic war', though René Wellek argues that Byron (who was personally acquainted with August Schlegel and Madame de Staël, prime agents in the controversy) 'considered the distinction "romantic-classical" as merely a Continental debate'.[57]

Nicholas Halmi stresses the 'temporalization of history', Reinhart Kosellek's term for 'the process in which, from roughly the mid-eighteenth century on, the present was recognized as distinct from the past'. For Halmi, 'the more specific literary consequences of the emergent sense of historical discontinuity were recognized, for instance, by William Wordsworth as the degradation of literary taste and by Novalis as the obsolescence of literary forms'.[58] As Sachs has recently demonstrated, 'the later eighteenth century was full of dire prognostications about the decline of literature', a decline seen as embracing not simply the quality of literature but also its importance in British culture and the intellect of its readers.[59] The concerns expressed by Wordsworth and Byron were manifestations of this *Zeitgeist* but, while not disowning his own contribution to 'the Age of Decline of English Poetry' (as Lovell notes, Byron more than once 'referred to the false taste of the age, which he felt he had helped to corrupt by the publication of his non-satiric poetry'), Byron apportioned a substantial part of the blame to the pens of Wordsworth and his fellow Lake School poets, especially Southey, together with 'the absurd and systematic depreciation of Pope' (see chapters 4 and 5).[60]

[57] *CPW* 4.215; Wellek (1963) 148.
[58] Halmi (2013) 369.
[59] Sachs (2018) 6.
[60] *CMP* 104; Lovell (1969) 175, n. 49.

In opposition to the doctrines of Wordsworth (who, Byron tartly noted, 'made a poem about a Washing tub—& a blind boy'), Byron's 1821 pamphlet, *Letter to John Murray, Esqre.*, 'documents a long-held and firm belief in the sovereignty of the classical tradition of literature' (Nicholson).[61] Though Novalis in 1798 had declared 'Wir sind aus der Zeit der allgemein geltenden *Formem* heraus' ('we are past the time of universally valid *forms*'), Byron in writing, and writing about, what are regarded as his three 'classical' tragedies—*Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*—was insistent on the need to return to the generic norms of classical tragedy, as explored in Chapter 6.[62] And more generally, Butler points to the 'revived and conscious classicism' of the younger Romantics,—Byron, Shelley and Keats.[63]

Against the backdrop of this heightened theoretical debate, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 discuss the more original and complex usage of the classical in the works of Byron's literary maturity from 1818 to his death in 1824. During this period, Byron's Protean poetic artistry harnessed the 'strongly divergent tendencies' that Stephanie Dumke describes Goethe recognising in both man and poet—'contrary drives towards boundlessness and limitation, heightened subjectivity and objectivity, as well as inwardness and an engagement with the world'.[64] Byron by this stage was largely carving out his own distinctive path, even if the triggers were sometimes the familiar ones of Southey as a negative influence and Shelley as a more positive one. His relocation to Italy had weakened, though it did not wholly sever, his connections to literary London, while it simultaneously exposed him to the earlier Italian literary

[61] *CMP* 132 and 408.
[62] Novalis cited in Halmi (2013) 369.
[63] Butler (1981) 123.
[64] Dumke (2016) 24.

traditions of Ariosto, Tasso and Dante and to more contemporary Italian, and French-inflected, neo-classical influences like Vittorio Alfieri and Vicenzo Monti.

In this period, he reverted to deploying classical works for satirical purposes, though mostly in a different idiom from his early *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* and he worked increasingly with the two classically-based models of epic and tragedy. The material is therefore considered generically, with Chapter 4 focusing on satire, Chapter 5 on epic and Chapter 6 on drama, within a common analytical framework which pays particular attention to the effects of Byron's classical intertextuality and to his play with form. Epic is considered before tragedy because *Don Juan* is a development from the satire of *Beppo* and its first cantos preceded Byron's turn to classical tragedies.

Chapter 4 appraises Byron's use of classical—indeed, almost exclusively Latin—precedents in his late satires, in particular his debt to Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis (divi) Claudii* in his 1821 *The Vision of Judgement*, written in response to Southey's *A Vision of Judgement* about George III's fictional apotheosis. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate a curious discordance in tone and technique among genres tackled at much the same time. In an era when epic was hugely popular in England, Byron's approach in *Don Juan* was an ironising subversion of the norms of classical epic he claimed to be adopting.[65] By contrast, when he turned to playwriting late in his life, Byron stringently upheld, rather than undermined, his controversial commitment to restrictive classical conventions for his three historical tragedies, *Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus*, and *The Two Foscari*. Chapter 6 also argues that the principal classical affinity of these three professedly 'Greek' closet dramas of 1820–

[65] For the popularity of epic, see Curran (1986) 158-59, Tucker (2008) 49.

21 was in fact with the contemporaneously unfashionable Roman tragedies of Seneca rather than those of ancient Greece.

In conclusion then, what is most striking about Byron's engagement with classical literature throughout his writing life, once he left behind the enforced requirements of school and university, is his essential Latinity.

Part I: The apprentice years, 1788–1812

Chapter 1: Byron's Classical Expertise

'Of the Classics I know about as much as most Schoolboys
after a Discipline of thirteen years' (Byron)[1]

In Byron's lifetime, 'the ability to quote the classics at will was a sign of breeding, the attribute of a gentleman, however loutish in other respects'.[2] This caste signifier was developed over several years of classical learning by rote and was not confined to the scholar squire or parson but characterised men across the top echelons of society. The rival elder statesmen of Byron's youth, William Pitt the Younger and Charles Fox, were both excellent Greek scholars, with Fox making Greek fashionable in the Whig circles which Byron was shortly to frequent.[3] Viscount Castlereagh, Byron's political bête noire, was a Cambridge-educated classicist and Robert Peel, Byron's fourth-form mate at Harrow, was outstanding in Latin and Greek.[4] Byron even reported to Walter Scott in 1812 that when he was presented to the Prince Regent, the prince 'spoke alternately of Homer & yourself & seemed well acquainted with both'.[5] Knowledge of Latin and Greek was, as Christopher Stray has emphasized, a crucial marker for group self-recognition (and hence for social exclusion).[6]

Byron's status as a peer of the realm and as a Harrovian appears to have led to a widespread assumption of his being accomplished in both classical languages. Reference to his classical education, usually unqualified by comment on his deficiencies in attendance and attainment, is a recurrent trope. Henry Stead

[1] January 1808, *BLJ* 1.148.
[2] Tyerman (2000) 155.
[3] Clarke (1945) 7.
[4] Tyerman (2000) 161.
[5] *BLJ* 2.182.
[6] Stray (1998) 29.

emphasizes that 'Byron's classical education amounted to around 2,500 hours of tuition in Greek and Latin'; and Peter Graham describes Byron as displaying 'a classically educated, gentlemanly concern' for matters of fact in his Eastern tales.[7] Fiona MacCarthy's 2002 biography of Byron asserts:

> [H]is exposure to the ancient texts had been long and intensive…These studies left him with a feeling for the austere grandeur of Greek tragedy. He admired especially Aeschylus' *Prometheus*…and the *Medea* of Euripides.[8]

Yet this fails to reflect the nuance of Byron's own account which suggests that, three examples excepted, Greek tragedy in general was *not* hugely congenial to him:

> Of the Prometheus of Aeschylus I was passionately fond as a boy—(it was one of the Greek plays we read thrice a year at Harrow) indeed that and the "Medea"—were the only ones—except the "Seven before Thebes" which ever much pleased me.[9]

More discerningly, M.L. Clarke in his examination of *Greek Studies in England 1700–1830*, while averring that 'Byron had had the usual public school grounding in classics', concludes that 'Byron had a certain interest in Greek history, though little in Greek literature as literature'.[10]

This chapter approaches Byron's engagement with the classics as far as possible from primary sources, drawing on evidence from Byron's early life and education, and from analysis of all classical references in his journals and c.3,000 extant letters.[11] Andrew Nicholson distinguishes between Byron the prose-writer and Byron the poet on grounds of self-consciousness: 'in his letters, journals and formal (non-fiction) prose, [Byron] is, or attempts to be, himself—however diverse that

[7] Stead (2016) 189; Graham (2004) 33.
[8] MacCarthy (2002, ppbk. 2014) 41.
[9] *BLJ* 5.268.
[10] Clarke (1945) 166-67.
[11] Marchand estimated prospectively that his collected edition would contain about 3,000 letters (*BLJ* 1.24); Cochran subsequently estimated 2,950 letters as extant, with new ones still coming to light. https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/introduction19.pdf.

"self" or those self-perceptions may be; in his poetry he is or attempts to be anything *other* than self'.[12] Nonetheless, like Cicero and Pliny before him (albeit that Byron explicitly cast himself as Pomponius Atticus to the Cicero of his friend, John Cam Hobhouse), the poet can sometimes be suspected of practising the epistolary form as performance art and transmuting the events of daily life for its effect on the recipient.[13] In 1821, a plainly exasperated Hobhouse complained to his diary that he had often let Byron know that his publisher, John Murray—'this town crier of his epistles'—read Byron's 'confidential letters to the promiscuous frequenters of his reading room'.[14] Despite Ruskin's accolade that Byron in both his letters and poetry wrote 'as easily as a hawk flies and as clearly as a lake reflects the exact truth in the precisely narrowest terms', a less ingenuous reader would be wary about the reliability of every Byronic claim.[15] Nonetheless, important conclusions about his engagement with Latin and Greek can be reached from their contents and, equally tellingly, from the omissions.

The tutelage of a gentleman of rank at the turn of the nineteenth century entailed a close, if often wearisomely repetitive, acquaintance with Roman and Greek literature and history. This learning was then exhibited in adult life in the use of classical tags and references, not least in correspondence. In Byron's case, however, his elevation to the peerage at the age of ten as the 6th Baron Byron of Rochdale disguised a relatively impoverished childhood of equivocal social standing, just as his belated entry to Harrow masked a fragmented education punctuated by recurrent inattention and absenteeism. In adult life, Byron exhibited a measure of social and

[12] Nicholson (2004) 194.
[13] *BLJ* 6.89.
[14] Hobhouse diary, October 28th 1821. https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/29-18211.pdf. See also Graham (1984) 283, 287 for Hobhouse's letters to Byron on the point.
[15] Ruskin (2012) 96.

scholastic insecurity: Byron frequently commented on his shyness and Thomas Moore judged that 'he was, in a remarkable degree, diffident in his intellectual powers'.[16] Christopher Tyerman's history of Harrow School concludes that academically Byron achieved little there and that he 'left school with a dislike of Virgil and Horace and a feeble grasp of Greek vocabulary'.[17] Byron himself apparently agreed: 'every thing like a task was repugnant to my nature; and I came away a very indifferent classic, and read in nothing that was useful'.[18]

Byron's early education

Given the strong relationship between class and classics, Byron's ancestry might have led to expectations of an accomplished engagement with Latin and Greek. His family claimed descent on his paternal side from the de Buruns, large landowners under William the Conqueror, and on that of his mother—a Gordon of Gight—from James I. However, despite recurrent emphasis on Byron's 'patrician status', George Byron Gordon (the poet's name in early childhood) was not born in the direct line of the barony, and his Westminster-educated father, John ('Mad Jack') Byron, was a handsome and profligate scapegrace who married Byron's orphaned heiress mother for her fortune.[19] John Byron promptly squandered her money in a 'chasm of debt' before abandoning wife and baby, and dying in France in penury in 1791 when Byron was only three.[20] Byron's mother, having decamped from London to Aberdeen for financial reasons a few months after his birth, was left to bring up her son alone in exigent financial circumstances; only sufficient of her fortune remained to yield £135

[16] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.175.
[17] Tyerman (2000) 158.
[18] Medwin (1824) 61.
[19] For references to Byron's patrician status, see for example Rawson (1990) 84.
[20] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.6 and 9.

per year, little more than the income of a shopkeeper (William St Clair suggests £260 p.a. as the income benchmark of gentility a generation later in 1816).[21] Then, in 1794, the six-year old Byron unexpectedly became heir presumptive to the title when his cousin was killed in the Battle of Calvi. Four years later, he succeeded his great-uncle ('The Wicked Lord') as 6th Baron Byron of Rochdale. Unfortunately, his inheritance chiefly amounted to debts and encumbered estates, including Newstead Abbey. Even when belatedly he went to Harrow, where total annual costs in Byron's day were £100–200 depending on extras like handwriting, drawing, fencing and so on, his mother struggled to fund all his educational and medical needs, despite support secured in 1799 of £300 per year from the Civil List.[22]

Hence, although Byron came from notable, if sometimes disreputable and disputatious, families on both sides, his widowed mother's impoverishment dictated that his own early years were spent in rented lodgings in a lower middle-class milieu in Aberdeen rather than in surroundings appropriate to the landed aristocracy.[23] His educational progression mirrored both the family's financial constraints and his own evolving social status. It was conspicuously marked by patchy attendance and institutional disruption, involving some six schools or tutors in three different cities from age five to thirteen.

First, in 1792 when he was nearly five, the déclassé young Byron went to a local one-room school in Aberdeen run by John 'Bodsy' Bowers where according to a schoolmate 'the dialect was the broadest, the tone of the school the roughest'.[24] Failing to make appropriate progress, he was moved after a year to the school of the

[21] Marchand (1971, ppbk.1976) 11; St Clair (1990) 4.
[22] Tyerman (2000) 156.
[23] Marchand (1971, ppbk.1976) 13.
[24] Eisler (1999) 22.

Reverend John Ross who swiftly taught Byron to read and fired his lifelong enthusiasm for Roman history:

> The moment I could read—my grand passion was *history*—and why I know not—but I was particularly taken with the battle near the Lake Regillus in the Roman History.[25]

The appeal of a narrative in which the Romans narrowly fought off an army of the Latin League including the last, expelled king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus (Livy 2.18-20), may be read as an early foreshadowing of his strong anti-monarchical sympathies. On Byron's retrospective account, this was the beginning of his immersion in history, and particularly Roman history, which, as discussed later in this chapter, became so fundamental to his mental landscape.

Byron was then tutored by John Paterson—'a good Scholar…With him I began Latin in *Ruddiman's Grammar*'.[26] Originally written in 1714 but repeatedly reissued, Thomas Ruddiman's *Rudiments of the Latin Tongue* is classed by Robert Ogilvie as a scholastic monument. It helped beginners to learn Latin by, unusually, using English as well as Latin, but even so nearly half the examples were drawn from Latin authors.[27] A 1785 edition of Ruddiman's *Rudiments* (one close in time to Byron's own usage) shows that these examples were mainly from Cicero (twenty-four in all), then Virgil and Ovid (including one from the *Ibis),* followed by five each from Terence and Plautus. There was also a scattering from Caesar, Pliny, Livy, Sallust, Quintilian, Catullus and Horace plus one each from Tibullus, Juvenal, Persius, Suetonius and Phaedrus (*The Fables,* 2.5.25), as well as references to authors without quotation. While Robert Tracy suggests that 'the fairly limited number of

[25] *BLJ* 8.108. The Battle of Lake Regillus was later to be celebrated in Thomas Macaulay's 1842 *Lays of Ancient Rome.*
[26] *BLJ* 8.108.
[27] Ogilvie (1964) 57; S. Kirk, *Lord Byron's Latin Grammar,* paper to the Classical Association Conference, 14 April 2014.

Latin quotations employed by Victorian novelists' may derive from the widely used *Eton Latin Grammar* rather than memorized from the original texts, in Byron's case there does not appear to be a correlation between examples in Ruddiman, or indeed the *Eton Latin Grammar,* and the Latin quotations in Byron's letters to suggest that they had anything more than a grammatical impact—if indeed that.[28]

Just before his seventh birthday in 1795, Byron moved to Aberdeen Grammar School, pronounced, as he later recollected, 'Scotice "Schule"—Aberdonice "Squeel"'.[29] Here 'low fees…made for a no-frills education' but nonetheless, since only Latin was taught, Byron had the opportunity to consolidate a sound foundation in the language.[30] However Moore, after examination of the school's records and consultation with Byron's grammar school contemporaries, concluded in his biography that 'though quick, when he [Byron] could be persuaded to attend, or had any study that pleased him, he was in general very low in the class, nor seemed ambitious of being promoted any higher'.[31]

Three years later Byron succeeded to the peerage and Mrs Byron moved her son to England, though her plan of settling at the dilapidated ancestral home of Newstead Abbey proved to be impracticable. While he was staying for some eight months among the county town society of Nottingham with relatives of his father, he was not in school and, uncharacteristically, pleaded with his mother for lessons with a private tutor, Jeremiah 'Dummer' Rogers: 'if some plan of this kind is not adopted I shall be called or rather branded with the name of a dunce which you know I could never bear'.[32] Mrs Byron's reluctance, occasioned perhaps by the cost, was overcome

[28] Tracy (1982) 6. From the *Eton Latin Grammar* Byron appears to have used only Martial's *fortuna multis dat nimis, satis nulli* (*Epig.* 12.10.2) from an epigram translated by Byron (see Chapter 2).
[29] *BLJ* 8.108.
[30] Eisler (1999) 24; Marchand (1971, ppbk.1976) 14.
[31] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.13.
[32] *BLJ* 1.39.

and Mr. Rogers 'read parts of Virgil and Cicero with him, and represents his proficiency to have been, for his age, considerable'.[33] Byron later sent a message to his old instructor that he could still recite twenty verses of Virgil, which he well remembered having read with Rogers.[34] He seems to have been on his best behaviour but, even so, Rogers' assessment was surely generous. Certainly Byron's official guardians, his mother apart, judged the eleven-year-old Scottish-bred Lord unfit for a top public school school like Eton or Harrow, and in 1799 they arranged for him to attend Dr. William Glennie's academy in Dulwich Grove, a minor school in London run by a fellow Scot from Aberdeenshire.[35]

Dislocated from his own class yet again, Byron was the only peer in this modest establishment. Moore, with access to first-hand accounts, conveys how unsatisfactory this placement proved for all concerned. The biographer himself criticised the mode of teaching, with Byron having to repeat earlier work in 'toiling through the rudiments again in one of the forms prescribed by the English schools'. The school's proximity to town encouraged unhelpful visits from Mrs. Byron who was only too willing to encourage her son's absences from what Byron described as 'this damned place'. Moore comments:

> [I]n vain was it stated to her [Mrs Byron] that, in all the elemental parts of learning which are requisite for a youth destined to a great public school, young Byron was much behind other youths of his age.[36]

Eventually, after nearly two years, the situation was so unacceptable that efforts were made to secure Byron a school more appropriate to his rank, where his mother could

[33] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.27-28.
[34] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.27-28.
[35] On succeeding to the title, Byron had become a ward of the Court of Chancery with three official guardians: his mother, his solicitor John Hanson, and a remote and reluctant relative, the Earl of Carlisle.
[36] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.30-31.

not interfere. His solicitor/guardian John Hanson, whose own son attended Harrow, prevailed on the school's headmaster, Dr. Joseph Drury, to accept Byron, on the basis 'that his education had been neglected; that he was ill prepared for a public school, but that he [Hanson] thought there was a *cleverness* about him'.[37] The aggrieved Dr. Glennie recorded his verdict:

> [T]o Harrow he went, as little prepared as it is natural to suppose from two years of elementary instruction, thwarted by every art that could estrange the mind of youth from preceptor, from school, and from all serious study.[38]

Byron at Harrow and Cambridge

For a proud and sensitive boy, Byron's position in 1801 as he started at Harrow was an unenviable one. True, he was, nominally at least, a Lord and for the first time in his life had schoolmates of the same class as his own, alongside the sons of the new mercantile plutocrats. Harrow was in its social prime: out of 345 names on the school's Bill in 1803, Byron was one of forty-one actual or future titled pupils.[39] However, Byron lacked their upbringing and their deep pockets, though his mother's self-sacrificing efforts to fund him shielded him considerably. Her care notwithstanding, Byron had for some while been finding his unsophisticated and temperamental single parent increasingly embarrassing. Dr Glennie provided a disparaging description of his Scottish countrywoman:

> Mrs. Byron was a total stranger to English society and English manners; with an exterior far from prepossessing, an understanding where nature had not been more bountiful, a mind almost wholly without cultivation,…not…endowed with powers to retrieve the fortune, and form the character and manners of a young nobleman.[40]

[37] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.38.
[38] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.36.
[39] Thornton (1885) 196.
[40] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.32.

Byron was additionally handicapped among callous schoolboys by a lame leg and a Scottish accent which he sought to suppress.[41]

Academically he was joining Harrow without the requisite educational basics, despite being considerably older than most at entry: Byron was 13½ when the average age for entry was 10½.[42] This was of material consequence, since the school initially assigned boys to forms based on attainment in classical languages rather than age. On assessment of their proficiency, boys worked their way up through the introductory forms of Phaedrus, Terence, Ovid and Grammar (the form names reflecting the topics of study), then from the Third Form to the Sixth. Byron objected to the prospect of being taught alongside much younger boys and the Head, with surprising delicacy, arranged for the new entrant to be given personal tuition by his own son, Henry, a housemaster at the school, until he was equipped to join his age group in the Fourth Form. Despite rather fraught relations between Byron and his tutor, his rapid induction was something of an achievement but it meant that Byron missed the solid grounding in vocabulary and grammar he might otherwise have acquired in the junior forms.

Harrow's formal syllabus was exclusively classical and in Byron's time offered a balance of Latin and Greek, concentrating on grammar and philology, with verse composition in both languages. There was also a Harrow tradition of promoting free English verse translation of classical poetry, one which yielded some of Byron's earliest published poems (see Chapter 2). Tyerman describes the 'academic drudgery' of Harrow's narrow curriculum with its 'unrelenting monotony of construe

[41] His lameness was a very real disability: it was a cause of comment by staff, of practical jokes by his fellows, and of painful and restricted movement, necessitating a runner in cricket and a pony to convey him to the school bathing place. In an 1804 Harrow performance of a scene from the *Aeneid,* Byron played 'the sedate role of Latinus' to Peel's Turnus to avoid having to stand (Tyerman (2000) 158).
[42] Tyerman (2000)152, 122.

and composition, recitation, exercises and themes', 'themes' being English essays on classical topics. The focus on grammar and syntax was leavened to a limited extent by regular oratorical declamations from classical writers such as the Greek tragedians, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Cicero, Sallust, Livy and Tacitus as well as from English poets. The emphasis in Greek was on Homer and the tragedies, and in Latin, 'apart from the customary obeisance to Virgil', on 'the convivial, speculative, and satirical Horace'.[43]

The mode of teaching was 'endlessly repetitive', with pupils rehearsing their prepared lines and exercises to tutors before presenting them orally in form.[44] Byron's notes on his 1798 copy of Thomas Morell's Αἰσχύλου Προμηθεὺς Δεσμώτης (Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound)* show that he read the play at Harrow in 1803 and again in November–December 1804 when his line markings and occasional dates give an indication of the intensity of the school exercise.[45] He began preparation on Sunday 25 November 1804 for at least three lessons the following day. Unfortunately, most line groupings do not indicate the times of the lessons but certainly he prepared a total of 178 lines for four lessons on Friday 30 November, with a further 87 lines covered in at least two lessons the next day. At this rate, the complete text of 1,092 lines would have been read within just over a week of full lessons. In later life, Byron contrasted his first enthusiastic reception of Homer in translation with the socially required acquaintance of Homer in Greek:

> As a child I first read Pope's Homer with a rapture which no subsequent work could ever afford…As a boy I read Homer in the original, as we have all done, some of us by force, and a few by favour; under which description I come is nothing to the purpose, it is enough that I read him.[46]

[43] Tyerman (2000) 161, 163.
[44] Tyerman (1994) 30.
[45] Data taken from Byron's copy held in the Harrow School archive.
[46] Nicholson (1991) 147.

In a note to his *Hints from Horace*, Byron was to criticize the desensitising effect of this dreary rote learning on his appreciation of classical verse: 'the public school penance of "Long and Short" is enough to beget an antipathy to poetry for the residue of a man's life', a view paradoxically expressed more powerfully in the poetry of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:[47]

> I abhorr'd
> Too much, to conquer for the poet's sake,
> The drill'd dull lesson, forced down word by word
> In my repugnant youth
> …
> Then farewell, Horace; whom I hated so,
> Not for thy faults, but mine; it is a curse
> To understand, not feel thy lyric flow.
> To comprehend, but never love thy verse. *(CHP* 4.672-75, 685-88)

Similar sentiments ensured that, when visiting Rome from Venice in 1817, he deliberately avoided 'the Mantuan birthplace of that harmonious plagiary and miserable flatterer [Virgil], whose cursed hexameters were drilled into me at Harrow'.[48] The lines above from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are much quoted as evidence of Byron's dislike of Horace's verse, but analysis of all classical quotations in Byron's letters and journals shows that Horace is by far the most frequently quoted author, accounting for over 40% of some 100 quotations, with Virgil in second place at just over 25%. This compares with only one or two quotations each for the remainder of some twenty sources, with the exception of five each for Ovid and Lucretius—levels which may suggest stock phrases in common currency. The bias to Horace followed by Virgil lasted throughout Byron's life (albeit within a diminished rate of quotation altogether) and no doubt reflects the impact of 'the drill'd dull lesson' as well as social habit.

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[47] Byron's note to *Hints,* line 224, *CPW* 1.435. Whatever Shelley's view later, at age 20 he similarly felt that 'the evils of acquiring Greek & Latin considerably overbalance the benefits' (Webb (1976) 53).
[48] *BLJ* 5.211.

Overall, Byron's was not a distinguished career at Harrow. Technically a pupil from April 1801 to July 1805, in line with his earlier pattern of lax school attendance, he absented himself for much of his fifteenth year, from January to mid-February 1803, and again from July 1803 to January 1804 when in the grips of unrequited love for his distant cousin, Mary Chaworth. Reflecting on his schooldays in Italian exile nearly twenty years later, he declared that he had always '*hated'* Harrow until the last eighteen months.[49] This last was a period of emotional friendships and of homoerotic *tendresses,* perhaps even a fully sexualised affair, with younger boys, most enduringly with the Earl of Clare, four years Byron's junior (see Chapter 3). Having entered the school belatedly, he nearly left prematurely: Dr. Drury, after (unspecified) 'trouble and uneasiness' caused by Byron's conduct, suggested that the young Lord leave two terms early and be prepared for Oxbridge by 'some private tutor'.[50] In the event, the headmaster was persuaded to relent.

The headmaster's letters during Byron's time at Harrow refer to '"negligence", "childish practices", idleness, indifference, animal spirits, and want of judgment'.[51] Moore's enquiries found that 'the general character which he bore among the masters at Harrow was that of an idle boy, who would never learn anything'.[52] This was an assessment Byron by and large accepted, except for a caveat about knowledge acquired from extensive but allegedly surreptitious reading:

> At School—I was…remarked for the extent and readiness of my *general* information—but in all other respects idle—capable of great sudden exertions—(such as thirty or forty Greek Hexameters—of course with such prosody as it pleased God), but of few continuous drudgeries.[53]

[49] *BLJ* 9.37.
[50] Eisler (1999) 80.
[51] Tyerman (2000) 158.
[52] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.59
[53] *BLJ* 9.42.

Harrow provided ample time for, and encouragement of, learning outside timetabled teaching, and Byron's memorandum-book provides a startlingly voluminous list of his teenage reading from which he maintained he could quote. Specifically in relation to the classical world, he claims to have read in Roman history 'Hooke, Decline and Fall by Gibbon, Ancient History by Rollin (including an account of the Carthaginians, &c.), besides Livy, Tacitus, Eutropius, Cornelius Nepos, Julius Cæsar, Arrian, Sallust', a list that oddly omits Suetonius, given Byron's selective discussion of Tacitus, Suetonius and Sallust when wooing Annabella Milbanke (see below); in Greek history 'Mitford's Greece, Leland's Philip, Plutarch, Potter's Antiquities, Xenophon, Thucydides, Herodotus'; in biography 'Cæsar, Sallust (Catiline and Jugurtha)'; in eloquence 'Demosthenes, Cicero, Quintilian'; and in poetry, 'Greek and Latin [classics] without number'.[54]

While Byron's writings demonstrate that he had certainly read more extensively than his school reports might suggest, his intimate Cambridge companion, Francis Hodgson, reacted sharply to the potential 'false impression' conveyed by this catalogue when it was published in Moore's *Life*:

> It is utterly impossible that B., with the life he led, should, at the age of nineteen, have read Livy and Tacitus through in the Latin, and Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch in the Greek. As to Thucydides, I feel convinced that while I knew him he never could have thoroughly understood the speeches in the original without the greatest difficulty, and more pains than he was likely to take. He must mean that he read these authors in translations.[55]

Hodgson's caveat, based on first-hand knowledge, is to be borne in mind in appraising Byron's reading of the classics at all stages of his life. It is notable that the ancient Greek works in the (almost certainly incomplete) 1827 library sale

[54] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.96-97.
[55] Hodgson, J.T. (1878) 2.206.

catalogue of books incontestably owned by Byron are all translations, with the exception of a 1783 *Anacreon* in Greek and Latin (probably a Foulis Press edition) with Shelley's autograph, which suggests it had belonged to Shelley before his death in 1822. By contrast, there are a number of volumes in untranslated Latin by Aulus Gellius, Horace, Petronius, Seneca, Suetonius and Tacitus. The classical translations in Byron's library at this late period, when he had been living in Italy for several years, are mostly in Italian (works by Diodorus Siculus, Herodotus, Lucian, Homer's *Iliad*, Josephus ('Giuseppe'), Pindar and Xenophon) and French (Lucian, Marcus Aurelius and a collection of Greek novels).[56] The only translations in English are Mitchell's 1822 *Aristophanes*, Berwick's 1809 *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, and *The Greek Tragic Theatre* (1779) in seven volumes with translations of Aeschylus by Robert Potter, Sophocles by Thomas Francklin and Euripides by Michael Wodhull.

As Byron's friend as well as biographer, Moore goes to some lengths to argue, in the face of Byron's conspicuous 'backwardness in the mere verbal scholarship', that the poet had 'a mind too inquisitive and excursive to be imprisoned within statutable limits'.[57] He cannot, however, disguise a tone of shock when confronted with concrete proof of the *degree* of Byron's backwardness:

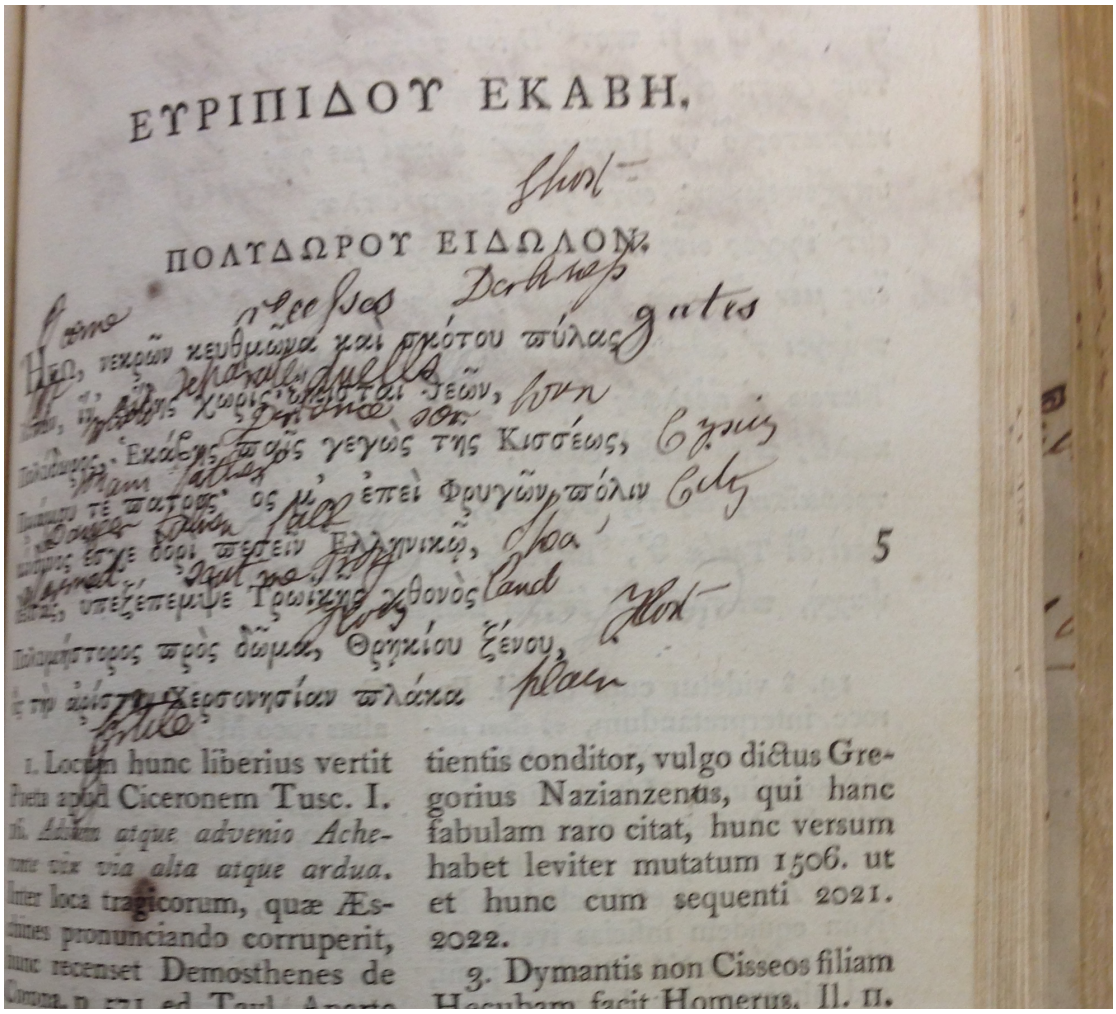
> It is impossible…to look through the books which he had then in use, and which are scribbled over with clumsy interlined translations, without being struck with the narrow extent of his classical attainments. The most ordinary Greek words have their English signification scrawled under them,—showing too plainly that he was not sufficiently familiarized with their meaning to trust himself without this aid. Thus, in his Xenophon we find νεοι, *young*—σωμασιν, *bodies*—ανθρωποις τοις αγαθοις, *good men*, &c. &c.[58]

[56] For Greek novels, lot 4 offered Achilles Tatius, *Amours de Leucippe et de Clitophon*; Chariton, *Amours de Chércas et Callirrhoé*; Heliodore, *Amours de Theagénes et Chariclée*; Eustathe, *Amours d'Ismene et d'Ismenias*; Longus, *Amours de Daphnis et Chloe*; Lucian, *L'Asne*; Prodromus, *Amours de Rhodante*; Parthenius, *Affections d'Amour*; Xenophon, *Abrocome et Anthia*.
[57] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.59.
[58] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.59.

Evidence in Harrow's archives provides the basis for present-day judgments, for example from Byron's heavily annotated copy of Richard Porson's 1802 student edition of Euripides' *Hecuba* which, along with Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Medea,* the poet bequeathed to the Monitors' Library at Harrow in December 1804 when he thought he was being made to leave early.[59] Porson (whom Byron deemed 'bestial' when he subsequently encountered him as the Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge) provided a supplement to the *Hecuba's* preface which Ogilvie judges 'a landmark in the understanding of Greek metre', including 'Porson's law' of the final cretic.[60] However, this groundbreaking scholarship contrasts sharply with the teenaged Byron's elementary scrawls.

The first page sets the tone: see Figure 3 below. Perhaps most disconcerting is Byron's inability to recognise Πριάμου as 'Priam' or, indeed, πόλιν as 'city', a word surely part of his ordinary school discourse given his interest in ancient history, but one which he has to annotate again in line 934. Byron was clearly not learning the vocabulary. He also has to gloss πύλας twice in lines 1 and 1035, and ξένου in lines 5 and 1038. (The basic word φίλος is similarly glossed as 'friend' three times in one hundred lines in his *Medea* at lines 561, 587 and 660, and again in his *Hippolytus,* line 690). Among many other words he might have been expected to know at this stage of his education, he provides a crib for ἄλλων ('others'), φίλτατ' ('dearest', twice), πατρός ('father)', παῖδας ('children'), τέκνον ('child') and, as Moore had noted in 1830, χρυσὸς ('gold').

[59] *Hecuba* (Porson's edition), *Prometheus Bound* (Morell's), *Hippolytus* (Markland's) and *Medea* (Porson's).
[60] Ogilvie (1964) 87; Clarke (1945) 73. Porson's law forbids a pause in the fifth foot of an iambic senarius after a long syllable.


ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΟΥ ΕΚΑΒΗ.

ΠΟΛΥΔΩΡΟΥ ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ.

Ἥκω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας
Πολύδωρος, Ἑκάβης παῖς γεγὼς τῆς Κισσέως,
Πριάμου τε πατρὸς· ὃς μ' ἐπεὶ Φρυγῶν πόλιν
ἔστειλε δορὶ πεσεῖν Ἑλληνικῷ, δείσας
μὴ δουλίαν ἕλωσι, πρὸς Θρᾳκίαν
Πολυμήστορος πρὸς δῶμα, Θρᾳκίου ξένου,
τὴν ἀρίστην Χερσονησίαν πλάκα

1. Locum hunc liberius vertit tientis conditor, vulgo dictus Gre-
Poeta apud Ciceronem Tusc. I. gorius Nazianzenus, qui hanc
16. *Adsum atque advenio Ache-* fabulam raro citat, hunc versum
ronte cùm via alta atque ardua. habet leviter mutatum 1506. ut
Inter loca tragicorum, quæ Æs- et hunc cum sequenti 2021.
chines pronunciando corruperit, 2022.
hunc recenset Demosthenes de 3. Dymantis non Cisseos filiam

Fig. 3, *reproduced with kind permission from the Keepers and Governors of Harrow School.*

Byron's copy of Porson's 1802 *Hecuba,* lines 1-8, with his numerous manuscript glosses, four over the first line's six words: 'Come' for Ἥκω; 'recesses' for κευθμῶνα; 'darkness' for σκότου; and 'gates' for πύλας. Some are illegible, not least because at times Byron writes over the text, but in these few opening lines he also notes *inter alia* 'ghost' for ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ; 'separatly' [sic] for χωρὶς; 'dwells' for ᾤκισται; 'son' for παῖς; 'born' for γεγὼς; 'Cysius' for Κισσέως; 'Priam' for Πριάμου; 'father' for πατρός; 'city' for πόλιν; 'danger' for κίνδυνος; 'spear' for δορὶ; 'fall' for πεσεῖν; 'alarmed' for δείσας; 'sent me' for ὑπεξέπεμψε; 'Troy' for Τρωικῆς; 'land' for χθονὸς; 'host' for ξένου; 'fertile' for ἀρίστην; and 'plain' for πλάκα.

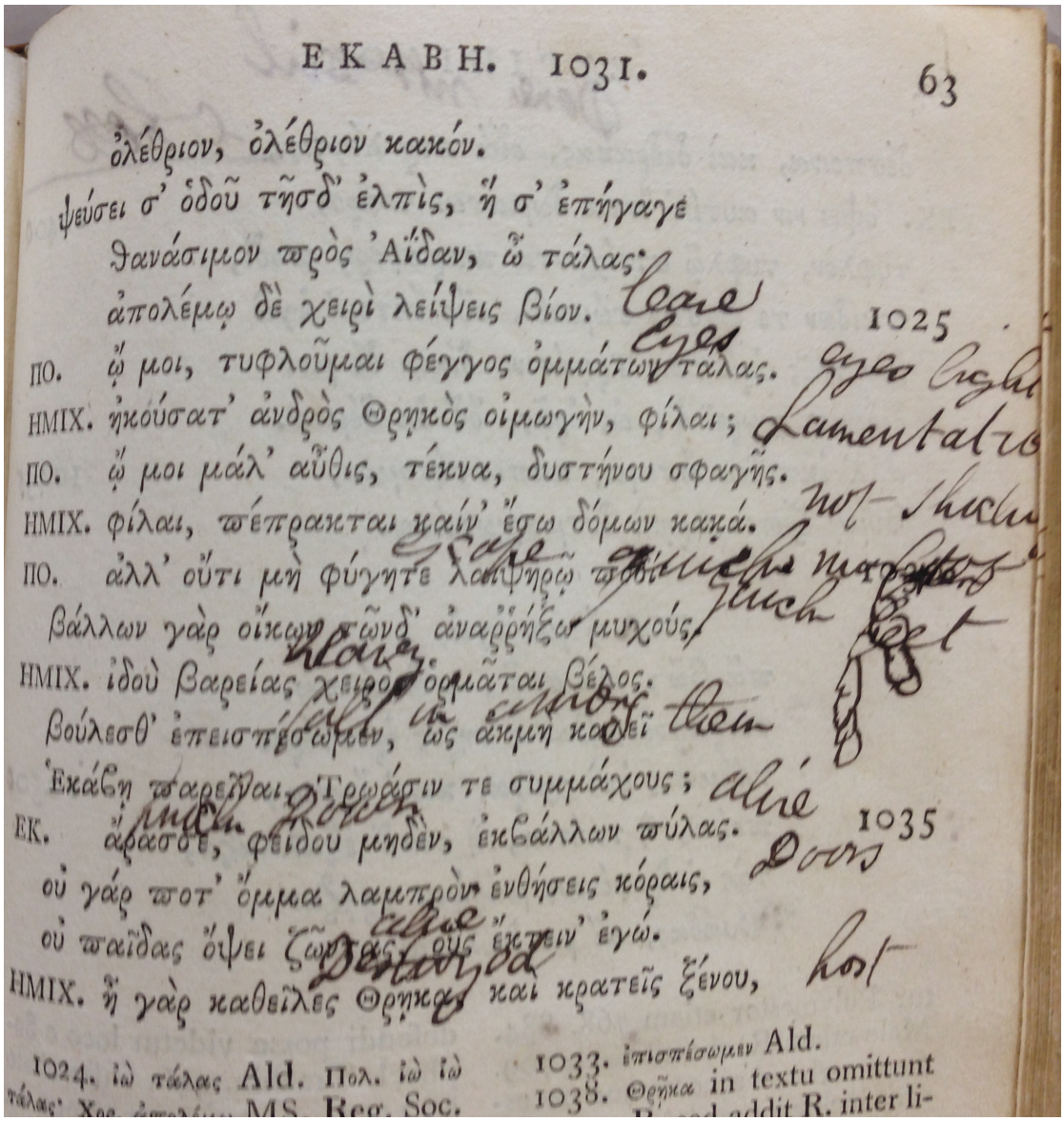


Fig. 4, *reproduced with kind permission from the Keepers and Governors of Harrow School.*

Byron's *Hecuba,* lines 1022-1038. Just possibly the doodle by the lame Byron may illustrate the 'quick feet' glossed for λαιψηρῷ ποδί in line 1030. In these lines Byron also notes *inter alia* 'leave' for λείψεις; 'eyes', then 'eyes light', for φέγγος ὀμμάτων; 'lamentation' for οἰμωγήν; 'escape' for φύγητε; 'heavy' for βαρείας; 'fall in among them' for ἐπεισπέσωμεν; 'knock down' for ἄρασσε; 'doors' for πύλας; 'alive' for ζῶντας; 'destroyed' for καθεῖλες; and 'host' for ξένου.

The images above of two pages from Byron's *Hecuba* give some sense of how weak his Greek was when, given the 1802 publication date of the text, he was

fourteen or older. Moore certainly judged him backward on the basis of first-hand understanding of what might be expected of a teenaged schoolboy at the time. It is little wonder that in 1823 Byron 'candidly acknowledged' to James Hamilton Browne 'that he was no profound classical scholar, especially in regard to Greek'.[61]

Byron's time at Trinity College, Cambridge, from age seventeen to twenty, did little to remedy his linguistic shortcomings. Although Cambridge academic life was dominated by Trinity, along with St. John's, when Byron entered the college in October 1805, there seems agreement that Byron's dismissive account of teaching there was broadly accurate.[62] In the early 1800s, 'classical education languished in the universities' while 'classical scholarship flourished', and at Cambridge Porson, though Regius Professor of Greek, gave no lectures and lived in London.[63] Tyerman's assessment is that, for most Harrovians, the universities were little more than finishing schools in social graces and fast living.[64] Within a month of his arrival, Byron was offering a trenchant critique to his guardian, Hanson:

> [T]hey call it the University, but any other appellation would have suited it much better, for Study is the last pursuit of the Society; the Master eats, drinks, and Sleeps, the Fellows *drink, dispute* and *pun,* the *employments* of the under Graduates you will probably conjecture without my description.[65]

Fortunately for Byron, there was no examination in Greek at Cambridge until the Classical Tripos was introduced shortly before his death, and Ogilvie finds 'little evidence of wide reading in Greek' and no Greek composition, though Latin or English compositions were to be delivered weekly around the time Byron attended.[66] Prizes like the Craven and the Browne Gold medals proved a spur to classical

[61] Browne (1834) 395. I am grateful to William St Clair for this reference.
[62] Stray (2007) 4.
[63] Clarke (1959) 73.
[64] Tyerman (2000) 156.
[65] *BLJ* 1.81.
[66] Ogilvie (1964) 84.

endeavour for others (including Coleridge who won the Browne Gold Medal for a Sapphic ode in 1792) but Byron, faltering in a quotation from Horace, suggested that his own familiarity with the classics regressed rather than advanced at Trinity:

> "Hic murus aheneus esto, Nil conscire sibi"—and *so on*, (as Lord Baltimore said on his trial for a Rape) I have been so long at Trinity as to forget the conclusion of the Line.[67]

His 1806 poem, 'Thoughts Suggested by a College Examination', portrays Trinity as unconcerned with the literary effects of classical poetry, in 'prizing *Bentley's*, *Brunck's*, or *Porson's* note,/ More than the *verse*, on which the *critic wrote*' (57-8).

His time at Cambridge was not a wholly happy period for Byron, despite his acquiring a group of loyal friends and developing an emotional attachment to a Trinity choirboy, John Edleston.[68] Again, he frequently absented himself from College for substantial periods, to the extent that the University only reluctantly accepted that he had met the residential requirements to graduate MA in 1808. Byron found the appropriate image for Cambridge in Virgil's *Eclogues*: **'**Alma Mater was to me "injusta Noverca" and the old Beldam only gave me my M.A. degree because she could not avoid it'.[69]

In terms of Byron's engagement with classics as he completed his fitful education at the age of twenty, it appears that in Latin he had read a reasonable amount of literature but had a less strong grammatical grip than, for example, his closest Cambridge friends like John Cam Hobhouse, Scrope Davies, Douglas Kinnaird, Charles Skinner Matthews and Francis Hodgson. Hodgson had been a scholar both at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, and was already a resident tutor

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[67] *BLJ* 1.145, quoting from Hor. *Epist.* 1.1.60-61 (Fairclough's text): *Hic murus aeneus esto, nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa* ('Be this our wall of bronze, to have no guilt at heart, no wrongdoing to turn us pale'). Gibbon uses the quotation to begin the *Finale* of his autobiography.
[68] *BLJ* 1.25.
[69] Verg. *Ecl.* 3.33, 'a harsh stepmother'; *BLJ* 1.197.

and Fellow at the latter when Byron met him, while Matthews gained a fellowship at Downing College in 1808, after submission of what Hobhouse judged 'a delightful piece of Latin'.[70] However, it is Byron's signal lack of linguistic proficiency in Greek which marks him out, including from most of his poet contemporaries with the exception of Keats.

By contrast Robert Southey, so often the butt of Byron's acid wit, 'was told by his Balliol tutors that he had better work on his own as he had outstripped them'.[71] Wordsworth went not to a public school but to Hawkshead Grammar School, an excellent institution which provided a good education in classics as well as mathematics and science, and had a track record of getting its brightest pupils into Cambridge. Wordsworth duly went to St. John's, Cambridge, and was described as 'being distinguished in the Classic' in his second year examination, but left with only a pass degree because he refused to sit the full suite of honours papers after his first year.[72] Coleridge, a fine classicist educated at Christ's Hospital, was awarded a scholarship to Jesus College, Cambridge and, as noted above, won a Browne Gold Medal though he missed the Craven Scholarship. Shelley, whose talent for Latin and Greek was recognised even as a child at his day school, was the product of Eton and, briefly, Oxford before his expulsion for atheism. Unlike Byron, he was fluent in Greek. Hamilton Browne recorded that Byron paid testament to Shelley's 'extensive learning' and his 'essential service' to Byron in composing or correcting some of the notes to his works.[73] Roderick Beaton also notes that at the time Shelley translated Plato's *Symposium* with an introductory essay in 1818, Byron had not read Plato: 'indeed, he probably never did, and later would rely for his information on Shelley.

[70] Graham (1984) 33.
[71] Ogilvie (1964) 41.
[72] Gill (1989) 27-28, 40; Moorman (1989) 25-26, 28; Worthen (2014) 39.
[73] Browne (1834) 395.

In his down-to-earth way, Byron seems to have thought that Plato's ideas were humbug'.[74]

Lifelong Latinity in Byron's letters

Tyerman comments, somewhat sweepingly, that 'to the early nineteenth-century Harrovian, literature, ancient or modern, was, at best, a source of *bons mots'*.[75] Literature meant vitally more than this to Byron, but the deployment in his letters of classical quotations and allusions is very much reflective of practice in the social milieu of his correspondents, a confirmation of his shared understanding of the code, except in one respect: the negligible appearance of quotations in Greek. While Latin was the more common among his friends as a group, Greek was also used. Hobhouse, for example, was one of Byron's most faithful correspondents. His report to Byron from Paris on the remarkable events during Napoleon's '100 Days' before Waterloo gives a sense of contemporary epistolary practice in their circle, as Hobhouse invoked Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Catullus 61 and Plutarch's *Life of Demosthenes,* all within a single letter:

> This letter incloses a small ring which I beg her Ladyship will condescend to accept, fausto omine, "a young Napoleon—" "Torquatus volo parvulus"—The Dictator, as he now stiles himself, is making advances in popular favour…This army may be beat, the days of Rosbach may return, all is possible but I suppose that all of you are agreed we shall be ruined by the victory—κλαίει νικηθείς, ὁ δέ νικησας άπώλολεν [sic].[76]

Shelley also used ancient Greek in correspondence and, famously, in a declaration in the visitors' album at Mont Blanc's Mer de Glace that he, 'Madame

[74] Beaton (2013) 44.
[75] Tyerman (2000) 161.
[76] Graham (1984) 201, 203; *fausto…omine*, 'with good wishes', 'as a good omen', Ovid *Met.* 6.448, 9.785; *Torquatus volo parvulus,* 'I would see a little Torquatus', Catull. 61.209; κλαίει ὁ νικηθείς, ὁ δὲ νικήσας ἀπόλωλε, 'The defeated weep, but the victor is completely destroyed', Plut. *Dem.* 19.1 and 21.3.

son epouse' (Mary) and 'la soeur' (Claire Clairmont) were εκαζοι αθεοι ['all atheists']. Southey recorded with disapproval having read this *in situ*, together with an addendum in Greek, probably by Edward Copleston of Oriel College, Oxford, and translated by Southey as '& if this be true, these persons are fools and miserable ones, glorying in their lusts—but if it be not true, they are liars'.[77]

By contrast, in Byron's letters and journals, there seem to be only three proper quotations in Greek compared with a total of almost one hundred in Latin. The first was a flourish in a letter to Francis Hodgson in the context of a proposed visit to Cambridge: Byron declared that 'being now an άριστον μεν υδωρ disciple I won't come within wine-shot of such determined topers as your collegiates'.[78] (Here and elsewhere accents, or lack of them, for Byron's Greek are given as in Marchand's text). ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ ('water [is] best') are, perhaps not coincidentally, the first three words of the first of Pindar's Olympian Odes, and hence more likely to stick in the memory, but it seems also to have been a catchphrase. The specific quotation was appropriate to Byron at the time, as evidenced by Hobhouse's dedication to Byron of his 'imitation' of Horace's *Epistles* 1.19, under the published title 'To ********** A Water Drinker'.[79]

The second quotation, a proverb allegedly recalled by Mimnermus, was perhaps more recondite, though some lines from Mimnermus were staples of contemporary miscellanies:[80]

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[77] Cochran (2010) 69. For Shelley's use of Greek in correspondence, see Percy to Mary Shelley, August 10th 1821 (Jones (1964) 325)**: '**My maxim is with Æschylus το δυσσεβὲς—μετα μεν πλειονα τικτει, σφετερᾳ δ' εικοτα γεννᾳ –There is a Greek exercise for you' (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 759-60: 'it is the impious deed that breeds more to follow, resembling their progenitors').
[78] *BLJ* 2.133.
[79] Hobhouse's *Imitations and Translations*, 1809; Graham (1984) 27-28.
[80] For example, Eton College's *Selecta ex Poetis Græcis* (1784) 185-86 (an unspecified edition of which was in Byron's 1813 library catalogue) included Mimnermus fragments 2-5 in Gerber (1999) 82-85.

> …if a queen of the Amazons may be believed, who says αρισον χολος οιφει [sic]. I quote from memory, so my Greek is probably deficient.[81]

Despite Byron's defensive concern about his Greek (the actual text is ἄριστα χωλὸς οἰφεῖ, 'a lame man makes the best lover'), the quotation was clearly memorable to him, surely because of its coupling of lameness with sexual supremacy.[82] That he was sensitive to his disability, witness an earlier letter to Hodgson: 'If my songs have produced the *glorious* effects you mention, I shall be a complete *Tyrtaeus*, though I am sorry to say, I resemble that Harper, more in his person than Poesy'—that is to say, in his disability.[83] Hodgson himself, in republishing his own 1804 translations of 'Extracts from Tyrtaeus', was less complimentary about the Greek poet:

> [A]lthough the flow of his verse is easy, natural and spirited, yet there is a scarcity and sameness in his images, a total want of variety…in his illustrations and language, which cannot impress the reader but with an unfavourable notion of his genius.[84]

The third example of Byron using a Greek quotation, in 1817 to his estranged wife, is given in Marchand's text as: 'For myself I have a confidence in my Fortune which will yet bear me through—ταύτόματον ημών καλλων Βουλενεται—the reverses which have occurred—were what I should have expected'.[85] Marchand did not identify the source of the quotation and noted that the Greek was hard to read and might be inaccurate. The original is surely from the *Menandri Sententiae*, the apt ταὐτόματον ἡμῶν καλλίω βουλεύεται ('chance plans better than we do').[86] At first glance, this usage seems out of character given Byron's general avoidance of Greek, especially addressed to a woman, but one plausible explanation is that both Byron and Annabella knew the quotation not directly from a classical source but from

[81] *BLJ* 4.51.
[82] Fr. 21a, Gerber (1999) 100.
[83] *BLJ* 1.176.
[84] Hodgson (1810) 78.
[85] *BLJ* 5.181 and note 1.
[86] No.738 in Pernigotti (2008).

Montaigne's *Essays* where it is quoted in Greek, followed by the translation 'By this you see,/ Fortune takes better aim than we' (Book 1, Chapter 33), in a popular English language edition.[87]

It may be significant that in an earlier letter to Annabella after her refusal of his first offer of marriage, Byron compared himself and another rejected suitor to Heraclitus and Democritus, the weeping and laughing philosophers discussed by Montaigne in Chapter 50 of Book 1: 'In short we were the Heraclitus & Democritus of your Suitors—with this exception—that our crying and laughing was excited not by the folly of others but our own'.[88] He could, of course, have known of the duo from elsewhere, for example Juvenal 10, which he declared with heavy irony had always been his favourite: 'it is the finest recipe for making one miserable with life, & content to walk out of it in any language'.[89] But that Montaigne's essays were an important influence on Byron is evidenced from his later assertion that he meant *Don Juan* to be 'Montaigne's Essays with a story for a hinge'.[90] Hamilton Browne records that Byron read a Montaigne essay every day on his final journey to Greece, and claimed that 'this practice…he had pursued for a long time'.[91]

Equally infrequently, Byron allowed himself to be playful with words derived from ancient Greek. After his friend Hobhouse was elected to Parliament, Byron, no doubt recalling student recitations, toyed with the Homeric formula τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος, though the manuscript shows he contrived a still not wholly satisfactory form of his portmanteau neologism, tondapemoibom<esity>{enosity,

[87] Byron's library sale catalogues for 1813 and 1816 show that he owned two three-volume sets of Montaigne's *Essays,* one French and the other very likely the 1811 9th edition of an English translation from 'Peter' (Pierre) Coste's French edition.
[88] *BLJ* 3.103.
[89] *BLJ* 2.95.
[90] *BLJ* 10.150.
[91] Lovell (1954) 387.

only at a second attempt:

> I hope [the MP, Hobhouse] gets on and neither suffers from Oligarchy —nor that more severe Aristocracy—*Polly*-garchy—I don't mean from *"πολλοι"*—to recur to the tondapemoibomenosity [?] of our Alma [M]ater (with her sour milk) but the regular petticoat regency of all wearers of that magic garment.[92]

In another instance, when a group of his London friends collectively advised a total suppression of Canto I of *Don Juan* because of its 'immoral turn' and its recognisable caricature of his wife, Byron wrote that he had received 'the decision of your Æreopagus or Apollophagus—or Phœbopagus;—and by the same post I growled back my reluctant acquiescence (for the present) of which I have repented ever since'.[93] In Italy, after the Pisan authorities detained his servant Tita allegedly because of his beard, he dubbed them 'those Pisan Μιζόπογαε' (an incorrect Greek form that should probably have been Μισοπωγωνες), 'beard-haters', presumably from the emperor Julian the Apostate's Menippean satire, the *Misopogon*.[94]

Other than these, Byron's use of Greek was restricted to commonplaces like οἳ πολλοι**,** and to relatively straightforward words such as ἄναξ, 'master' ('Murray, the αναξ of publishers, the Anac of stationers').[95] Some probably reflect schoolboy usages, such as Byron's request that his friend Hobhouse, in examining the suitability of a London house to rent for Byron and his new bride, should not forget 'those *essentials* to happiness…I mean the convenient position of the *Κρεια* [sic]—or two—or more'.[96] The terminology stems from an eighteenth-century fit of refinement at Harrow 'when what had been called the bog or boghouse became known as the

[92] For example, Hom. *Il.* 10.42: τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων: ('In answer to him spake lord Agamemnon'). *BLJ* 10.63 and Cochran text from NLS Ms.43454, https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/byron-and-kinnaird-1822-to-18241.pdf p.61.
[93] *BLJ* 11.170-71.
[94] *BLJ* 9.150.
[95] *BLJ* 3.66.
[96] *BLJ* 4.279.

"necessary"' (χρεία in Greek), but Byron's faulty Greek and auditory memory of the school usage perhaps misled him into writing *Κρεια,* a garbled recollection of Homeric references to sacrificial meat.[97]

Overall though, in the deluge of letters that poured from Byron's pen, these are very rare instances. In contrast to his colleagues, Byron notably avoided using the language of ancient Greece, though its history and literature provided a welter of references. Samuel Rogers was hailed as 'the Tithonus of poetry—immortal already'; and Byron declared the 'tough title' of Thomas Moore's poem, *Lalla Rookh,* 'the tail of Alcibiades's dog', which in Plutarch's account Alcibiades cut off despite its beauty, to the outrage of the Athenians, because he said, 'I want Athens to talk about this, that it may say nothing worse about me'.[98] More pointedly, in correspondence Byron referred to the women in his life with whom he was at odds as characters from Greek literature: his mother was 'my amiable Alecto' or 'this female Tisiphone' (two of the Furies), and his spurned and vengeful lover, Caroline Lamb, was Medea. Before his marriage, Annabella attracted a comparison with the epitome of the Roman virtuous *matrona,* Cornelia Scipionis Africana, when Byron acclaimed her 'my mother of the Gracchi (that are to be)'. However, after his wife left the marital home with their daughter Ada and secured a formal separation, he habitually called her 'my moral Clytemnestra' and Ada 'the little Electra of my Mycenae', while Annabella's family became 'the House of Atreus'.[99] He channelled for his correspondents a resonance of horror from the association of real women with the fearsome females of Greek tragedy.

[97] Tyerman (2000) 122.
[98] *BLJ* 5.186 and 5.210; Plut. *Alc.* 9.
[99] For example, *BLJ* 5.144, 5.198, 6.150 and 9.186.

Byron's wariness about using actual Greek in his letters is not dissimilar to his approach to French which, even during the Napoleonic Wars, was still very much the language of the London *bon ton*. A newly appointed American ambassador reported with surprise that, at his first official dinner with the Prime Minister, Castlereagh, in 1818, 'the conversation was nearly all in French'.[100] Evidence from Byron's correspondence demonstrates the extent to which several key women in his life—including his sister Augusta who held a position at court, Frances Wedderburn Webster with whom he flirted, his confidante Lady Melbourne and sometimes his aristocratic Italian inamorata, Countess Teresa Guiccioli—used French in their everyday communications with him. Indeed, Teresa Guiccioli read Byron's works in French rather than English. It was after encountering Cantos 1-5 of *Don Juan* in a French translation that she exacted a promise from Byron (later rescinded) not to continue what she declared 'a detestable production'.[101]

The role of French as a *lingua franca* meant that Mary Shelley used it in corresponding with Teresa in 1823, as did Alexander Mavrokordatos in writing to Byron over the Greek uprising, while Byron—'from a spirit of contradiction, I suppose—and to show that I am Italianized by my long stay'—appears to have replied to him and other Greeks in Italian.[102] He also mainly replied to Teresa's French in his idiomatic Italian, and relatively rarely resorted to French in his own letters, though there was a somewhat denser cluster of French phrases in 1813 during the period he was being lionised at the heart of London high society. He repeatedly declared that 'I can read French with great pleasure & facility—though I neither speak nor write it'.[103] This reticence on Byron's part in using French and quoting

[100] Hale (2006) 36.
[101] *BLJ* 8.148; 10.95.
[102] *BLJ* 11.137.
[103] *BLJ* 6.18; see also 4.161.

ancient Greek literature does somewhat distinguish him from his friends in adult life. It is conceivable that his early life, shaped by an uncultured mother and some less than top-drawer educational settings before Harrow, left a permanent self-doubt that inhibited his active use of these languages.

The same factors may have sensitised Byron to the nature of the social game enacted via multilingual tags. While he mainly avoided Greek quotations, his letters and journals are saturated in classical references and numerous Latin quotations which, like his letters themselves, are mostly directed to those élite males of his acquaintance versed in Latin and Greek. But Byron's gentle teasing of his friend Hobhouse over the latter's habitual use of classicisms suggests a shrewd assessment of likely audience reaction beyond their circle. After inveighing against the tactics of the Cato Street conspirators to the politically reformist Hobhouse, Byron added a delicate but expressive rider:

> I know that revolutions are not to be made with rosewater, but though some blood may & must be shed on such occasions, there is no reason it should be clotted—in short the Radicals seem to be no better than Jack Cade, or Wat Tyler…I perceive you talk *Tacitus* to them sometimes—what do they make of it?[104]

Shortly afterwards, Hobhouse's maiden speech as an MP about government *agents provocateurs* goaded Byron to satirical verse:

> …But Hob, (damn his eyes)
> Makes a speech about Spies,
> And is busy in quoting *"Domitian"*.[105]

Hobhouse's quotation was Domitian's saying, as recorded by Suetonius, *princeps qui delatores non castigat, irritat* ('the emperor who does not punish informers hounds them on', Suet. *Dom.* 9.3). Byron was conscious that the discourse of

[104] *BLJ* 7.63.
[105] *BLJ* 7.111.

classical quotation and reference was, in effect, the encoded entertainment of the gentleman's club. While he was willing to play the game among his peers, he understood, as Hobhouse apparently did not, that there were limits to its appropriateness and effectiveness. Byron himself adjusted his epistolary style to his audience.

Byron's correspondence beyond his own social circle was, for the greater part, with men of business and hence appropriately utilitarian, with few classical flourishes. Byron's prime correspondent outside the *haut ton* was his long-term publisher, John Murray II, to whom Byron wrote regularly, and often indiscreetly, during his years abroad. Despite characteristic Byronic volatility, there is evidence of a degree of affection on both sides until a growing estrangement developed over fee rates and in particular over the conservative and cautious Murray's concern about *Cain's* iconoclasm (1821) and what Murray saw as the 'outrageously shocking' Cantos 6-8 of *Don Juan*, which he refused to publish.[106] The spectre of class awareness can perhaps be discerned in Byron's somewhat atypical handling of classical references in letters to Murray, notwithstanding that the publisher ran a distinguished literary salon and was in 1824 one of the founding members of the Athenaeum gentlemen's club, whose building is still adorned with a gilded statue of Athene and a bas-relief frieze copied from the Parthenon marbles bought by the British government from Lord Elgin in 1816 and presented to the British Museum. To his friends and equals, Byron employed references without explanation, as, for example, his witty description of the one-eyed Murray as 'the Arimaspian of Albemarle Street', referencing Herodotus:

[106] Nicholson (2007) 455.

> μουνοφθάλμους ἀνθρώπους…ὀνομάζομεν αὐτοὺς σκυθιστὶ Ἀριμασπούς· ἄριμα γὰρ ἓν καλέουσι Σκύθαι, σποῦ δὲ ὀφθαλμόν.
>
> ('one-eyed men…we call these people by the Scythian name, Arimaspians; for in the Scythian tongue *arima* is one, and *spou* is the eye', Hdt. 4.27).[107]

To Murray himself, Byron did sometimes use a favourite tag, such as lines from Lucretius which he also used twice in writing to Thomas Moore:

> By land and Sea Carriage a considerable quantity of books have arrived —and I am obliged and grateful.—But 'Medio de fonte leporum surgit amari aliquid['] &c. &c.— — which being interpreted means—
>
> "I'm thankful for your books dear Murray—
> But why not send Scott's Monastery?"[108]

Lucretius's verse also found a place in Latin in *Don Juan* (10.78) and Byron embedded a translation in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1.82): 'Still from the fount of joy's delicious springs,/ Some bitter o'er the flowers its bubbling venom flings', that juxtaposition of bitter and sweet fitting so perfectly the tenor of his own works. Nonetheless, evidence in the Byron–Murray correspondence suggests that, while Murray as a publisher was very live to classical texts, his actual grasp of classical languages was less sure than that of his authors.[109] Byron tactfully skirts Murray's knowledge of ancient Greek in outlining his approach to his play, *Marino Falieri:*

> If you want to have a notion of what I am trying—take up a *translation* of any of the *Greek* tragedians. If I said the original—it would be an impudent presumption of mine.[110]

The implication about Murray's Latin is unmistakable when, as the tension over Murray's editorial timorousness mounted between them, Byron instructed his

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[107] *BLJ* 10.116. Byron certainly read Herodotus but the Arimaspians may have been further brought to his attention by Longinus' reference (*On the Sublime,* 10.4) to the *Arimaspea* immediately after his discussion of Sappho's fr.31, which Byron cites at *Don Juan* 1.42.
[108] *BLJ* 7.200; 4.152. Lucr. 4.1133-34: *medio de fonte leporum/ surgit amari aliquid quod in ipsis floribus angat* ('from the very fountain of enchantment rises a drop of bitterness to torment even in the flowers').
[109] Nicholson (2007) 350.
[110] *BLJ* 8.57.

intermediary and Cambridge friend, Douglas Kinnaird, to pass on Caesar's reassurance to a nervous sailor during a storm:

> Master Murray (besides being probably in no great peril) ought to recollect that "Cesarem vehit" (which passage you can translate to him) and be proud of his company.[111]

Florus has a version of the story: *quid times? Caesarem vehis* ('Why are you afraid? You have Caesar on board', Flor. 2.13.38).

A venture into Latin by Murray himself confirms the point. In 1821, Murray wrote apologising to an irate Byron for having omitted from his latest publication an entire stanza which Byron had sent after the main text. In so doing, he sought a degree of mitigation on the grounds of *malus animus,* evidenced as being used as a legal term at this time by *Don Juan*'s reference to 'what the Lawyers call a "Malus animus"' (*Don Juan* 1.30). Murray, however, does not quite hit the mark:

> The omitted Stanza I certainly plead guilty to,…but where there is no mala anamus you should certainly be less enraged.[112]

The origin of the term must surely be Terence's *Andria*, where the phrase at 1.1.164 is *mala mens, malus animus* ('evil mind, evil heart') of which Murray's *mala anamus* seems an evident conflation by a poor or non-Latin user. The play itself was widely known: Peter Brown notes that the *Andria,* the first Latin comedy to be translated into English in the 1520s, was regularly performed at Westminster School in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the Westminster Latin play was one of the great social events of the year in London.[113] Byron, whose education covered Terence, made punning use of an apposite cry from the *Andria* (and also Terence's *Adelphoe*) at a moment in 1815 when his wife was nearing delivery of their only child and the bailiffs were about to seize his goods, including his library:

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[111] *BLJ* 9.89.
[112] Nicholson (2007) 426.
[113] Brown (2014) 243.

> Lady Byron is in full progress. Next month will bring to light (with the aid of "Juno Lucina, *fer opem",* or rather "*opes",* for the last are the most wanted), the tenth wonder of the world.[114]

Byron's letters also shed an interesting sidelight on gender distinctions in the appropriateness of classical references and even classical texts. To his unpolished mother, Byron addressed no classical references and very few, all commonplaces, to his socially smart but unintellectual, older half-sister, Augusta Leigh née Byron. In a brief burst of correspondence with a provincial but well-read female friend from his Nottinghamshire days, Byron expected Elizabeth Pigot, like her doctor brother, to know characters from the *Oresteia* and *Aeneid*.[115] He used a considerably wider range of references during his intense correspondence at the heyday of his popularity in London society with his confidante, Lady Melbourne (mother-in-law to Caroline Lamb and aunt to Annabella Milbanke). Comparing her to Pericles' mistress, Byron described the sexagenarian Lady Melbourne as 'a sort of modern Aspasia, uniting the energy of a man's mind with the delicacy and tenderness of a woman's'.[116] In general, he assumed she would understand his classical references, but where the reference might be obscure, he provided details, for example about Mithridates' deliberate self-habitituation to poison.[117] Nor did he apparently quote directly in Latin as in letters to his male friends, making this explicit in one instance: 'there is an old saying (excuse the Latin—which I won't quote but translate) "whom the gods wish to destroy—they first madden"'.[118]

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[114] '"Juno Lucina, bring help" or rather "wealth"', *BLJ* 4.327. In Terence's *Andria* ('The Woman of Andros') 3.1 [473], Glycerium in labour invokes Juno Lucina, the goddess celebrated in Ovid's *Fasti,* 2.449-52, with *Iuno Lucina, fer opem*, as does Pamphila in Terence's *Adelphoe* ('The Brothers") 3.4 [487].
[115] *BLJ* 1.125.
[116] MacCarthy (2002, paperback 2014) 180.
[117] *BLJ* 4.23.
[118] *BLJ* 4.123. The Latin was presumably *quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat* (see Table 1 in Chapter 2 below and *CPW* 4.11).

Ominously, in the premarital correspondence with Annabella Milbanke which constitutes much of their courtship, the authentic, lively Byronic voice is largely lost. A self-confessedly 'laconic' series of unusually stiff letters discuss philosophy and reading material. One, containing a formidable list of recommended historians, suggests that some Latin texts would be taxing for women, even for one deemed a bluestocking:

> I have a Tacitus with Latin on one page & Italian on the other among my books in town—I should think the original by itself a little severe on a feminine reader & will send you that if you would like it.[119]

A more refreshing note about wedding presents teases Annabella about knowing the Latin for a common quotation from the *Aeneid*: '"timeo Danaos et dona ferentes" you know you are a blue—so I may quote Latin to you sans pedantry—and if you can't translate—I will in my next—I think I see your indignation at this disparaging proposition'.[120] However, Byron, while emphasizing his preference for the subversive Tacitus, declares at least one classical historian unsuitable for the moral Miss Milbanke:

> The "Agricola" is beautiful—it is a pity that there are so many objections to a like perusal of Suetonius also; whose portraits are but too faithful even in their coarsest features.——You must be partial to Sallust—but after all there are none like Tacitus & him you have.[121]

It appears then that women, even of his own class, were by virtue of their gender and their different education not regarded as equal members of the classical club, although Byron was willing to bestow exceptional acceptance on an individual basis. One such case was his cerebral, Circe-like lover of 1812–13, Lady Oxford, who asked him: 'Have we not passed our last months like the gods of Lucretius?', a line the magpie poet promptly appropriated. Byron acknowledged that, as far as

[119] *BLJ* 4.161.
[120] Verg. *Aen.* 2.48; *BLJ* 4.239-40.
[121] *BLJ* 4.169.

Lucretius was concerned, Lady Oxford was 'an adept in the text of the original', and evidently a discriminating one too, since she subscribed to a prospectus for a new translation but when the translator, 'that booby Busby', sent her a specimen, she asked for her name to be removed.[122] Byron, however reluctantly, allowed his name to stand and was used by Thomas Busby for advertisement purposes in the preface to his work: 'The name of Lord Byron among my subscribers, demonstrated the candid expectations entertained respecting this translation, by one of the most distinguished poets of this age'.[123] Alas for Busby's own expectations, his 1813 two-volume translation, *The Nature of Things,* was not well received, either by Byron or critically; a lengthy review in *The British Critic* of May 1814 lambasted 'his pretensions to scholarship' and 'a style disfigured by the most unpardonable affectation'.[124]

'My grand passion was history'

For Byron himself, the copious Latin quotations and references in his letters and journals compared with the paucity of ancient Greek and French suggests that Byron felt reasonably at ease with Latin, whatever others' views of his linguistic skills. It was not, however, merely the Roman language, but Roman history which Byron prized above the Greek. Byron's letters and journals make clear that there were two distinct streams in his idiosyncratic education: the formal syllabus, and his own reading which he characteristically sought to conceal: 'I was never *seen* reading—but always idle and in mischief—or at play.—The truth is that I read eating—read in bed—read when no one else reads'. Lifelong he was a voracious reader with a

[122] *BLJ* 3.210-11; 3.7.
[123] Busby (1813) 10.
[124] *The British Critic* (May 1984) 466, 479.

retentive memory and, as noted earlier, 'a grand passion' for history. By the end of his time at university, he claimed that 'few nations exist or have existed with whose records I am not in some degree acquainted from Herodotus down to Gibbon'.[125] In Byron's literary works, this great sweep of history interplays with the contemporary or near-contemporary events which are so often the subject of his poetry. McGann, for example, argues persuasively that *Don Juan* 'is fundamentally an autobiographical poem which comments upon and interprets the course of European history between 1787 and 1823'.[126] The historical lens through which Byron filtered the direct experience of the contemporary operated with the total fluidity of co-presence—what Byron described as his soul 'passing the equinoctial line/ between the present and past worlds' (*Don Juan* 10.61).

The immediacy of the classical, and primarily of the Roman, in Byron's imagination is not just a sophisticated gloss, a superficial set of comparators, but is deeply rooted in Byron's world view. This is something very different from the substitutional type of Augustan satirical classicizing described by Stray where 'things could be written about Augustus Caesar which could not be written about the king of England'.[127] Nor is it a reciprocal Roman rebuttal of Shelley's transcendental vision of an idealistic Greece as the fount of liberal democracy and all Western culture, with its explicit depreciation of Rome's role:

> We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their root in Greece. But for Greece—Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters.[128]

[125] *BLJ* 9.42; 1.148.
[126] McGann (2002) 45.
[127] Stray (1998) 17.
[128] Shelley, preface to *Hellas* (1821).

As Stephen Cheeke notes, 'locating [Byron] within any kind of historiographical context seems insecure given the essential contradiction that history is everywhere alive in Byron's work, but is also negatively theorized and personified'.[129] Byron summarized his own cyclical view of history in the post-bellum fourth canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

> 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
> First Freedom, and then Glory—when that fails,
> Wealth, vice, corruption,—barbarism at last.
> And History, with all her volumes vast,
> Hath but one page. (*CHP* 4.108)

Hobhouse provided the note for the passage from Conyers Middleton's 1741 *Life of Cicero,* drawing a parallel between Rome, once mistress of the world but now sunk to 'sloth, ignorance and poverty', and Britain, currently 'the happy seat of liberty, plenty and letters' yet perhaps on the same course from virtuous industry to wealth, then degeneracy and eventual barbarism.[130] But in general, at least *in propria persona* in his letters and journals, Byron seems less concerned with moralising than using practical comparisons from classical history, without sentimentalising nostalgia, to explore contemporary situations. Hermann Fischer's insight into the nature of Byron's literary classicism applies more broadly:

> [Byron's] so-called classicism had little of the reactionary or nostalgic but was rather a clear-sighted analysis of present, and a prophetic (and pessimistic) foreboding of future developments in European literary culture.[131]

So, for example, when he heard in 1814 that Napoleon had abdicated, Byron's immediate thought was of the example of Sulla, the first-century BCE Roman general who resigned the dictatorship, disbanded his armies and finally, after an elected second consulship, retired to his estate. For Byron, Napoleon had been a hero figure.

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[129] Cheeke (2003) 12.
[130] Kelsall (1987) 58.
[131] Fischer (1990) 227.

A controversialist even as a schoolboy, the young lord had insisted on displaying a bust of Napoleon in his room at Harrow—an aggressively provocative act rather than simple teenage rebellion at a period when boys (including friends of Byron) were leaving Harrow to fight and die in combat against Napoleon. Byron's shocked reaction to Napoleon's abdication was disillusionment, and his comparison in poetry, correspondence and journal was with Sulla whose 'only glory was that hour/ Of self-upheld abandoned power':

> Ah! My poor little pagod, Napoleon, has walked off his pedestal. He has abdicated, they say…I cannot bear such a crouching catastrophe. I must stick to Sylla, since my modern favourites don't do,—their resignations are of a different kind.

In his private journal, he elaborated:

> Methinks Sylla did better; for he revenged and resigned in the height of his sway, red with the slaughter of his foes—the finest instance of glorious contempt of the rascals upon record.[132]

Fully mindful of Sulla's bloodthirsty record as a ruthless opponent who *inter alia* sacked Athens, marched on Rome and exacted appalling revenge from fallen enemies, Byron nonetheless recognized the courage and historical significance of resigning a dictatorship granted without time limit, an act for which, less generously, Julius Caesar reportedly mocked Sulla: *Sullam nescisse litteras, qui dictaturam deposuerit* ('Sulla did not know his A.B.C. when he laid down the dictatorship', Suet. *Caes.* 77).

Similar issues of power and governance were occupying Byron in 1821 at a time when he had associated himself via the Gambas—the liberal-minded aristocratic family of Countess Guiccioli—with the Carbonari, an underground independence movement active in the struggle against the oppression of Italy by foreign European

[132] Byron's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, st. VII (1814); *BLJ* 4.93 and 3.256.

powers, especially Austria:

> Only think—a free Italy!!! Why, there has been nothing like it since the days of Augustus. I reckon the times of Cæsar (Julius) free; because the commotions left every body a side to take, and the parties were pretty equal at the set out. But, afterwards, it was all prætorian and legionary business.[133]

Here Byron was not simply making a superficial comparison with Caesarian Rome; he was critiquing the nature of freedom. When an uprising in Naples was rapidly and ignominiously quashed through 'cowardice and treachery', Byron concluded that he had neither time nor temper to write about the immediate political circumstances for Italy and, rather than use his notebook for a journal, would write 'Anything that comes uppermost—and call it "my Dictionary"'. And he wrote first, not about the alphabetically precedent 'Aberdeen' of his childhood which was afforded second place, but about 'Augustus', because what was very much 'uppermost' in his mind at that moment of libertarian crisis was the nature and form of political power. There his frame of reference for the variously oppressed European countries of the early nineteenth century was not 'democratic' ancient Athens but ancient Rome—and imperial rather than republican Rome at that.

Byron began, like so many before and since, with puzzling over the condundrum of Augustus' character, whom he acknowledged as a great man, 'but not one of *my* great men—I have always looked upon Sylla as the greatest Character in History, for laying down his power at the moment when it was "too great to keep or to resign", and thus despising them all', the quotation taken from Johnson's *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (34) based on Juvenal's tenth satire.[134] Practical and

[133] *BLJ* 8.47.
[134] *BLJ* 8.106-7, here and below.

pragmatic, Byron wasted no time agonising over the legitimacy of Augustus' hold on the state:

> As to the retention of his power by Augustus—the thing was already settled.—If he had given it up—the Commonwealth was gone—the republic was long past all resuscitation…you might as well cure a Consumption, restore a broken egg—as revive a state so long a prey to every uppermost Soldier as Rome had long been.

He then speculated on an interesting set of counterfactuals, including whether our estimate of Augustus would have been different had the *princeps* been succeeded immediately by Nerva, Trajan, the Antonines, or even by Titus and his father, instead of by Tiberius and Caligula:

> so far from gaining by the *contrast* I think that one half of our dislike arises from his having been heired by Tiberius—and one half of Julius Cæsar's fame—from his having had his empire consolidated by Augustus.

Byron's consideration of Augustus, Sulla, Caesar, Tiberius, and Roman consuls built a case that led to his generalising conclusion: 'It is still more difficult to say which form of Government is the *worst*—all are so bad.—As for democracy, it is the worst of the whole—for *what is (in fact)* democracy? an Aristocracy of Blackguards'.[135]

From his self-imposed exile in Italy, Byron followed political events in England closely, especially given Hobhouse's election as MP for Westminster in 1820. In assessing this period of intense political activism, Byron in his arguments drew on the classical world in two ways. First, he sought to draw striking comparisons with well-known figures from Roman history, just as when—fairly or unfairly—he tainted women in his life with the names of vengeful Greek tragic heroines. So, for example, Byron damned the radicals, Henry Hunt and William Cobbett, by association with Roman agitators:

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[135] *BLJ* 8.106-7. Byron seems to have disliked Tiberius particularly and, in referring to 'the Tiberius of Austria', equated the emperor's oppressive regime with that of Austria in Italy during Byron's residence in Ravenna (*BLJ* 8.211).

> [H]e who enacts the Clodius—the Milo—and what is there in Bristol Hunt and Cobbett—*so* honest as the former—or *more* patriotic than the latter?—"Arcades Ambo" blackguards both.[136]

Also, when he heard that the detested Castlereagh had committed suicide, Byron's epitaph contrasted the statesman to his detriment with the republican Cato the Younger who committed suicide in Utica rather than live under Caesar's supremacy:

> Oh, Castlereagh! thou art a patriot now;
> Cato died for his country, so did'st thou;
> He perish'd rather than see Rome enslav'd,
> Thou cut'st thy throat, that Britain may be saved.[137]

(Without any great meaning beyond the verbal pun, Byron also dubbed the Cato Street conspirators 'these Utican conspirators').[138] Second, in seeking to persuade Hobhouse of the force of his current opposition to the likes of Hunt and Cobbett, he elliptically drew on a shared understanding of the destructive turbulence of the first century BCE Roman Republic, recorded by Cicero among others:

> Why our classical education alone—should teach us to trample on such unredeemed dirt as the dishonest bluntness—the ignorant brutality, the unblushing baseness of these two miscreants;—and all who believe in them.[139]

In Byron's intellectual mindset, history—and primarily Roman history—existed in the same plane as contemporary events. It provided him with a mechanism for analysis and for communication.

That said, not all his references to Roman history demanded great knowledge or carried significant weight. Some were obvious, if charming, as, for example, when he declared in an early letter in Italian to Teresa Guiccioli: 'Il amartì è per me il *passagio* del' *Rubicone* e gia ha deciso il mio destino' ('To love you is my crossing

[136] *BLJ* 7.81; Byron quotes Verg. *Ecl.* 7.4, 'Arcadians both'.
[137] *CPW* 6.578.
[138] *BLJ* 7.62.
[139] *BLJ* 7.81.

of the Rubicon and has already decided my fate').[140] One at least was gallant: according to Lady Blessington, Byron in conversation employed a term derived from the Roman *lustrum* for a five year period in describing Lady Melbourne as being 'a captivating creature, malgré her eleven or twelve lustres'—a distinctly more diplomatic phrase than 'fifty-five or sixty years'.[141] Another was wittily ingenious, showing how deeply the details of Roman history had penetrated Byron's consciousness:

> It was odd enough to receive an invitation to pass the *summer* in *Holstein*—while in *Italy*—from people I never knew…Mr. J. ["Mr. Jacobsen (I think), of Hamburgh"] talked to me of the "wild roses growing in the Holstein summer" why then did the Cimbri & Teutones emigrate?[142]

Byron's interest in Sulla and Marius may have drawn his attention to the Cimbri and Teutones, Germanic tribes who in the late second century BCE left their homelands in Jutland and migrated into Roman territory.

It was not only for political insight that Byron looked to Rome. Increasingly from 1817 on he did so in his vituperative critique of contemporary poetry. The Introduction to this thesis noted his reproof that by comparison with Pope, 'it is all Horace then, and Claudian now among us'.[143] Subsequently, in a rage over the (unheeded) advice of a cabal of his friends that the first cantos of *Don Juan* should not be published, he again censured Murray's 'wretched Claudians of the day', then apologised for denigrating Claudian:

> I wrong Claudian who *was* a *poet* by naming him with such fellows—but he was the "ultimus Romanorum" the tail of the Comet—and these persons are the tail of an old Gown cut into a waistcoat for Jackey—but being both tails—I have compared one with the other—though very unlike—like all Similies [sic].[144]

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[140] *BLJ* 6.159.
[141] Lovell (1969) 133.
[142] *BLJ* 9.24.
[143] *BLJ* 5.265.
[144] *BLJ* 6.95.

He returned to the point two years later, with a broader set of Latin authors as *comparanda*:

> It is…a great error to suppose the *present* a *high* age of English poetry—it is equivalent to the age of *Statius* or *Silius Italicus* except that instead of imitating the Virgils of our language—they are "trying back" (to use a hunting phrase) upon the Ennius's and Lucilius's who had better have remained in their obscurity.—Those poor idiots of the Lakes too—are diluting our literature as much as they can——in short——all of us more or less (except Campbell & Rogers) have much to answer for—and I don't see any remedy.[145]

Byron's frame of reference here was again Roman, not Greek. He did though turn to Greece for an analogue for the relationship between his creative process and daily life, when Moore was puzzled that Byron could have written his wickedly funny satirical poem, *The Vision of Judgment,* while in low spirits: 'a man's poetry is a distinct faculty, or soul, and has no more to do with the every-day individual than the Inspiration with the Pythoness when removed from her tripod'.[146] If this seems, for Byron, a surprisingly Romantic perception of writing poetry as an alchemical process, elsewhere he mocked the notion of the poet as prophet, the ἐνθουσιαστικός or *vates.* One Mr. Coolidge of Boston, for example, was decreed 'somewhat too full of poesy and "entusymusy"'. And Byron bathetically undercut the poetic persona:

> I can never get people to understand that poetry is the expression of *excited passion*, and that there is no such thing as a life of passion any more than a continuous earthquake, or an eternal fever. Besides, who would ever *shave* themselves in such a state?[147]

Conclusion

In summary then, as discussed in the Introduction, Byron's eventual status as a Harrovian peer and his brief participation and death in the Greek War of

[145] *BLJ* 8.200-201.
[146] *BLJ* 9.64.
[147] *BLJ* 8.146.

Independence have, over a long period, generated widespread assumptions about his facility in Greek and Latin and his alignment with the kind of Romantic Hellenism embraced by Shelley. But his peerage belied an early life of financial, emotional and educational impoverishment. Throughout his thirty-six years, he rarely had a permanent home. In childhood, he had no real family other than a temperamental relationship with a sometimes shaming mother and, later, what is alleged to have been a culpably close relationship with his half-sister, Augusta. He lacked a father to oversee a *Bildung* appropriate even to his class at birth: the English gentleman's *cursus honorum* at the turn of the nineteenth century did not conventionally include one-room schools in Aberdeen or even establishments in Dulwich Grove. When finally an aristocratic relation was appointed as one of his guardians, the Earl of Carlisle proved extremely reluctant to deal with Byron and his mother, and later refused to introduce Byron to the House of Lords, a slight Byron never forgave.[148]

Indications of intellectual and social insecurity were sometimes masked by Byron's verbal or even physical pugnacity, but Moore recorded the surprise, on the part of Byron no less than the world at large, at the discovery of his genius.[149] At every stage of Byron's life he was to some degree alienated from his surroundings, a factor which may have triggered his acute oppositional stance and his early identification with contentious heroes like Sulla and Napoleon. Moore's judgment was that, as a boy, Byron

> though a disciple of the schools, was, intellectually speaking, *in* them, not *of* them, and who, while his comrades were prying curiously into the graves of dead languages, betook himself to the fresh, living sources of his own.[150]

[148] Some specific social or personal animus is suggested by the fact that the Earl was considerably more hospitable to Byron's orphaned elder step-sister Augusta, the daughter of a marchioness.
[149] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.175.
[150] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.99.

This highlights the twin aspects of Byron's time as a student: the tightly restrictive education of 'longs and shorts', of grammar and vocabulary, which Byron relatively disregarded, and the imaginative world of history and literature in which he took compensatory refuge. Although his engagement with classics was not underpinned by a deep philological knowledge, he had sufficient grasp of Latin not merely to signal his membership of the élite but to provide extensive colouration in his writings and effect some measure of interpretation (see Chapter 2). Ancient Greek as a language, he largely avoided using himself. But he read extensively, if necessary in translation, and the rich world of classical history and literature pervasively informed Byron's world view. At Harrow he found confirmation that assessing contemporary events and culture through the lens of the antique was a meaningful approach, a practice that marked him out from most other major Romantic poets.

Chapter 2: 'Translation's Servile Work' (Byron)

During the period up to 1812, Byron's most public engagement with the classics came with his debut as a poet in June 1807 when he published *Hours of Idleness, A Series of Poems Original and Translated*. As the sub-title suggests, this volume intermingled Byron's versions of ancient poetry in English with his own creations. He was then only nineteen, still technically a student at Cambridge though often absent, and not yet a significant figure in the social and literary landscape of the day.

Classical translation, a matter of intense personal engagement with an ancient text, was at this period a common activity among the literary community, professional and amateur (see below), and Byron's letters and library catalogues demonstrate an early interest in the efforts of others. Late in life, however, Byron claimed that, with the exception of Pope's 'Homer' and Thomas Moore's *Anacreon,* 'translations almost always disappoint me'; 'translations, for the most part, resemble imitations, where the marked defects are exaggerated, and the beauties passed over'.[1] This chapter provides a revealing catalogue of the full set of his classical translations and imitations and sets them in the context of external influences and, importantly, of Byron's stage of development as a poet.

'The laborious and ignoble task of translating' (*The Edinburgh Review*)

Byron's headmaster at Harrow, Joseph Drury, championed the writing of free English verse translations of classical poetry, a practice which yielded some of Byron's earliest published poems, just as the second earliest poem of Wordsworth's to survive is an 'imitation' of Anacreon from a classroom exercise at Hawkshead

[1] Lovell (1969) 140-41.

Grammar School.[2] Christopher Tyerman remarks that the Harrow headmaster's 'encouragement of versifying was not wholly pointless, stimulating in some precision of thought and expression as well as a degree of literary appreciation', a comment that subtly captures both the aim of the exercise and its incomplete success.[3]

Writing from Constantinople to his former tutor, Joseph Drury's son Henry, a few years after he had left Harrow, Byron gently mocked this pedagogical practice in a much-quoted rhyme which his letter alleged was composed *ex tempore*, purportedly as a translation from the nurse's dole which opens Euripides' *Medea*:

> I am just come from an expedition through the Bosphorus to the Black Sea and the Cyanean Symplegades, up which last I scrambled at as great risk as ever the Argonauts escaped in their hoy. You remember the beginning of the nurse's dole in the Medea, of which I beg you to take the following translation, done on the summit.
>
> "Oh how I wish that an embargo
> Had kept in port the good ship Argo!
> Who, still unlaunch'd from Grecian docks,
> Had never passed the Azure rocks;
> But now I fear her trip will be a
> Damn'd business for my Miss Medea, &c. &c.["]
>
> as it very nearly was to me;—for, had not this sublime passage been in my head, I should never have dreamed of ascending the said rocks, and bruising my carcass in honour of the ancients.[4]

This is characteristic of one facet of Byron: not the dark, brooding anti-hero but the sentimentalist, inspired to verse by his presence at a significant spot, yet prone to undercut the mood by bathos—a bathos conveyed here both in the parodic 'translation' itself and in the extratextual image of a lame young man, inspired to a hazardous climb by a speech from Greek tragedy, 'bruising [his] carcass in honour of the ancients'. Despite Harrow's enforced oral recitation of the *Medea*, Byron

[2] Tyerman (2000) 161; J. Moore (2013).
[3] Tyerman (2000) 162.
[4] *BLJ* 1.245-46.

seems to have recollected clearly only its very opening lines: 'Εἴθ' ὤφελ' Ἀργοῦς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος/ Κόλχων ἐς αἶαν κυανέας Συμπληγάδας' ('Would that the Argo had never winged its way to the land of Colchis through the dark blue Symplegades!').

The irony is that Byron's doggerel, devised to amuse his Harrow master, achieved a *Nachleben* that was not accorded to his serious translation of lines 627-62 from a chorus from the *Medea,* which was published in *Hours of Idleness* with his note advising that 'a considerable liberty is taken with the original'.[5] Byron's parody of Euripides' tragedy prefigured the mid-nineteenth-century burlesques that echoed his rhymes, as in the Nurse's speech from Planché's *The Golden Fleece* (1845):

> Oh, that the hull of that fifty-oared cutter—the Argo
> Between the Symplegades, never had passed with its cargo![6]

or Jason in Jack Wooler's *Jason and Medea* (1851):

> The fleece is mine—and it shall ever be a
> Pledge of my passion for my own Medea.[7]

Planché's 'Argo'/'cargo' rhyme was also an appropriation from Byron, this time from *Don Juan* (2.66 and 14.76), and Gerald Massey fittingly recycled it in relation to the Crimea in his 'Before Sebastopol' of 1855: 'Then gaily thro' the ocean foam/ Shall sail our nobler Argo./ And proudly to our Island-home/ We'll bear the precious cargo'.[8]

At Harrow and Cambridge, as indeed throughout his life, Byron was surrounded by personal acquaintances and poet contemporaries enthusiastically occupied with classical translation. One of the most successful publications was *Translations Chiefly from the Greek Anthology,* which, along with its sequels,

[5] *CPW* 1.371.
[6] Hall and Macintosh (2005) 356-57.
[7] Macintosh (2000) 92.
[8] Massey (1855) 17.

Gideon Nisbet identifies as 'demonstrably the stimulus for nineteenth-century Britain's literary interest in translating epigram'.[9] Issued anonymously in 1806 at just the moment Byron was initiating his own literary career, its authors were Robert Bland and John Merivale with both of whom Byron had personal links. Byron recorded that Bland, as an Assistant Master at Harrow, heard his '6th form repetitions ten months together, at the average of two lines a morning, and those never perfect'; and Merivale, who married the daughter of Harrow's headmaster before Byron left, became a friend.[10] As Merivale noted in the prefatory 'Advertisement' to an 1833 reprint of their later work, *Collections from the Greek Anthology* (dedicated to the same Henry Drury who was the recipient of Byron's *Medea* skit), their *Translations Chiefly from the Greek Anthology* 'received from Lord Byron, in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"…the compliment of a few lines', beginning:[11]

> And you, associate Bards! who snatch'd to light
> Those Gems too long withheld from modern sight
> Whose mingling taste combined to cull the wreath,
> Where Attic flowers Aonian odours breathe. (*EBSR,* 881-84)

Byron's ten-line encomium of the unnamed authors was, in fact, an implicit rebuttal of criticism of their *Greek Anthology* by *The Edinburgh Review*, the detractor of Byron's first published poetry and the prime target of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.[12] It does, though, say something about Byron's less than whole-hearted enthusiasm for classical translation that his passage ends by urging Bland and Merivale to 'scorn a borrowed tone:/ Resign Achaia's lyre, and strike your own' (*EBSR,* 889-90). Byron's Cambridge friend, Francis Hodgson, assisted with the

[9] Nisbet (2013) 40.
[10] *BLJ* 2.112.
[11] Bland and Merivale (1833) v. Byron's 1813 and 1816 library sale catalogues show that he owned Bland and Merivale's 1806 *Translations Chiefly from the Greek Anthology* and their 1813 successor volume, *Collections from the Greek Anthology*.
[12] *The Edinburgh Review*, XVIII (Jan.1807) 319-31.

Anthology and, when in 1807 he published a translation of the satires of Juvenal, he also attracted the censure of *The Edinburgh Review,* which summarized its principles—along with its estimation—of translation:

> We expect in a translation, a tolerably exact copy, not merely of the matter and sentiments, but of the manner and style of the original; and, if Mr Hodgson was unable or unwilling to give us this, he should have quitted the laborious and ignoble task of translating.[13]

On that basis, it was scarce wonder that Byron's generally free versions of the classics met with the *Review'*s disapproval.

Two years later John Cam Hobhouse, another close friend from Byron's Cambridge circle, dedicated to Byron his *Imitations and translations from the ancient and modern classics, together with original poems never before published*, containing works written by his friends (including Byron) and himself. In the preface, Hobhouse complained of the world suffering 'a glut of books' and asserted that he scarcely knew anyone without an occasional, very strong, desire 'to venture at publication'. He located that desire within the context of adolescent male self-definition:

> [T]hese verses were all composed at that age when most persons think it as necessary to fall in love with the Muses to show their wit, as they do to commence their suitorship to the earthly fair ones to prove their manhood.[14]

Hobhouse's diagnosis of young students playing poet and lover as a *rite de passage* typifies Byron's case. He penned tender original verses to a variety of 'fair ones' with whom he flirted in the provincial Nottinghamshire town of Southwell where his mother lived, while providing for his Cambridge companions the intellectual ballast of classical translations. He did not seem then to envisage himself as a permanent

[13] *The Edinburgh Review,* XXIII (April 1808) 54.
[14] Hobhouse (1809) v, viii.

member of what he termed 'the mob of gentlemen who write' and maintained, in letters to friends as well as in the histrionic Preface to *Hours of Idleness*, that this work of 'a young man, who has lately completed his nineteenth year' would probably be his first and last publication.[15]

In this environment of literary self-fashioning, it is unremarkable that the young Byron should be disposed to publish, and he did so at what has been seen retrospectively as a moment of change in approaches to translation, both theoretical and applied. George Steiner in *After Babel* divides the theory, practice and history of translation into four periods, the first of which—an epoch of 'seminal analyses' stemming from empirical translation practice—extends all the way from Cicero and Horace to Byron's youth. Steiner sets its end point at the publication of Alexander Fraser Tytler's *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1791) and Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens* (1813), the latter too late to have affected Byron's practice.[16] In his essay, Tytler laid down three principles: a translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work; its style and manner of writing should be of the same character as that of the original; and it should have all the ease of original composition. In Tytler's words, 'a translator ought always to figure to himself, in what manner the original author would have expressed himself, if he had written in the language of translation'.[17]

Matthew Reynolds describes Tytler's essay as 'an encyclopaedia of the tradition of domestication', where 'translation is thought of as continuing the process of composition, adjusting the source text to suit its changed circumstances', on the basis of legalistically-defined admonitions reflecting genre; relationships between

[15] *CPW* 1.34, 32. See also, for example, *BLJ* 1.118: 'I…now bid an eternal Adieu to the Muse, in an Ode expressive of my Intention to relinquish *Poesy* forever' (1807).
[16] Steiner (1975) 236-37.
[17] Tytler (2nd edn corr.1791) 15, 189.

grammar, idiom and nuance of source and target languages; and the acceptability of additions and omissions.[18] The last point required additions to have 'the most necessary connection with the original thought, and actually increase its force', while omission was allowed only of accessory points.[19] These strictures were certainly not evidenced in Byron's, often loose, translations but even so, Tytler (under his title of Lord Woodhouselee) complimented *Hours of Idleness*.[20]

Byron was never much inclined to theorise about literature and declared in his vigorous defence of Pope against William Bowles, 'Away then with this cant about Nature—and "invariable principles of poetry"'.[21] In this, he differed from Wordsworth who, according to Bruce Graver, articulated a concept of translation for his work on Virgil, as preparation for a Drydenesque theoretical preface.[22] Nor did Byron join Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats in reacting against neo-classical translations, those of Pope in particular. Wordsworth excoriated 'the poison of Pope's Homer', even if his own, consciously Latinate, three books of the *Aeneid* earned him a rebuke in Coleridge's marginalia about 'unEnglishism here and there in this translation of which I remember no instance in your own poems'.[23] Similarly, Keats' lines, 'On first looking into Chapman's Homer' (1816), captured his exhilaration with George Chapman's *The Whole Works of Homer* of exactly two hundred years earlier, in contradistinction to Pope's later version. Yet for Byron, the literary gods he recognized at nineteen as being pushed aside ('Milton, Dryden, Pope alike forgot', *EBSR,* 187) still had power for him over a decade later: 'Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;/ Thou shall not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge,

[18] Reynolds (2006) 64.
[19] Tytler (2nd edn. corr. 1791) 39.
[20] Tytler letter of 10 March 1809, Bodleian Library, Dep. Lovelace Byron 155.
[21] *CMP* 146.
[22] Graver cited in Caldwell (2008) 196-97.
[23] Jackson and Whalley (2001) 205.

Southey' (*Don Juan* 1.1633-34). In the Pope-Bowles controversy, he defended Pope's 'brutally abused version of Homer' as 'a beautiful English poem' made 'of a sublime Greek one' against Joseph Warton's vividly memorable complaint that its faults 'are such as remind us of Nero's gilding a brazen statue of Alexander the Great, cast by Lysippus'.[24]

Byron as a translator made no claim to anything radical in diction, tone or style. Of his own stance, in his preface to *Hours of Idleness* he said merely 'I have not aimed at exclusive originality, still less have I studied any particular model for imitation; some translations are given, of which many are paraphrastic', his terminology harking back to Dryden's taxonomy of *'metaphrase', 'paraphrase* or *translation with latitude'* (Dryden's preferred option), and '*imitation*, where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion'.[25] Byron variously uses the titles of 'Translations', 'Paraphrases', 'Adaptations' and 'Imitations' for his versions of the classics but there is in reality little systematic distinction between them, as *The Edinburgh Review* tartly observed in its review of Byron's *Hours of Idleness*—its reference to 'hobbling verses' a cruel shaft at a lame poet:

> And why call the thing in p. 79 [*Translation from Anacreon, To His Lyre*] a translation, where two words (θελω λεγειν) of the original are expanded into four lines, and the other thing [ie imitation] in p. 81 [Anacreon, Ode 3], where μεσονυκτιοις ποθ*'* ώραις, is rendered by means of six hobbling verses?[26]

Byron's classical translations catalogued

Table 1 (overleaf) provides a full list of Byron's free-standing classical translations, with details of date of composition and publication, and his known poems in Latin.

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[24] *CMP* 158; 457, n.249.
[25] *CPW* 1.33; Dryden, *Ovid's Epistles, by several hands* (London, 1680) Preface.
[26] *The Edinburgh Review,* XXII (Jan. 1808) 287.

Table 1: Byron's Classical Translations and Poems in Latin

This table provides details of Byron's freestanding works variously categorised as translations, imitations, adaptations or paraphrases from works in Greek and Latin. They are arranged by classical author and date of composition, and also show the date and title of first publication. Works published during Byron's lifetime are highlighted in **bold**; dates of posthumous publications are shown in *italics*.

The table concludes with what seem to be Byron's only original compositions in classical languages known to be extant, two poems of 1811–12 in Latin.

The prime source for data is McGann's *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, Volumes 1-7 (Oxford, 1980-1993), plus Nicholson's "'Nauseous Epigrams": Byron and Martial' (2007).

Publications referred to in the tables are as follows:

Publications within Byron's lifetime (1788–1824)

FP: Byron, *Fugitive Pieces* (Newark, 1806): anonymous, private publication.

POVO: Byron, *Poems on Various Occasions* (Newark, 1807): anonymous, private publication.

HI: Byron, *Hours of Idleness. A Series of Poems Original and Translated* (London, 1807).

POT: Byron, *Poems Original and Translated* (London, 1808).

Liberal: L. Hunt, G.G. Byron, Baron, and P.B. Shelley (eds), *The Liberal: Verse and Prose from the South* (London, 1822–3).

Posthumous publications

Dallas: R.C. Dallas, *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron* (London, 1824).

Life: T. Moore (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: with notices of his Life* (London, 1830; repr. Cambridge 2012).

1831 edn.: *The Works of Lord Byron*, 6 vols. (London, 1831).

LJ: R.E. Prothero, (ed.), *The Works of Lord Byron. Letters and Journals*, 6 vols. (London, 1898-1901).

Coleridge: E.H. Coleridge (ed.) *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, 7 vols. (London, 1898-1904).

Pratt: W.W. Pratt, *Byron at Southwell* (Austin, 1948).

D.L. Moore: D.L. Moore, *The Great Byron Adventure* (Philadelphia, 1959).

A. Burton and J. Murdoch, *Byron. Exhibition Catalogue* (Victoria and Albert Museum, 1974).

CPW: J.J. McGann (ed.), *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1980-1993).

Nicholson: A. Nicholson, "'Nauseous Epigrams": Byron and Martial', in *Romanticism: The Journal of Romantic Culture and Criticism*, 2007, Vol.13(1) 76-83.

I: Byron's classical translations				
Classical Poet	**Byron's Poem**	**Date composed**	**Date first published**	**Publication**
1804–07: Harrow and Cambridge				
Greek				
Aeschylus	'**Fragments of School Exercises, From the Prometheus Vinctus of Aeschylus'** (16 lines; 528ff.)	1804	**1806**	***FP, POVO HI, POT***
Anacreon	**'Translation from Anacreon. To His Lyre'** (*Anacreontea Ode 1)* (26 lines)	1805 or 6	**1807**	***HI, POT***
	Ode 3 (48 lines)	1805 or 6	**1807**	***HI, POT***
	Ode 5 (26 lines)	1805 or 6	*1898/1948*	Coleridge/ corrected Pratt
	[Ode 34] (12 lines)	1806	*1948*	Pratt
	[Ode 47] (8 lines)	1806	*1948*	Pratt
	[Ode 16] (8 lines)	1806	*1980*	*CPW*
Euripides	**'Translation from the Medea of Euripides'** (56 lines, *Med.* 627-662)	1807	**1807**	***HI, POT***
	Doggerel 'Translation of the Nurse's Dole in the Medea of Euripides' (6 lines, 1-7)	1810	*1830*	*Life,* 1.227: letter to Drury.

Classical Poet	Poem	Date composed	Date first published	Publication
Latin				
Catullus	**'Translation from Catullus. "Ad Lesbiam"'**(24 lines) (Catull. 51)	1806?	**1806**	***FP, POVO HI, POT***
	'**Translation from Catullus. "Luctus de Morte Passeris"'** (24 lines) (Catull. 3)	1806?	**1806**	***FP, POVO HI, POT***
	'Imitated from Catullus. To Anna' in *FP,* '**To Ellen'** in *POVO, HI, POT* (12 lines) (cf. Catull. 48, also 5 and 7)	1806	**1806**	***FP, POVO HI, POT***
Domitius Marsus	**'Translation of the Epitaph on Virgil and Tibullus'** (4 lines) *(Epitaphium Tibulli)*	1806	**1806**	***FP, POVO HI, POT***
Hadrian	**'Adrian's Address to His Soul, When Dying'** (6 lines plus Latin)	1806	**1806**	***FP, POVO HI, POT***
Tibullus [sic] = Sulpicia	**'Imitation of Tibullus. "Sulpicia Ad Cerintum". Lib Quart.'** (6 lines) (*OCT* Tib. IV.11 = Tib. III.17).	1806	**1806**	***FP, POVO***
Horace	**'Horace, Ode 3. Lib.3, Translation'** (17 lines plus Latin)	1806 or earlier	**1807**	***POVO* only**
Virgil	i) **'Fragment of a translation from the 9th Book of Virgil's Aenead'** [sic] (16 lines)	1806 or earlier	**1807**	***POVO* only**
	ii) '**The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus, A Paraphrase from the Aeneid lib.9'** (406 lines)	1807 (full)	**1807**	***HI, POT***
1810-11: in Athens				
Horace	'Hints from Horace', based on Horace's *Ars Poetica* (804 lines) [McGann classification as 'Imitation']	1811; rev. 1821	*1831*	Full: 1831 edn.. Excerpts: 1824, Dallas;1830, *Life*.
	'Imitation of Horace. Satire 4' [*Sat.*1.4] (18 lines)	1811	*1980*	*CPW*
1812-14 in London, and possibly 1822 in Italy				
Martial	Imitation of Martial, 2.55 (with Latin)	1812	*1981*	*CPW*
	[Imitation of Martial, 2.88]	1812	*1981*	*CPW*
	[Imitation of Martial, 3.26]	1812	*1981*	*CPW*
	Imitation of Martial, 6.34	1812	*1959*	D.L. Moore
	Translation from Martial [6.53]	1812	*1981*	*CPW*
	[Adaptation of Martial, 6.60]	1812	*1981*	*CPW*
	(i) [Imitation of Martial, 11.92] (with Latin) (ii) Nicholson variant	1812 1812 or 14	*1981* *2007*	*CPW* Nicholson
	(i) [Imitation of Martial, 11.93] (with Latin) (ii) Nicholson variant	1812 1812 or 14	*1824* *2007*	*The Examiner* (7 Nov. 1824) Nicholson
	[Imitation of Martial, 12.12] (with Latin)	1812	*1981*	*CPW*
	Martial 11.87	1814	*2007*	Nicholson
	Martial 12.10	1814?	*2007*	Nicholson
	Martial.—Lib.1. Epig.1 (with Latin)	1822?	**1823**	***Liberal,* 2 (1823), 398**
Proverb	'Quem Deus Vult Perdere Prius Dementat'	1817	*1900*	*LJ* IV.93
II: Poems in Latin				
	Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva* ['Carmina Byronis in C. Elgin']	1811	*1826*	Paris, 1826
	'Edleston' (14 lines)	1811 or 12	*1974*	Byron Exhibition catalogue, V&A

The single most striking feature of Byron's output of translations and imitations from ancient texts is that he seems to have undertaken them only during three periods of his life, all early in his poetic career: primarily as a student at Harrow and Cambridge; briefly in 1811, in Athens, when a volume in the library of the convent where he was staying may have stimulated his engagement with Horace*;* and for a limited period in 1812–14 after he entered London literary circles and exchanged translations of Martial with Samuel Rogers and Thomas Moore.[27] His classical translations are therefore, in absolute terms, not numerous for a poet as prolific as Byron: a mere fourteen were published in his lifetime, out of an apparent surviving total of some thirty-five.[28] Given the likely origin of several in student exercises and Byron's later focus on epigram, they tend to be short, with the exception of a 406-line paraphrase of the *Aeneid*'s 'Nisus and Euryalus' episode (Verg. *Aen.* 9.176-459) and a literary satire based on Horace's *Ars Poetica,* Byron's *Hints from Horace,* both enterprises stimulated by specific personal motivations discussed below.

Over 18 months in 1806–1808, with characteristic excess, Byron issued four books of poetry with overlapping contents, two privately and anonymously (though his authorship was an open secret), then two publicly under his own name: *Fugitive Pieces* (1806); *Poems on Various Occasions* (1807); *Hours of Idleness* (1807); *Poems Original and Translated* (1808). The format for all was a familiar one for his audience: Stuart Gillespie notes that by the mid-seventeenth century, it was common

[27] Nicholson (2007) 77.
[28] This excludes two classical texts allegedly translated but missing: (i) Horace's *Exegi Monumentum (Odes* 3.30) which Byron recorded himself in a letter from Athens as having translated into Italian (*BLJ* 2.13); and (ii) '*Surripui dum ludis &c &c'* (Catull. 99) which Byron in November 1806 marked in his personal copy of Graevius's edition of *Catullus, Tibullus et Propertius* (1680) as one of four Catullus poems that he had translated or paraphrased (Nicholson (1991) 204). The other three Catullus translations were included in all four of his 1806–8 books (see Table 1).

to produce a miscellany of short pieces of original and translated verse, selected according to the poet's 'tastes and affinities'.[29] Byron's four early volumes contain, in total, thirteen translations or 'imitations' of the classics and, in addition, there are extant drafts of four unpublished translations of Anacreon.[30] However, when this flurry of juvenile publications came to an end with *Poems Original and Translated,* published when he was still only twenty, Byron's interest in publishing such works largely evaporated, other than his plan, aborted in 1811 and thwarted in 1821, to issue his *Hints from Horace*, (a poem examined in Chapters 4 and 6).

His letters suggest that his heart was never much in 'translation's servile work', and he seems early on to have decided that this was not where his reputation should be built.[31] In his Harrow list of books read, against his claim that in poetry he had read 'Greek and Latin classics without number', he added 'these last I shall give up in future—I have translated a good deal from both languages, verse as well as prose'.[32] When Hobhouse solicited contributions from friends for his 1809 *Imitations and Translations,* Byron provided nine original poems and no translations or 'imitations' whatsoever, compared with ten of the latter from Hobhouse himself and more from other contributors. After 1808, the only classical translation published in his lifetime, in the year before his death, was of Martial's epigram 1.1, Byron's sole public offering from a clutch of unpublished works based on Martial. In sum, Byron's

[29] Gillespie (2011) 11.
[30] Published translations or 'imitations' of lines from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vinctus*, 'Anacreon' (2), Euripides' *Medea*, Catullus (3), Virgil (in both a shorter and longer version), Horace, Domitius Marsus, Hadrian, and a poem then attributed to Tibullus, *'Sulpicia ad Cerintum'*. His 'Anacreon' translations were from the *Carmina Anacrontea* in the Louvain manuscript which in fact postdated Anacreon but were generally accepted as authentic from their publication in 1554 by Henricus Stephanus until Bergk omitted the *Anacreontea* from his edition of Anacreon in1834 (Rosenmeyer (1992) 4).
[31] 'Translation's servile work at length disown/ And quit Achaia's Muse to court your own', from Byron's MS addition to the original version of *British Bards* (note to lines 889-90, *CPW* 1.257), which Dallas claimed was amended after he questioned whether 'disown' and 'own' was an allowable rhyme (Dallas (1824) 39).
[32] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.97.

set-piece translations are mostly juvenilia, a description he himself used, here without false modesty.[33] Formal classical translation proved a short-term phase for Byron, barely surviving his student days, though he did occasionally embed brief translations of classical passages within his own original work.

This was a very different literary trajectory from his neo-classical examplars, Dryden and Pope, who were mature poets when they produced their magisterial, and lucrative, versions of Virgil and Homer respectively. In Dryden's case in particular, translation became a matter of practical necessity after he was stripped of his Poet Laureateship on religio-political grounds, and it constituted the greater part of his output, some 40,000 lines of translations mainly from Latin authors, especially Ovid, Lucretius and above all Virgil whose work he translated in its entirety.[34] The *chefs-d'œuvre* of Pope's translations were his *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* written between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-eight, but he was still publishing imitations and paraphrases of Horace in the last ten years of his life.

Among Byron's Romantic contemporaries, this pattern of life-long classical translation continued to be evident, if less marked in terms of ambition and success. Henry Stead notes that Wordsworth spent a good deal of his career engaged in translating Roman poetry.[35] Leigh Hunt and Percy Bysshe Shelley, with whom Byron spent time in Italy in the later years of his life, also continued to undertake classical translations as a serious art form in adulthood. Jeffrey Robinson argues that the poets in Hunt's circle saw translation 'as an element in their progressive poetic and political programme of cultural expansion'.[36] Hunt published a good number of such works, mainly from Greek poets (Homer, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus and Anacreon) but

[33] *BLJ* 1.103 and 110.
[34] Walker (1987) xiii.
[35] Stead (2015) 175.
[36] Robinson (2006b) 106.

with a few Latin pieces, especially from Catullus whom he judged 'one of the very few Romans that appear to me to have had an original talent for poetry'.[37]

Shelley similarly translated Moschus and Bion; indeed a 16-line fragment from Moschus was the only classical translation he published in his lifetime, despite the fact that in his late twenties, when his creative impulses faltered in a period of domestic depression, he turned to translating, with a Hellenophile's strong bias to Greek.[38] Of Plato, as well as four epigrams, he tackled three dialogues: *Ion*, a lost *Phaedo* and an 1818 prose version of the *Symposium* entitled *The Banquet*, the first unbowdlerised version of which was published only in 1931. Shelley's choices were less canonical elsewhere, in part, Maria Schoina argues, to allow him to raise issues of poetic and political concern to him.[39] He left draft translations of seven Homeric Hymns (still then thought to be by Homer) but not the *Iliad* or *Odyssey;* of the only complete surviving satyr play, Euripides' *The Cyclops,* but not a single Greek tragedy, although he translated some orally*;* and of lines from Virgil's tenth *Eclogue* and fourth *Georgic* but not the *Aeneid.* Current consensus seems to judge Shelley a fine translator in the transformative mould; Kenneth Haynes, for example, considers that Shelley's was 'the best verse translation of the Homeric hymns of the period', despite its unfinished state and numerous errors.[40] Yet even when living in close proximity to Shelley and Hunt, Byron as an accomplished poet showed no interest in producing similar work, unless perhaps his late Martial translation betokened the opening of a new phase cut short by death.

[37] Hunt (1818) 34.
[38] 'I have been translating the hymns of Homer, for want of spirit to invent', Shelley, 19 July 1820 (Jones (1964) 2.213).
[39] Schoina (2015) 179.
[40] Haynes (2006) 161-63.

1806-8: 'Isn't he a classical lord?' (Hewson Clarke)

Byron's four books of 1806–8 are so closely related in content that, to minimise confusion, they are commonly handled by reference to the third, *Hours of Idleness.* Here, however, it is necessary to disaggregate at least the privately circulated from the public volumes, in order to reveal Byron's evolving presentation of his classical standing. His first book, *Fugitive Pieces* (1806), was issued anonymously in limited numbers to his Southwell friends and then hurriedly withdrawn and destroyed, allegedly on the grounds that one poem, 'To Mary', had been criticized as 'rather too warmly drawn' by John Becher, a local clergyman and Byron's adviser.[41] An expurgated and expanded replacement, *Poems on Various Occasions* (1807), was issued within weeks. Encouraged by the reception of his work within this circle, Byron soon broadened his horizon and published to the world at large a further revision, *Hours of Idleness, A Series of Poems Original and Translated* (1807), under his own name. Finally, what was in effect a revamped second edition, with an unchanged representation of classical translations, was published in 1808 as *Poems Original and Translated.*

In terms of his selections, Byron's omissions from these first four volumes of poetry are as interesting as his inclusions. The dichotomy of Juvenalian and Horatian influences in his work is a mainstay of Byronic criticism. Yet, unlike university contemporaries such as Hodgson, Hobhouse and Wheeler, Byron offers no Juvenal at all and only fleetingly a single translation of Horace, *Odes* 3.3 (*justum et tenacem propositi virum,* 'The man of firm and noble soul'). Byron had not included the Horace in his first book; when this was suppressed, it seems plausible that Byron

[41] See Byron's 'Answer to Some Elegant Verses, Sent by A Friend to the Author, complaining that one of his descriptions was rather too warmly drawn' (1806).

added the Horace ode to the hastily organized replacement volume to help compensate for his deletion of certain 'amatory effusions' and enlarge the text, but it failed to keep its place in his first public collection. This suggests that his cry in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 4.685 of 'Horace whom I hated so' had some validity in his late teens, notwithstanding his considerably more extensive engagement later. In these early books there is, moreover, no Ovid and no Lucretius, to both of whom he frequently alluded in subsequent works. This all stands in marked contrast to the classical selections in his friend Hobhouse's slightly later 'miscellany by several hands', or 'missellingany' as Byron noted the Printer's Devil called it.[42] Hobhouse's personal contribution covered, among others, translations or imitations of no fewer than six works by Horace, along with Juvenal's *Satire XI*, Ovid's *Amores* 1.1 and Moschus' elegy for Bion adapted to the death of Burns—very much what one might have expected from Byron's circle.

If Hobhouse's choices were largely conventional, those in Byron's polished public volumes seem less idiosyncratically Byronic than calculated to project some measure of the pretentious earnestness which permeates these books as a whole. After the youthful spiritedness of *Fugitive Pieces,* its replacement was, in Byron's words, '*vastly* correct, & miraculously *chaste*'.[43] The further iteration in *Hours of Idleness*, his first book designed for the general public, presented the author as more serious-minded, with a higher proportion of classical translations, a stronger bias to the higher genres and a greater number of Greek pieces, though, as Timothy Webb notes, the predominant emphasis of the book remains Latinate.[44] To the private

[42] *BLJ* 1.208.
[43] *BLJ* 1.103.
[44] *Fugitive Pieces* (1806, private publication, 7 classical out of 38 pieces); *Poems on Various Occasions* (1807, private publication, 9 classical out of 48 pieces); *Hours of Idleness. A Series of Poems Original and Translated* (1807, Byron's first 'public' volume, 10 classical out of 39 pieces); and *Poems Original and Translated* (1808, public volume, 10 classical out of 38 pieces). Webb (2015) 392.

collections' single Greek translation, parts of a chorus from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vinctus* (see Chapter 6), he added translations of two odes from Anacreon and boosted the representation of tragedy with a 56-line excerpt from Euripides' *Medea.* For epic, he substantially expanded his version of the *Aeneid's* 'Nisus and Euryalus' episode. Those pieces selected for inclusion were well-known and the versions largely derivative, falling a long way short of the Horatian lines from which he excerpted his epigraph: *[carmina non prius/ audita…] virginibus puerisque canto* ('I am singing to girls and boys [songs not heard before]', Hor. *Odes* 3.1.2-4). Byron's songs had certainly been heard before, though in claiming to sing to 'girls and boys', he was reflecting his disparate audiences, the 'girls' of Southwell and 'boys' of Cambridge. As he later reflected, 'It is a Singular Thing, that all my Readers, have selected a different poem as the *best,* from each other, the Girls (in course) [sic] prefer, the *amatory*'.[45]

Hours of Idleness, his public debut, was conspicuously, if not entirely sure-footedly, an exercise in adolescent Byronic posturing. Just as Byron increased the proportion of classical translations in his volumes as his target audience broadened from the limited social circle of Southwell to the reading public, so with each edition he progressively provided epigraphs in Greek or Latin to enhance the classical colouration of a number of his original poems, including retrojecting them onto poems which had appeared without them in his earlier private editions. Into *The Tear,* for example, he inserted *O lachrymarum fons,* a four line Alcaic fragment in Latin from Thomas Gray's commonplace book. The preface of *Hours of Idleness* equally evidenced a clear intent to establish Byron's credentials as a gentleman of classical learning, with its quotations in Latin from Virgil and Horace, classical references and

[45] *BLJ* 1.109.

talk of wreaths and groves and trifles.[46] The volume's title page carried epigraphs in Greek and in Latin plus a third from Dryden, a multilingual superfluity which provoked Hewson Clarke to comment derisively in his review: 'Homer, Horace, and Dryden, all in three lines. Isn't he a classical lord?'.[47]

As for the works themselves, Byron could have found the classical texts for five of the eight student Latin translations—those by Catullus (3), Domitius Marsus and Tibullus (Sulpicia)—in his (still extant) copy of Johann Georg Graevius' 1680 edition of *Catullus, Tibullus, et Propertius,* which was already in his possession in November 1806 when he noted in it that he had translated four Catullus poems.[48] Byron's translation of Catullus' '*Surripui dum ludis &c &c'* (Catull. 99) is currently not known but the other three translations were published in Byron's early volumes and have recently been examined perceptively by Henry Stead in *A Cockney Catullus* (2016). This chapter will therefore focus instead on other works, except to underline Stead's comment that Byron in his 'Translation from Catullus "Ad Lesbiam"' 'paraphrastically introduces a level of description that significantly outweighs that of its source', a tendency evident in Byron's translations generally.[49] Norman Vance has judged the version of Catullus 51's adaptation of Sappho fragment 31, φαίνεταί μοι, 'not Byron at his best':

> the power of the Latin depends on a tension between the terse Sapphic stanza and the insistent lover's syntax which carries him through three stanzas in a single sentence, but this is lost in Byron's complacently neat couplets.[50]

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[46] Verg. *G.* 3.9, Hor. *Odes* 4.12.28.
[47] Hewson Clark, review of *Hours of Idleness, The Satirist* No.1 (October 1807) in Reiman (1972) Pt.B.5.2102. Byron's *Hours of Idleness* had title-page epigraphs from Hom. *Il*. 10.249 (μήτ' ἄρ με μάλ' αἴνεε μήτε τι νείκει, 'praise me not too much nor blame me'), Hor. *Odes* III.1.4 (*Virginibus puerisque Canto*: 'I sing to girls and boys') and Dryden, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 85 ('He whistled as he went for want of thought').
[48] *CMP* 204, 522-23.
[49] Stead (2015) 192-98.
[50] Vance (1997) 115.

Byron offered a translation of Domitius Marsus' epitaph on Tibullus in all four of his early books:

DOMITII MARSI DE TIBULLI MORTE ***Catullus, Tibullus, et Propertius*, Variorum** (1680) p. 332	**BYRON: TRANSLATION OF THE EPITAPH ON VIRGIL AND TIBULLUS BY DOMITIUS MARSUS**
TE quoque Virgilio comitem non aequa Tibulle Mors juuenem campos misit ad Elysios: Ne foret, aut elegis molleis qui fleret amores, Aut caneret forti regia bella pede.	He**,** who sublime, in epic numbers roll'd, And he**,** who struck the softer lyre of love, By Death's* *unequal* hand alike controul'd, Fit comrades in Elysian regions move. *Byron's published note** The hand of Death is said to be unjust**,** or unequal, as Virgil was considerably older than Tibullus, at his decease.

Byron's first couplet, with its reference to 'epic numbers', may point to the importance of metre in the original but misses the 'superbly expressive impropriety' that Llewelyn Morgan sees in 'this exquisite little composition', in Marsus' assignment of the traditionally epic hexameter line to the elegist Tibullus and the characteristically elegiac pentameter to the author of the epic *Aeneid*. This metrical 'affront to the proper balance of things', woven into the very texture of the verse, subtly reinforces the sense of a disruption of the natural order.[51] The young Byron, however, resorts to a somewhat clumsy footnote to make explicit the injustice of the death of the youthful Tibullus at broadly the same time as that of the older Virgil.

The most unusual of Byron's selection of classical texts appeared only in his two privately circulated books. His *'Imitation of Tibullus. "Sulpicia Ad Cerintum". Lib Quart.*' is founded on Tibullus 4.11 (3.17), a poem now attributed to Sulpicia rather than Tibullus. It is of interest on two counts. The first is the exceptionality of Byron's choice. As recently as 2002 when Mathilde Skoie was highlighting the disparity between the reception of Sappho and of Sulpicia as female classical poets, she identified Byron's 'poetic translation', alongside three illustrations, as the *only*

[51] Morgan (2012) 214-15.

artistic response to Sulpicia's poetry she could find up to 2000 CE (though interest has grown subsequently).[52] The second is that the narrator of the Latin love elegy is an unnamed *puella*, identified as *Serui filia Sulpicia* by reference to the preceding poem in the sequence (Tib. 4.10 (3.16)). Sulpicia's address to Cerinthus, her beloved, sits well with the original poems of Byron's early books which frequently explore themes of love, parting, deceit and death and, like the selected Catullus poems, predominantly speak in the first person. From the outset, Byron is drawn to the direct presentation of self, but, uniquely among his works of this period, Byron here articulates a feminine, rather than a masculine, voice. His singular rendering of Sulpicia's verse foreshadows the compassionate concern for the woman's perspective attested in his later writing, a concern perhaps most famously demonstrated in Donna Julia's letter of farewell to Don Juan, beginning 'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,/ 'Tis Woman's whole Existence' (*DJ* 1.1545-52).

TIBULLI LIBER IV, AD CERINTUM. XI
***Catullus, Tibullus, et Propertius*, Variorum** (1680), pp. 328-29

Estne tibi Cerinte tuae placiture puellae
Qui mea nunc vexat corpora fessa calor?
Ah ego non aliter tristes evincere morbos
Optarim, quam te sic quoque velle putem.
Nam mihi quid prosit morbos evincere? ubi tu
Nostra potes lento pectore ferre mala?

BYRON: IMITATION OF TIBULLUS "SULPICIA AD CERINTUM." LIB. QUART.

CRUEL Cerintus! does this fell disease,
Which racks my breast, your fickle bosom please?
Alas! I wish'd but to o'ercome the pain,
That I might live for love, and you again**;**
But now I scarcely shall bewail my fate,
By Death alone, I can avoid your hate.

The German classical scholar Heyne, in his highly regarded editions of Tibullus from 1775 on, describes 4.11 (3.17) as *suavissimum poëmatium puellae dulcissimae* ('the most charming poem by the sweetest girl') and, eliding poet and *persona*, stresses her talent and her affection for her beloved.[53] The poem on this

[52] Skoie (2002) 26. For recent interest in Sulpicia as a poet, see, for example, Stevenson (2005) 36-44*;* Lyne's '[Tibullus] Book 3 and Sulpicia' (2004–5); Balmer's discussion of Sulpicia, (2013) 127-33; and Simon Armitage's version of Tib. 3.13 as 'Sulpicia's Playlist" (Skoie (2002) 257; Thorsen (2013) 86n.16).
[53] See Harloe (2016) 443; Skoie (2002) 154 including n.128.

view might well have been calculated to appeal to the taste of the young ladies of Southwell whom so many of the works in Byron's first books salute. In fact, however, Byron's 'imitation' is less sweet than the Latin.

If Byron did use his Graevius text in tackling what Skoie sees as the easiest of the 'notoriously hard to translate' short Sulpicia poems, he would have read Scaliger's argument that Tib. 4.11 depends on the preceding poem, in which Sulpicia angrily reacts to Cerinthus' cheating on her with a *scortum* ('a whore'), 'for', says Scaliger, citing Terence's *Andria*, 'what they say is true: lovers' anger is a renewal of love…Now because of her weakness in love, she is ill'.[54] Byron imports a harsher tone from 4.10 (3.16), when he opens by apostrophising Cerinthus as 'cruel', and juxtaposes Sulpicia's breast racked with illness with his 'fickle' bosom.[55] Critically, he intensifies the strength of her lover's antipathy to her. In the Latin, Cerinthus merely bears her illness *lento pectore*, that is, with a degree of indifference (*lentus OLD* 8, 'slow to feel emotion').[56] Byron's Sulpicia, however, is the object of active ill will: 'by Death alone, I can avoid your hate', the strength of Cerinthus' aversion emphasised by the final placement of 'hate'.

A further short piece, not from the Graevius, was a translation, accompanied by its Latin text, of 'Adrian's Address to His Soul, When Dying', the well-known poem attributed to the Emperor Hadrian.[57] Pope had himself penned two variants of the *Hadrianus Moriens*, one a simple translation and the other a Christianised version welcoming the bliss of dying in order to 'languish into life', and in 1712 he remarked

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[54] Graevius (1680) 328; Skoie (2002) 83-84. The maxim from Terence (*amantium irae amoris integratio est,* Ter. *And.* 3.3 [555]) was much quoted right through to the Victorian period. Hurst notes that it was an especial favourite of Victorian novelists like Thackeray and Trollope, perhaps because of its inclusion in the *Eton Latin Grammar* as an illustration of the verb agreeing with the complement rather than the subject (Hurst (2006) 13n.9).
[55] 'Breast' and 'bosom' are favoured words in Byron's early works, occurring 22 and 17 times respectively in *Fugitive Pieces* (1806) alone.
[56] Lyne (2007) 364 n6.
[57] Courtney (1993, ppbk. 2003) 382.

in *The Spectator* on debate about a widely canvassed and less pious alternative reading:

> I was the other day in Company with five or six Men of some Learning; where chancing to mention the famous Verses which the Emperor *Adrian* spoke on his Death-bed, they were all agreed that 'twas a Piece of Gayety unworthy that Prince in those Circumstances. I could not but dissent from this Opinion: Methinks it was by no means a gay, but a very serious Soliloquy to his Soul at the Point of his Departure: in which Sense I naturally took the Verses at my first reading them when I was very young, and before I knew what Interpretation the World generally put upon them.[58]

Fifty years later John Wilkes circulated an unequivocally obscene travesty of Pope's *The Dying Christian to his Soul* in his *The Dying Lover to his Prick.* Yet there is in Byron's 1806 rendering no hint of the *double entendre*, no play for example with *rigida*, which the Byron of *Don Juan* would surely not have forgone:

Animula! vagula, blandula,	Ah! gentle, fleeting, wav'ring sprite,
Hospes, comesque, corporis**,**	Friend and associate of this clay!
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?	To what unknown region borne,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,	Wilt thou, now, wing thy distant flight?
Nec**,** ut soles**,** dabis jocos.	No more**,** with wonted humour gay,
	But pallid, cheerless, and forlorn.

If, from Byron, this staid sentimentalism reeks of the schoolroom, the lasting popularity of the *Address* is demonstrated by David Johnston's 1876 book containing well over one hundred translations, despite the divided opinions in its Introductory Notes about the intrinsic merit of Hadrian's lines, which are deemed 'almost untranslateable [sic]'.[59] In 1808 *The Edinburgh Review* held similar views and blasted with both barrels at Byron, then Pope: 'we do not think Lord Byron was made for translating, during his non-age, Adrian's Address to his Soul, when Pope succeeded so indifferently in the attempt'.[60] Execution may have failed Byron here,

[58] Alexander Pope, *The Spectator* No. 532*,* 10 November 1712.
[59] Johnston (1876) 12 and 5. Many of the translations are by clergymen, though authors also include Christina Rossetti, with versions in both English and Italian, and her brother, William Michael Rossetti.
[60] *The Edinburgh Review,* XXII (Jan. 1808) 287.

but the overall selection of translations and imitations for his first public book was designed to an end, in line with McGann's identification of 'a spectacular element insinuat[ing] itself throughout *Hours of Idleness* which lends the volume not so much a self-dramatizing as a self-propagandizing quality'.[61]

Nisus and Euryalus

Finally, Byron's major engagement with a single classical text during this period of his life at Harrow and Cambridge was both more ambitious and, in one realisation, more creative. Key themes recurring throughout the *Hours of Idleness* volume include the close friendships of youth ('doubly dear' to one forced to 'seek abroad, the love denied at home', *Childish Recollections,* 213-16); 'the mythology of individual greatness and heroic endeavour', in McGann's words; and a nexus of honour, fame, and memorialisation through poetry.[62] These motifs coalesce in Byron's homoerotic versions of the touching episode of Nisus and Euryalus, inseparable Trojan warriors under Aeneas' command, who are introduced in Virgil's *Aeneid* during Book 5's funeral games as *Euryalus forma insignis viridique iuventa,/ Nisus amore pio pueri* ('Euryalus famed for beauty and flower of youth, Nisus for tender love for the boy', *Aen.* 5.295-96).

Nisus' loving but discreditable behaviour, in tripping his friend's rival to secure Euryalus' victory in the footrace, foreshadows the later calamitous military exploit at *Aen.* 9.176-449, the beginning of which Byron first tackled in a pedestrian 16-line 'Fragment of a Translation from the 9th Book of Virgil's Aenead' [sic].[63] This has the hallmarks of a Harrow school exercise and appeared only in his second,

[61] McGann (1968) 23.
[62] McGann (1968) 21.
[63] Verg. *Aen.* 9.176-83.

hastily assembled 1806 book, *Poems on Various Occasions.* Heyne, whose 1793 third edition of Virgil's works was in Byron's library by 1816, described it as the *episodium Aeneidis omnium facile nobilissimum*, and it was a popular piece at this period of martial patriotism and loss of life during the prolonged wars against the French of 1793–1815.[64] Leigh Hunt recollected that, as a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital, 'the only classic I remember having any love for, was Virgil; and that was for the episode of Nisus and Euryalus'.[65]

In spring 1807, in the throes of infatuation with John Edleston, Byron returned to the story in a full, 406-line version, *The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus, A Paraphrase from the Aeneid, Lib. 9*. Concurrently, he was writing *The Death of Calmar and Orla, An Imitation of Macpherson's Ossian,* to which he appended an explanatory note: 'It may be necessary to observe that the story, though considerably varied in the Catastrophe, is taken from "Nisus and Euryalus"'.[66] These undertakings had, perhaps, a double motivation. Publicly, lines in his *Nisus and Euryalus* like 'The price of honour is the sleep of death' (52) played to the feelings of families bereaved by war and also reflected his own admiration at this stage for heroic leadership. Moore considered that Byron's 'hope of astonishing the world, at some future period, as a chieftain and hero, mingled little less with his young dreams than the prospect of a poet's glory'. He recorded Byron saying that, 'some day or other', he would raise a troop, dressed in black and riding black horses, and hence to be called 'Byron's Blacks' and 'you will hear of their performing prodigies of valour'—a fantasy indicative of his theatrical concern for appearance, and prognostic of the corps known

[64] Heyne (1787) 284.
[65] Hunt (1828) 372. Hunt recorded in the same passage that he did not care for Ovid at that time, knew nothing of Horace, disliked Cicero, regarded Homer with horror but was inclined to admire Demosthenes.
[66] *CPW* 1.375.

as ‘Byron’s Brigade’ which he formed and funded in the Greek War of Independence.[67]

Privately, Byron hinted that the emotionally charged relationship of the Trojan couple had in addition a direct personal significance. A letter to his Southwell friend, Elizabeth Pigot, written days after *Hours of Idleness* was published, maintained that he loved Edleston more than any human being and invoked Nisus and Euryalus among other canonical same-sex couples linked by close friendship:

> We shall put *Lady E. Butler*, & Miss *Ponsonby* to the *Blush*, *Pylades* & *Orestes* out of countenance, & want nothing but a *Catastrophe* like *Nisus* & *Euryalus*, to give *Jonathan* & *David* the “go by”’.[68]

In his private journal three years before his death, perhaps echoing Nisus’ *amor pius,* Byron looked back to ‘a violent, though *pure*, love and passion’ which, along with his friendship with Edward Noel Long, ‘were the then romance of the most romantic period of my life’.[69]

The homoerotic aspect of Virgil’s handling of Nisus and Euryalus has been much discussed, including, not long after Byron’s versions, by Jeremy Bentham who, Louis Crompton notes, cited Nisus and Euryalus’ ‘union of bodily vigour with mental intrepidity’ in arguing against Montesquieu’s charge that pederasty effeminises men.[70] John Makowski finds that the striking frequency of the vocabulary of love in the episode has no parallel in other descriptions of friendships in the *Aeneid*, and his reading of Virgil's ‘very un-Homeric *Darstellung* [portrayal] of Nisus and Euryalus as erastes and eromenos’ (which Makowski sees as having its roots in Plato’s

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[67] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.94-95.
[68] *BLJ* 1.125. However, in a published note to his 1807 poem ‘To Romance’, Byron commented more sardonically that Nisus and Euryalus, along with Pylades and Orestes, Achilles and Patroclus, and Damon and Pythias, ‘have been handed down to posterity, as remarkable instances of attachments, which in all probability never existed, beyond the imagination of the Poet, the page of an historian, or modern novelist’ (*CPW* 1.373).
[69] *BLJ* 8.24.
[70] Crompton (1985) 98.

idealization of a physical but essentially pedagogical interpersonal relationship) maps appositely onto the relationship of patron and protégé between Byron, the peer, and Edleston, the younger, lower class choirboy.[71]

The evidence, then, suggests that it was the content—in particular, the devotion of 'the faithful pair' and the pathos of their deaths—rather than any philological challenge which attracted Byron to tackle Virgil's well-known episode in his only published classical translation of substantial length. Nisus had reached safety in their bold venture through the enemy but, opting to 'die with him, for whom he wish'd to live' (338), turned back for his love-affirming *aristeia* and defeat. The episode ends in depicting 'a favourite fantasy of Byron's early poems, the male *Liebestod'* (Crompton).[72] In Byron's *Nisus and Euryalus* paraphrase, the dying Nisus seeks 'his wonted place' on Euryalus' bosom, 'And death was heavenly, in his friend's embrace' (400). The interpolated reference to 'his friend's embrace' adds a homoerotic flavour not patent in Virgil's *placidaque ibi demum morte quievit* ('and there at length, in the peace of death, [Nisus] found rest', *Aen.* 9.445), though the conventional assimilation of Virgil's line to Christian beliefs and language may have somewhat disguised Byron's gloss for his readers. In *The Death of Calmar and Orla,* it is the Euryalus figure, Calmar, who is found holding Orla/Nisus's hand and lying 'on the bosom of Orla. Theirs is one stream of blood'. At this point, however, in Byron's 'variation in catastrophe', Calmar/Euryalus 'lives, though low' but he rejects the possibility of being healed in favour of being united with his friend in death (103-16).

[71] Makowski (1989) 5, 4.
[72] Crompton (1985) 97.

Byron repeatedly returned to the theme of male friends or lovers bound by such ties of affection that they longed to die together, a *topos* encountered in ancient literature not just in Virgil but in works like Ovid's account of Apollo and Hyacinthus (Ov. *Met.* 10.203-4), a favoured narrative for Byron and his intimates (see Chapter 3), and Horace's assurance to Maecenas, *supremum/ carpere iter comites parati* ('we are ready to set out on the final journey as comrades together', Hor. *Odes* 2.17.11-12).[73] Byron expressed the same sentiment in his contemporaneous *Stanzas to Jessy,* which Marchand considers 'obviously addressed to John Edleston': 'There is a mystic thread of life/ So dearly wreath'd with mine alone,/ That Destiny's relentless knife/ At once must sever both, or none'.[74] And it is of significance that Byron entitles his own composition, *The Death of Calmar and Orla,* as an indication of his prime focus of interest in the story.

The *Nisus and Euryalus* paraphrase, among the last works completed before publication of *Hours of Idleness,* was technically more accomplished than the earlier, short extract, while still exhibiting traits characteristic of Byron's student classical translations. The style is essentially Latinate and clearly influenced by Dryden's translation, sometimes borrowing vocabulary like 'mien' and 'methinks'.[75] Equally, his efforts to import variety can appear pretentious. So, for example, in the course of the episode Dryden is content to repeat 'sword' several times for *ensis* and *ferrum,*

[73] Harrison notes that the language of shared death as a token of affection also recalls professions of erotic heterosexual love in Latin poetry (Harrison (2017) 197).
[74] *BLJ* 1.129.
[75] Dryden's Nisus and Euryalus episode (Book 9 of the *Aeneid*) in his *Sylvae* (1685), line 9 and Byron's version line 9 for Euryalus' 'mien', and lines 31 and 34 respectively for 'methinks'. Even where the echo is largely the effect of reflecting the original Latin, there can be a detectable trail from Virgil to Dryden to Byron, as for example with Volcens' cry when the gleam of the plundered helmet on Euryalus' head draws the enemy's attention to the pair. For Virgil's *'state, viri. quae causa viae? quive estis in armis?/ quove tenetis iter?' (Aen.* 9.376-77), Dryden gives 'Stand! stand! why thus in arms? And whither bent?/ From whence, to whom, and on what errand sent?', which Byron abridges to 'Stand, Stragglers! stand! why early thus in arms?/ From whence, to whom?' (308-9).

but Byron uses the word only twice, more frequently preferring 'the steel' and at points the arcane Latin-based 'falchion' (from *falx*) and 'glaive' (from *gladius*).

Latin is capable of a concise expression difficult to achieve in English but, even allowing for this, Byron is very considerably more prolix than the original. As Deryck Williams points out, the *Aeneid* episode falls into almost equal halves, one of scene-setting and speeches and the other of fast moving narrative. Byron inflates both, but the preparatory section disproportionately, unbalancing the overall structure.[76] An extract from Nisus' argument that Euryalus should not accompany him on the quest to Aeneas through enemy lines illustrates the poets' comparative techniques:

Virgil, *Aen.* 9.213-15

sit qui me raptum pugna pretiove redemptum
mandet humo, aut solitas si qua Fortuna vetabit,
absenti ferat inferias decoretque sepulcro.

'Let there be someone to commit me to earth, rescued from battle or ransomed at a price, or, if some chance denies the usual rites, to render them to me in my absence, and honour me with a tomb'. (Fairclough (1999) II, p.129).

Byron, *Nisus and Euryalus*, 65-72

When humbled in the dust, let someone be,
Whose gentle eyes will shed one tear for me;
Whose manly arm may snatch me back by force,
Or wealth redeem, from foes, my captive corse;
Or, if my destiny these last deny,
If in the spoiler's power, my ashes lie;
Thy pious care, may raise a simple tomb,
To mark thy love, and signalize my doom.

Here Byron amplifies Virgil's tightly-wrought three lines to eight, and domesticates his translation to a more sentimental tone in keeping with his original poems in *Hours of Idleness*. In particular, adjectives are added liberally to Virgil's spare text—'gentle' eyes, 'manly' arm, 'captive' corse, 'pious' care and 'simple' tomb—and Byron's Nisus makes explicit to Euryalus that the purpose of erecting a cenotaph is 'to mark thy love', as well as to 'signalize my doom' (the latter, a lamentably inelegant expression). Both effects contribute to a characterisation of Nisus at this point as more emotional, less controlled than Virgil's.

[76] Williams (1973, 1996) 291. The *Nisus and Euryalus* episode halves of 137 lines (*Aen.* 9.176-313) and 135 lines (9.314-449) equate in Byron's translation to 222 and 184 lines respectively.

Throughout the whole episode, Byron opts for a more passionate linguistic palette than Virgil's, even where the latter itself offers an affective colouration, as when the elderly Aletes is moved by the pair's brave plan to ambush the sleeping Rutulians and seek Aeneas. Virgil's *sic memorans umeros dextrasque tenebat/ amborum et vultum lacrimis atque ora rigabat* ('so saying, he held them both by shoulder and hand, while tears rained down his cheeks and face', 9.250-51) is heightened further in Byron's hands:

> Then in his warm embrace, the boys he press'd,
> And quivering strain'd them to his aged breast;
> With tears the burning cheek of each bedew'd,
> And, sobbing, thus his first discourse renew'd. (127-30)

This contains one of a string of Byronic references to burning, flames and ardour, which is activated by Virgil's use of *ardorem* (9.184) and *ardentem…amicum* (9.198) but extended across the passage, beginning with Byron's incendiary version of Virgil's *his amor unus erat* ('a common love was theirs', 9.182) as 'These burn with one pure flame of generous Love' (15).[77]

Generally, there is a clear pattern of the marked Virgilian simplicity, characteristic of an episode which Williams considers 'less sophisticated' than any other part of the *Aeneid,* being intensified and elaborated by Byron, sometimes to the point of florid excess.[78] So, for example, for Virgil's plain statement, *statione relicta/ ipse comes Niso graditur regemque requirunt* ('quitting his post, he walks by Nisus' side as they seek the prince', 9.222-23), Byron offers a basic translation for *statione relicta* but adds an emotive embellishment: 'The pair, buoyed up on Hope's exulting wing,/ Their stations leave, and speed to seek the king', 83-84). Byron turns again to wings—'Celestial pair! if aught my verse can claim,/ Wafted on Time's broad pinion,

[77] See also lines 37, 49, 79, 160, 193, 359.
[78] Williams (1973, 1996) 291.

yours is fame!' (401-2)—to lift his poetry to Virgil's climactic claim of everlasting fame through poetry, *Fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt,/ nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo* ('Happy pair! If my poetry has any power, no day shall ever blot you from the memory of time', Verg. *Aen.* 9.446-47). These are markers that this is the work of a young poet still learning his craft and, moreover, writing in a mode, translation, that he was to abandon in his maturity.

Perhaps more intriguing today is *The Death of Calmar and Orla*, Byron's transposition of Virgil's episode from one mythical setting to another. A strongly-expressed theme in *Hours of Idleness* is Byron's nostalgic affection for his Scottish heritage and for the Highland mountains he visited in childhood, a sentiment expressed in poems often influenced by the much-contested works of 'Ossian', the alleged author of ancient epic poems and fragments fraudulently claimed as translated from the Gaelic by James Macpherson and first published in the 1760s.[79] Byron's experimentation with an Ossianic mode is unsurprising, given the far-reaching influence of what Robert Crawford has described as 'Ossian's paradoxical effect…of simultaneous primitivism and sophistication', versions of which were developed by Burns and Byron, Scott and Wordsworth.[80]

Significant in relation to Byron's melding of classics with Gaelic in *The Death of Calmar and Orla,* and to his habitual paratextuality throughout his writing life, is the proliferation in Macpherson's publications of scholarly footnotes providing substantial passages of poetry, many in Greek and Latin with literary translations. For Crawford, 'Ossian is the most self-conscious text imaginable,

[79] Poems in the *Hours of Idleness* collection with varying degrees of Ossianic flavour include *Oscar of Alva, Lachin Y Gair, On Leaving Newstead Abbey, A Fragment, Elegy on Newstead Abbey* and *The Death of Orla and Calmar.*

[80] Crawford (2001) 21, 57. Coleridge, without Byron's Scottish antecedents, also produced two verse imitations of Ossian and embarked on the libretto for an Ossianic opera (Agrawal (1990) 182, D.R. Moore (2003) 48).

constantly aware of its own intertextuality, of its linguistic status'.[81] The key triad for footnote citation in Ossian is Homer above all (with translations by Pope), Virgil (with translations by Dryden) and Milton, with other occasional classical references, for example, Strabo and Statius in *Fingal* published in 1762.

In annotations in his 1806 edition of *The Poems of Ossian,* Byron evaluated Ossian approvingly against Homer: 'no hero in the Iliad or the Odyssey…is at once so brave and amiable' as the mythical Celtic king, Fingal, father of the blind bard Ossian; 'Hector…greatly sullies the lustre of his glorious actions by the insult over the fallen Patroclus' while 'the conduct of Fingal appears uniformly illustrious and great'; and Connal is 'the Ulysses of Ossian, though he is a far more complete character than the Grecian chief". Homer did, however, win some points:

> [T]hough in sublimity of sentiment, in vivacity and strength of description, Ossian may claim a full equality of merit with Homer himself, yet in the invention both of incidents and characters he is greatly inferior to the Grecian bard.

Pierre la Rose's severe, but understandable, 1898 verdict was that Byron's notes, probably penned when the poet was eighteen or nineteen, 'furnish a pleasant little commentary on his critical ineptitude'.[82]

Late in his life, Byron's poem *The Island* explored topographically his cultural affiliations, using as a totem Loch na garr (or Lachin y Gair), the mountain in the Grampians on the royal Balmoral estate where as a boy he spent some, retrospectively idyllic, summers:

> He who first met the Highlands' swelling blue
> Will love each peak that shows a kindred hue …
> Long have I roamed through lands which are not mine,
> Adored the Alp, and loved the Apennine,
> Revered Parnassus, and beheld the steep
> Jove's Ida and Olympus crown the deep:

[81] Crawford (2001) 52.
[82] Byron's annotations taken from la Rose (1898) 810-11.

> But 'twas not all long ages' lore, nor all
> Their nature held me in their thrilling thrall;
> The infant rapture still survived the boy,
> And Loch-na-gar with Ida looked o'er Troy,
> Mixed Celtic memories with the Phrygian mount,
> And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount. (Canto 2.280-81, 284-93)

The flawlessly evocative line, 'And Loch-na-gar with Ida looked o'er Troy', crystallises Byron's seamless assimilation of the ancient classical world to his personal Caledonian life-experience.

As early as 1807, having, to la Rose's satisfaction, 'read Ossian carefully enough to imitate it with moderate success', Byron explored that same cultural collision of the classical and the Gaelic, or at least Gaelic revival, in his pastiche Ossianic epyllion based on the *Aeneid.*[83] For Susan Oliver, *The Death of Calmar and Orla* attempts to reclaim epic for radical purposes by employing an unconventional, Gaelic setting.[84] The core plot is similar: a battle is being waged between Scottish warriors and Norsemen, and an Aeneas figure, Cuthullin (the Cuchulain of Irish mythology), is absent when the Scots come under attack. When the dark-haired Orla (Nisus) volunteers to fetch Cuthullin, the blonde Calmar (Euryalus), hailed in the opening paragraph as a hero, insists on accompanying his friend on the hazardous mission, despite Orla's attempts to dissuade him, not least by representing the tragic impact on Calmar's mother, blue-eyed Mora, if Calmar was to be killed, just as Nisus begs not to be the cause of grief for Euryalus' faithful mother (*Aen.* 9.216-18).

Thereafter, Byron's streamlined account of their encounter with the enemy carries an implied metatextual commentary on the Virgilian characters, in its omission of features which render the reading of Nisus and Euryalus ambivalent. Neither Calmar nor Orla exhibits the reckless rage for indiscriminate slaughter that

[83] la Rose (1898) 812.
[84] Oliver (2008) 19.

Virgil insinuates, nor the greed for plunder which precipitates Euryalus' downfall. Rather the Scottish pair's original intention is to steal through the enemy unnoticed, until Orla catches sight of the man who killed his father and is honour-bound to take revenge. Even then, he refuses to kill Mathon in his sleep and, in waking him to combat, rouses the other enemy chiefs and triggers his own death (72-81). This is a clear contrast to Virgil's Nisus who checks his voice before embarking on slaying the sleeping Rutulians (*Aen.* 9.324ff.). Byron's is a more noble vision and, as described earlier, he romanticises the ending, with Calmar actively opting for death over life without his friend.

A cardinal topos of the poem, uncompromised by irony, is the immortality of vanished heroes through bardic song.[85] Where Virgil promises commemoration conditionally with *si quid mea carmina possunt,* ('if my poetry has power, *Aen.* 9.446), *The Death of Calmar and Orla* begins and ends with an emphatic assertion of ever-lasting fame: 'Past is the race of heroes, but their fame rises on the harp' (4-5); 'Peace to thy soul, Orla! thy fame will not perish. Nor thine, Calmar!' (124). Philip Cardinale has argued that in *The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus,* 'Byron inserts into the Latin text a contrast between the English words "Fame" and "Glory"', with the companions earning '"Fame" by dying for each other rather than faceless "Glory"', the latter accorded those who are loyal to, and successful in, the objectives of war.[86] In line with this, *Calmar and Orla* refers only to 'fame', as does Byron's translation from Anacreon, 'To his Lyre', though no such distinction is made in *Oscar of Alva,* an Ossianic poem from *Hours of Idleness* with anacreontic echoes.[87]

[85] See lines 5, 38, 54-61, 115-16, 120, 124-25, 127-28.
[86] Cardinale (2008) 97-98.
[87] *Oscar of Alva:* 'The song is glory's chief reward' (307); 'No lyre of fame, no hallowed verse,/ Shall sound his glories high in air' (313-14).

In form and feel, there are marked differences between *The Death of Calmar and Orla* and Byron's closer paraphrase of the *Aeneid* story. Typically of Ossian, but unusually for Byron given his unwavering advocacy of rhyme, *Calmar and Orla* is a prose poem, and one, moreover, in which the narrative is succinctly told. Byron captures the style and tone of Ossian in a staccato text constructed of short clauses with a high representation of monosyllabic, often Old English, words. Compare, for example, the introductions of Euryalus and his Scottish counterpart, Calmar; both descriptions are mannered, but to very different effect. In his *Aeneid* paraphrase, Byron's alliterative description of Euryalus begins 'No lovelier mien adorned the ranks of Troy,/ And beardless bloom yet graced the gallant boy' (9-10), a less than satisfactory bid for a lofty style, especially when set beside the Old English vocabulary and syntax of *Calmar and Orla*:

> mild was the eye of Calmar; soft was the flow of his yellow locks; they streamed like the meteor of the night. No maid was the sigh of his soul; his thoughts were given to friendship! to dark-eyed Orla; destroyer of heroes! (12-15).[88]

The latter is a pitch-perfect simulation of how Hugh Blair, in his 1793 *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian,* depicts 'the manner of composition' in Ossian: 'No artful transitions; nor full and extended connection of parts…but a style always rapid and vehement; in narration concise, even to the point of abruptness'.[89]

Blair also describes a language with a 'figurative cast', and Casey Dué notes the presence everywhere in Ossian of simile and metaphor.[90] Byron, in paraphrasing *The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus,* necessarily replicates Virgil's famous similes of the hungry lion (*Aen.* 9.339-41, Byron 259-64) and the purple flower/crimson poppy

[88] The following words originate in Old English: mild, eye, soft, flow, yellow, lock, stream, night, maid(en), sigh, thought, friendship, dark.
[89] Blair (1793) 18.
[90] Dué, 'The Invention of Ossian' http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/1334

(*Aen*. 9.435-37, Byron 379-82), but in *The Death of Calmar and Orla,* he adds similes such as Calmar/Euryalus' yellow hair streaming 'like the meteor of the night' (see above). In the following example, a direct line can be tracked between Virgil, Ossian/Macpherson and Byron. 'Ossian', in his 1762 *Fingal, An Ancient Epic poem in Six Books,* employs a simile:

> As rushes a stream of foam from the dark shady deep of Cromla; when the thunder is rolling above, and dark-brown night sits on half the hill. So fierce, so vast, and so terrible rushed on the sons of Erin. The chief like a whale of ocean, whom all his billows pursue, poured valour forth as a stream, rolling his might along the shore (p.10).

To this, he provides a footnote to flag the link to Virgil:

> aut ubi decursu rapido de montibus altis
> dant sonitum spumosi amnes et in aequora currunt
> quisque suum populatus iter
>
> ('or as when in swift descent from mountain heights foaming rivers roar and race seaward, each leaving its own path waste' ['with no less fury the two, Aeneas and Turnus, sweep through the battle'], *Aen*. 12.523-25)

In a similar context of foes rushing into battle like surging water, Byron's *Calmar and Orla* echoes *Fingal'*s vocabulary of 'foam' and 'roll' in its own Virgilian epic simile:

> As roll the waves of the Ocean on two mighty barks of the north, so pour the men of Lochlin on the chiefs. As breaking the surge in foam, proudly steer the barks of the north, so rise the Chiefs of Morven, on the scattered crests of Lochlin. (88-91)

At the moment of composition, Byron claimed *The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus* as 'the best in point of Versification I have ever written', and reviews in two contemporary periodicals did single it out for praise, though one, *Monthly Literary Recreations,* was published by the agent handling the London sales of Byron's book so its complimentary review did not lack self-interest.[91] *Le Beau Monde* less enthusiastically commented that it was 'bold' to attempt translating the

[91] *BLJ* 1.118.

episode of Nisus and Euryalus after Dryden, and Anacreon after Moore, and expressed surprise that his translations should not have been suppressed.[92] It is, though, the less noticed *The Death of Calmar and Orla* which is the more revealing of Byron's poetic skills and of his attitude to the Virgil.

'Translations…there are none' (Monthly Mirror)

So far as the reception of *Hours of Idleness* generally was concerned, Byron affected to be off-hand in his comments to friends about his 'juvenilia', while eagerly tracking sales and reviews. A letter of May 1807 makes clear that his aim was fame, not fortune, and suggests that the heavy emphasis in its Preface on his youth, his aristocratic status and his dilettante attitude to poetic composition as something 'to divert the dull moments of indisposition, or the monotony of a vacant hour', was a deliberate tactic:

> I am tired of versifying, & am irrevocably determined to *rhyme* no more, an employment I merely adopted *"pour passer le Temps"*[.] when this work is accomplished, I shall have obtained all the *Eclat* I desire at present, when it shall be said that I published before I was 20; the merits of the contents is of little Consequence, provided they are not absolutely execrable, the novelty of the *Deed* (which though not *unprecedented*, is at least uncommon, particularly among *Patricians*) will secure some share of Credit.[93]

He may have been encouraged in this by Pope's similar plea on the grounds of youth in the Preface to his *Collected Works [Translations and Imitations]* and Thomas Moore's on behalf of the fictitious Thomas Little, but, if so, Byron woefully misjudged.[94] He

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[92] Reiman (1972) Pt.B.4.1657 for *Monthly Literary Recreations*, III (July 1807), 67-71; Pt. B.1.4 for *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, XXVIII (Dec 1807), 407-408; and Pt. B.1.78 *Le Beau Monde,* II (Sept. 1807), 88-90 respectively.

[93] *BLJ* 1.119.

[94] Pope's Preface to his *Collected Works* (London, 1717): 'I desire it may then be consider'd, that there are very few things in this collection which were not written under the age of five and twenty; so that my youth may be made…a case of compassion'. 'T.M.' in the Editor's Preface to *The Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Little, Esq.*: 'Mr Little died in his one-and-twentieth year; and most of these poems were written at so early a period, that their errors may claim some indulgence from the critic'.

was pilloried for his disingenuous pretensions by *The Edinburgh Review's* anonymous 1808 critique (actually written by Henry Brougham though Byron suspected the *Review*'s editor, Francis Jeffrey) which began with an acerbic allusion to Horace's *Ars Poetica*: 'the poetry of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit'—that is, mediocrity.[95]

Retrospectively, attention has focused mainly on this devastating demolition of the noble student's poetic offerings principally because, despite the *Review*'s advice that 'he do forthwith abandon poetry', it provoked Byron to hone his satirical talents in broadening a work in hand, *British Bards,* to *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, first published the following year and swiftly running to four editions. Always super-sensitive, Byron's immediate reaction was that 'as an author, I am cut to atoms by the E[dinburgh] Review' which 'has completely demolished my little fabric of fame'. In fact, however, the reviews *in toto* supported his stiff-lipped reflection a month later that he had been 'lucky enough upon the whole', *The Edinburgh*'s 'paper bullets of the brain' notwithstanding.[96] Within the majority commendation of Byron's promise as a poet, there was though a clear distinction between judgments on Byron's 'original' works and those 'translated': the latter found little favour.

The most incisive analysis came in the *Monthly Mirror* from an anonymous reviewer Donald Reiman suspects was Edward Dubois, wit and man of letters whose own book of 1799, *The Wreath*, had offered prose translations of Sappho, Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, together with a comparison of more than coincidental

[95] *The Edinburgh Review,* XXI (Jan. 1808), 285-89. Hor. *Ars Poetica* 372-73: *mediocribus esse poetis/ non homines, non di, non concessere columnae* ('But that poets be of middling rank, neither men nor gods nor booksellers ever brooked').
[96] *BLJ* 1.158-59, 1.162. Ward judges that, of the sixteen original reviews, eleven were preponderantly favourable, whereas only three were unfavourable, and two were as generous with praise as with censure (Ward (1944) 549).

correspondences between Lucian and Horace.[97] In relation to *Hours of Idleness,* after declaring that 'translations…there are none', the reviewer undertook a detailed dissection of Byron's "Translation from Catullus, *luctus de morte passeris"* (Catull. 3)*,* a work 'in the easy style of writing' which it found 'dishonoured' Catullus. By comparative quotations from the Latin and Byron, he highlighted omissions, insipid verse and a certain inexactitude in translating the Latin. His less than refined conclusion was that 'if this was one of his lordship's *school exercises* at Harrow, and he escaped whipping, they have there either an undue respect for lords' bottoms, or they do not deserve the reputation they have acquired'. *The Edinburgh Review* was only marginally more generous:

> [W]e fear his translations and imitations are great favourites with Lord Byron. We have them of all kinds, from Anacreon to Ossian; and viewing them as school exercises, they may pass. Only, why print them after they have had their day and served their turn?[98]

The question is whether these are merely examples of the short-sighted contemporary reception of works by Romantic poets or whether, behind the excesses of language, their judgments are just. In fact, the immediate criticisms of Byron's classical translations on publication do not seem unduly harsh. While these early translations have regularly been cited and reprinted up to the present day, this often seems a matter of reflected glory from Byron's later brilliance and fame as a poet. His name has an aura that invests with importance teenage apprentice work which cannot fairly be compared with the works of a mature poet. Moore noted in his *Life* that he held nearly six hundred lines of Byron's (presumably general) poetry written during this period but never printed: 'the greater number of these have little, besides his name, to recommend them'.[99]

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[97] *Monthly Mirror,* 2nd Series, III (Jan. 1808), 28-30 at Reiman (1972) Pt. B.4.1714.
[98] *The Edinburgh Review,* XXI (Jan. 1808), 287.
[99] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.101.

Jane Moore has pointed out that, in echoing traditional song forms, Wordsworth and Coleridge with *Lyrical Ballads* and Moore with *Odes of Anacreon* in some ways 'move forward by looking back'.[100] *The Death of Calmar and Orla* apart, Byron's translations look back to the neo-classical past he admired but without offering any such innovative twist. Of the volumes as a whole, Marchand declared that, in the limited circulation *Poems on Various Occasions,* 'the artificiality of style did not give him a chance to display his already considerable talents for realism, incisiveness and humour', but worse still, Byron's revisions for the published *Hours of Idleness* 'snuffed out most of the sparks of original talent that had occasionally livened the privately printed volumes. What remained was imitative, sentimental and mawkish'.[101]

McGann trenchantly describes *Hours of Idleness* as a whole as 'thoroughly derivative', and sees Brougham's review in *The Edinburgh* as a shrewd reading in registering Byron's 'masks of vanity and pretentiousness' and ridiculing 'the technical and stylistic weakness'.[102] As the translations of a dilettante tyro, one would not expect to find here Pope's unrivalled mastery of the closed heroic couplet, but at a more basic level the *Hours of Idleness* pieces lack technical polish and, for the greater part, the creative élan which distinguishes Byron's later work. This is not, of course, a universal view. As recently as 2015, Stead has found in Byron's 'more erotic, sentimental' handling of Catullus 'an example of how so-called licentious poetry can achieve high artistic merit and cultural value'.[103] But overall the judgment holds.

[100] J. Moore (2013) 31.
[101] Marchand (1971, ppbk. 1976) 42, 44.
[102] McGann (1976) 5; (1998) 32.
[103] Stead (2015) 204.

'all those nauseous epigrams of Martial' (Don Juan)

Byron's second, brief phase of translating classical works took place during his stay in Athens in 1810–11 and is considered in Chapter 3, with the exception of *Hints from Horace,* a poem that uniquely Byron worked on in both his early and later periods, which is discussed in Chapters 4 and 6. His final phase, mainly from 1812–14, focused solely on Martial's works. In all, Byron left versions of twelve Martial epigrams (two with variants), more than 'all the rest of the "Romantics" put together' according to Cochran, and certainly the highest number of Byron's works based on any one classical author (see Table 1 above).[104] Labelled by Byron variously as translation, 'imitation' or not at all, here too without significant differentiation, most remained unpublished until the twentieth century.

As noted earlier, the only classical translation which Byron himself saw to publication after 1807 was his version of Martial's first epigram. This, with its Latin text, appeared in January 1823 in the second issue of *The Liberal,* a short-lived quarterly magazine founded by Byron, Shelley and the Hunt brothers (the *'properrioters'* in Byron's pun) in what Kim Wheatley sees as 'a reformist counterblast' to the Tory *Quarterly Review* founded in 1809 by Sir Walter Scott and John Murray.[105] *The Liberal* was in urgent need of contributions, and epigrams and classical translations were a common and convenient means of filling space in periodicals of the time.[106] Byron probably also prepared a second epigram for publication around this time: in late 1824, after the demise of both Byron and *The Liberal*, a revision of his unpublished 1812 imitation of Mart. 11.93 appeared in John and Leigh Hunt's radical weekly, *The Examiner,* presumably on the basis of a text

[104] Cochran (2013) 93.
[105] Wheatley (2013) 109.
[106] Nisbet (2013) 67.

provided directly or indirectly by the poet.[107]

If *The Liberal'*s disingenuous manifesto commitment to literature rather than politics was undermined in its first issue by the inclusion of Byron's satirical *The Vision of Judgment* and three savage epigrams on Castlereagh's suicide, his choice of Mart. 1.1 for the second issue was more benign. Moreover, *The Liberal's* literary audience might have been expected to be familiar with the first, linguistically unchallenging, epigram of Martial's first book, even if indecency disqualified much of his wider *oeuvre* from school textbooks:

MARTIAL Lib.1. Epig.1

Hic est quem legis, ille, quem requiris,
Toto notus in orbe Martialis
Argutis Epigrammatôn libellis:
Cui, lector studiose, quod dedisti
Viventi decus atque sentienti,
Rari post cineres habent poetae.

'You read him, you ask for him, and here he is: Martial, known the world over for his witty little books of epigrams. Devoted reader, the glory you have given him while he lives and feels comes to few poets in their graves'. (Shackleton Bailey (1993) 1.43).

BYRON, text from *The Liberal,* 2 (1823) 398.

He unto whom thou art so partial,
Oh, reader! is the well-known Martial,
The Epigrammatist: while living,
Give him the fame thou wouldst be giving;
So shall he hear, and feel, and know it:
Post-obits rarely reach a poet.

Martial's own epigram reversed the conventional trope of Latin poets seeking glory in posterity, cf. Catullus 1, Propertius 3.1 and Horace's *Odes* 3.30, the latter of which Byron claimed to have translated into Italian while in Athens in 1810.[108] After what was initially a broadly approximate rendering of the Latin, Byron's crucial change of nuance was from Martial's immodest assertion that his audience had already given glory to him *viventi…atque sentienti*, a claim repeated in Mart. 3.95.7-8 and elsewhere, to a solicitation that the reader *should* give due praise to a living poet. Peter Howell judges that Byron 'rather spoilt the effect' compared with

[107] *The Examiner* 24 (7 Nov.1824).
[108] *BLJ* 2.13. No copy of the translation is known.

Martial's 'calm gratitude', but the reworking drew on a familiar Byronic theme.[109] *The Prophecy of Dante* had highlighted the hollow reward of poets doomed 'to be rack'd/ In life, to wear their hearts out, and consume/ Their days in endless strife, and die alone;/ Then future thousands crowd around their tomb/…And…/ Spread his—by him unheard, unheeded—fame' (1.149-57). Long conscious that his own fame might be 'as my fortunes are,/ Of hasty growth and blight' (*CHP* 4.9), by 1822 Byron was sensitized by his own fading popularity to the lack of appreciation shown before their recent deaths to Shelley and indeed to Keats, whose 'versifying Tooke's Pantheon and Lemprière's Dictionary' he privately pilloried but whose public critical denigration he regretted.[110]

Martial's last line may allude to Ovid's final claim from Pontus that *famaque post cineres maior venit* ('and fame comes in greater measure after [we are] ashes', Ov. *Pont.* 4.16.3), a destiny that awaited both Keats and Shelley, but Byron's pragmatic response queries the utility and comfort of such posthumous glory. The punchy conclusion of his translation in 'Post-obits rarely reach a poet' is a masterstroke, capturing both the compressed form of the Martial and, with its slangy 'Post-obits', the Byronic man-about-town tone, in a characteristically bathetic ending nonetheless infused with seriousness.[111] In tone, sense and sound, with its tightly-crafted cluster of assonantal long 'o's and spitting 'p's and 't's set off by the rolling resonance of 'rarely reach', it provides, even more effectively than Martial's *[decus…] rari post cineres habent poetae,* the maxim-like culmination symptomatic of epigram. And Christopher Ricks (albeit perhaps undervaluing Martial's '*rari*')

[109] Howell (1980) 104.
[110] *BLJ* 8.102. See also *DJ* 11.60: 'John Keats, who was killed off by one critique,/ Just as he really promised something great,/ If not intelligible,—without Greek/ Contrived to talk about the Gods of late,/ Much as they might have been supposed to speak'. Keats died in 1821, Shelley in 1822.
[111] A post-obit was a bond given by a borrower, payable after the death of a specified individual. Shelley raised cash by post-obit bonds against a future inheritance due to him under entail.

notes ‘a happy dryness’ in Byron’s choice of ‘rarely’ rather than ‘never’, marking a ‘judiciousness’ about pronouncing on the afterlife.[112]

As alert readers might have recognized, Byron’s rhyme of ‘partial’ and ‘Martial’ was recycled from an early passage of *Don Juan* which, laced with not wholly unsympathetic irony, skewered the assiduous scholars who bowdlerized classical texts but, out of scholarly scruples, annexed the offending excerpts:

> And then what proper person could be partial
> To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?
>
> Juan was taught from out the best edition,
> Expurgated by learned men, who place,
> Judiciously, from out the schoolboy’s vision,
> The grosser parts; but fearful to deface
> Too much their modest bard by this omission,
> And pitying sore his mutilated case,
> They only add them all in an appendix,
> Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index;*
>
> For there we have them all at one fell swoop. (*Don Juan* 1.43-45)

The asterisk on ‘index’ is Byron’s, indicating one of the many notes he provided to assert the factual basis of his poetry: ‘Fact. There is or was such an edition, with all the obnoxious Epigrams of Martial placed by themselves at the end’, a reference to the *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammata* in a French series of classical texts edited with copious notes for the education of Louis XIV’s grandson, the Dauphin *(‘in usum Delphini’*) and for the wider public.[113]

Only one Delphine book can be attributed incontestably to Byron’s library, an 1803 *Ciceronis Orationes Selectæ,* but in the 1827 ‘deceased gentleman’s’ catalogue which Cochran argues also relates to Byron’s library, there are thirteen Delphine Latin texts including the Martial and a two-volume *Catullus, Tibullus, et*

[112] Ricks (2002) 127.
[113] Harrison and Stray (2012) 4.

Propertius.[114] Isaac Disraeli, man of letters and father of Benjamin Disraeli, commented in his *Curiosities of Literature,* a work Byron admired, that while the *in usum Delphini* 'project was excellent,…the performance was bad'; 'the greater part of these interpreters have but indifferently executed their employment'.[115] Unfortunately, the 1680 edition of Martial by Vincent Collesson proved one of the less successful publications in the series, with a single reprint enhanced by numismatic illustrations in 1701.[116] This second edition owned by the 'deceased gentleman' helpfully provided 151 'epigrammata obscoena', with notes but no Latin paraphrase, in a separate section of 56 pages at the end of the book under a warning address to the reader.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the vogue for Martial evident among the wits and writers of previous centuries was on the wane, though it had not yet sunk to the degree of abhorrence of his obscenity and sycophancy exhibited by the Victorians.[117] In Germany, in the mid-1790s, Goethe and Schiller wrote some 750 epigrams modeled on Martial's *Xenia* for their joint work, *Xenien,* but in England Halhed's anonymous 1793–94 imitations of Martial were poorly received.[118] Richard Porson, Byron's Cambridge professor and a quondam writer of epigrams, is alleged to have attacked the form itself, claiming that 'the dignity of a great poet is thought to be lowered by the writing of epigrams'.[119]

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[114] Cochran (2013) 49-55. The thirteen Delphine editions listed in the 1827 library sale of the 'deceased gentleman' were *Caesaris* (1806); *Catullus, Tibullus, et Propertius* (1685); *Ciceronis Orationes Selectæ* (1793); *Horatius* (1727); *Martialis Epigrammata* (1701); *Ovidii Metamorphoses* (1721); *Ovidii Fasti* (1720); *Ovidii Epistolae* (1714); *Plauti Comœdiæ* (1679); *Plauti Comœdiæ Selectae* (1724); *Suetonius* (1718); *Terentius* (1723); *Virgilius* (1773).
[115] Disraeli (1791) 93-94.
[116] See also Wolff (2005) 235.
[117] Leary (2012)136.
[118] Reed (2002) 105.
[119] Sullivan (2004) 300.

Even the iconoclastic Byron, despite his barbed shaft at the 'proper' person's tastes in *Don Juan*, was demure in his handling of Martial whose lewdness he acknowledged less ironically in a note to his poem, *The Island,* about 'Latin poems which vie with Martial or Catullus in obscenity'. This latter accords with Shelley's view, in considering same-sex physical passion, that 'the ideas suggested by Catullus, Martial, Juvenal and Suetonius never occur amongst the Greeks; or even among those Romans who, like Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, imitated them. The Romans were brutally obscene'.[120] Martial, in the *praefatio* to his first book of epigrams, excused himself on the grounds of precedent in Catullus, Marsus, Pedo and Gaetulicus, but Byron simply chose not to imitate the Roman's racier poems publicly. His own work shared Martial's predilection for holding the mirror up to contemporary life, but his preferred subjects for translation from Martial were broadly literary and pecuniary, a choice which may reflect the circumstances of composition—for most of his life Byron was financially stretched and, in his later years, demonstrated a fixation about money. Stylistically too, he held back from following in full Martial's pronouncement on the appropriate diction for his works: *lascivam verborum veritatem, id est epigrammaton linguam* ('the licence I use in calling a spade a spade, that is the language of epigram').[121] While Byron's versions emulate Martial's use of short, sometimes slang, words in simple forthright sentences, they generally avoid obscenities.

Byron's first and main engagement with his epigrammatic predecessor was a series of nine manuscript poems under his own heading of 'Imitations of Martial',

[120] Byron, *The Island,* 2.407; Shelley, 'A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love' (1818), where Shelley added 'how innocent is even the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes compared with the infamous perversions of Catullus' (Holmes (1980) 111).
[121] Martial's preface to Book 1 of his epigrams, lines 10-11.

dated by McGann to 1812.[122] This occurred soon after his return to London from the East, when Byron became an intimate part of a literary circle including Thomas 'Anacreon' Moore, Thomas Campbell and Samuel Rogers, a wealthy banker-poet at the heart of London's cultural life: 'I have lately been leading a most *poetical* life with Messrs. Rogers Moore & Campbell'.[123] 'Melodious Rogers', a generation older, was one of the few poets whom Byron had praised in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (803-8) but only now did they meet and, for a time, enjoy a close friendship.

Whatever Martial's standing in Regency polite society generally, his work seems to have been part of the informal currency of exchange among Byron's new poet friends. Byron cited Martial in urging Moore to stay at Newstead: 'Hodgson will plague you, I fear with verse—for my own part, I will conclude, with Martial, "nil recitabo tibi"' ('I will recite nothing to you', Mart. 11.52.16), appropriately given that Moore himself had chosen Martial's epigram 1.117.18, *'Tanti non es', ais? Sapis, Luperce* ('You're not worth it, you say? You're a man of sense, Lupercus') as the self-deprecatory epigraph for his own 1806 publication, *Epistles, Odes and other Poems*.[124] And a 'Sam', presumably Rogers, figured in early drafts of two of Byron's translations, Mart. 6.60 and 11.92. As an adolescent thirty years before, Rogers had himself included versions of nearly forty Martial epigrams in his 1782 *Poems on Various Occasions* (a not uncommon title, used among others by Byron for his second book of poems) and it is he who appears to have been the key influence. Medwin recorded Byron as saying that 'Rogers is the only man I know who can write epigrams, and sharp bone-cutters too, in two lines'.[125] A note of February 1812 from

[122] *CPW* 3.404.
[123] *BLJ* 2.128.
[124] *BLJ* 2.145.
[125] Medwin (1824) 257.

Byron to Rogers indicates a mutually stimulating, tripartite literary alliance, albeit one lacking the erotic undertow of Catullus' with Licinius Calvus (Catull. 50): 'Your epigrammatic example has set Moore and me scribbling, I send you the fruits of *my* midnight buffoonery'. Citing this, Andrew Nicholson argues convincingly that Byron's epigrammatic *'vers d'occasion'* were personal exercises for private consumption among a select few and never intended for publication.[126] At the same time, Byron's free adaptation of Mart. 6.60, which transposes the reactions expected of a friend in its Martial-like antitheses, wickedly reveals the camaraderie as tinged with competitive *Schadenfreude*:

MARTIAL 6.60

Laudat, amat, cantat nostros mea Roma libellos,
meque sinus omnes, me manus omnis habet.
ecce rubet quidam, pallet, stupet, oscitat, odit.
hoc volo: nunc nobis carmina nostra placent.

'My Rome praises my little books, loves them, recites them; I am in every pocket, every hand. Look, somebody turns red, turns pale, is dazed, yawns, is disgusted. This I want. Now my poems please me'.
(Shackleton Bailey (1993) II, p.45)

BYRON

I print sometimes—to judge of praise or blame—
Sam's face is my thermometer of fame.—
If he looks gay, the critic's was most fearful;
If sad, my publisher is wondrous cheerful.—

For the greater part then, Byron's direct translations or imitations of Martial's epigrams around 1812 can be seen as ludic exchanges with fellow-poets, in a literary tradition where, as Nisbet points out, ancient epigrams were themselves 'predicated on imitation and "capping" of predecessors'.[127] Subsequently, in 1814 or thereabouts, Byron seems to have acquired a still extant copy of Cornelius Schrevel's well-respected, 1670 Leiden edition of *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammata*. The book was not included in his 1813 library catalogue but was bought by Murray in the 1816 sale and, among the pencilled marginalia in Byron's own hand, a translation of Mart.

[126] Nicholson (2007) 77.
[127] Nisbet (2013) 18.

11.87 is dated May 1st 1814.

In total, he wrote four translations alongside the appropriate Latin texts, two new and two variants of 1812 epigrams.[128] It was only in this text that Byron flagged Martial's treatment of pederasty and sodomy which, along with incest, were matters of anxiety as he approached marriage to Annabella Milbanke in what would prove a vain bid for social camouflage.[129] Yet, even in the privacy of a book he owned, Byron was more circumspect than Martial. In Martial's vignette at 11.87, Charidemus, the once wealthy pederast (*tunc pedico fuisti*), was reduced in old age by poverty to a fornicator running after old crones (*illa fututorem te…facit)*; but Byron's deftly euphemistic version hailed the 'wondrous power of Poverty/ That thus can make a Man of thee!'. With even greater discretion, Byron simply sidelined Mart. 11.78, a more salacious epigram with lines uncannily prophetic of the allegation of marital sodomy, then felonious, which would be made when his wife left him, a separation Byron believed to have been promoted by Annabella's mother and governess:[130]

> pedicare semel cupido dabit illa marito,
> dum metuit teli vulnera prima novi:
> saepius hoc fieri nutrix materque vetabunt
> et dicent: 'uxor, non puer, ista tibi est'. (Mart. 11.78, 5-8).
>
> ('She will let her eager spouse sodomize her once, while she fears the first wound of the new lance, but her nurse and her mother will forbid its happening often and say: "She's your wife, not your boy"'. Shackleton Bailey (1993) III, pp. 65-7)

In terms of poetic handling, the crucial conciseness of Martial's epigrams sometimes eluded Byron: of his twelve known exercises, only six were delivered within the same line count as the Latin. Byron himself commented

[128] Nicholson (2007) 76-77. New translations of Mart. 11.87 and 12.10, and variants of 11.92 and 93.
[129] Crompton (1985) 214.
[130] MacCarthy (2014) 268, 274.

contemporaneously to Lord Holland, 'latterly I can weave a nine line stanza faster than a couplet, for which measure I have not the cunning', and in the year his Mart. 1.1 appeared in *The Liberal,* he similarly confided to Lady Blessington 'I have never succeeded to my satisfaction in an epigram'.[131]

Sacrificing brevity did not necessarily amplify the effect, though Byron frequently captured the final, pithy line to which a Martial epigram typically builds. His Mart. 12.10 illustrates the point:

MARTIAL 12.10	**BYRON**
Habet Africanus miliens, tamen captat. Fortuna multis dat nimis, satis nulli. ('Africanus has a hundred million, but still he fishes for legacies. Fortune gives too much to many, to none enough'. Shackleton Bailey (1993) III.99).	Old George hath millions – would have more – and scrapes His hoard with meanness in a thousand shapes – Thus Fortune pampering each unworthy son Too much to many gives – enough to None –[132]

Against Nicholson's assessment that Byron's last line is 'perfection itself', his second is merely flabby and the first misses the legacy-seeking connotation of the Latin *captat* (*OLD* 9).[133] The otherwise gratuitous importation of 'each unworthy son' in line 3, taken together with the name 'Old George', may, however, have a point, in infiltrating a covert reference to George III and his variously unsatisfactory sons, particularly the future George IV. The fit, if not exact, is close enough to amuse: George III was parsimonious, keeping his heir on short rations, while the Prince of Wales (by 1814 Prince Regent) was prodigiously profligate and always short of funds for grand projects like Carlton House and the Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

One characteristic which Byron and Martial shared, was their fondness for topicality. In his 'Imitation of Martial, VI.34', Byron substituted the Prince of Wales

[131] *BLJ* 2.210; Lovell (1969) 152.
[132] Nicholson (2007) 77.
[133] Nicholson (2007) 80.

for Caesar and sharpened Martial's dart by *excluding* the prince from the obsequious clapping which greets Caesar and 'every sovereign':

MARTIAL 6.34, lines 2, 5-6	**BYRON, 'Imitation of Martial, VI.34'**
[…me numerare iubes…] quaeque sonant pleno vocesque manusque theatro, cum populus subiti Caesaris ora videt. ('You bid me count…the voices and hands that sound in the crowded theatre when the people suddenly see Caesar's face'. Shackleton Bailey (1993) II, p.25)	[…bid me number…] …every voice or clapping hand that hails The face of every sovereign—but of W[a]les.

The pointed transformation of Caesar into the Prince Regent highlights a perennial issue for the translator over how best to handle proper names in the original: whether to remove, retain or replace. In general, Byron's approach is to omit names, and in his final couplet of 6.34, in disregard of Tytler's principle about not omitting principal points, he excises even Martial's suggestive citation of Catullus and Lesbia (*nolo quot arguto dedit exorata Catullo/ Lesbia,* 'I don't want the number that Lesbia gave in answer to clear-voiced Catullus' prayer', 6.34.7-8), despite the fact that not only their names, but the allusion to specific Catullan poems, Catull. 5 and 7, would have been well-known to Rogers and Moore, or indeed any of Byron's classically educated readers. In another example, Mart. 2.88, Martial's literary distich addressed to 'Mamercus' becomes in Byron's hands an anonymised squib aimed generically at all poetasters, but at the same time the name of Homer is imported to heighten the impact and specificity of Martial's *quidquid vis esto,* 'be what you like':

MARTIAL 2.88	**BYRON**
Nil recitas et vis, Mamerce, poeta videri. quidquid vis esto, dummodo nil recites. ('You recite nothing and want to be considered a poet, Mamercus. Be what you like, so long as you recite nothing'. Shackleton Bailey (1993) II, p.185)	You don't recite, but would be deemed a poet; You shall be Homer—so you do not show it.—

Byron's imitation of 2.88 retains Martial's contrast in the two halves of each line, though the paradox of Mamercus wanting to be considered a poet without being prepared to engage in the Roman practice of recitation rather loses its point in the primarily print-based context of Regency London. Byron does not, though, attempt to replicate Martial's intricate wordplay, with its near-repetition of *nil recitas* and *nil recites* as a frame for the epigram, within which the first line's juxtaposition of *recitas* and *vis* is reversed and split between the two clauses of the second line. Instead, he substitutes one of his trademark disyllabic rhymes, setting 'poet' against 'show it', the latter perhaps not the perfect verb but compelling in position.[134]

Byron's engagement with Martial has been examined in some detail because the epigrammatist was the only classical author whom Byron tackled substantively as a translator after his evolution as a recognized poet, and, as Nicholson comments, it is 'remarkable that of all the Latin poets whose poems Byron translates the most numerous are those of Martial'.[135] Yet, despite the likely appeal of Martial's spontaneity, societal scrutiny and satirical bite, the interest in free-standing translations rekindled in Byron by Samuel Rogers proved evanescent. During the last ten years of his life, Byron's preference was for a more organic intertextual exploitation of the classics, in Latin and Greek and in translation, within his original works.

Conclusion

If Byron's hero, Pope, had shaped a 'highly influential new poetic idiom' by his translation of Homer, Byron can hardly be said to have emulated him.[136] Despite his

[134] Cf. Byron's rhyme of 'know it' and 'poet' in his version of Mart. 1.1.
[135] Nicholson (2007) 76.
[136] Gillespie (2011) 29.

extensive practice at Harrow in 'versifying' ancient texts, his time-limited engagement in the activity and the quality of the products suggest that the requirements proved too restrictive for so innovative, digressive and, at least as far as Greek is concerned, linguistically insecure a poet. What becomes very clear from this chapter's analysis of Byron's classical translations is that, apart from a small number of early exercises on ancient Greek poetry, he focused on Latin texts.

Direct translation from the classics was, for him, primarily a transient student activity which contributed to the construction of his early public *persona* in *Hours of Idleness* and its related volumes. As an established poet, he returned to it only briefly in order to exploit the potential of the *Ars Poetica* in literary debate and to exchange Martial translations and imitations under the stimulus of literary comradeship with Rogers and Moore, an exercise which leavened the prevailing Romantic emphasis on originality of composition. Byron might in later life express admiration for Thomas Mitchell's translations of Aristophanes or be inspired to original composition by Shelley's translation of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vinctus* (see Chapter 6), but he showed no desire to match their endeavours (though, exiled in Italy, he did translate works by Italian poets like Dante and Pulci).[137]

In this, as on many fronts, Byron was in the vanguard. Within the broader context of the development of Romanticism, this was a moment on the cusp of change in the practice of classical translation, with the most successful poets of the day increasingly withdrawing from such activity. John Talbot finds starkly that '[t]ranslation from Latin verse in the nineteenth century, for the first time since the Renaissance, was not central to the work of major English poets'.[138] This general

[137] The fourth and final issue of *The Liberal* No 4, July 30th 1823, carried Byron's translation of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* Canto 1, with the Italian *ottava rima* original.
[138] Talbot (2006) 188.

shift may not have been evident to Byron, given the number of his intimate friends and fellow poets engaged in classical translation projects, not simply as juvenilia but as substantive works.[139] Nonetheless, his bias to Latin rather than Greek apart, Byron himself foreshadowed what Talbot characterises as the rather different pattern of leading Victorian poets' engagement with classical translation: schoolboy exercises, only occasional excursions into translation and the incorporation of reminiscences or imitations of classical texts within original poems.[140]

This profile might at first sight seem at odds with the pervasive concern in Byron's original poetry with issues of acculturation and translation among different peoples and religions, but it reflects his consistent approach to ancient literature in adulthood. After Cambridge, his principal response to classical texts, whether historical, mythological or literary, was not to craft lexical parallels for the whole but to appropriate fragments, plots, incidents, characters, names and at times choice of words.

[139] Examples include Hodgson, Hobhouse, Bland and Merivale, Gifford, Busby, Mitchell, Hookham Frere, Moore, Rogers, Wordsworth, Shelley, and (Leigh) Hunt.
[140] Talbot (2006) 188.

Chapter 3: Latin in the Levant

Introduction

From 1809–11, with the traditional Grand Tour route through Europe to Rome blocked by the war with Napoleon, Byron embarked on extended post-university travels to the Levant, initially in the company of his friend from Cambridge, John Cam Hobhouse. Critical attention has focused largely on the momentous impact of Greece, modern and ancient, on the development of Byron's philhellenism as demonstrated in the second canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which he wrote *en route* (see Introduction). But this is only part of the picture of this formative period. What is equally evident is the extent of Byron's Latinity, paradoxically even while living in the heart of Athens. A second point of interest is Byron's exploitation of classical works, occasionally ancient Greek but predominantly Roman, to convey homoerotic impulses, akin to his use of Virgil's 'Nisus and Euryalus' episode to express same-sex devotion, as discussed in Chapter 2.

'The mysterious, that style in which more is meant than meets the Eye'

Byron's bisexuality has been well covered by the scholarship of recent decades. In the poet's teens and early twenties particularly, alongside his well-publicised (often poetically self-publicised) relationships with women, he exhibited a marked pattern of attachment to younger boys, in England and during his Mediterranean travels. It should be noted, however, that Louis Crompton in his *Byron and Greek Love* offers the verdict that 'Byron's heterosexual impulses were fully as real as his homosexual ones and, if we take his life as a whole, more persistent and significant', analogous to Hans-Christian Günther's assessment that Horace, like Tibullus, 'appears to have

been bisexual, with a distinct preference for women'.[1] Bernard Beatty further finds that Byron's time at the Capuchin convent and school in Athens in 1810–11 was the only period when his whole eros-thrust was homosexual, apart from his infatuation with Lukas Chalandritsanos in the last months of his life.[2]

Jerome Christensen attributes Byron's sexual preferences to his education:

> Lord Byron learned his homosexuality from books—old books. One of the most impressionable students of the classics the English public schools have ever formed, Byron invested sexual desire only in Greek boys. For Byron—classical in his tastes, anthropological in his desires—*Greek love* meant love of Greeks.[3]

Christensen's central tenet seems contestable: Hobhouse censoriously documented his belief that Byron 'had nothing to learn in the way of depravity either of mind or body when he came from Harrow', years before he encountered Greek boys.[4] Clearly, though, the philosophical and poetical literature of ancient Greece did offer Byron and his friends evidence of a community accepting of love and sexuality among males as well as with females, on the proviso of conformity to societally-determined norms. As Michel Foucault describes in his history of sexuality, for mature ancient Greek men to love boys was not only 'permitted by the laws' and 'accepted by opinion' but 'a cultural practice that enjoyed the prestige of a whole literature that sang of it'.[5] Allusions to these Greek texts, and more commonly to their reflections and refractions in those of Roman writers, provided Byron with a vehicle for articulating his feelings in an environment where there was no publicly acceptable analogue in English.

[1] Crompton (1985) 8; Günther (2013) 52.
[2] Bernard Beatty, personal communication, 13 June 2016.
[3] Christensen (1993) 54-55.
[4] Hobhouse journal for January 15, 1830, cited in Crompton (1985) 108.
[5] Foucault (1990) 2.190; see also Dover (1989).

His letters and poems of this period present two pertinent streams: the homosocial, typical among males of his class and period, and the homoerotic, shading into his experience of physical homosexual activity. For both, classical literature offered paradigms and modes of expression which were extensively utilised by Byron as a poet and as a correspondent with two particular Cambridge friends, Hobhouse and Charles Skinner Matthews—for Gary Dyer, a trio of 'active or aspiring "sodomites"' in the nomenclature of Byron's day.[6] The term 'homosexual' was not coined until 1868, at a moment which Foucault's 'Introduction' (also known as *La volonté de savoir)* identifies as a watershed in the public recharacterisation of those to whom the term might apply. Before then, sodomy was simply 'a category of forbidden acts'. The new category of homosexuality, which Foucault dates broadly from Carl Westphal's 1870 article on 'contrary sexual sensations', was denoted 'less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility,…a kind of interior androgyny': 'the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species'.[7] But as Sebastian Matzner notes, arguments have been made against the abruptness of Foucault's demarcation.[8] This 'kind of interior androgyny', often suffused in classicism, can be found represented in Byron's writings of the early decades of the nineteenth century.

As a generality, the Roman concept of *amicitia* provided a broad analogue for the nineteenth century's strongly-felt homosocial bonds forged in the single-sex environments of boarding school, university, the gentleman's club, the military, the Houses of Parliament, and so forth. Yet, even against this background, Thomas Moore in his biography of Byron commented on 'the romantic and almost love-like

[6] Dyer (2001) 563.
[7] Foucault (1990) 1.43.
[8] Matzner (2010) 61.

feeling which [Byron] threw into his school friendships'.[9] Byron's early poetry suggests that, whatever the degree of physical sexuality, he brought to such attachments an unusual degree of emotional intensity: 'We, we, my friends can ne'er forget/ "Friendship is Love without his wings!"'.[10] However, by twenty-three, with a classical jibe, he was representing such attitudes to Hobhouse as superannuated:

> at our time of life, to talk of 'attachment!' when one has left School, aye and College too, Sdeath, one would think you were like Euripides who admired the Autumn of Agatho [sic].[11]

Little more than a month later, however, he used the same analogue in confessing that he himself liked another schoolfriend, William Harness, 'as Euripides liked Agatho [sic]…as much for the past as the present'.[12] Byron was referring to the account in Plutarch's *Amatorius* ('The Dialogue on Love') of Euripides' remark that 'even the autumn of the fair is fair', when he embraced and kissed the 'beautiful' fifth-century BCE Greek tragedian, Agathon ('Ἀγάθωνα τὸν καλὸν'), 'though the latter's beard had already grown', a rare ancient example of acknowledged attraction not to a young boy but to a bearded adult male.[13] Characteristically, Byron's choice of referent distorts time in presenting his friend and especially himself as older than in fact they were: Agathon was about forty when he encountered the septuagenarian Euripides, Harness at this point a mere twenty-one to Byron's twenty-three.

With the possible exception of Harness, the overall characteristics of Byron's homosexual *tendresses* bear marked similarities to classical norms in terms of the age of the objects of his affection, and of the nature of the relationships as described

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[9] Moore (1830, repr.2012) 1.102.
[10] *L'Amitié est L'Amour sans Ailes* (80).
[11] *BLJ* 2.126-27. Byron's 'Agatho' should in fact be Agathon.
[12] *BLJ* 2.140.
[13] Plut. *Mor*. 770C, trans. Helmbold (1961) 435; Dover (1989) 86, 144. In *Don Juan,* Juan is described as 'a most beauteous Boy,/ And had retained his boyish look beyond/ The usual hirsute seasons' (*DJ* 9.53).

by Phaedrus at Agathon's symposium: οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγ' ἔχω εἰπεῖν ὅ τι μεῖζόν ἐστιν ἀγαθὸν εὐθὺς νέῳ ὄντι ἢ ἐραστὴς χρηστὸς καὶ ἐραστῇ παιδικά ('I for my part am at a loss to say what greater blessing a man can have in earliest youth than an honourable lover, or a lover than an honourable favourite').[14] Byron was the *erastes* figure, the older of the pair and the élite male, enthralled by an *eromenos* or *paidika*, a young boy in the twelve to eighteen age range to whom he could act as mentor, provider and protector.[15] At Harrow, any *eromenoi* would have been closer to him in social status, though not necessarily of the nobility, but thereafter they tended to be of a substantially lower class, as with John Edleston at Trinity College; the Newstead Abbey servant, Robert Rushton; and the young boys, Eustathius Georgiou and Nicolo Giraud, from his first journey to Greece and Loukas Chalandritsanos from his last.

The ancient world provided a fund of apt references, overt and masked, which Byron drew on most densely from his schooldays to this stage of his life. At Harrow he allocated his schoolfellows classical nicknames, some with an erotic flavour, as in his 1806–7 poem *Childish Recollections* for which he provided a key, Euryalus at this stage being associated with George, Fifth Earl of Delawarr, rather than Edleston (see Chapter 2): 'I am astonished you did not recognize That *Madcap Tattersall,* is *Davus*, Lycus is old DeBathe, *Euryalus Delawarr*'.[16] Tattersall, described in the poem as 'the harbinger of childish joy;/ For ever foremost in the ranks of fun' (266–67), took his nickname from Davus, the archetypal cunning slave in Terence's *Andria,* while Lycus/De Bathe is praised in a classical antithesis as boasting 'A

[14] Pl. *Symp.* 178C, trans. Lamb (1925) 101.
[15] The precise nature of events which led to the sixteen-year old Byron's estrangement in 1804 from Lord Grey de Ruthyn, his tenant at Newstead Abbey, appears uncertain, though Doris Langley Moore writes of 'the repugnance he [Byron] had felt when obliged to resist a man eight years his senior' (D.L. Moore (1974) 77).
[16] *BLJ* 1.109.

Spartan firmness, with Athenian wit' (292).[17] Lycus (a name Byron also used in *L'Amitié est L'Amour sans Ailes*) was the beloved of the Greek lyric poet, Alcaeus, who, according to Cicero, found the mole on the youth's wrist an ornament rather than a blemish.[18] None of Alcaeus' surviving fragments mentions Lycus but Horace in his ode to the Greek lyre described Alcaeus, the 'citizen of Lesbos', as singing about the boy. Byron quoted the Horace in an 1811 letter from Athens full of innuendo about the Capuchin convent schoolboy, Nicolo Giraud: 'Et Lycam [sic] *nigris* oculis, nigroque *Crine* decorum' ('and the gorgeous Lycus with his jet-black eyes and jet-black hair', Hor. *Odes* 1.32.11-12).[19] The feminine accusative 'Lycam' rather than the correct masculine accusative 'Lycum' would have been an elementary mistake even for Byron, and Cochran's insistence that the manuscripts of Byron's letters to Hobhouse on occasion refer to Nicolo as Nicolà (the Italian feminine form) reinforces the impression of an intentional grammatical insinuation in 'Lycam'.[20] Later, Byron addressed some of his elegies for the chorister, John Edleston, to Thyrza, a feminised form of Thyrsis, the singing shepherd of Virgil's 7th Eclogue (see later in this chapter).

In much the same fashion as Byron used 'Lycus' as a loaded sobriquet, his friend Matthews wrote to Byron from Cambridge of not having seen 'the Bathyllus', after the object of Anacreon's desire also recorded by Horace: *non aliter Samio dicunt arsisse Bathyllo/ Anacreonta Teium* ('they say that Teian Anacreon was on fire in just the same way for the Samian Bathyllus', Hor. *Epod.* 14.9-10).[21] The figure

[17] Byron would also have been familiar with Horace's use of 'Davus', cf. *Ars Poetica* 237, *Serm.* 2.5.91 and *Serm.* 2.7.
[18] Cic. *De Nat. Deorum* 1.79.
[19] *BLJ* 2.14.
[20] https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/byron-and-hobhouse-11.pdf p.1 (see also pp. 27 and 36.)
[21] https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/02-mediterranean-1809-181114.pdf p.72.

of Bathyllus foregrounds the sensitivity in the early nineteenth century of authorial engagement with issues of same-sex sexuality in classical texts. In Moore's extraordinarily popular *Odes of Anacreon* (1800), the author's note to Ode XVII about a portrait of Bathyllus acknowledges that he is 'somewhat veiling the original' in his lines 'But Oh! Suffuse his limbs of fire/ With all that glow of young desire etc.'. At the same time, he noted with regret that, at that passage, the distinguished classicist Madame Dacier 'hung out lights', that is, indicated missing material by asterisks.[22] The original Greek was less inhibited:

> ἁπαλῶν δ' ὕπερθε μηρῶν,
> μαλερὸν τὸ πῦρ ἐχόντων,
> ἀφελῆ ποίησον αἰδῶ
> Παφίην θέλουσαν ἤδη.
>
> ('above his soft thighs, thighs with raging fire in them, put a simple member that already desires the Paphian', *Carmina Anacreontea* 17.34-37)[23]

Coleridge in his 1817 *Biographia Literaria* was uncompromisingly condemnatory of the Anacreon and also of Virgil's second *Eclogue*: 'Blessed indeed is that state of society,…in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the BATHYLLUS even of an Anacreon, or the ALEXIS of Virgil, from disgust and aversion!'[24] For Coleridge, 'a fine poem on a hateful subject, such as the "Alexis" of Virgil or the "Bathyllus" of Anacreon', gives off a 'fetid odor'.[25] It is to such censorious comments that Byron offers—manifestly tongue in cheek—support in his *Don Juan* verse, written the year after publication of *Biographia Literaria*: 'Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample.../ But Virgil's Songs are pure, except

[22] Moore (1800) 76 (actually translations in English from the *Carmina Anacreontea*). Anne Dacier contributed to the Delphin classics series and published neoclassical prose translations of the *Iliad* (1699) and the *Odyssey* (1708).
[23] Campbell (1988, repr. 2001) 2.186-87.
[24] Coleridge (1817) 2.7.
[25] Coleridge described his 'disgust' in these olfactory terms in his *Notebooks* though Hughes suggests that the entry following this passage has itself homoerotic undertones (Hughes (1996) 188).

that horrid one/ Beginning with *"Formosum Pastor Corydon"'*.[26] Just as Coleridge offered an oblique reference which only a classically educated reader would understand, so the quintessentially Byronic rhyme of 'horrid one' with 'Corydon' spotlights the ellipsis of the Virgilian lines which go to the heart of Coleridge's apparent concern: *Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexin/ delicias domini* ('Corydon the shepherd was aflame for the fair Alexis, his master's darling', Verg. *Ecl.* 2.1-2). The eclogue's further elaboration of Coleridge's 'hateful subject' makes explicit Corydon's sexual attraction to both male and female, to Alexis and Menalcas and to Amaryllis. Bisexuality may have been 'an accepted feature of Arcadian myth, as in classical love poetry', as Robert Coleman's edition of the *Eclogues* notes, but British laws and public attitudes in early nineteenth-century England necessitated caution.[27]

While Byron's ascription of flirtatious nicknames to young friends could be seen as a schoolboy game, the state's vigorous enforcement of the ancient sodomy laws was a serious threat to those engaging in homosexual activity. Élite men at risk of prosecution might, with warning, have the option of going into exile but those less fortunate could be condemned to the savagery of the mob in the pillory or even, since sodomy was a capital offence, death by hanging. Crompton records that executions for sodomy ran at an average of two per year for three decades from 1806, a period that encompassed the whole of Byron's life from the age of eighteen.[28]

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[26] *DJ* 1.42. Byron demonstrated his familiarity with Virgil's second eclogue in 'Lines Associated with *Hints from Horace*' (*CPW* 1.319) where line 32 described his treatment by the critic, Jeffrey, in terms of the passionate shepherd's by Alexis ('From Corydon unkind Alexis turns'), and his note quoted Corydon's self-addressing final line: *Invenies alium, si te hic fastidit, Alexin* ('You will find another Alexis, if this one scorns you', Verg. *Ecl.* 2.73).
[27] Coleman (1977) 108.
[28] Crompton (1985) 16.

This punitive judicial and social environment was the backdrop for the terms of correspondence between Byron and his Cambridge friends, Hobhouse and Matthews, around the period of Byron's Mediterranean travels of 1809–11. Within their intimate, university-educated circle, the more explicitly homosexual references were communicated in a private language largely, though not exclusively, classically based. Dyer writes with insight on 'Byron's fluency in techniques of covert communication that marked the cultures of sodomy, boxing and crime', though the classical 'code' examined in this chapter (as distinct from the criminals' 'flash' cant) appears to have been addressed only to this very limited group of close friends rather than a wider 'culture'.[29]

In June 1809, as Byron and Hobhouse waited for a favourable tide for departure in the racy port of Falmouth (where 18 months later Matthews reported the 'pillorification' of a sailor for forcibly 'pedicating' a boy), the letters between them were febrile exchanges vibrating with encrypted sexual excitement.[30] They wrote with adolescent archness in what Matthews termed 'the mysterious, that style in which more is meant than meets the Eye', designed to disguise the contents from the '*tabellarians*' (postmen).[31] One strand of 'the mysterious' with classical roots was richly botanical. In a joint letter from the travellers to Matthews back in Cambridge, Hobhouse reported 'the Cornish air is so exceedingly favorable [sic] to complexion, that the roses of the genus andron are the most universally blooming you ever beheld', a description evoking Horace's warning to the young and handsome Ligurinus about the ephemeral nature of male beauty: *nunc et qui color est puniceae*

[29] Dyer (2001) 563.
[30] Crompton (1985) 161-62.
[31] https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/02-mediterranean-1809-181125.pdf p.6.

flore prior rosae/ mutatus ('and the complexion that now surpasses the bloom of the crimson rose fades', Hor. *Odes* 4.10.4-5).[32]

Their favoured term for an attractive boy was a 'Hyacinth', after the Spartan youth beloved above all others by Apollo.[33] Byron's contribution to the joint letter suggested that 'Georgia itself'—a byword for the beauty of its inhabitants—could not emulate Falmouth and its environs in 'capabilities or incitements to the "Plen. and optabil.—Coit."', i.e. full same-sex intercourse (see below). He observed: 'We are surrounded by Hyacinths & other flowers of the most fragrant [na]ture, & I have some intention of culling a handsome Bouquet to compare with the exotics we expect to meet in Asia', an indication also of his sexual expectations of the east.[34] In Ovid's tender version of the Hyacinth tale in the *Metamorphoses*, the god and the young Spartan, both stripped and gleaming with oil, embark on a discus contest but, when Hyacinth attempts to catch the discus after a mighty throw by Apollo, it rebounds from the hard earth and, striking him in the face, kills him. Unable to save his mortal lover, the grief-stricken Apollo vows to celebrate Hyacinth in song and, in his honour, creates a new flower 'more beautiful than Tyrian dye'.[35]

The undertone of sex in the story and the visual and phonic similarity of 'quoit' (Middle English 'coit' or 'coite') to 'coit.' (short for coitus) were made explicit in Matthews' reply to Byron:

> A word or two about hyacinths. Hyacinth, you may remember, was killed by a Coit. but not that 'full and to-be-wished-for Coit.' have a care then that your Abbey Hyacinth be not injured by either sort of coit.[36]

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[32] https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/01-england-1791-180921.pdf p.114.
[33] Oscar Wilde was to use the same imagery for Lord Alfred Douglas, nicknamed 'Bosie' ('Bosie is so tired: he lies like a hyacinth on the sofa, and I worship him'), including in a letter to Bosie that was to be quoted against Wilde at his trials: 'I know Hyacinth, whom Apollo loved so madly, was you in Greek days' (Tóibín (2002) 59; Evangelista (2009) 126).
[34] *BLJ* 1.206-7.
[35] Ov. *Met.* 10.162-219.
[36] https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/02-mediterranean-1809-181125.pdf p.6.

Byron's 'Abbey Hyacinth' (elsewhere L'Abbe Hyacinth) is thought to have been Robert Rushton, the young servant from Newstead Abbey whom Byron took on his tour but sent home in August 1809 because Turkey was too dangerous for boys.[37] The friends still used the 'Hyacinth' cipher after Byron's return to London: in a letter alive with anxieties about public exposure, Byron apprised Hobhouse that James Wedderburn Webster, a friend who had visited Byron in Athens, 'made one cursed speech which put me into a fever, about ένα παιδί [sic*,* 'one boy'] & made Hodgson nearly sink into the earth, who unluckily recollected our telling him the '"two hundred a year" proffer pro ιακίνθος', that is, 'for a hyacinth'.[38]

Matthews' recurrent references to coits/quoits and coitus play off Byron's 'Plen. and optabil.—Coit.' (sometimes varied slightly in later exchanges, as for instance 'pl&optC' or 'pl&opt'), a linguistic cryptogram representing an abbreviation of *coitum plenum et optabilem* from Petronius' *Satyrica* 86. The original phrase marks the climactic moment of a titillating pederastic passage in which the elderly poet, Eumolpus, narrates how once he lodged in a refined household in Pergamum where, with the aid of bribes, he seduced the *formosissimum* ('very beautiful') son of his host in nightly stages until, with the boy receptive but feigning sleep, he achieved *coitum plenum et optabilem,* Matthews' 'full and to-be-wished-for Coit'[us].[39] When Eumolpus cheated the boy of his promised reward, his further approaches were rejected but eventually the boy relented with the words *si quid vis, fac iterum* ('if you like it, do it again'), a prelude to the boy's own insatiate demands, which Eumolpus welcomed enthusiastically at first but later exhaustedly rebuffed.[40]

[37] *BLJ* 1.222.
[38] *BLJ* 2.124.
[39] Petron. *Sat.* 86.
[40] Petron. *Sat.* 87.

That the full episode from the *Satyrica* was in Byron's mind on the brink of departure from England is demonstrated by a letter offering a friend a loan, in which Byron gave in quotation marks a version of the boy's second surrender to Eumolpus: 'Si vis, fac iterum'.[41]

The broader, socio-cultural connotations of the friends' coded correspondence have been considered in detail elsewhere, with the main arguments summarised by Dyer as follows.[42] While Crompton argues for a shared 'gay identity, based on common interests and a sense of alienation from a society they must protect themselves from', Christensen rejects this interpretation, suggesting rather that the letters describe 'the deliberate formation of a *literary* sense of identity', with the code operating 'not primarily to hide something but as a kind of trademark to identify an association of senders and receivers'. Dyer himself sees Christensen as understating the sense of persecution, but accepts as central the paradox he raises that 'while the code conceals something from all but a restricted group of initiates, it advertises the concealment'—a phenomenon characteristic of Byron's writings more generally.[43]

There is a question of how 'restricted' that 'group of initiates' would have been in 1809–11. Crompton notes that the 'Plen. and optabil.—Coit.' reference 'baffled' editors (and, no doubt, postmen too) until it was recognised by the classicist Gilbert Highet in 1957, but it seems unlikely that the flagrantly-advertised 'concealment' would have remained impenetrable to Byron's classically-educated contemporaries, had the correspondence been available to them.[44] The 1669 Latin text of 'Petronius Arbiter', the edition owned by Byron, is to be found in other library sale lists of the period, although English translations had been published by William

[41] *BLJ* 1.196.
[42] Dyer (2001) 569.
[43] Crompton (1985) 129; Christensen (1993) 60; Dyer (2001) 569.
[44] Crompton (1985) 128.

Burney in 1694 and John Addison in 1736.[45] Among Byron's fellow authors, Petronius was a major influence on the works of Shelley's close friend and classical devotee, Thomas Love Peacock, while Shelley's 'Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love' (1818, but not published until the twentieth century) makes clear that Petronius' *Satyrica* was not an obscure work.[46] In Shelley's discussion of homosexual penetrative sex, he first suggests that 'we are not exactly aware…what that action was by which Greeks expressed this passion', then contends:

> That it could seldom have approached to a resemblance with the vulgar imputation, even among the more gross and unrefined Romans, I appeal to a passage of Petronius, well known to every scholar, in which Giton, the pathic[,] is represented to talk the language of a woman receiving pleasures from the embraces of Encolpius.[47]

Nor were scholars the only readers familiar with Petronius' subject. As Byron later adduced in rehearsing a defence of *Don Juan* against a possible charge of indecency, Tobias Smollett's best-selling 1748 novel, *The Adventures of Roderick Random,* contained 'Earl's [sic] Strutwell's defence of Petronius'.[48] The account of the defence by the eponymous hero Roderick begins:

> [Earl Strutwell] put into my hand Petronius Arbiter, and asked my opinion of his wit and manner. I told him, that, in my opinion, he wrote with great ease and vivacity, but was withal so lewd and indecent, that he ought to find no quarter or protection among people of morals and taste. 'I own,' replied the Earl, 'that his taste in love is generally decried, and indeed condemned by our laws; but perhaps that may be more owing to prejudice and misapprehension than to true reason and deliberation'.[49]

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[45] In Byron's 1816 library sale, a 1669 copy of *Petronius Arbiter*, Variorum, Amst. was sold to John Murray in a lot with a 1670 *Martialis Opera*. In preparing for the sale, Byron expressed himself as 'very uncomfortable' at not being able to find (and presumably, to withhold) this 'old Dutch' quarto edition of Petronius, along with an old edition of *Tibullus, Catullus et Propertius*, the poems of his former guardian Lord Carlisle and, because it was his 'last prize book at Harrow', 'Tyrnhill's Aristotle's poetics', a misremembered title for Thomas Tyrwhitt's 1794 *Aristotelis de Poetica liber* with the Greek text and notes in Latin (*BLJ* 5.36). In the event, all were included in the bailiffs' forced sale.
[46] Walsh (1999) xl.
[47] Holmes (1980) 109-10.
[48] *BLJ* 10.98; see also 10.68.
[49] Smollett (1748) 2.162-63.

Roderick belatedly discovers the fraudulent Earl Strutwell to be 'notorious for a passion for his own sex', at which point 'his hugs, embraces, squeezes and eager looks, were now no longer a mystery; no more than his defence of Petronius'. Smollett's book would not, of itself, have enabled the novel-reading public to decrypt 'pl&optC', but it would have drawn to their attention both Petronius' work and Strutwell's assertion that Petronius' 'taste in love', capable of yielding 'exquisite pleasure', 'prevails not only over all the east, but in most parts of Europe'.[50]

A separate point is Christensen's reading of the 'literary' nature of the exchanges between the friends, and his argument that of 'greater importance than the wished-for coitus is the idea of it'.[51] Their frame of reference is indeed largely drawn from writings but the tone of physical excitement which reaches its epistolary crescendo at Falmouth is distinctly different from the sentimental emotionalism of Byron's poetry at Harrow and Cambridge, or indeed his earlier letters which had not hitherto directly alluded to homosexuality.[52] Hobhouse reported to Matthews that 'our conversation here…has generally turned on that interesting topic', and Byron riskily wrote to his former Harrow tutor, Henry Drury, that he had promised to contribute to Hobhouse's planned account of their journey a treatise under the alliterative title, 'Sodomy simplified or Pæderasty proved to be praiseworthy from ancient authors and modern practice'.[53] And it is precisely that combination of 'ancient authors and modern practice', of literature *and* real life, which seems evidenced in Byron's exchanges with his friends at this period. Ancient authors provided examples and terms of discourse; modern practice stemmed from the

[50] Smollett (1748) 2.167, 164, 163.
[51] Christensen (1993) 60.
[52] Crompton (1985) 126.
[53] *BLJ* 1.208.

differences in *mores* and sexual customs as Byron and Hobhouse travelled from the Christian West to the Islamic East and what was then still Ottoman Greece. These factors served to propel Petronius to prominence in Byron's letters during this period. Horace's self-described bisexuality likewise provided an over-arching descriptor, in Byron's poem of farewell to Hobhouse in Constantinople:

> Tell him [Matthews], that not in vain I shall essay
> To tread and trace our 'old Horatian way',
> And be …
> What better men have been in better times.[54]

For *coitum plenum et optabilem* was not just a lexical cipher: it had a further signification. The *Satyrica* episode provided a specific association with the east of Byron and Hobhouse's travels, since Eumolpus' hushed encounters with the purportedly sleeping boy were set in Pergamum. Petronius' textual homoerotics were explicit rather than merely suggestive, well-suited to the carnal appetites of the sexually-charged Byron at the age of 21: *utcunque igitur inter anhelitus sudoresque tritus, quod voluerat, accepit* ('Anyhow, with gasps on my part and sweat he got a pounding, and so had what he all along wanted', Petron. *Sat.* 87).

If this, as literature, provided what was in domestic British circumstances of the time a transgressive sexual *frisson*, there seems no reason to doubt that during his expedition Byron did secure *coitum plenum et optabilem* in fact, perhaps sometimes in 'a Turkish bath—that marble paradise of sherbet and sodomy'.[55] It seems clear that a primary reason for Byron's refusal to return to England with Hobhouse after a year's travels through the Mediterranean to Albania, Greece and Turkey was the freedom the Levant provided for adventures with young boys, especially when he 'most auspiciously settled' in August 1810 at the Athenian Capuchin convent with

[54] Byron, *Farewell Petition to J[ohn] C[am] H[obhouse] Esq*. (37-40), *CPW* 1.283.
[55] *BLJ* 8.207.

'il Padre Abbate' and 'his "schuola" consisting of six "Regatzi"'.[56] Using classical references, he promptly reported to Hobhouse on his developing relationship with the schoolboy, Nicolo Giraud:

> I have been employed the greater part of today in conjugating the verb "ασπαζω' [sic] (which word being Ellenic as well as Romaic may find a place in the *Citoyen's* [Matthews'] Lexicon) I assure you my progress is rapid, but like Cæsar "nil actum reputans dum quid superesset agendum" I must arrive at the pl & opt C.[57]

Late that year, however, with an echo of Eumolpus, he was bemoaning:

> I have found so many of [Matthews'] antiques on this classical soil, that I am tired of pl & opt Cs, the last thing I could be tired of, I wish I could find some of Socrates's Hemlock, but Lusieri tells me it dont [sic] poison people nowadays.[58]

Classical allusions retained their communicative power, but the gratification to be gained from apparently unfettered sexual activity itself was proving cloying. Classical language and literature soon provided a different source of occupation as Byron applied himself to writing. And tellingly, even in Athens, his literary impulses were framed in Latin. Similarly, although his model of pederasty might be Greek, whether modern or ancient, his mode of expression in his personal homoerotic argot inclined more to Latin than Greek references. True, Byron drew on Plutarch's Agathon story and Anacreon was a communal resource, but he referred more abundantly to Terence, Virgil, Petronius, and Horace—to Horace in his own right and, in the layering of Latin over Greek, to Horace as the channel for Alcaeus' Lycus, just as Ovid may have been Byron's source for the Hyacinth myth.

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[56] *BLJ* 2.11-12.
[57] *BLJ* 2.14, where ἀσπαζω means 'embrace'; Byron quotes Lucan's *Pharsalia* 2.657, with Caesar 'thinking nothing done if anything remained to be done'.
[58] *BLJ* 2.29.

'The Horace I found in the convent' (Byron, Athens)[59]

At the end of February 1811 Byron reported from Athens that '[f]or want of better employment I began several plans of scribbling, but have been wise enough to destroy them all except the poem of which you recollect I had finished two cantos, to which I have added nothing'.[60] The cantos in question are cantos 1 and 2 of his travelogue of a pseudo-fictional hero, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* the first draft of which he had completed almost a year earlier. Byron had by this time been alone on his travels for several months since Hobhouse's return to England, and he habitually needed some form of intellectual 'divertisement', as he explained when he began studying Armenian in Venice five years later because his 'mind wanted something craggy to break upon'.[61] In 1810–12 the product was a small cluster of Latin translations and compositions. The first fair copies of all but one were produced in the incongruous location of the Capuchin convent in Athens, during a period when Byron is often figured as becoming imbued with Hellenophilia.

Byron's literary imagination and compositions were always susceptible to the contingent: 'The Horace I found in the convent', he said. So, in addition to 'tradut[ing] [that is, 'translating'] 'prayers out of the Mass ritual', he opportunistically turned to Horace.[62] On the friends' sea journey out in 1809 Hobhouse had translated Horace' *Epistles* 1.10 and *Odes* 3.29, and when Byron advised Hobhouse from Athens in March 1811 that 'I have begun an Imitation of the "De Arte Poetica" of Horace (in rhyme of course) & have translated or rather varied about 200 lines and shall probably finish it for lack of other argument', Hobhouse

[59] Some material in this chapter, first published in an article in *The Byron Journal*, Vol. 46(2) (2018): 127–140, appears here by kind permission of the Liverpool University Press.
[60] W. St Clair, *The Independent,* Sunday 18 July, 1999, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-leslie-a-marchand-1107367.html.
[61] *BLJ* 5.130.
[62] *BLJ* 2.42, 2.13.

replied from Dover that 'By the strangest coincidence I have finished and laboured with great care...a litteral [sic] verse rhyme translation of the same poem with learned notes'.[63] Byron's *Hints from Horace* was his prime literary activity in Athens and his only major exercise in classical translation after quitting university (see Chapter 4 and, in relation to its rules for drama, Chapter 6).

Byron in Athens utilised Horace further in producing a (now lost) translation into Italian of Horace's *Exegi monumentum* ode (*Odes* 3.30) and an incomplete and somewhat free 'imitation' in English of *Satire* 1.4, Horace's programmatic discussion and defence of the satiric genre. The satire's direct relevance to Horace's broader consideration of the poetic art in the *Ars* may explain why Byron's fair copy of his fragmentary version was found bound up in a corrected manuscript of *Hints from Horace*.[64] In his 'Imitation of Horace: Satire 4', Byron follows Horace closely in the opening lines, in which initially satirists launch aggressive personal assaults on stereotypical targets incontestably deserving attack. For Horace's Old Comedy poets, Eupolis, Cratinus and Aristophanes, Byron substitutes Dryden, Buckingham and Foote who lash generic evil-doers, thieves, rogues, adulterers and duellists (1-7). When Horace's satire continues by praising the Roman satirist, Lucilius, for his wit and keen-scented nostrils (*facetus,/ emunctae naris*) but castigating him for prolixity and harsh verse (*Sat.* 1.4.7-13), Byron's 'imitation' similarly notes, but pardons, the aesthetic shortcomings of Charles Churchill's rough verse because 'there never was Satiric snout/ So sharp at smelling mortal foibles out' (15-18). Observing that Churchill himself had laid claim to 'the gen'rous roughness of a nervous line' (*The Apology,* 1763)*,* Clare Bucknell argues that:

[63] Cochran (2013c) 130 n.193; *BLJ* 2.42; Graham (1984) 66.
[64] *CPW* 1.454.

> Byron's version of the Lucilius–Horace relationship not only confers on Churchill Horace's praise of Lucilius, but also tempers Horace's criticisms of Lucilius with sympathetic nods to Churchill's unconventional way of thinking about his craft.[65]

Unfortunately, Byron's eighteen lines tackle only the first eight of Horace's 143 lines.

What has not received sufficient attention is that also at this time Byron was engaging more creatively with Latin. First, he is credited with a Latin epitaph for the stone placed in the Theseion (the Temple of Hephaestus in Athens's agora) over the body of an Englishman, George Watson, whom *nec animi virtutes corporis vires juv[entutis] ver [nec haec] salube[rrima regio] cons[e]rvarent* ('neither excellence of mind, strength of body, prime of youth nor this very health-giving region could save from death') in August 1810.[66] Of considerably greater interest, however, Byron's own dating shows that while he was working in the convent on *Hints from Horace,* he was producing the first fair copy of one of apparently only two extant examples of his verses in Latin, an epigram on Lord Elgin—'Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva*'. Then a few months after his return to England, he wrote a Latin elegy for Edleston, his 'more than friend'.[67] Both are examined later in this chapter.

There is a significance not to be undervalued in Byron's turning for intellectual stimulus to Latin works in such a concentration, despite his performative emphasis on his lodging at the heart of the ancient city of Athens:

> I am living in the Capuchin Convent, Hymettus before me, the Acropolis behind, the temple of Jove to my right, the Stadium in front, the town to the left, eh, Sir, there's a situation, there's your picturesque! nothing like that, Sir, in Lunnun, no not even the Mansion House.[68]

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[65] Bucknell (2016) 362-63.
[66] Dinsmoor (1941) 24-25.
[67] *CHP* 2.96.
[68] *BLJ* 2.37.

In the preface to his *Hints from Horace* Byron wrote, without apparently noting the discordance between text and place:

> Though it be one of the most obnoxious egotisms of authorship to state when or where a work was composed, I must incur this censure by stating that the following Imitation was begun and finished at Athens the only spot on earth which may partly apologize for such a declaration.[69]

Even Moore noted the dislocation between Byron's residence in an area infused with Greek history and his occupation there. Moore commented that 'in this retreat …, as if in utter defiance of the "genius loci"', Byron wrote his *Hints from Horace* 'impregnated as it is with London life from beginning to end'.[70]

What made Byron's choice of text even more flagrantly defiant of the *genius loci* was that he was using the convent's unusual library; as Hobhouse noted contemporaneously, the Padre had 'fitted up the circular chamber formed by the monument of Lysicrates, with shelves that contain a few volumes of choice books'.[71] This choragic monument, a still extant structure decorated with a frieze representing the story of Dionysus and the pirates from Homeric Hymn VII to Dionysus (a narrative that one might have expected to appeal to Byron), was erected specifically to celebrate Lysicrates' victory in an ancient Greek drama competition, the Dionysia of 335/4 BCE. It is a matter of deep irony, and one consistent with the argument of this thesis about Byron's predominantly Latin bias, that a poet widely proclaimed as a Hellenist, while living in Athens and working in an environment purposefully evocative of Greek drama, should address himself not to the great fifth-century tragedians but to the urbane Roman, Horace, and a composition in Latin.

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[69] *CPW* 1.427.
[70] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.244.
[71] Hobhouse (1813) 1.301; Eliot (1975) 415.

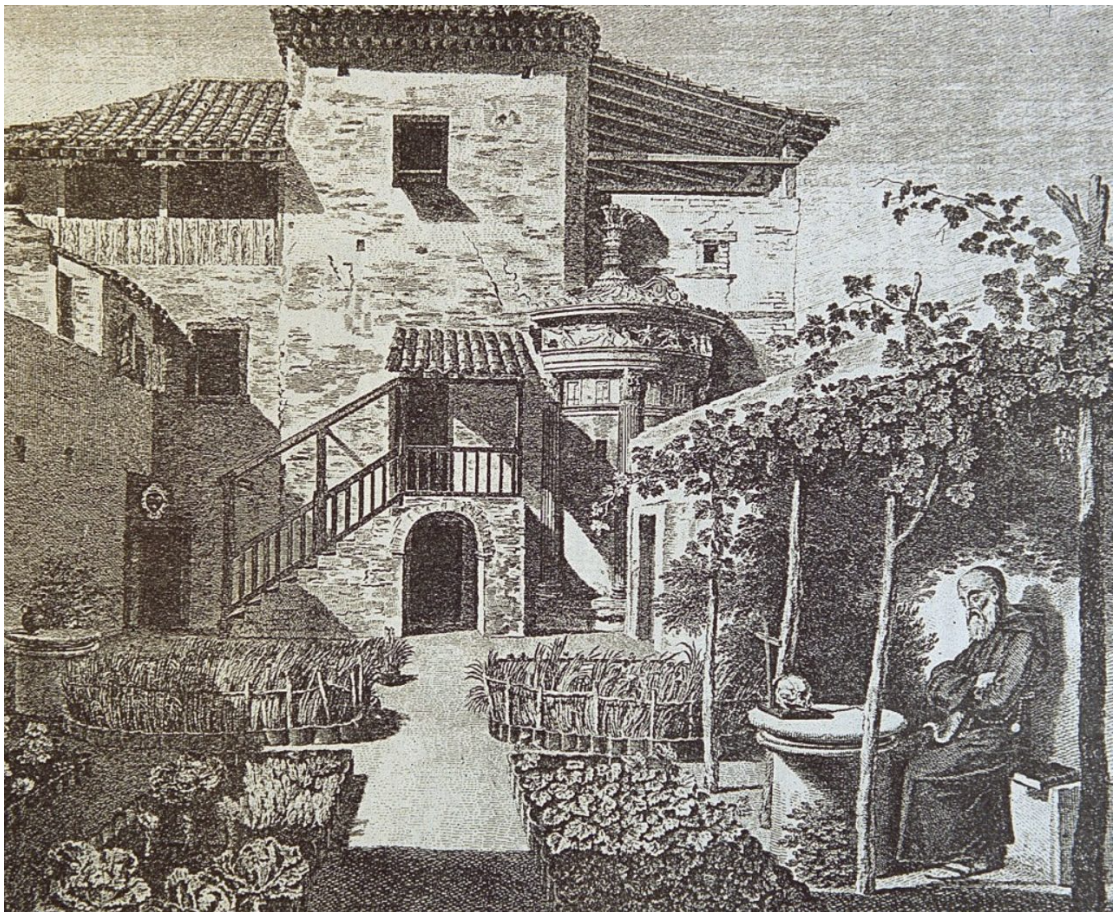


Fig. 5: 'The Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, commonly called the Lanthorn of Demosthenes', partially enclosed in the Hospitium of the Capuchins where Byron stayed in 1811–12, as Stuart and Revett saw it in 1751 (*The Antiquities of Athens* 1762, Vol. 1, Chapter 4, plate 1, cropped). *Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of Trinity College, Oxford.*

Some factors may be contextual. This was an atypical moment for the adult Byron when Latin was at times a live presence. In what Roderick Beaton has described as 'the disorganised but collegiate atmosphere of the Capuchin Convent', for the only time in Byron's life after university he was living in a quasi-scholarly setting, and one moreover where Catholic services would have been conducted in Latin.[72] Here he interacted closely with the convent's intelligent and charismatic Italian padre, Father Paolo, and his boy pupils in whose company the 23-year old Byron in effect returned to school and schoolboy behaviour.[73] During Byron's

[72] Beaton (2013) 23.
[73] *BLJ* 2.13.

travels, too, Latin was, on occasion, of practical utility to him, not as an academic or religious language but as a *lingua franca*.[74] Under Harrow's statutes, Latin had had to be spoken in schooltime and (purportedly) when at play, and Byron used Latin as a means of oral communication with monks in Portugal ('I…talk bad Latin to the monks, who understand it, as it is like their own'); via Ali's physician with Ali Pasha, the Ottoman ruler of Albania who subsequently wrote to Byron in Latin; and in Greece in 1810 until he dismissed his multilingual guide, when he noted that 'I am now tolerable in Italian, and am studying the Romaic under a Master, being obliged to cashier my Latin with my last Dragoman, and betake myself to the moderns'.[75] Ultimately however, all these are extrinsic factors which support, rather than occasion, Byron's more-widely evidenced preference for Latin as the classical language with which to work in translation and composition.

Byron's Latin verses

From 1811–12 date what seem to be the only known surviving examples of Byron's verses in Latin: the relatively neglected epigram, 'Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva*' (also known as *Carmina Byronis in C. Elgin*), and *Edleston,* an elegiac lament in the mould of his *Thyrza* series.[76] At Harrow, as Edward Laborde delicately puts it, 'not a little time was spent in acquiring a tricky skill in composing Latin verses' (and indeed Greek verses).[77] However, neither Harrow nor Trinity College, Cambridge, now holds any examples of his efforts in Greek or Latin, and enquiries

[74] Hobhouse began his diary of their journey in Latin, though he relapsed into English after only 12 entries.
[75] For Harrow School: personal communications from Dale Vargas, author of *The Timeline History of Harrow School* (London, 2010); Laborde (1948) 30, 239. For Byron's use of Latin for interpretation: in Portugal, *BLJ* 1.215 and 219; with Ali Pasha, *BLJ* 1.227 and 3.111; in Greece, *BLJ* 2.32 (also 2.29-30).
[76] Beatty argues, however, that the 'more openly impassioned' *Edleston* should not itself be regarded as one of the 'Thyrza' poems (Beatty (2005) 94, 81).
[77] Laborde (1948) 48; also Tyerman (2000) 122.

elsewhere, including of the John Murray Archive, have similarly proved fruitless.[78] Apparently therefore, these two works provide the only opportunity to assess Byron's proficiency in classical verse composition.

Both poems are written in Latin elegiac couplets, a metrical form shared by the genres of epigram and elegy and comprising a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter. Several of its formal characteristics are particularly consonant with Byron's own style of writing in English. The couplets tend to be self-contained, with little enjambment, a feature typical of Byron's poetry in English at this stage of his poetic development.[79] So too are generically appropriate stylistic devices such as exclamation, question, apostrophe and antithesis. Beatty, observing that Byron is a rhetorician, notes:

> One of the criticisms often brought against Byron is that he is not a true poet because he thinks in antitheses like a wit. It is fundamentally a Romantic charge based on a Coleridgean aesthetic which privileges mysterious kinds of unity apprehended and created by the imagination rather than the overt conjunctions and oppositions offered by rhetoric.[80]

But whatever one's view of criticisms based on such an aesthetic, antitheses and wit are indeed fundamental elements of Latin elegiac poetry and, in his polemical 'Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva*', Byron manipulates 'conjunctions and oppositions' in a poetic and technical *tour de force*.[81]

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[78] Personal communication from the archivists of Harrow School (19 July 2016); Trinity College, Cambridge (2 November 2016); and the John Murray Archive at the National Library of Scotland (8 November 2016).

[79] See, for example, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, Hints from Horace* and Cantos 1 and 2 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which rarely exhibit the enjambment Byron orchestrates to such thrilling effect in the later cantos of his epic *Don Juan* (surely only fortuitously in line with Platnauer's observation that writers of Latin epic avoided the frequent coincidence of sense and line-endings, Platnauer (1951) 27).

[80] Beatty (2005) 82.

[81] I am greatly indebted to Dr. Tristan Franklinos for his incisive discussion of Byron's poems in Latin.

After working within the conventions of epitaph for Watson's Latin inscription, Byron chose the form of classical epigram to attack Lord Elgin, as he returned to the theme of Elgin's despoliation of the Acropolis which a year before (turning as so often to Roman history for illustration) he had compared in a note to the second canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* with the devastation of Sicily by Verres, its first century BCE Roman governor—an event famously chronicled by Verres' prosecutor, Cicero (Cic. *In Verrem* 2.4).

On McGann's dating, the six-line Latin version antedated by several months some broadly parallel lines in *The Curse of Minerva,* for which Byron provided the following explanatory note to line 122:

> His lordship's name, and that of one who no longer bears it [i.e. the names of Elgin and his divorced wife, Mary], are carved conspicuously on the Parthenon; above, in a part not far distant, are the torn remnants of the basso-relievos, destroyed in a vain attempt to remove them.[82]

In *The Curse of Minerva* itself, a battered Minerva—helmet dinted, lance broken and aegis bereft of its gorgon (80-84)—hails the narrator in her 'vacant, violated fane', the Parthenon (99). Yet, as McGann has argued, the figure of Elgin here is 'only the chief symbol' for Byron's broader critique of Britain's imperialist foreign and domestic policies, and cultural appropriations: 'Hers were the deeds that taught her lawless son/ To do what oft Britannia's self had done' (211-12).[83] The Latin 'Lines Associated', however, achieve their epigrammatic force by focusing a stinging *ad hominem* attack exclusively on Elgin's 'most unblushing impudence' and the alleged divine retribution wreaked in the personal life of 'the last, the worst, dull spoiler'.[84]

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[82] *CPW* 1.449. See also *The Curse of Minerva* 107-8: 'For Elgin's fame thus grateful Pallas pleads,/ Below, his name—above, behold his deeds!'.
[83] *CPW* 1.447. Peacocke notes that *The Curse of Minerva,* printed by Murray only in eight copies for friends, was pirated without Byron's consent by the 'ultra-loyal' *New Monthly Magazine* and, after 'depoliticisation through Procrustean editing', concentrated on the anti-Elgin content (Peacocke (2015) 118-20).
[84] Note to *CHP* 2, line 101 at *CPW* 2.191; *CHP* 2.11.

Aspice, quos Scoto Pallas concedit honores,
  Subter stat nomen—facta superque vide!—
Scote miser! quamvis nocuisti Palladis aedi
  Infandum facinus vindicat ipsa Venus;
Pygmalion statuam pro sponsa arsisse refertur,
  Tu statuam rapias, Scote, sed uxor abest.
'Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva*'

'Look what honours Pallas Athena allows to the Scot:
  below stands his name—and above behold his deeds!—
Wretched Scot! It may have been Pallas' temple you have ruined
  but it is Venus herself who exacts revenge for the unspeakable crime.
Pygmalion is said to have burned with love for a statue in place of a wife;
  you may carry off a statue as plunder, Scot—but a wife is missing'.
(Author's translation)

In form, tone and expression, the piece points unmistakably to Martial, several of whose satirical epigrams Byron was to translate only months later after his return to England in socializing with Samuel Rogers and Thomas Moore (see Chapter 2). 'Lines Associated' captures key features of a Martial epigram: rhythm, conciseness, a tighter bond between hexameter and pentameter lines than shown, for example, in Catullus' epigrams, and the 'aggressive' wit of a 'surprising punchline' (Dihle).[85] There are clear verbal parallels with Martial in the exclamatory opening which, reflecting epigram's inscriptional origins, styles itself as epitaphic by its traditional call for attention in the framing imperatives of *aspice* and *vide!* ('look!', 'see!').[86]

Perhaps the most striking quality of Byron's epigram is its deft structural articulation which, while observing the generic convention of responsion between hemistich and hemistich, hexameter and pentameter, couplet and couplet, constantly and mischievously misdirects the reader. At first reading, the opening couplet

[85] Hooley (2012) 242-43; Dihle (1989, trans.1994) 179.
[86] See Mart. 4.3.1, 5.31.1 and 13.58.1 for *aspice quam* at the start of a poem; Mart. 6.73.5 (also followed by *quam*), 9.86.7 and 14.109.2 for *aspice* at the start of a line; and Mart. 6.21.4 and 14.131.1 for *vide* at the end of a line. Virgil also employs *aspice* at the start of a line but not at the start of a poem.

appears to herald an innocuous panegyric. The unnamed Scot is juxtaposed with the goddess Pallas Athena, indeed given first place, and his equally unspecified *honores* are elaborated in line 2 as the equipoised *nomen* ('name') below and *facta* ('deeds') above.[87] However, the second couplet brings an abrupt reversal in attitude to 'the Scot', with its vehement opening apostrophe to *Scote miser!* ('wretched Scot!), emphasised by the early strong caesura; only at this point is the poem's note of invective revealed. As line 3 continues and introduces the ruination of Pallas Athena's temple, the reader revisits line 2 to understand that the *nomen* is that of Elgin shamefully inscribed on the Parthenon, and his *facta* the destruction and removal of the temple's sculptural adornments.

Within line 3, there is a further twist set up in Byron's *quamvis nocuisti Palladis aedi* ('although you have harmed Pallas' temple'). Ovid uses *quamvis nocuere* in his *Tristia*, a Harrow third-form set text, in expressing his confidence that although his 'little books' have damaged him in allegedly precipitating his exile, they will nonetheless give him *nomen* ('a name' or 'fame') in posterity.[88] Classically educated readers who detected this hint might therefore anticipate in the responding line 4 some beneficial counterbalance to Elgin's vandalism, but Byron offers no such mitigation of the damage. Instead he makes a contrapuntal turn from Pallas Athena to Venus, to effect a satisfying symmetry in the poem: the first half lays out Elgin's outrages which reduce the warlike Athena to impotence in her own temple, while a

[87] Given Byron's interest in Sulla, he may have encountered Cicero's conjunction of *nomen et honos* in Cic. *Sull.* 24.2 (and elsewhere), and would certainly have known Virgil's usage of *honos nomenque* in *Ecl.* 5.78 and *Aen*. 1.609. Individually the terms were common in epitaphic literature, e.g. Prop. 3.1.22 and 24 for *honos* and *nomen* respectively. Horace's *Ars Poetica,* on which Byron was working while in Athens, compares *facta* and *honos* (68-69).

[88] For *quamvis nocuere*, see for example Ov. *Tr.* 3.3.79-80: *quos ego confido, quamvis nocuere, daturos/ nomen et auctori tempora longa suo* ('These I have sure trust, although they have injured him, will give a name and a long enduring life to their author'; and *Tr.* 4.1.35: *nos quoque delectant, quamvis nocuere, libelli* ('I also find pleasure in my books though they have injured me'). See also Ov. *Tr.* 3.7.9.

neat antithesis in the second half sees gentle Venus, the goddess of Love, inflict painfully public retribution.

The third and final couplet of this epigrammatically succinct work introduces a mythological exemplum typical of elegy, in this instance the aptly sculptural story of Pygmalion. In Ovid's version of the myth, the celibate Pygmalion, although disgusted by other women, carves an ivory figure of a woman so beautiful that he is inflamed with love for it, to the extent of kissing it and calling it the companion of his bed. In recognition of an offering to Venus, the goddess grants his incompletely expressed wish to have the ivory girl as his flesh and blood wife.[89] Byron raises expectations of a similarly happy ending for Elgin by the parallelism in the line openings of *Pygmalion statuam…Tu statuam*. However, these are undercut by the poem's final words, *uxor abest,* (wording found in Ovid's *Tristia,* 4.6.46): 'a wife is missing'. Pygmalion creates a statue and gains a wife, Elgin carries off a statue—and loses a wife. The climactic barb is that in 1808, amid national scandal, Lord Elgin divorced his first wife, herself closely involved in the removal of the Parthenon sculptures, on grounds of adultery and sued her lover whom she later married.[90] That, at least, is the cutting, but respectable, reading of the text. A more salacious interpretation, fully in line with Byron's taste for *double entendres* and Martial's sexual suggestiveness, would highlight the agalmatophilia inherent in the Pygmalion story: the sculptor is said to have had sex with a statue, but while Elgin may carry off a statue as plunder, he is not having sex with either statue or wife.

The irony of the mythological comparison is intensified by the poem's understated point that Venus, the goddess of love, is the agent in both cases. It is she

[89] Ov. *Met.* 10.238-97.
[90] St Clair (1998) 140-42.

who brings Pygmalion's statue to life to be his bride; and it is she who leads Mary Elgin to desert her nobleman husband. This stands in contrast to *The Curse of Minerva* proper which puts more emphasis on vengeance by Pallas Athena rather than Venus, not least in its Virgilian epigraph*, Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas/ Immolat, et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit* ('Pallas it is, Pallas who sacrifices you with this stroke, and takes retribution from your guilty blood!', Verg. *Aen*. 12.948-49). This is, one hopes, a waggish rather than careless citation, since Aeneas' cry refers not to Pallas Athena but to Pallas, the young son of Evander slaughtered by Turnus.

There may be a link here with the other of Byron's known Latin poems, *Edleston,* an anguished elegy for John Edleston, the object of Byron's affection at Cambridge whose death from tuberculosis Byron discovered only belatedly after his return to England:

Te, te, care puer! veteris si nomen amoris
  Iam valeat, socium semper amare voco.
Te, fatumque tuum, quoties carissime! plango,
  Et toties haeret fortior ipse dolor.
Dulcis at ipse dolor, quam dulcis! dulcior ardet
  Vanus amor, credens te tenuisse sinu.
Me miserum! frustra pro te vixisse precatum,
  Cur frustra volui te moriente mori?—
Heu quanto minus est iam serta, unguenta, puellas
  Carpere cum reliquis quam meminisse tui?
Quae mihi nunc maneant? gemitus, vaga somnia fratris,
  Aut sine te lacrymis pervigilare toro.
Ah Libitina veni, invisae mihi parcere Parcae!
  Mortua amicitia Mors sit amica mihi.

'You, my precious boy! if the name of ancient loves
still holds strong, I beg you always to love your friend.
Most precious boy, I cry for you and your fate,
every time I do the pain grips more strongly.
But the pain itself is sweet, so sweet! More sweetly burns
impossible love, believing I hold you in my lap.
Wretched me! Praying in vain to live by your side,
why did I wish in vain to die when you were dying?
Alas! How much less it matters to enjoy garlands, perfumes, girls
with the rest, than it does to be mindful of you?
What now remains for me? Groans, vague dreams of a brother,

Or staying up all night crying without you in bed.
Ah Libitina, come, spare me from the hated Fates!
Now friendship is dead, let Death be my friend'. (trans. Henry Stead)[91]

Byron was crafting this poem at much the same time as he was revising and expanding *The Curse of Minerva,* with its epigraph from the *Aeneid* about the dead Pallas. For this reason, his opening *Te, te, care puer* may be read as an evocative borrowing from Evander's farewell to his doomed son: *dum te, care puer, mea sera et sola voluptas,/ complexu teneo* ('while I hold you, beloved boy, my late and lone delight, in my embrace', Verg. *Aen*. 8.581-82).[92] The *Edleston* manuscript has other echoes of the *Aeneid,* some minor and debatable but one unequivocal in line 6's cancelled *poscens/fingens [te] revocare gradum*, with its unmistakable allusion to the Cumaean Sibyl's well-known admonition to Aeneas about the difficulty of egress from the underworld, *facilis descensus Averno…sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,/ hoc opus, hic labor est* ('the descent to Avernus is easy...but to recall one's step and escape to the airs above, this is the task, this the toil').[93] Hence Byron's first draft (*Fig. 6*) suggested the bereaved narrator demanding/imagining that his beloved boy return from oblivion. On revision, however, Byron substituted *credens te tenuisse sinu* ('believing I hold you in my lap'), of itself a more physical image and, as Stead has argued, wording reminiscent of Catullus 2.2's eroticising *in sinu tenere,* referring to the sparrow which Lesbia was accustomed to hold in her lap, though one might also see a reflection of Evander's purer, paternal *te…complexu teneo*.[94]

[91] Stead (2016) 200-1. (NB Byron used 'thou' and correlatives rather than 'you' in his Thyrza' poems).
[92] Statius also twice uses *te, care puer* (*Silvae* 5.579; *Achilleis* 1.273) but these references seem less appropriate to *Edleston*.
[93] *Aen.* 6.126, 128-29.
[94] Stead (2016) 202.

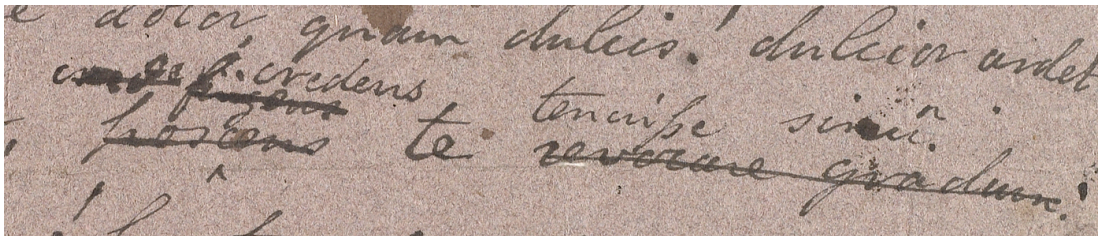


Fig. 6: extract from Byron's MS of *Edleston: poscens te revocare gradum,* amended to *fingens,* then *credens te tenuisse sinu.*
By kind permission of the National Library of Scotland.

This points up two key features of *Edleston*: its intertwined motifs of loss and same-sex love, and its pervasive intertextuality with existing Latin texts. The first reflects a long tradition in English literature of encoding homosexual feeling in two classical genres in particular: pastoral, the genre of removal to the past, and, as with *Edleston*, elegy where often, in a narrative of doom but also of purgation, the spirit is left transcendent after the loss of the physical body. *Edleston*'s pronounced intertextuality surely reflects the contemporary practice of Latin versifying in public schools described by Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria,* whereby the youth 'must first prepare his thoughts, and then pick out, from Virgil, Horace, Ovid, or perhaps more compendiously from his Gradus, halves and quarters of lines in which to embody them'.[95] Byron's punning 1813 reference to a 'triangular *"Gradus ad Parnassum"*' of poets surmounted by Sir Walter Scott as 'the Monarch of Parnassus' makes clear his familiarity with Aler's popular *Gradus ad Parnassum* which assisted tyro versifiers in identifying appropriate Latin words to fit the required metre by indicating their quantities (Byron's 'longs and shorts') and providing synonyms and classical examples.[96]

The issue then arises of the key intertexts for *Edleston*. McGann is clearly right that line 11's *Quae mihi nunc maneant?* (literally, 'What now are to remain for me?')

[95] Coleridge (1817) 1.20-21.
[96] *BLJ* 3.219-20.

specifically echoes Catullus' *quae tibi manet vita?* ('What life remains for you?', Catull. 8.15), a rhetorical questioning of the pleasures lost to Lesbia without 'Catullus' as her lover.[97] The allusion prompts a reading of the response in *Edleston* as sexually charged as well as symptomatic of grief, with its groans, its empty bed and—akin to a Roman love elegist's dreams of his *puella*—its dreams of a *frater* ('brother'), a word which can ambiguously carry the connotation of same-sex lover in Petronius and in Martial, authors high in Byron's consciousness at this time.[98] An overtly sexual note is sounded by Byron's first draft of line 12, *Aut vacuo lacrymis pervigilare toro* ('or to lie awake in tears in an empty bed'), suggesting loss of his bedfellow. This is then modified by his subsequent replacement of *vacuo* ('empty") with *sine te* ('without you) to yield alternative readings, one anodyne ('or, without you, to lie awake in bed in tears'), and one more loaded ('or, in tears, to lie awake without you in bed'). These flickering, superimposed images of homoerotic attachment and the desolation of bereavement may have influenced Byron's choice of his fourteen-line form, given the sonnet's use, like Latin elegiacs, for both love and lament.[99]

Stead has, however, justifiably contested McGann's broader contention that the poem's 'principal model here is Catullus, especially nos. 68, lines 15-24 and 101', where Catullus addresses the recent death of his brother but where Stead detects no explicit textual connection with *Edleston*.[100] There is, though, some correlation with Catullus 68 as a whole (rather than lines 15-24) in *Edleston*'s vocabulary of *lacrimis, pervigilare, dulcis*, *me miserum, fratris, frustra,* and *te moriente*; in its reference to

[97] *CPW* 1.459.
[98] Richlin (2009) 85.
[99] Ugo Foscolo, for example, had used sonnet form for his 1803 adaptation of Catull. 101 as a lament on his brother's suicide, *in morte del fratello Giovanni.*
[100] Stead (2016) 202.

the Parcae (Catull. 68B.85); and in its image of a tearful man alone in his bed (*lacrimis…desertum in lecto caelibe,* Catull. 68A.2, 6).[101] Likewise, the final lines of each poem may be read as mirror images, with 'Catullus' finding it sweet to live while his darling is alive (*lux mea, qua viva vivere dulce mihi est*) and Byron's narrator seeking death as his friend with friendship dead (*Mortua amicitia Mors sit amica mihi,* a line in which Byron varies the conceit of death's death, *mortua mors*).[102]

Nonetheless, despite the immanence of Catullus in *Edleston,* Stead's conclusion that Catullus 'cannot so readily be called Byron's principal source for this poem' still has force.[103] Byron's serial drafts exhibit a much wider patchwork of references than McGann acknowledges, in drawing not only on Catullus but also on Cicero, Virgil, Lucretius, Ovid, Juvenal, Horace, the neo-Latin of William Shenstone and very probably Erasmus. Given Erasmus' place in the statutory Harrow curriculum, it seems likely that *Edleston*'s *vaga somnia fratris* (here 'the fleeting dreams of a brother', line 11), in addition to its manifestation of loss and an arguably sensual reading of 'dreams of a brother', subtly reinforces the idea of the rapid passage of youth by allusion to the use of *vaga somnia* in Erasmus' best known poem, *carmen de senectute,* where the flight of youth is compared with dreams which flee on waking.[104] Similarly, while *Edleston* shares with Catullus 68 the image of a deserted bed, Byron's original words *vacuo…toro* occur not in Catullus but several

[101] See Catull. 68 for *lacrimis* (2), *pervigilat* (8), *dulcis* in five forms (7, 18, 24/96, 61, 106), *misero mihi* (20), *frater/fratri/fraterna* (19, 20, 21; 91, 92, 93), *frustra* (75), and *tu moriens* (21).
[102] Catull. 68B.160.
[103] Stead (2016) 202.
[104] Erasmus, *carmen* 83.83: *sic sic effugiunt tacitae vaga somnia noctis.* The image is traditional, found for example in Mimnermus' *Nanno* (fr. 5, Gerber (1999) 84) quoted in *Selecta ex Poetis Graecis*, once owned by Byron, and Theocritus *Id.* 27.8 (Vredeveld (1986) 53). Byron's own 'Thyrza' poems dwell on dreams, including the dream flown on waking in 'Stanzas' ('Away, away, ye notes of woe!'), 23 and 26; see also 'And thou art dead' 32; and 'If sometimes in the haunts of men' 39.

times in Ovid, including in *Amores* 3.9.34, an elegy for Tibullus' premature death.[105] Ovid's lament for the Roman poet credited with introducing erotic motifs to the underworld would have been an appropriate source for Byron, who had earlier translated Domitius Marsus' *Epitaphium Tibulli* (see Chapter 2).[106] For the greater part, though, the borrowings in *Edleston* seem to offer little more than their surface meaning, with Byron less concerned to play intellectual games with suggestively powerful allusions than to construct a lament from couplings of words familiar from classical and neo-Latin writers.[107]

Ovid's *Amores* 3.9 has other correspondences with *Edleston*, in line 6's *ardet* (*Edleston* 5), in line 15 where Ovid's *moriente Tibullo* is mirrored by Byron's *te moriente* (*Edleston,* line 8)*,* and Ovid's *nec minus est…quam* construction (*Am.* 3.9.15-16) by the *quanto minus est…quam* of lines 9-10 of *Edleston,* though here Byron quotes from the eighteenth-century poet, William Shenstone. Credit for the allusion to Ovid therefore rests with Shenstone for his then much-celebrated Latin epitaph for a Miss Dolman, who died of smallpox about twenty-one years of age, fortuitously Edleston's age at his death.

Byron's epigraph to one of his 'Thyrza' elegies in English for Edleston, 'Stanzas' ('And thou art dead, as young and fair'), quotes with exactitude Shenstone's line *Heu quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse!* ('Alas, how much less does it mean to engage with those left behind than to

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[105] Ov. *Am.* 3.9.34, where sleeping in an empty bed represents piety rather than loss: *quid in vacuo secubuisse toro?* ('what [use] to have slept in an empty bed?'); for Ovid's use of *vacuo…toro,* see also *Am.* 2.19.42, *Am.* 3.10.2 and *Ars am.* 2.370. Byron's replacement phrase *sine te* occurs frequently in Latin literature and repeatedly in Ovid. Byron had alluded to Ovid's *sic ego nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum* (*Am.* 3.11b. 39), or its echo in Martial 12.46.2, in an 1810 letter to Hobhouse: 'After all I do love thee, Hobby, thou hast so many good qualities and so many bad ones it is impossible to live with or without thee' (*BLJ* 2.14). However, it is also possible that Byron adopted his afterthought *sine te* from Thomas Gray's elegy in Latin for his friend, Richard West (see discussion of Gray's poem below).

[106] Boyd (1987) 205.

[107] Stead takes a similar view (Stead (2016) 203).

remember you?'), whose sentiments Byron's lines 64-67 expansively explore in English:

> Yet how much less it were to gain,
> Though thou hast left me free,
> The loveliest things that still remain,
> Than thus remember thee!

The received dating is February 1812, around the time when, as discussed in Chapter 2, Byron was first in close contact with Samuel Rogers and Thomas Moore, both of whom also cite Shenstone's Latin line, as Beatty has noted.[108] Rogers gives it in a footnote to his allusion to 'Maria's urn' still breathing 'the voice of love' in his volume, *The Pleasures of Memory,* which circumstantial evidence suggests Byron was reading around the time he composed 'And thou art dead' (see footnote).[109] Moore integrates a translation of the same line ('to live with them is far less sweet than to remember thee') within a poem of his own, with a note referencing his source: 'I have here made a feeble effort to imitate that exquisite inscription of Shenstone's, *"Heu! quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse!"'*.[110] So even Byron's appropriation of Shenstone is unoriginal, but despite utilizing the same material, the tone of his augmented translation in 'And thou art dead', with its acknowledgment not just of the power of bereaved remembrance but also of being 'left free' by the addressee's death to sample the world's 'loveliest things', has more of bleak realism about the inescapable continuation of life than of the tender sentimentality evident in both Rogers and Moore.

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[108] *CPW* 3.4-6; Beatty (2005) 80 and 92 n.3.
[109] An original Byron manuscript dated April 1812 of a poem thought to be lost ('Absent or present still to thee') was discovered in 2006 in the UCL library in an 1810 edition of Rogers' *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792) inscribed to 'The Right Hon.ble The Lord Byron, from his obliged & faithful friend The Author'.
[110] Moore, 'I saw thy form in youthful prime' (*Irish Melodies,* Vol. 4).

For the Latin text of *Edleston,* Byron modifies Shenstone's line to *Heu quanto minus est iam serta, unguenta, puellas/ Carpere cum reliquis quam meminisse tui?* (9-10). In place of Shenstone's bland *versari*, ('to engage with' those left behind), Byron substitutes the mostly Juvenalian *serta, unguenta, puellas/ carpere*, injecting the sense of a vibrant social life with its sympotic pleasures of the flesh: garlands (*serta*) signifying drinking, perfumes (*unguenta*) and multiple anonymous girls (*puellas*). This fusion of two Latin quotations, one modern, one ancient, transforms the genteel delicacy of Shenstone's elegy for his sole Maria, *puellarum elegantissima* ('the most refined of girls'), into a Byronic amalgam of daily conviviality underscored by the imminence of death. *Serta, unguenta, puellas* is taken from Juvenal *Sat.* 9.128 and Byron has left documentary evidence that in 1811 he had been reading versions of Juvenal associated with his friends. In May, on his voyage home, he commented that the 'Imitations of Juvenal' in Hobhouse's loss-making edition of *Imitations and Translations* were 'certainly as good in their kind as any in our language'.[111] One Juvenal translation by 'L.T.' in that volume specifically used *Dum serta, unguenta, puellas/ poscimus, obrepit non intellecta senectus* ('while we call for garlands and perfumes and girls, old age is creeping up, undetected') as its title prominently on the contents page. In September Byron recorded reading Hodgson's *Juvenal* which offered a distinctly flowery translation of the same lines:

> Mid the light sallies of the mantling soul,
> The smiles of beauty, and the social bowl,
> Inaudible, the foot of chilly age
> Steals on our joys, and drives us from the stage![112]

[111] *BLJ* 2.45.
[112] *BLJ* 2.95; Hodgson (1807) 179.

Juvenal's words were well-suited to the circumstances of *Edleston's* composition, except that death was driving off a distressingly high number of those close to Byron without waiting for 'chilly age'. Not only had his mother, still only forty-six, died within a month of his return without his having seen her, but over a short period he had learnt of the deaths of his friends Hargreaves Hanson, John Wingfield, Charles Skinner Matthews and finally John Edleston. Byron wrote: 'It seems as though I were to experience in my youth the greatest misery of age. My friends fall around me, and I shall be left a lonely tree before I am withered'.[113] The overwhelming scale of the loss in so short a time may account for the exaggerated death wish of *Edleston*. As Byron mourned and made his own will, his correspondence demonstrated the extent of his preoccupation with death. In one letter to Hodgson, he quoted the chorus' reflections on the afterlife from the Stoic Seneca's *Troades,* (a play that opens with a bitter charge of divine fickleness):

> I will have nothing to do with your immortality; we are miserable enough in this life, without the absurdity of speculating upon another. If men are to live, why die at all? and if they die, why disturb the sweet and sound sleep that "knows no waking"? "Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque Mors nihil...quæris quo jaceas post obitum loco? Quo *non* Nata jacent".[114]
>
> ('There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing. …Do you ask where you will lie after death? Where those lie who are unborn', Sen. *Troades* 397, 407-8).

These Senecan lines can be heard behind the cry of his contemporaneous poem, *Euthanasia*: 'To be the nothing that I was/ Ere born to life and living woe!', and similarly nihilistic images occur in other poems of the period.[115] At the same time, Byron was returning to the social round again after two years away and himself

[113] *BLJ* 2.110. See also *CHP* 2.904-5: 'All thou could'st have of mine, stern Death! thou hast;/ The parent, friend, and now the more than friend'.
[114] *BLJ* 2.88-89.
[115] See 'And thou art dead' (18) and 'To Thyrza' (16).

indulging in a certain amount of *serta, unguenta, puellas*, the latter resulting in a dose of gonorrhoea.[116] Yet his letters, like *Edleston,* declared present entertainments undermined by a degree of emptiness: '[Scrope Davies'] gaiety (death cannot mar it) has done me service; but, after all, ours was a hollow laughter'.[117]

Beyond these definite intertextualities in *Edleston*, there is the likelihood of others, especially with key texts from Byron's time at Harrow and Cambridge. For example, the reference at line 13 to Libitina, the ancient Roman goddess of funerals, was probably inspired by the Horace ode which Byron had translated into Italian while in Athens not long before, since Horace's *non omnis moriar multaque pars mei/ vitabit Libitinam* (literally, 'I shall not all die and a great part of me will avoid Libitina', Hor. *Odes* 3.30.6-7) was surely also the source of Byron's haunting but curiously unEnglish line, 'The all of thine that cannot die', in the final stanza of 'And thou art dead', a poem which Beatty judges marked by a 'curious sense of prolonged secret intimacy across the nothingness of death':[118]

> The all of thine that cannot die
> Through dark and dread Eternity
> Returns again to me,
> And more thy buried love endears
> Than aught except its living years.

One might also detect borrowings in lines 1-3 of *Edleston* from the *amor valeat* of Terence's *Eunuchus* and the *fatum tuum* of the *Satyrica,* and in lines 7 (*Me miserum!)* and 4 (*haeret…dolor*) from Cicero's *miserum me! consumptis enim lacrimis infixus tamen pectori haeret dolor* ('Woe is me; for though all my tears are shed my grief still clings to me deep-rooted in my heart'), which Quintilian quotes in his *Institutio*

[116] *BLJ* 11.159.
[117] *BLJ* 2.77; 'To Thyrza' (21-24).
[118] See also Byron's *Cain* Act II, sc.1.71-72 (1821): 'Thou canst not/ *All* die—there is what must survive'. Beatty (2005) 92.

Oratoria as an example of emotive figures.[119] All these works were familiar to Byron and referenced elsewhere in his writings. These suggestions are, of course, speculative and, taken together, would mean that much of *Edleston* exhibits some degree of intertextuality. This of itself would not be wholly surprising. Currently available evidence indicates that, unlike Thomas Gray for example (see below), Byron very rarely composed Latin verse after he left formal education, so recourse to known models, classical and neo-Latin, would be natural.

The crucial question is how successfully Byron melds together what Stead describes as a 'Frankenstein's monster of a poem'.[120] There is a considerable contrast between his masterly control of 'Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva'* and the more contrived *Edleston*. The shorter, tauter 'Lines Associated' is densely meaningful, every word contributing value to the acerbic attack being launched on Elgin. Replete as it is with neat antitheses and other rhetorical devices, it is the highly polished product of a poet very much aware of the Latin tradition of epigram in which it sits.

Edleston is longer and clumsier, and it is significant that its finest lines *Heu quanto minus est iam serta, unguenta, puellas/ Carpere cum reliquis quam meminisse tui?* (9-10) are wholly unoriginal, except in the yoking of disparate authors. Technically, there are some deficiencies and awkwardnesses in its Latin accidence and syntax, though the poem has occasional flourishes, for example when Byron draws on his experience of having survived being seriously ill while away in Greece to counterpose wanting to live and wanting to die with Edleston, both in vain: *frustra pro te vixisse precatum,/ Cur frustra volui te moriente mori?* (7-8).[121] It is,

[119] Ter. *Eun.* 881; Petron. *Sat.* 75.10; Cic. *Phil.* 2.64.4-5; Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.26.
[120] Stead (2016) 203.
[121] For example, Stead has highlighted the awkwardness of the Latin in line 13, which (given the call for death in the final line) is probably intended to invoke Libitina, the goddess of funerals, to spare him

though, a thought more elegantly captured in his sparer English poem, 'To Thyrza' (39-40): 'Relenting nature vainly gave/ My life, when Thyrza ceased to live!'. Some of Byron's own effects miss their target. The escalating *dulcis…dulcis! dulcior* ('sweet', 'sweet', 'sweeter') in line 5 has an echo of the well-known opening lines of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* Book 2 with its *suave, suave, suave, dulcius* (lines 1, 4, 5 and 7), a passage which Byron cited in an 1809 letter from Lisbon.[122] In *Edleston*, with the repetition concentrated into one line, the effect is merely jingling, but seven years later in the first canto of *Don Juan,* Byron shows how to exploit the same piece of Latin verse in masterfully rhetorical English. There he not merely copies but almost unbearably intensifies Lucretius' pattern, with nineteen usages of 'sweet' in stanzas 122-27 before rising to an exhilarating climax in stanza 128's 'sweeter', set in a tricolon before a deferred subject: 'But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,/ Is first and passionate love'.

There is here some analogy with Thomas Gray's elegies for the death of his old Etonian schoolfriend and literary confederate, Richard West, the first written in Latin (like several earlier works which passed between them) and a further three in English.[123] Robert Mack concludes that, of the four, Gray's 1742 'Latin poem is arguably the most intensely visceral—the most emotionally devastated and traumatized…Yet it is also the least sophisticated', at least in relation to the problem of mortality.[124] Much the same might be said of the relationship between Byron's elegy in Latin for Edleston and those in English. Indeed Beatty, *contra* McGann, has

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from hostile Fates, a reading incompatible with the nominative or vocative range of '*Parcae'.* The alternative of reading *parcere* as the imperative *parcite* would yield 'hostile fates, have mercy on me' (Stead (2016) 200 n.75).

[122] *BLJ* 1. 216.

[123] Gray's Latin elegy for West is a 28-line fragment constituting the opening of the otherwise abandoned Book 2 of his self-described 'Metaphysic' work on Lucretian lines, *De Principiis Cogitandi* ('On the Elements of Thought') (Starr and Hendrickson (1966) 168-69).

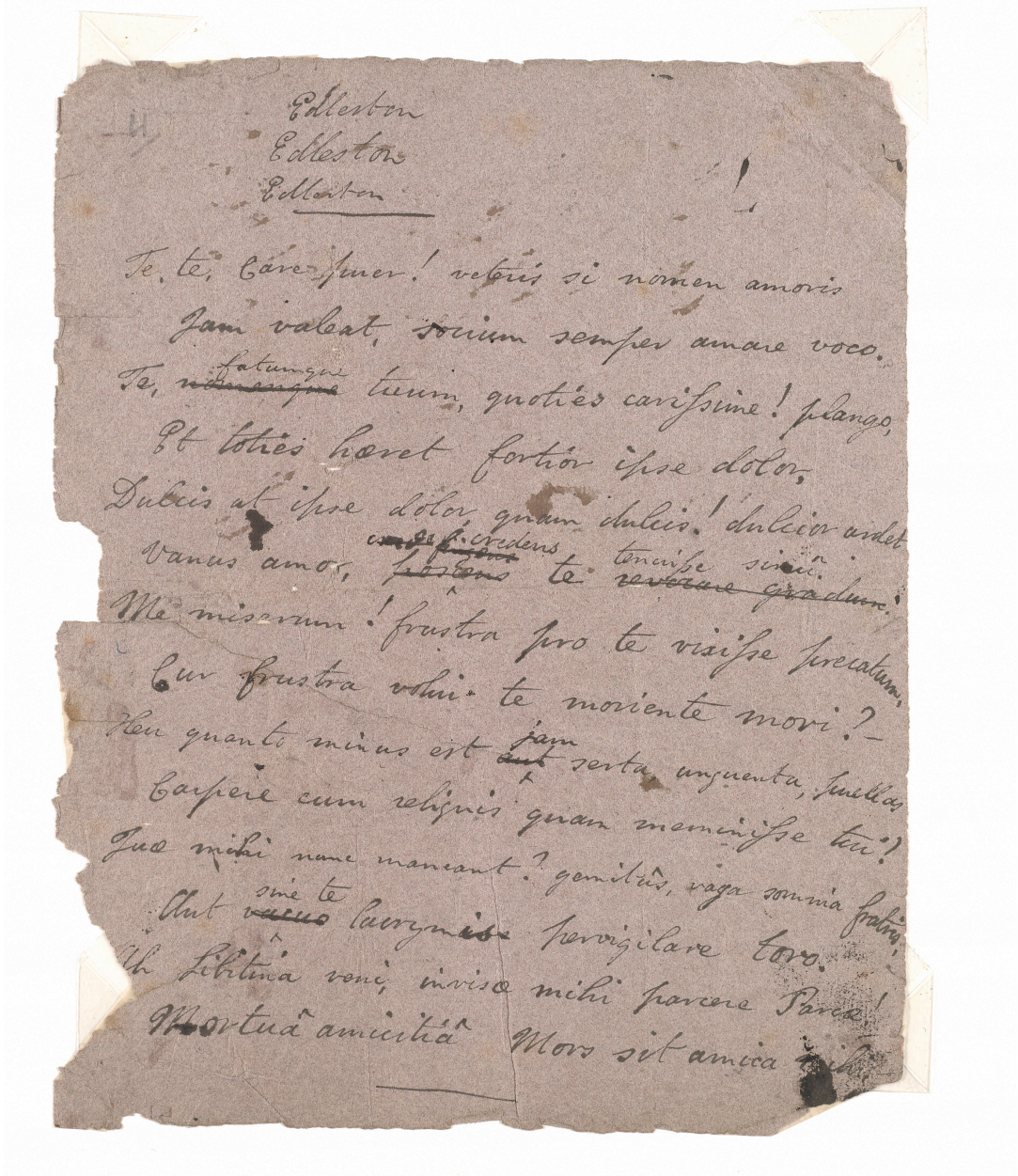
[124] Mack (2000) 309.

suggested that the principal model for *Edleston* is Gray's fragmentary Latin poem, *De Principiis Cogitandi, Liber Secundus*.[125] The Latin texts of the two works share relatively few common expressions, though *sine te* is one, but there are what Beatty terms 'parallels of feeling'.[126]

Byron, who in his letter to Hodgson quoting Seneca's *Troades* had uncompromisingly declared that he would have nothing to do with 'your immortality', in *Edleston* touches only briefly and lightly on the issue in his first couplet: *si veteris nomen amoris/ Iam valeat* ('if the name of an old love still has power').[127] The hesitation implied by the use of *si* ('if') leaves open to question not simply the survival of Edleston's affection but the very existence of a spirit in an afterworld with concern for its earthly relicts. Thereafter, however, the Latin *Edleston* turns away from the 'beloved dust', dead 'without a stone to mark the spot', of the English elegies, to write exclusively of the narrator's anguish at the loss of his lover and the prospect of future happiness.[128] In the immediate, shocked aftermath of bereavement, as he contemplates the divorce between death and life with its pressure of futile pleasures, Byron envisages groans, dreams and lonely tearful nights, just as Gray bemoans sunny days spent in mourning, weeping, and vain complaints, though without Byron's expressed wish to die himself.[129] The emotional intensity of Byron's feelings for his young favourite is apparent most strongly from the poem's manuscript (see *Fig. 7)* where, above the plaintive *Te, te, care puer,* the handwritten triple repetition of 'Edleston' is the only instance of Byron memorialising the boy by

[125] Beatty (2005) 80.
[126] The experience of having hoped in vain is recorded by both Byron and Gray but using different words, Byron in the *frustra* couplet of lines 7-8 discussed above, and Gray in *Heu spes nequicquam dulces, atque irrita vota!* ('alas, the vain sweet hopes, the unavailing prayers!', line 14).
[127] *BLJ* 2.88-89.
[128] 'Away, away, ye notes of woe!' (14); 'To Thyrza'(1).
[129] Gray, *De Principiis Cogitandi, Liber Secundus* 15-16*: Heu mæstos Soles, sine te quos ducere flendo/ Per desideria, et questus iam cogor inanes!*

name in poetry. This was evidently intended as a private piece, and remained unpublished until 1974.


Edleston
Edleston
Edleston

Te, te, care puer! veteris si nomen amoris
Jam valeat, socium semper amare voco.
Te, fatumque tuum, quoties carissime! plango,
Et toties horret fortior ipse dolor,
Dubius at ipse dolor quam dulcis! dulcior ardet
Vanus amor, credens te tenuisse sinu.
Me miserum! frustra juro te visse precatum,
Cur frustra vivis te moriente mori?
Heu quanti minus est jam serta, unguenta, fluenta
Capiere cum relines quam meminisse tui?
Quo mihi nunc manant? genialis, vaga somnia fronde,
Aut te lacrymis pervigilare toro.
Ah Libitina veni, invisa mihi parcere Parca!
Mortua amicitiâ Mors sit amica mihi?

Fig. 7: Byron's manuscript of *'Edleston',* NLS Ms.43343.
By kind permission of the National Library of Scotland

By the time *Edleston* was written in late 1811 or early 1812, the Latin-infused ambience of the Athenian convent was no longer operative but still relatively close in time. Any theory that Byron chose Latin as a secret code to obscure the homoerotic

content is implausible: its contents would have been open to every educated English gentleman, not least Byron's male social circle; and the need for any such code could easily be averted in this instance by the solution of ascribing a potentially female name to the dead love, as in the English language 'Thyrza' elegies published immediately and unproblematically in 1812.[130] For Byron as for Gray, a likely factor is the potency of Latin elegy as a form for the expression of grief at the loss of a same-sex lover. Just as Martial offered both the sanction of antiquity and a model of form and language for the attack and salacious joke at the heart of 'Lines Associated with the Curse of Minerva', so the Latin elegists provided authority and licence for Byron's threnody for a beloved boy in *Edleston*. Yet on present evidence this was a resource Byron chose not to develop further. Subject to the emergence of lost texts, *Edleston* seems to have been Byron's last composition in Latin.

Conclusion

Part I of this thesis, consisting of Chapters 1, 2 and 3, has covered Byron's extensive engagement with classics during his formative years in education and on his European travels to the age of twenty-four in 1812. Despite the almost exclusive concentration in his school curricula on Latin, and later Greek, language and literature, Byron proved no philologist. The overwhelming weight of evidence suggests that Byron's proficiency in ancient Greek was poor, and that his exercise of classical linguistic skills was strongly biased towards Latin, even during his residence in Athens. His early literary endeavours, where classically oriented in

[130] Byron had used the expedient of flexing gender identities for protective dissimulation in his 1807 'Stanzas to Jessy' (which Marchand finds 'obviously addressed to John Edleston', *CPW* 1.389), and in the presentation of his 'Imitation' of Catull. 48 as 'To Anna' and later 'To Ellen' rather than to Catullus' boy lover, the *mellitus* Iuventius.

translation and composition, were largely conventional, though exceptionally works like *The Death of Calmar and Orla* and 'Lines Associated with *The Curse of Minerva*' demonstrated his capacity for creative appropriation and composition. Byron's interest was demonstrably not in the language but in the history and literature of the ancient world, and very particularly the Roman world.

On his return from the Mediterranean towards the end of this period with the first drafts of two substantial works in his baggage, Byron's literary career stood poised between publication of *Hints from Horace,* his satirical 'imitation' of Horace's *Ars Poetica,* and his generically indeterminate travelogue, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, A Romaunt.* Initially Byron maintained an 'obstinate repugnance' to the idea of publishing the latter first but external opinion was less enthusiastic about *Hints from Horace*, and eventually he took the path less travelled, which did indeed make all the difference.

The appearance of the first two, ground-breaking cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812 marked Byron's emergence as a poet of originality and his extraordinary rise to international literary prominence. Overnight acclaim greeted the advent of the introspective Byronic hero, with his overwhelming sense of internal desolation in the face of the futile pleasures of the external world. Matthew Arnold's acid lines of 1851 demonstrate the impact of Byron's contagious *Weltschmerz*:

> What helps it now, that Byron bore,
> With haughty scorn that mocked the smart,
> Through Europe to the Aetolian shore
> The pageant of his bleeding heart?
> That thousands counted every groan,
> And Europe made his woe their own?
> *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse,* 133-38.

Use of the obsolete title, 'Childe', the concept of pilgrimage, and the subtitle, 'A Romaunt', styled the poem's antecedents as those of mediaeval romance, and it was

at this point that, with the exception of his Martial *jeux d'esprit*, Byron turned away for some years from experiments in classical 'imitation' and composition to reap further public success with his Oriental tales, *The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair*, and *Lara*.

Part II of this thesis examines Byron's return to classical models in the works of his literary maturity published from 1818 to his death in 1824. Organised by genre, Chapter 4 considers satire, Chapter 5 epic and Chapter 6 tragedy.

Part II: The years of maturity, 1818-1824

Chapter 4: 'a little turn for satire'

In Byron's *Beppo,* the narrator declares:

> I fear I have a little turn for satire,
> And yet methinks the older that one grows
> Inclines us more to laugh than scold, though laughter
> Leaves us so doubly serious shortly after. (*Beppo*, 629–32)

The ironically tentative first line knowingly underplays Byron's ingrained and ingenious aptitude for satire. In Claude Fuess's words, 'Byron's satiric spirit was persistent and conspicuous from the date of *Fugitive Pieces* (1806) until his death eighteen years later'.[1] It was on precisely these grounds that M.H. Abrams excluded Byron from his seminal *Natural Supernaturalism* of 1971: Byron 'deliberately opens a satirical perspective on the vatic stance of his Romantic contemporaries'.[2] Abrams's decision seems predicated on a notion of Romanticism built on Wordsworth and Coleridge, one which could encompass the metaphysical Shelley despite his satires, but balked at Byron. At that time, against the background of a longstanding view that 'satire had already ceased to be significant or potent' by the Romantic era (despite, for example, Thomas Moore's best-selling *Intercepted letters; or, The Twopenny Post-Bag* (1813) and *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818) and Shelley's political satires of 1819–20, *Peter Bell the Third* and *Oedipus Tyrannus; or Swellfoot the Tyrant*), Byron's stance of satirical alterity was seen to set him firmly in opposition to the other canonical Romantics and particularly to Wordsworth, the 'anti-satirical theorist and practitioner *par excellence*' in John Rieder's encapsulation of Steven Jones's presentation of Wordsworth.[3]

Jones elaborated the perceived dichotomy, if only to dissent:

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[1] Fuess (1975) 7.
[2] Abrams (1971) 13.
[3] Dyer (1997) 11; Rieder (2001) 123.

> If Romantic poetry is defined as vatic or prophetic, inward-turning, sentimental, idealizing, sublime and reaching for transcendence—even in its ironies—then satire, with its socially encoded, public, profane, and tendentious rhetoric is bound to be cast in the role of the other.[4]

His argument that in fact the satiric and the Romantic 'interpenetrate one another' was part of a wave of challenges to the older stereotype in the closing decades of the twentieth century, though Jones's statement that Byron was 'simply the most vivid representation of the ambivalent relation of Romantic and satiric modes in the period' still affords Byron a deserved degree of exceptionality.[5] Byron is pre-eminently a figure who problematises our understanding of literary history and disrupts neat taxonomies of genre and periodicity, because his artistic practice is so often counter-cultural, and at times contradictory. His engagement with satire exemplifies the issue in eluding definitions of Romanticism and posing a generic puzzle in classifying *Don Juan*. The difficulty of categorising the genre as a whole for the Romantic age was openly acknowledged by Stuart Curran whose *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (1990) consciously omitted 'satire, which…is an extremely vital mode in British Romanticism, one whose full dimensions have never been addressed in criticism…a genre whose constituents have never even been catalogued'.[6]

For Byron, satire was indeed a 'vital mode', providing a suitably ironic vehicle for expression of his fervently felt concerns about politics, society and—a constant preoccupation from his first full satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*—the quality and direction of contemporary literature. Throughout his writing career he produced a torrent of satirical works, including *jeux d'esprit* like *Waltz* and *The Blues*, vicious epigrams on establishment adversaries like Castlereagh,

[4] Jones (2000) 3.
[5] Jones (2000) 10; see also for example Butler (1984), Dyer (1997).
[6] Curran (1990) 12-13.

and hard-hitting political verses and ballads like *The Age of Bronze, The Irish Avatar* and the ballad which so wounded his friend Hobhouse, 'My Boy Hobby O!', alongside his better known major satirical poems.

It is these major satires which best illustrate the shift in the nature of Byron's engagement with classical literature from the imitative (and 'Imitative') mode of his apprentice years to the individualistic innovations of his maturity. They fall largely into two phases: the early ventures in the English neo-classical tradition based on Latin verse satire—that is, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* and its successor, *Hints from Horace*—and the Italian-inflected but still classically-infused narrative satires published from 1818 onwards—*Beppo, The Vision of Judgment* and, arguably, *Don Juan* (which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Byron at one point described *Don Juan* as an 'Epic Satire' (*DJ* 14.99), and beyond question it has major satirical elements, but Curran regards it as breaching the norms of satire in its incessant attack on, rather than appeal to, accepted moral standards, and its insistence that 'all facts are subjective approximations': 'Epic can accommodate such a radical skepticism but satire cannot'.[7]

Given the combination of Byron's naturally satirical bent and his intensive education in classical satire, it is unsurprising that his satires should draw on ancient works and hence, in the light of his own preferences and the claimed *Romanitas* of the genre, principally on Latin works. Unlike Shelley with his Aristophanic *Swellfoot the Tyrant,* Byron did not appropriate features from Greek Old Comedy directly. Susanna Braund cites Diomedes' fourth century CE characterisation of satire from Lucilius onwards as 'a form of poetry among the Romans and not the Greeks that is abusive and composed to criticise the faults of men in the manner of Old Comedy,

[7] Curran (1990) 197; Gleckner also judges *Don Juan* not satiric (Gleckner (1979) 203-4).

such as Lucilius and Horace and Persius wrote'.[8] Byron's literary heroes, Dryden and Pope, had been the leading satirists in an 'Augustan' period which looked for models in a traditional canon of Roman verse satire consisting, in John Sullivan's specification, of 'Horace's *Sermones* and *Epistulae*, Persius' six and Juvenal's sixteen satires,…the numerous satiric epigrams of Martial and a few from Catullus, the whole corpus being less than 10,000 lines'.[9] These were very much Byron's exemplars, other than that, as argued below, Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* (itself influenced by Lucilius' first book) should not be overlooked and the presence of Persius in Byron's works also is less evident than is sometimes claimed.[10]

F.L. Beaty asserts that Byron's 'most authentic reproduction in form and content' of Roman satire is his 'free imitation of Persius' fifth satire with additional suggestions from Horace and Juvenal' in the quasi-philosophical dialogue between a tearful Don Juan and the compassionate Englishman, Johnson, among the crowd of 'shivering slaves' waiting for sale in *Don Juan* 5.13-25.[11] This seems somewhat exaggerated, despite undoubted intertexts with Persius' fifth satire and Horace's *Satires* 2.3 and 2.7. Certainly Byron suggests at the beginning of Canto 5 that his 'poem will become a moral model', 'with all passions in their turn attack'd', passions named as Love, Ambition, Avarice, Vengeance and Glory in a pivotal passage where Beaty convincingly identifies the Rev. Martin Madan's 1789 commentary on the Persius as the source of Byron's imagery of the snake sloughing its skin annually, hunting nets and 'we' humans fluttering like birds on limed twigs (*DJ* 5.21-22).[12] But Byron is, fundamentally, down to earth and he immediately makes the

[8] Diomedes *GLK* 1.485, cited at Braund (2004) 8.
[9] Sullivan (1992) 217.
[10] Freudenburg (2005) 6 for Seneca.
[11] Beaty (1976) 347.
[12] Beaty (1976) 348.

practically-minded Juan undermine the relevance of Johnson's abstract account of ensnaring passions: 'All this is very fine, and may be true,/…but I really don't see how/ It betters present times with me or you' (*DJ* 5.23). The dialogue does not, in the event, imitate Persius' protracted attack on the moral man's enslavement to passions (in Persius, greed, luxury, love, ambition and superstition, targets borrowed from Hor. *Sat.* 2.3, Horace's longest satire as the fifth is Persius'), nor is Johnson shown to 'inveigh against passions' as Beaty claims.[13] Of these issues, the *Don Juan* scene reflects only on love, and Johnson—though serially uxorious in line with the Roman satirist's charge of the madman's inability to resist infatuation and sex—at no point urges Juan to abandon women as ostensibly does the Persius piece which, in an iterative series of intertexts, mirrors the Horace in its borrowed stock exchange between lovelorn master and slave from Terence's *Eunuchus* (46–63), itself taken from Menander.[14]

Byron's tone too is radically different from Persius' scathing commentary. He offers a wry, not vituperative, sideways glance at his own position as an abandoned husband in Johnson's desertion by his second wife and in the dry reassurance offered to Juan that 'Fortune at your time of life,/ Although a female moderately fickle,/ Will hardly leave you (as she's not your wife)' (*DJ* 5.19 and 17). And what is explicitly stressed is Johnson's remarkable *sang-froid* in the face of a fate which he sees no point in resisting: 'To strive too with our fate were such a strife/ As if the corn-sheaf should oppose the sickle:/ Men are the sport of circumstances' (5.17). An opponent of slavery, Byron pointedly juxtaposes the degrading physical reality of an actual slave market where Juan's fellow-captives are treated like animals

[13] Beaty (1976) 349.
[14] Pers. 5.161-75; Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.259-71. See also Hor. *Sat.* 2.7.46-74.

or goods, with philosophy's metaphor of mental slavery in Johnson's nonchalant outline of the Stoic credo:

> 'But after all, what *is* our present state?
> 'Tis bad, and may be better—all men's lot:
> Most men are slaves, none more so than the great,
> To their own whims and passions, and what not'. (*DJ* 5.25)

Johnson's tone here is one of resigned acceptance of human weaknesses, and he—and one suspects, Byron too—reserves his opprobrium for the philosophers themselves: 'To feel for none is the true social art/ Of the world's stoics—men without a heart' (5.25). It is a substantially less ambiguous ending than Persius', where the parting shot contends that what Braund sees as Persius' hard-line Stoicism in his fifth satire would be met by a coarse laugh among the *varicosos centuriones* ('centurions with bulging veins', Pers. 5.189–91).[15] Overall then, this dialogue scarcely seems Byron's 'most authentic reproduction' of Roman verse satire. It appears, moreover, to be his only substantive engagement with Persius, despite the likely attraction of the poet whom Kirk Freudenburg judges 'perhaps the most aggressively political of all Roman satirists'.[16] There are merely quotations, perhaps both commonplaces: 'out of nothing nothing can arise' (Pers. 3.84) and (twice) *caedimus inque vicem praebemus crura sagittis* ('we shoot and in turn expose our legs to arrows', Pers. 4.42).[17] One factor influencing Byron may have been the notorious difficulty of Persius' Latin.

In terms of technique, just as Roman satirists like Lucilius and Horace had deliberately made discordant use of hexameters — the elevated metre of epic — for their *sermones* ('conversations'), so Byron's English satirical models like Pope,

[15] Braund (2004) 94-95.
[16] Freudenburg (2005) 12.
[17] Braund (2004) 16. *BLJ* 9.76; a note to Note III to Canto 2 of *CHP* (*CPW* 2.294); and *BLJ* 6.204 where Marchand represents Byron as writing 'cadimus signe vicem probamus frura sagittis'.

Churchill and Gifford had employed 'heroic' couplets. In something of a rearguard action for his times, Byron's early satires adopted this template. His great satires written in Italy, however, abandoned any pretence of a strict 'imitation' of a classical work in favour of narrative, and they exchanged the couplet for the exacting but flexible *ottava rima* in *Beppo* (1818)*, Don Juan* (1819 on) and *The Vision of Judgment* (1822). *The Vision* drew on a different class of Roman satire, the Menippean (see below), and Byron located this work firmly in the Italian tradition in his insistence that its 'octave stanzas' were written 'in the Pulci style, which the fools in England think was invented by Whistlecraft—it is as old as the hills in Italy'. (Earlier though, he had acknowledged that John Hookham Frere's pseudonymous *'Prospectus and Specimen for an Intended National Work,* by William and Robert Whistlecraft' (1817) was stylistically the 'immediate *model*' for *Beppo*).[18] The main exception to this pattern of two phases of satire with distinct modes and metres is *The Age of Bronze,* Byron's final substantial satire which reverted without explanation to what he acknowledged as his 'early English Bards style': 'It is in the heroic couplet measure—which is "an old friend with a new face"', presumably referring to Byron's move away from restrictive Popean end-stopped couplets to more irregular, often more flowing, sense units.[19] In lines 9–34 for example, sentences vary in length from one line to over eleven.

The *Beppo* lines at the head of this chapter also register a general modification in tone over the two phases from what Robert Gleckner terms the 'selfish spleen' of *English Bards* towards *Don Juan*'s 'sober merriment' of 'equanimity'.[20] The *Beppo*

[18] *BLJ* 8.229 and 6.24.
[19] *BLJ* 10.81.
[20] Gleckner (1979) 102 and *passim*. Byron cited Dryden, Pope and Swift as examples of satire's origin in 'selfish spleen' (cancelled lines 114a-b from *Hints from Horace, CPW* 1.293).

narrator's note of amused tolerance overlaying an essential seriousness is more characteristic of Byron's later years than the harsher satire of his early works, though the division is not absolute. Age merely 'inclines' him to mock rather than castigate; for splenetic later lines, see his 1822 epigrams on Castlereagh's suicide published in the first edition of *The Liberal*, for example the fierce Martialic brevity of 'So *He* has cut his throat at last!—He? Who?/ The man who cut his country's long ago'.[21]

Conversely, Jerome McGann argues that *English Bards* in its first edition was 'a predominantly Horatian exercise' but underwent a 'Juvenalian shift' in its second, expanded edition, in angry response to the ridicule heaped on Byron's *Hours of Idleness* by *The Edinburgh Review* (see Chapter 2).[22] 'Horatian' and 'Juvenalian' as taxonomical categories of verse satire delinked from specific intertextualities were, according to Gary Dyer, already operative in Byron's day after late eighteenth-century satirists 'became more polarized in their methods':

> Juvenalian satire, akin to a tragic mode, is meant to induce fear and is uncompromisingly harsh and moralistic. Horatian satire, more attuned to the comic, aims at laughter or amusement, its poetic speaker being presented as mild, amicable, almost conciliatory.[23]

In line with this, Byron's belligerent youthful satire, *English Bards*, explicitly invokes Juvenal, while the quotation from the later *Beppo* at the head of this chapter has a flavour of Horace's programmatic *ridentem dicere verum* ('to tell the truth while laughing', *Sat.* 1.1.24). But the exclusionary framing of these binary labels masks the range of classical influences and appropriations in Byron's satires, and the primary focus of this chapter is to provide some wider illustration of that range and its contribution, whether by allusion, subject-matter or structure, to Byron's own

[21] *CPW* 6.578.
[22] *CPW* 1.398.
[23] Dyer (1997) 39.

distinctive ‘turn for satire’.

Byron’s satires in the English neo-classical tradition

Formal verse satires in the classically-based English manner were largely a feature of Byron’s early years. Like Juvenal and Persius (though not Horace), his initial focus was on the state of contemporary literature, and after the publication of *Hours of Idleness* in June 1807, Byron began his first lengthy satire, then to be called *British Bards*, in an indiscriminate flurry of composition which by October that year included in addition 214 pages of a novel, 560 lines on Bosworth Field, 250 lines of another poem and half a dozen smaller pieces.[24] Just before Christmas, he was unsuccessfully pitching to a publisher the anonymous publication of his four hundred plus lines—‘the subject, the poetry of the present Day’—in a volume with Francis Hodgson’s ‘Satire in imitation of Juvenal’, presumably on the basis of a perceived Juvenalian affinity between the two works.[25] It is important then to see *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, A Satire*, for all its success, as the constantly evolving text of a fledgling writer testing his wings with different subjects and genres, and working within the milieu of his classically-oriented Cambridge friends, not least Hodgson and his imitation of Juvenal.

Juvenal was omnipresent at the time: Dyer notes that fifteen volume-length Imitations of Juvenal were published in Great Britain and Ireland between 1791 and 1821, and Byron brandished Juvenal in advertising ancient and modern satiric antecedents for *English Bards*. In a note to lines about venturing over ‘the path which Pope and Gifford trod before’ (*EBSR,* 93-94), Byron provided the Latin text for Juvenal’s similar declaration in his programmatic first satire that, like an epic hero,

[24] *BLJ* 1.136.
[25] *BLJ* 1.141.

he was charging his chariot in the tracks of the early Roman satirist Lucilius, an author whom Horace praised to the lawyer Trebatius as 'a better man than either of us' (*nostrum melioris utroque, Sat.* 2.1.29):

> Cur tamen hoc libeat potius decurrere campo
> Per quem magnus equos Auruncae flexit alumnus:
> Si vacat, ac placidi rationem admittitis, edam.
>
> ('Yet why I choose to charge across the same plain where the great protégé of Aurunca steered his chariot, I'll explain, if you have the time and can listen quietly to my reasoning', Juv. *Sat.* 1.19–21).[26]

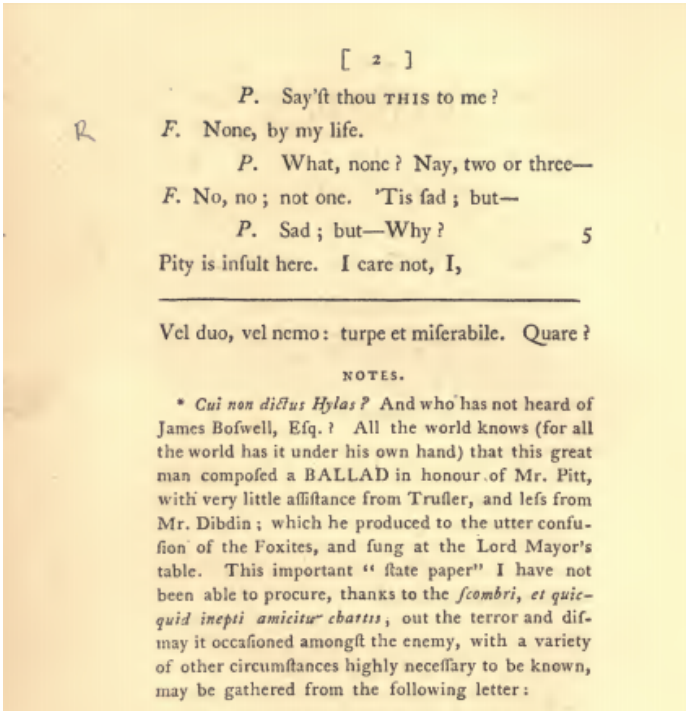
Although Byron later cited Lucilius as an example of an author who should have remained in obscurity, that side of him which liked a good fight and used satire as an offensive weapon displayed an affinity with the more aggressive Roman satirists harking back to Lucilius and with authors of invective.[27] Alongside Juvenal, one might include Martial, given what Clarence Mendell sees as his 'thoroughly satiric' epigrams (see Chapter 2), as well as the author whom Martial acknowledged as his superior, Catullus, whose invective is close to satire.[28]

There are, of course, native influences on *English Bards*, notably the popular Juvenalian satirist, Charles Churchill; and Byron's representation that the proposed joint volume with Hodgson's *Juvenal* would be larger than *The Baviad* nods to the model of William Gifford, Byron's '"Magnus Apollo"' and '*literary* father'.[29] Gifford's most successful works were his 1802 translation of Juvenal and two vitriolic literary satires, *The Baviad* and *The Maeviad,* titles taken from the Augustan poetasters, Bavius and Maevius, named in Virgil's third eclogue.[30] *The Baviad,* a

[26] Byron's Juvenal text at *CPW* 1.400 n.93.
[27] *BLJ* 8.201.
[28] Mendell (1922) 20; Mart. 7.99.7 and 10.78.16.
[29] *BLJ* 2.92, 11.117. For Churchill's influence, see *The Eclectic Review,* Vol. 5, 481-82; Bucknell (2016) 360-82; *CPW* 1.398; Stabler (2000) 47-57. For Gifford's, see Jones (1993) 772. Gifford's works are listed in Byron's library catalogues.
[30] Verg. *Ecl.* 3.90; see also Hor. *Epod.* 10 for *olentem Maevium* ('stinking Maevius').

1791 work attacking Robert Merry and the other sentimentalist 'Della Cruscan' poets, was an 'Imitation' of Persius' first satire and *The Maeviad* imitated Horace's *Satire* 1.10 on the topic of writing satire. In all then, a deeply Roman set of influences.

Fig. 8: **Similarities in format**: **(i) William Gifford, *The Baviad*** (1791) lines 3–6, with Persius *Satire* 1.3 and notes.



[2]

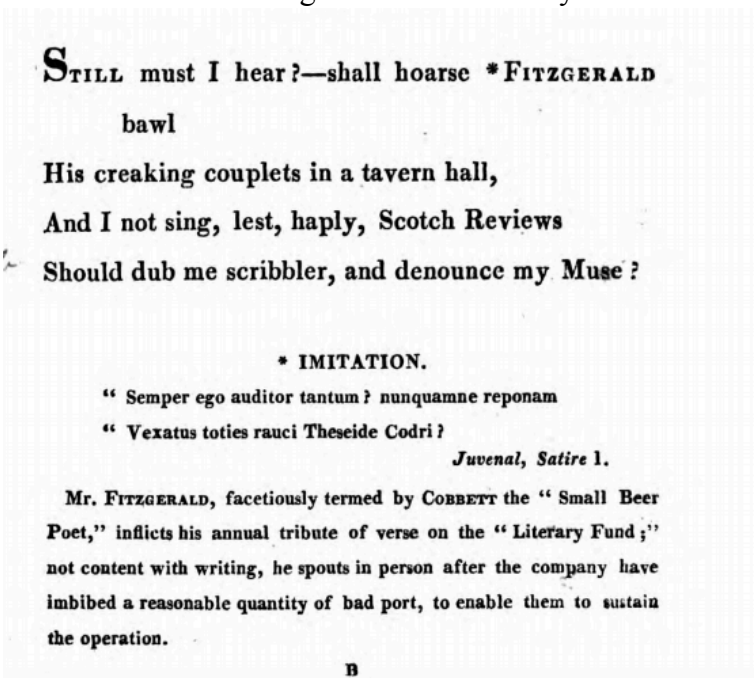
P. Say'ſt thou THIS to me?
F. None, by my life.
P. What, none? Nay, two or three—
F. No, no; not one. 'Tis ſad; but—
P. Sad; but—Why?
Pity is inſult here. I care not, I,

Vel duo, vel nemo: turpe et miſerabile. Quare?

NOTES.

* *Cui non dictus Hylas?* And who has not heard of James Boſwell, Eſq.? All the world knows (for all the world has it under his own hand) that this great man compoſed a BALLAD in honour of Mr. Pitt, with very little aſſiſtance from Truſler, and leſs from Mr. Dibdin; which he produced to the utter confuſion of the Foxites, and ſung at the Lord Mayor's table. This important "ſtate paper" I have not been able to procure, thanks to the *ſcombri, et quicquid inepti amicitur chartis*, out the terror and diſmay it occaſioned amongſt the enemy, with a variety of other circumſtances highly neceſſary to be known, may be gathered from the following letter:

(ii) Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809, 2nd edition) lines 1–4, with Juv. *Sat.* 1.1–2 (literally, 'Shall I always be stuck in the audience? Never retaliate for being tortured so often by hoarse Cordus' song of Theseus?').



STILL must I hear?—shall hoarse *FITZGERALD bawl
His creaking couplets in a tavern hall,
And I not sing, lest, haply, Scotch Reviews
Should dub me scribbler, and denounce my Muse?

*** IMITATION.**

"Semper ego auditor tantum? nunquamne reponam
"Vexatus toties rauci Theseide Codri?
***Juvenal, Satire* 1.**

Mr. FITZGERALD, facetiously termed by COBBETT the "Small Beer Poet," inflicts his annual tribute of verse on the "Literary Fund;" not content with writing, he spouts in person after the company have imbibed a reasonable quantity of bad port, to enable them to sustain the operation.

B

Declaring that 'my object is not to prove that I can write well, but, *if possible*, to make others write better', Byron imitated not only Gifford's moralising literary theme but, initially, the format of Gifford's satires so that his second, expanded edition of *English Bards* opened with his English imitation of Juvenal *Sat.* 1.1–2, the Latin text and a brutal note on his victim, William Fitzgerald, on one page (see *Fig. 8*).[31] It is a reading experience that demands a cognitive synthesis of all three elements, quite unlike reading the *English Bards* text alone and sequentially as commonly printed now, including in McGann's *Complete Works.* Byron later gave repeated (and regrettably, still unheeded) instructions that his *Hints from Horace* should be printed in parallel with the Latin of Horace's *Ars Poetica,* 'not only to show where I have left Horace, but where he has left me'.[32] For him, 'the merit in this kind of writing consists in the *adaptation*', and the stereoscopic juxtaposition of the Latin and the English facilitates the reader's appreciation of the author's ingenuity in transposing the Roman world to the contemporary. Samuel Johnson, however, notwithstanding his own admired 'imitations' of Juvenal's third and tenth satires in, respectively, *London* (1738) and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), criticised Pope's *Imitations of the Satires and Epistles of Horace* on the grounds that 'between Roman images and English manners there will be an irreconcileable [sic] dissimilitude, and the works will be generally uncouth and party-coloured; neither original nor translated, neither ancient nor modern'.[33]

Predictably, Byron did not maintain this conspicuous closeness to the Latin in *English Bards*. The degree of Byron's debt in this work to Juvenal, and indeed to rival translations of Juvenal, has been extensively debated in the literature. Fuess's

[31] *CPW* 1.228.
[32] *CPW* 1.428; see also *BLJ* 2.90, 8.88.
[33] *BLJ* 8.61; Johnson in Lonsdale (ed.) (2006) 45 and 78.

suggestion that after the first hundred lines Byron 'neglected Juvenal to pursue an independent course' has been convincingly rebutted by Mary Clearman's detailed analysis of the echoes and close imitations of Juvenal occurring throughout *English Bards*.[34] Accepting this broad point but in turn rejecting Clearman's claim of Juvenal's first satire as a structural 'blueprint' for *English Bards*, Beaty proposed Juvenal 'as an afterthought in the accretive growth' of the poem, on the inspiration of Madan's expansively titled 'New and Literal Translation of Juvenal and Persius, with copious explanatory notes by which these difficult satirists are rendered easy and familiar to the reader'.[35]

Byron's principal satiric exemplars shared a notably savage tone, the *saeva indignatio* Scaliger intensified from Juvenal's declaration, *facit indignatio versum* ('indignation will inspire my poetry', Juv. *Sat.* 1.79), and the disposition, 'all gall and spitefulness', which Moore discerned in Gifford with a pen in his hands.[36] Acerbic satire suited Byron's mood of *joie de guerre* after the mauling his *Hours of Idleness* received at the hands of 'Scotch Reviewers'. Always libertarian and to some extent shielded by his aristocratic status, Byron here and throughout his career was unafraid to attack the living and the powerful, in the mould of the socially and economically well-placed Lucilius, Catullus and Persius. By contrast, 'Horace target[ted] type-characters, unnamed fools, and persons of no particular account', in Freudenburg's characterization; Martial courted Domitian in what David Shackleton Bailey terms 'genuflectory verse'; and Seneca pilloried only the dead, a cautious restriction Juvenal also claimed at *Sat.* 1.170-71, albeit Braund declares this 'patently

[34] Clearman (1970) 88 (quoting Fuess (1912) 51) and *passim*.
[35] Beaty (1976) 337-43. Byron's 1813 and 1816 library catalogues list the 1807 edition of Madan's translation.
[36] Moore, ed. Lord John Russell (1853) 2. 230.

untrue'.[37] Catherine Connors suggests that Lucilius' outspokenness came to be seen by the Romans as an embodiment of Republican *libertas*, and that attitude meshes well with Byron's insistence on the right to freedom of expression.[38] Yet exceptionally Byron later suppressed *English Bards*, despite its continuing popularity, because of concern about unfair offence to particular individuals. By 1816, he judged it a 'miserable record of misplaced anger—and indiscriminate acrimony', 'the tone and temper are such that I cannot approve'.[39]

For his next 'Imitation' first drafted in Athens (see Chapter 3), Byron turned away from Juvenal to a work based on Horace. Conceivably because his primary satirical concerns at this stage were literary, the vehicle he chose was Horace's didactic work on literature, *Ars Poetica,* and the sub-title of his *Hints from Horace* was the comprehensively self-explanatory marketing tag, 'Being an Allusion in English Verse to the Epistle "Ad Pisones de Arte Poetica" and Intended as a Sequel to "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"'. According to his friend R.C. Dallas, Byron felt that a work of literary criticism based on Horace's epistolary *Ars Poetica* would mine the same popular seam as *English Bards,* of which third and fourth editions had been issued in his absence abroad.[40] He may have been influenced in this choice by Gifford's verdict on Horace in 'An Essay on the Roman Satirists' included in his 1802 *Satires of Juvenal,* when, after dismissal of Horace as 'an ethical writer', he declared:

> as a critic, he [Horace] is intitled [sic] to all our veneration. Such is the soundness of his judgment, the correctness of his taste, and the extent and variety of his knowledge, that a body of criticism might be selected from his works, more perfect in its kind than any thing which antiquity

[37] Freudenburg (2005) 10; Shackleton Bailey (1993) 1.3; Braund (2004) 129.
[38] Connors (2005) 129.
[39] *CPW* 1.399, 418.
[40] Moore (1830, repr.2012) 1.259-60.

has bequeathed to us.[41]

The *Ars Poetica* was a work with a long tradition of translation, in French famously in Boileau's *L'Art Poétique* (1674) and in English by the likes of Ben Jonson (1640), the Earl of Roscommon (1680) and perhaps most notably in the context of Byron, John Oldham, who spoke in the Advertisement to his 1681 'Horace His Art of Poetry, Imitated in English' of putting 'Horace into a more modern dress…by making him speak, as if he were living, and writing now'. Beyond Oldham's important influence on Dryden and Pope, Beaty points to specific likely parallels between the Oldham Imitation and Byron's *Hints*, for example in Byron's allusions to 'ale-house sign' (32), 'lions waltzing the Tower' (626) and, in a subsequently deleted passage, to a Scotchman being 'bold as Billingsgate' (*CPW* 1.319).[42]

Byron claimed that the *Ars* was 'the most difficult poem in the language'—in Latin, that is—and Jane Stabler has suggested that Byron undertook the exercise 'in Popean idiom' as a way of advancing his reputation.[43] Unfortunately, like his student translations, his version is to some extent derivative and often pedestrian in handling Horace's crisp observations. Consider, for example, Horace's line quoted verbatim to potent satiric effect at *Don Juan* 13.80*,* 'Or (to the point with Horace and with Pulci)/ "*Omne tulit punctum*, quæ *miscuit utile dulci*"' ('He has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure', *Ars P*. 343), Byron's *quae* rather than Horace's *qui* referring to the high society ladies of dubious morals under examination. But in *Hints,* Byron's version is merely flat: 'that Bard for all is fit/ Who mingles well Instruction with his Wit' (541–42). Undiluted didacticism is not Byron's forte, even

[41] Gifford (1802) xlvii.
[42] Beaty (1985) 53. *Oldham's Works* in 2 volumes were in Byron's 1813 and 1816 library catalogues.
[43] *BLJ* 2.90; Stabler (2002, ppbk. 2009) 101.

when he endorses Horace's thought, as in *ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris* (*Ars P.* 338): 'Fiction does best when taught to look like Truth' (*Hints* 537).

Mary Rebecca Thayer finds it strange that 'so negligent an artist as Byron' should choose to work with poetic theory, but then qualifies her point in the light of Byron's practice:

> frequently he uses the Horatian maxims to introduce digressions of his own, and these are pure Byronic satire. The interpolations constitute a large part of the poem, and make it rather a piece of bitter satirical verse than an epistle about literature, with only an incidental element of mild satire, as is the original.[44]

While her view of Byron's interpolations is clearly right (despite Byron's cancelled statement in his 1811 Preface that 'the present "Imitation" will be found to contain as little satire as could be avoided by an author speaking of an enemy'), Tobias Reinhardt has noted 'the narrator's shifts between earnest didaxis and biting satire' in the *Ars Poetica* itself.[45] This undermines Thayer's conclusion that *Hints from Horace,* 'so far from being really Horatian in tone, rather serves to accentuate Byron's lack of sympathy with Horace'.[46] Indeed, the personal, discursive elements in Horace's still much-debated work may be part of what attracted Byron. Byron surely relished Horace's description of posturing would-be poets:

> bona pars non unguis ponere curat,
> non barbam, secreta petit loca, balnea vitat.
> nanciscetur enim pretium nomenque poetae,
> si tribus Anticyris caput insanabile numquam
> tonsori Licino commiserit.
>
> ('a goodly number [of poets] take no pains to pare their nails or to shave their beards; they haunt lonely places and shun the baths—for surely one will win the esteem and name of poet if he never entrusts to the barber Licinus [Julius Caesar's barber] a head that three Anticyras cannot cure', *Ars P.* 297–301).

[44] Thayer (1916) 39.
[45] *CPW* 1.428; Reinhardt (2013) 523.
[46] Thayer (1916) 39.

Noting that Blake was 'as famous a tonsor as Licinus himself, and better paid', Byron's own version pulled no punches in naming Wordsworth:[47]

> With little rhyme, less reason, if you please,
> The name of Poet may be got with ease, …
> Write but like Wordsworth,—live beside a lake
> And keep your bushy locks a year from Blake,
> Then print your book, once more return to town,
> And boys shall hunt your Bardship up and down. (*Hints* 469-70, 73-76)

As described in the conclusion of Chapter 3, Byron's text of *Hints from Horace* was allowed to languish after the success of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812 brought him international fame for a radically different, and more distinctive, literary persona. His interest was not reignited until 1820 when Pope and the whole tradition of 'imitations' from dead languages were under attack from the likes of Bowles and Wordsworth (see Introduction), and Byron's own reputation was coming into question. A refreshed *Hints from Horace* seemed an appropriate vehicle for a classically-laced counter-attack:

> Beware—for God's sake don't begin like B[owle]s!
> 'Awake a louder and a loftier strain'.
> And pray, what follows from his boiling brain?
> He sinks to Southey's level in a trice,
> Whose epic mountains never fail in mice![48] (192-96)

At this late stage too, his close concern with the *Ars Poetica* seems to have had a significant influence on his own work. One of the oddities of the *Ars* is, as discussed by Reinhardt, that many of Horace's instructions 'appear to derive from a Greek 5th century BC context' and 'seem of antiquarian interest at best to a Roman audience of the 1st century BC'.[49] This is particularly true of Horace's lengthy disquisition on drama, and Chapter 6 of this thesis explores how his Greek-based rules were,

[47] *CPW* 1.437.
[48] Cf. *Ars Poetica* 139: *parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus* ('Mountains will labour, to birth will come a laughter-raising mouse').
[49] Reinhardt (2013) 500; see also Laird (2007) 142.

anachronistically, reflected in Byron's historical tragedies of 1820–21. At the same time, progress in publishing *Hints from Horace* was faltering. In 1811 Byron had, not unjustly, referred to his *Hints* in terms of 'my Schoolboy erudition' but in 1821 he wrote to Murray that 'I look upon it and my Pulci as by far the best things of my doing…but I know they will *not* be popular'. Murray's reply that 'Gifford does not agree in your estimation of the *Hints from Horace'* seems to have jolted Byron's confidence, given his respect for Gifford's literary judgments, and the work's chequered history ended with a second abandonment and full publication only in 1831 after Byron's death.[50]

'more to laugh than scold'

The years of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the Oriental tales saw a hiatus in major satires and a change of tone. Thomas Moore became a key figure among Byron's literary interlocutors and Jeffery Vail suggests that Moore's success in 1812–13 with light-hearted socio-political satire probably persuaded Byron to move on from his formal neo-classical imitations.[51] An interesting example of Byron's new mode is his slighter, pseudonymously-published satire, *'Waltz: An Apostrophic Hymn* by Horace Hornem, Esq.' (1813), which took as its principal targets the waltz and the Hanoverian monarchy among other alien imports, including the shipping to England of weighty tomes by the continental classicists, Brunck and Heyne, whose respective two-volume edition of Sophocles and eight-volume edition of Virgil were listed in Byron's 1816 library sale catalogue.[52]

[50] *BLJ* 8.88, 2.90; Nicholson (2007) 394.
[51] Vail (2001) 11; later, Shelley's satires of 1819–20 were also influential.
[52] 'Brunck's heaviest tome for ballast, and, to back it,/ Of Heyne, such as should not sink the packet', *Waltz,* 77-78.

One piece of fun depended on his audience's knowledge of Terence, a classical playwright who would have been well-known to Byron and to his contemporaries generally from the widespread use of his plays in pedagogic practice as 'a model of the purest and most graceful Latinity', in the estimation of Hugh Blair.[53] Indeed, at Harrow, one junior form focused on Terence, though Byron bypassed this (see Chapter 1). As Byron indicates in *Don Juan,* Terence was quoted in textbooks like *The Eton Latin Grammar*:

> A slight repast makes people love much more,
> Bacchus and Ceres being, as we know,
> Even from our grammar upwards, friends of yore
> With vivifying Venus. (*Don Juan* 16.86)

The reference, here and also at *Don Juan* 2.1350-52, is to the proverb acclaimed as true by a somewhat drunken Chremes in Terence's *Eunuchus, sine Cerere et Libero friget Venus,* literally 'without food and wine, Love is cold' but pleasingly captured by Peter Brown in the rather more Byronic 'no arousal without carousal'.[54] Like Horace before him, Byron quotes from Terence, mainly from the *Andria* and *Eunuchus*, in letters to his immediate circle of friends and in his published poetry, and he would have been familiar with Blair's verdict that 'there are some forms of verse so loose and familiar, as to be hardly distinguishable from prose; such as the verses of Terence's Comedies', a description which might be applied to *Don Juan.*[55]

In *Waltz,* the spoof prefatory address to the publisher is written in the persona of the naively Pooterish Horace Hornem, 'a country gentleman of a midland county', whose wife takes to the new-fangled German import, the waltz:

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[53] Lecture 47, Blair (1812) 3.341.
[54] Ter. *Eun.* 732; also *DJ* 2.1350-52: 'and some good lessons/ Are also learnt from Ceres and from Bacchus,/ Without whom Venus will not long attack us'. Brown (2006) 185.
[55] For Horace, see Gowers (2012) 370; Gowers sees Terence's 'artfully compressed dialogue', 'somewhere between poetry and prose, and his rejection of named abuse' as the closest comic model for Horace. For Byron's usage of Terence, see for example *DJ* 13.12-13 ('*Davus sum!'*) and Ter. *An.* 194. Lecture 38, Blair (1812) 3.80.

> But judge of my surprise, on arriving, to see poor dear Mrs. Hornem with her arms half round the loins of a huge hussar-looking gentleman I never set eyes on before, and his, to say truth, rather more than half round her waist…with Mrs. H.'s hand on his shoulder, '*quam familiariter'* (as Terence said when I was at school), they walked about a minute, and then at it again, like two cock-chafers spitted on the same bodkin.[56]

Significantly, Terence's words in the *Andria*—learnt at school—are those of a father describing the very moment at which the behaviour of his son with the apparently disreputable 'woman of Andros' betrayed their *bene dissimulatum amorem et celatum* ('well-dissembled and hidden passion', 132): in a moment of danger, the son grasped her round the waist, and she threw herself back upon him—*quam familiariter* ('how familiarly').[57] The allusion, no less than the risqué 'cock-chafers', confirms our suspicions of 'poor dear' 'Mrs. H.', though its pointedness apparently goes unrecognized by the aptly named potential cuckold, Hornem.[58]

Hornem's note to his *quam familiariter* tag furnishes a further joke for those conversant with Virgil and Ovid:

> My Latin is all forgotten, if a man can be said to have forgot what he never remembered—but I bought my title-page motto of [sic] a Catholic priest for a three shilling Bank token, after much haggling for the *even* sixpence. I grudged the money to a Papist, being all for the memory of Perceval and "No Popery," and quite regret the downfall of the Pope, because we can't burn him any more.[59]

The Latin 'title-page motto' purchased by Hornem proves to be Virgil's well-known comparison of Dido and her entourage to the goddess Diana and her train on his first sight of the Carthagininan Queen: *qualis in Eurotae ripis, aut per juga Cynthi/*

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[56] *CPW* 3.23.
[57] *mediam mulierem complectitur./…tum illa, ut consuetum facile amorem cerneres,/ reiecit se in eum flens quam familiariter!* Ter. *An.* 133, 135-36. I am indebted to the late Peter Brown, formerly Fellow and Tutor in Classics at Trinity College, Oxford, for drawing the significance of Hornem's quotation to my attention.
[58] See Weiser (2016) 520 for the prevalence of horns to denote cuckolds in early modern English literature, including Samuel Johnson's remark that 'there is no image which [Shakespeare] appears so fond of as that of a cuckold's horns'.
[59] *CPW* 3.396-97.

Exercet DIANA choros ('Even as on Eurotas' banks or along the heights of Cynthus Diana guides her dancing bands').[60] However, in *Waltz* it is attributed not to Virgil but to Ovid, an error surely too blatant for Byron but rather intended to signal that the Catholic priest is exacting revenge for the anti-papist's resentful haggling over pence by pointing up Hornem's pretentious ignorance. Yet nonetheless the epigraph, with its explicit dancing bands and implicit conjuration in Dido of a woman destined to succumb to passion for a stranger, is a faultless choice for a satire ostensibly at least about a dance which licenses the 'lewd grasp, and lawless contact' of strangers (237): '*Who*, tempted thus, can answer for the rest?' (229). Byron captures the immoral impact of the 'seductive', 'voluptuous' waltz as, under the guidance not of Diana but the Hanoverian Prince Regent, a dance requiring partners to stand 'front to front' sweeps all before it in the London of 1812, a moment when 'Morals and Minuets, Virtue and her stays,/ And tell-tale Powder—all have had their days'.[61] Even Terpsichore has fallen from grace: the poem opens with 'the least a Vestal of the Virgin Nine', 'too long misdeemed a maid', owning her 'not too legally begotten Waltz'.[62]

Just as *Waltz's* epigraph imports epic figures from the *Aeneid* into a satire on the model of later Roman satirists, Byron offers a less demanding but scathingly effective example of this same allusive technique in *The Blues: A Literary Eclogue* (1821), when the poet Inkel invokes Homer for a cutting comic comparison between the great heroes of ancient epic and the likes of the leech-gatherer in the prolix Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence*:[63]

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[60] Verg. *Aen.* 1.498-99.
[61] *Waltz,* 147, 258; 200; 182-83.
[62] *Waltz,* 2, 6, 14.
[63] For Virgilian intertexts in Juvenal, see the references to Hercules and Cacus from *Aen.* 8 in Juv. 5.125; and (Braund (1996) 149) the parody of Virgil's description of Abas' shield, *magni gestamen*

> How does your friend Wordswords, that Windermere treasure?
> Does he stick to his Lakes, like the leeches he sings,
> And their gatherers, as Homer sung warriors and kings?
> (*The Blues,* Ecl. 2.47-49)

This has to be read in the context of a broader public debate about Bowles' contentions on 'the *subject* and the *execution* of poetry', which, shortly before writing *The Blues,* Byron had contested in his *'Letter to John Murray Esqre',* his lengthy 1821 prose intervention in the heated Pope-Bowles controversy (see Introduction).[64] Behind the surface humour of the 'Wordswords' lines, the deflationary bathos conveys Byron's concern about the tendency of Wordsworth and the Lake School to 'treat of low life in all it's [sic] branches', and about Wordsworth's ongoing poetical project, in his never fully realised *The Recluse,* to commandeer epic scale and features for a solipsistic exploration of his personal growth in the narrow confines of the Lake District.[65] Wordsworth's preface to *The Excursion,* the second part of his *Künstlerroman* charting his development as an artist, confronted Virgil's societally-engaged *arma virumque cano* ('Of arms and the man I sing') with the egocentric 'Of the individual Mind that keeps her own/ Inviolate retirement…I sing'—an introspective 'Romantic' approach Byron rejected in the panorama of places, people and politics he tackled in his own epic, *Don Juan.*[66] Byron's address to 'the Lakers' in his dedication to *Don Juan* urged on them a more expansive frame of reference in wishing they would 'change [their] lakes for ocean' (st. 5), a view shared by Francis Jeffrey, the traditionally-minded editor of *The Edinburgh Review* (and mistaken target of Byron's ire in *English Bards)* who had coined the term 'the Lakers'.

Abantis (Aen. 3.286) at Juv. 2.99 for Otho's mirror, *pathici gestamen Othontis*, in a passage Byron demanded should be printed in his *Sardanapalus* (see Chapter 6).
[64] Bowles (1806) Vol. 10, 364; *CMP* 120-60.
[65] *CMP* 159.
[66] Verg. *Aen.* 1.1; Preface to Wordsworth's 1814 *The Excursion*, 19-20, 23.

The Blues also makes Wordsworth the target of a literary squib with its roots in antiquity, one Byron clearly relished since he returns to it repeatedly. At *Ecl*. 2.61-63 Wordsworth's works are found lining a hat box and wrapping pastry, just as *English Bards* 309-10 had seen William Hayley's verses immediately remaindered to wrap tarts.[67] In his poem 95, Catullus similarly satirises the use for wrapping paper of works of the 'bloated' annalist Volusius, after they fail to achieve popularity beyond their native locality:

> at Volusi annales Paduam morientur ad ipsam
> et laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas.
>
> ('But the Annals of Volusius will die right at the Po
> and will often provide loose wrapping for mackerel', Catull. 95.7–8).[68]

Horace too writes of the street selling frankincense, perfumes, pepper and all sorts wrapped in useless pages of poetry (Hor. *Epist.* 2.1 269–70) while Martial jokes about his Egyptian papyrus providing a toga for tuna, and a cloak for olives (Mart. 13.1.1-3). Byron would have known of all three versions, and in his *Letter to John Murray Esq.* he slightly transposes Pope's translation of Horace's lines:

> It were better that all which these men—and that I as one of their set—
> have ever written, should
> 'Line trunks—clothe spice—or fluttering in a row
> Befringe the rails of Bedlam——or Soho'.[69]

Byron deploys the device most caustically in his 1821 epigram implying that he knows Wordsworth's poetry *only* from pastry wrappings:

> Of Turdsworth the great Metaquizzical poet
> A man of great merit amongst those who know it
> Of whose works, as I told Moore last autumn at Mestri [sic]
> I owe all I know to my passion for *Pastry*.[70]

[67] Ben Jonson used the same idea in *Inviting a Friend to Supper,* line 26.
[68] Text and translation of Catull. 95 (and Catull. 36 below) from Godwin (1999, repr. 2007).
[69] *CMP* 149. Pope's line begins 'Clothe spice, line trunks'.
[70] *CPW* 6.2.

This was a particularly cutting blow because Wordsworth's sales figures were low during Byron's lifetime (the 500 sets of Wordsworth's 1815 collected *Poems* took five years to sell), while Byron was one of the best-selling poets in English literature: his 1814 poem, *The Corsair*, set a sales record, selling an extraordinary 10,000 copies on its first day of publication and 20,000 in its first two weeks.[71] The irresistible rhyme with Wordsworth may well be the primary impulse behind the excremental appellation of Turdsworth from a poet who in general avoids explicit obscenity, but for the classicist reader there is a subliminal chain of reference from Wordsworth's poetry wrapping pastry to Volusius' *Annals* wrapping fish, and on to Catullus 36's *Annales Volusi, cacata carta,* 'Volusius' *Annals*, paper full of crap'. Stead has highlighted how 'Catullus' poetry came to the fore of the English classical canon' during the Romantic era and Byron's close acquaintance with Catullus' works is evidenced in his juvenile translations of three poems by the Latin poet (see Chapter 2), the undoubted Catullan borrowings in his Latin elegy, *Edleston* (see Chapter 3), and references to Catullus in his letters and verse, not least *Don Juan*'s tongue in cheek dictum that 'Catullus scarcely has a decent poem' (*DJ* 1.42).[72]

Ariadne or Penelope?

As Connors has stated in colloquial terms, 'one of the things Lucilius, Horace, Persius, and Juvenal have in common is their pleasure in a nice bit of epic furniture about the place', a predilection assisted by the dactylic hexameter metre common to both epic and satire.[73] When Byron returned to a major satire in *Beppo*, the first and most gentle of his late, great works, he subtly exploited a strand of epic parody, albeit

[71] Purkis (2000) 194; Erickson (2009) 218.
[72] Stead (2016) 5.
[73] Connors (2005) 123.

in a more light-hearted vein than Horace's contemptuous dissection of contemporary legacy-hunting in *Sat.* 2.5 via a dialogue between Ulysses and Tiresias based on *Od.* 11.90-149, and Juvenal 4's parody of the epic council heralded by an invocation to the muses (Juv. 4.34-154). Published anonymously in 1818, *Beppo* was deemed by *The Edinburgh Review* 'extremely clever and amusing', though 'absolutely a thing of nothing', 'a mere piece of lively and loquacious prattling…upon all kinds of frivolous subjects'.[74]

Blazing the way for *Don Juan, Beppo*'s good-humoured digressions afforded Byron scope to poke playful fun at some of his favourite targets: morals and mores in chilly England and warm Italy; poetical adversaries—'One hates an Author that's all Author; fellows/ In foolscap uniforms turned up with Ink' (st.75), in particular his fellow Harrovian, Sotheby, as the 'bustling Botherby', 'the Sublime/ Of Mediocrity' (sts.72–73); and women—women's charms and women's vanity, budding Misses and knowing wives, sequestered Muslim women and educated bluestockings. Byron's extradiagetic comments addressed his contemporary world, and the narrative itself was based on supposed events in Venice which, en route to his own mistress, the complaisant husband of Byron's mistress of a year, Marianna Segati, erroneously recounted as true.[75] Drafted initially at high speed, *Beppo* was a poem of the moment, capturing the atmosphere and manners of the lively Venetian world experienced by Byron, yet even so it incorporated some unobtrusive classical satire very different in kind from the overt correspondences of *English Bards* and *Hints from Horace*.

[74] *The Edinburgh Review*, Feb 1818, No. LVIII, pp. 304, 302.
[75] *CPW* 4.484.

Despite the poem's title, the protagonist is Laura whose merchant husband Beppo vanishes for years without a word, only to reappear in his adopted guise as a Turk when she has settled into a comfortable life with a cultured and wealthy Count as her *cavalier servente.* At the outset of the tale, as Beppo sets sail after a pathetic parting, Byron misdirects the reader by calling Laura 'this Adriatic Ariadne' (st. 28), the classical symbol of a woman deliberately abandoned by her (quasi-) husband but rescued from desperation by the arrival of a new lover (in the case of Ariadne, Theseus and Bacchus respectively).[76] It is therefore foreseeable that after several years Laura takes a punningly-termed 'Vice-husband, chiefly to protect her'. Meanwhile, playing off the classically-educated reader's consciousness of Ariadne's frantic agitation at her desertion in versions by Catullus and Ovid, the text ironises the limited degree of Laura's distress at her husband's absence: 'Laura waited long, and wept a little', merely 'thought of' wearing unflattering widow's weeds, and 'almost' lost her appetite (st. 29). It is not until stanza 89 near the end of the poem, when the seeming 'Turk' reveals himself as Beppo and reclaims his wife, that the true comparator for Laura is revealed not as Ariadne, but as Penelope, the faithful wife who resists all suitors until her husband's disguised return.

In *Beppo*, Byron rewrites Homeric epic with a characteristic insistence on the pragmatism and practicalities of real life. By associating Laura with Ariadne, the poem suggests that it is not unreasonable for a deserted woman, left without support and companionship, after some years to take a partner, especially a gentleman like the Count, 'a lover of the good old school/ who still become more constant as they cool' (st. 34). In the final stanzas, the long-absent husband and the urbane lover each

[76] See accounts of the Ariadne story in, for example, Catull. 64 and Ov. *Her.* 10, *Ars am.* 1.525-64, *Met.* 8.172-82 and, less happily in relation to Bacchus, *Fast.* 3.459-516. Dido was similarly abandoned by a quasi-husband but no Bacchus came to her rescue.

accept this reality and become friends; in a delightful instance of life as lived, when Beppo takes off his Turkish dress, he has to borrow the Count's underclothes for a day. Odysseus, however, a creature of the epic world, kills all Penelope's suitors and, after twenty years away, simply sheds his rags and dons a fine tunic and cloak at hand (*Od.* 22, 23.155).

Laura is similarly presented not in epic mode but as one of Byron's ironically observed contemporary women. At the moment of *anagnorisis*, both Penelope and Laura are silent. Penelope, having been assured that her husband has returned, sits down opposite Odysseus while he waits to see whether she will speak; but she sits in silence 'for a long time' (*Od.* 23.93), in fact for eighty lines, though her son Telemachus upbraids her for having a heart harder than stone for refusing to question her husband. In *Beppo* too, when the Turk proclaims 'That lady is my wife!', Laura 'said—what could she say? Why, not a word!' (sts. 89-90). But her recovery is rapid, and this modern wife bursts out in a torrent of questions and comments that even Telemachus might have found excessive (sts. 91–93). Byron's sardonic presentation of a woman obsessed as much by appearance and trivialities as by her husband's absence for many years has nonetheless a ring of truth.

Beppo's reply is not given—indeed this unheroic figure's only direct speech in the whole poem is his sensational claim to Laura, eleven words in all. The tale of his *nostos* is briefly outlined not by him but by the narrator in four undramatic stanzas, in contrast to Odysseus who, after eventual acceptance by Penelope, luxuriates in telling her of his extraordinary encounters with the Cicones, Lotus Eaters, Cyclops, Laestrygonians, Aeolus, Circe, inhabitants of Hades, Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the cattle of the Sun, Calypso and the Phaeacians (*Od.* 23.310-43). The telling of tales is the essence of epic, repeatedly returned to in the *Odyssey* and

rarely challenged, however implausible. Byron questions such fictional behaviour through his narrator's laconic reaction to Beppo's much more modest adventures: 'I don't believe the half of them' (st. 98).

Byron's *Beppo* is then not merely a mock-epic satirising its age and society. It is an understated satire on epic itself, in framing the marital narrative strand of the *Odyssey* within a contemporary tale current in Venice, and with wit and humour requiring the reader to consider some of the realities of the situation depicted and the likely responses in everyday life. In keeping with the fictional milieu, Byron fashioned a new, unelevated, anti-epic idiom, as *The Edinburgh Review* recognised immediately in hailing it as 'an example, unique we think in our language, of about hundred stanzas of good verse, entirely composed of common words, in common places' (albeit scarcely in the Wordsworthian mould).[77] After the artificiality of *English Bards* and *Hints from Horace*, Byron had found a voice that could realise the vernacular but still harmonise with the impassioned, the grand, the classical, as he demonstrated in *The Vision of Judgment*, his finest satire bar his sprawling masterpiece, *Don Juan*.[78]

Heavenly visions

The work was a response to the 1821 publication of *A Vision of Judgement,* an obsequious panegyric which Robert Southey, as Poet Laureate, had written about the entry to heaven of the recently deceased George III and had dedicated in unctuous terms to George IV. The contents of Southey's *Vision*, poetical and political, could scarcely have been better calculated to inflame Byron's anti-Laker, anti-monarchical,

[77] *The Edinburgh Review*, Feb. 1818, No. LVIII, p. 303.
[78] The spelling on its publication in the first edition of *The Liberal* (belatedly on 15 October 1822 and, to Byron's fury, without its Preface) was *Judgment* without an 'e', as also in *CPW*; Southey's title was, however, published as *Judgement* with an 'e'.

Whig sensibilities. More personally provocative was Southey's abrupt intrusion into his prolegomenon of a hyperbolic denunciation of a 'Satanic school' of unnamed writers, whom Byron recognised as himself, Shelley, Moore and others.[79] Under the pseudonym of Quevedo Redivivus, Byron replied with a deadly satirical attack on 'that poor insane creature, the Laureate', on his High Tory sentiments and on the monarchy in his alternative account of George III's heavenly trial: 'In *[The Vision of Judgment]* it is my intent to put the said George's Apotheosis in a Whig point of view, not forgetting the Poet Laureate for his preface and his other demerits'.[80] Goethe, appropriately of the poem's setting at 'the celestial gate', deemed it 'Himmlisch! Unübertrefflich!' ('Heavenly! Unsurpassable!').[81]

A testament to the famously 'glowing alembic of his mind', Byron's 848-line skit is a seamless meld of brilliant originality and complex intertextuality. For the latter, the initial reference point is clearly Southey's *A Vision,* where George III ascends to heaven after death, and stands under judgment before 'the Ineffable Presence', the Orders of Heaven and the accusers of Hell in the form of 'the Fiend', and two unspecified 'slanderers' identifiable as John Wilkes and the unidentified satirist, 'Junius'. The King's accusers are struck dumb, and he is admitted to heaven amid hallelujahs from the angels and welcomes from a series of sovereigns, worthies and predeceased members of his family. In Byron's merciless parody, a similar judgment process is undertaken but just as the King's damnation seems inevitable, Southey himself arrives and, in the panic created by his beginning to recite his excruciating poem, George III slips into heaven.

[79] *CMP* 100.
[80] *BLJ* 8.229.
[81] Cited in Cochran (2015a) 59.

Byron's information on other literary influences is rather mischievous. His pseudonym, Quevedo Redivivus ('Quevedo restored to life'), and his postscript to *The Vision*'s preface point the reader to the satirical *Los Sueños* (*Visions*) of the 17th-century Spanish author, Francisco de Quevedo, but in fact Quevedo's vision, unlike Byron's, is of a more general day of judgment, with large numbers of the dead reviewed by category such as gender, characteristic, profession, vice, etc.. Byron's postscript, in defending the freedom with which his saints and angels speak, also cites the Lucianic *A Journey from This World to the Next* of Henry Fielding, for Byron 'the *prose* Homer of human nature'.[82] However, beyond the satirical tone and the common *topos* of judgment in the afterlife, there are few precise resemblances between Byron's poem, sharply focused on George III and Southey, and the more generalised pageants of characters in these works, other perhaps than one incident in the Fielding when Minos, the judge of the dead, pushes a bard into Elysium to silence a recitation. There may be here the germ of Byron's final scene when Southey's attempts to recite his own *Vision* at the gate of heaven precipitate protests among angels, devils, saints and ghosts (st. 102).

Critics, for instance Rolf Lessenich as recently as 2017, have seen Byron's *Vision* as similarly in the tradition of the Greek 'Dialogues of the Dead' by the Second Sophistic writer, Lucian, whom Byron would certainly have studied at Harrow and whose works figure in all Byron's library sale catalogues (at his posthumous sale not in Greek but in an 1819 three-volume Italian translation by Manzi).[83] Peter Cochran has alternatively suggested Lucian's *Kataplous* ('The Downward Journey') as a precedent.[84] These suggestions are, on the face of it,

[82] *BLJ* 8.11. For Lucian's influence on Fielding's *Journey*, see Robinson (1979) 211ff., Goldgar and Amory (1993) xxviii; Janes (2011) 497.
[83] Lessenich (2017) 122. For the Harrow curriculum, Tyerman (2000) 119.
[84] Cochran (2010) 194-95.

understandable, especially given a specific reference to Lucian in Byron's defensive response to Douglas Kinnaird's misgivings about *The Vision*'s admixture of 'serious and ludicrous': 'I carefully avoid *all profane* allusion to *the Deity*—and as for Saints—Angels—and demons—they have been a sprightly people since the Wife of Bath['s] times—and Lucian's even till now'.[85] However, this is simply a justification of his lively handling of heaven's inhabitants, and his verse narrative differs considerably from Lucian's episodic *Dialogues of the Dead* which present, among others, Philip II of Macedon in a disparaging exchange with his son, Alexander the Great, and Hermes' attempt to settle accounts with the ferryman, Charon. There is a somewhat closer, but still only very broad, link with Lucian's *Concilium Deorum* assessing the worthiness of existing gods; *Icaromenippus* in which Menippus flies to heaven and is, temporarily, admitted before the council of the gods; and *Kataplous* in which the tyrant Megapenthes, among others, is judged by Rhadamanthus and consigned to fetters alongside Tantalus.

On the same grounds of only broad and exceptional correlations, I share McGann's doubts about Emrys Jones's suggestion of Byron's *Vision* being directly 'indebted in important ways' to Erasmus' scathingly anti-clerical *Dialogus Julius Exclusus e coelis* of 1514, despite R.T.S.'s assertion in *The Literary Gazette* shortly after *The Vision's* publication that its 'leading thought is taken (unacknowledged, as usual)' from Erasmus' 'very curious dialogue'.[86] Anonymously published in 1514, Erasmus' neo-Latin lampoon presents an extended dialogue between St Peter and the recently-deceased Pope about the proper practices of the Church in which Julius II (unlike the all but mute George III) is self-convicted in St Peter's eyes as 'a plague

[85] *BLJ* 9.62.
[86] *CPW* 6.672; Jones (1981) 5; *The Literary Gazette* No.302 of 2 Nov. 1822, pp. 694-95.

to humanity', amongst other things for complaining that 'barbarians' like the French worship Christ too scrupulously, and take too seriously certain archaic and long outdated expressions like simony, blasphemy, sodomy, sorcery and clairvoyance.[87] There are similarities with Byron's *Vision* in the location of the debate about Julius' suitability for entry to heaven at its gates and in St Peter's failure to recognise the Pope. However, general features such as the Menippean flavour of a satire, fantasy afterlife settings in heaven or the underworld, a judgment trial and an implicit motif of death as the leveller of kings, popes and commoners are not unique to Lucian or Erasmus, nor indeed to Quevedo or Fielding.

This stands in considerable contrast to the multiple, detailed correspondences of Byron's *Vision* with sections of an earlier Latin work in the same tradition of Menippean satire, Seneca the Younger's scatological and eschatological *Apocolocyntosis* ('Gourdification'), otherwise known as *Ludus de Morte Claudii* (*Caesaris*)—'Funning with the death of Claudius' in Ellen O'Gorman's translation.[88] Byron wrote *The Vision* in 1821, the same year as his tragedies, *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*, in relation to which he cited Thomas Rymer's translation of René Rapin's *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie* (see Chapter 6). His appropriation of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* may therefore have been prompted by Rapin's discussion of satire, where he commends the 'Apotheosis of the Emperor Claudius' as 'one of the most delicate pieces of Antiquity'.[89]

This incomplete, highly original and 'uniquely surviving specimen of Menippean satire from the Roman world' recounts, through the eyes of a not wholly reliable narrator, the Emperor Claudius' demise and deification on earth, followed

[87] Erasmus, trans. Clarke (2013) 139, 149.
[88] O'Gorman (2006) 95. Eden suggests that the title equates Claudius with a plucked gourd, 'a desiccated shell full of emptiness' (Eden (1999) 4).
[89] Rymer (1694) 145.

by his irruption into the *concilium deorum* before whom witnesses speak for and against his admission until he is expelled on the damning indictment of Augustus Caesar.[90] Claudius observes his own funeral on his journey down to Hades, where he stands trial and is sentenced to endless torment, as a gambler, by playing dice with a dice-box with a hole in it, but in the final lines his punishment is commuted to service as a law-clerk. Emrys Jones in 1981 argued for the debt Byron's *Vision* owed to the *Apocolocyntosis* in the 'very unusual central situation' of a recently dead head of state, respectively George III and the emperor Claudius, facing a debate about his right to enter heaven. He also proposed that 'the much-admired urbanely tolerant ending of the *Vision*...might be thought to match the loaded off-handedness of Seneca's ending, with its rapid demotion of Claudius to the negligible status of a freedman's clerk', with both works leaving a feeling of having 'indulged animus' *and* 'exercised restraint'.[91] Examination of the two texts provides overwhelming evidence for the *Apocolocyntosis* as a very substantial intertext for Byron's *Vision*.

Stylistically, the *Apocolocyntosis* exhibits key Menippean characteristics identified by Relihan in his survey of *Ancient Menippean Satire*: juxtapositions of prose and verse, of widely different styles, and of seemingly serious material with a comic fantastical setting, together with a toleration of digression and burlesques of language and literature.[92] Anna Motto and John Clark highlight a prevailing spirit of playfulness, 'an intellectual gaiety' in the *Apocolocyntosis*, balanced by an occasional counter-motif in the reminders that 'despite all the cartoon vagility and gaiety, Claudius had been a very real, very dangerous and very pernicious

[90] Eden (1999) 13.
[91] Jones (1981) 5-6.
[92] Relihan (1993) 34-35; Paschalis (2009) 200.

potentate'.[93] The same could be said of *The Vision* and of its kings, the Georges III and IV. One striking element in the success of Byron's *Vision* is his tight control—of verse, of focus, of imaginative creativity and of tone which navigates flawlessly between the comic and the serious with an overall lightness of touch. And that witty levity is remarkable, given the challenging ambition of his object of ridiculing Southey and his poetry, and of painting George III in what Byron saw as his true colours, as part of a general indictment of all illiberal governments.[94]

Both the *Apocolocyntosis* and *The Vision* indulged in blatant *lèse-majesté* in accusing Claudius and George III of oppressing freedom, but Byron faced a markedly greater risk. The narrator of the *Apocolocyntosis* declares at the outset that he has been set free by 'the death of a man who gave truth to the proverb that one should be born either a king or a fool' (*Apocol.* 1.1). Claudius himself observes that at his funeral *omnes laeti, hilares: populus Romanus ambulabat tamquam liber* ('everyone was happy and merry. The people of Rome were walking about like free men', 12.2) as they looked to a new order under Nero, whose reign the Parcae hail as guaranteeing an era of prosperity (4.2-4). Reading the preposterous, and at points double-edged, praise of Claudius in Seneca's spoof funeral dirge (*non alius potuit/ citius discere causas/, una tantum parte audita,/ saepe et neutra,* 'no other could more quickly master his briefs, after hearing only one side of the case, and often neither', 12.3.19-22) calls to mind Tacitus' account of the risible effect of the actual *laudatio funebris* for Claudius delivered by Nero in 54 CE:

> postquam ad providentiam sapientiamque flexit, nemo risui temperare, quamquam oratio a Seneca composita multum cultus praeferret.

[93] Motto and Clark (1983) 36-38. Their consideration of the *Apocolocyntosis* identifies its themes appearing in Erasmus' *Julius Exclusus* (1514), Quevedo's *Sueños* (1627), Byron's *The Vision of Judgment* (1822) and Philip Roth's [tedious] *Our Gang* (1971).
[94] Fuess (1973) 192.

> ('when the orator addressed himself to his foresight and sagacity, no one could repress a smile; though the speech, as the composition of Seneca, exhibited [much elegance]', Tac. *Ann.* 13.3).

Seneca was tutor to the new emperor, the 17-year old Nero who Cassius Dio suggests had been complicit in Claudius' murder.[95] Whatever the truth of Dio's claim, there is general acceptance that the intended, and presumably appreciative, audience for Seneca's satire was the circle of the young emperor and, as Christopher Whitton points out, every individual named by Seneca other than the lauded Nero was conveniently dead by the time the *Apocolocyntosis* was written.[96]

Byron's poem, though, flirted with danger in attacking not only the dead George III but the nine-year Regency and prospective reign of his son, the very much alive George IV. In *The Vision,* Sathan [sic] charges that George III 'ever warr'd with freedom and the free' (st. 45). But despite the fact that his death took place at precisely that moment when elsewhere libertarian movements seemed to be gaining traction ('in the first year of freedom's second dawn/ Died George the Third', st. 8), there can be no rejoicing because 'he leaves heirs on many thrones/ To all his vices, without what begot/ Compassion for him—his tame virtues' (st. 47). Real life retribution for *The Vision* duly followed. With John Murray and other publishers reluctant to take the risk of publishing, the poem eventually appeared in the first issue of *The Liberal*, the periodical which Byron founded with Shelley and Leigh Hunt and which mendaciously announced in its preface that 'the object of our work is not political'.[97] Its London-based publisher, John Hunt (Leigh's brother), was found guilty of defamation of both kings and of bringing the Monarchy into disgrace, though Byron's offer to stand trial himself proved unfeasible.[98]

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[95] Cassius Dio 60.35.2.
[96] Whitton (2013) 152; see also Eden (1984, repr.1999) 13.
[97] *The Liberal* (1822) 1.vii.
[98] *CPW* 6.671.

Seneca and Byron strip their rulers on death of all residual imperial dignity. Claudius apparently dies in farting and shitting himself, and on arrival *in caelo* is unrecognised as the Emperor of the Roman world, indeed is barely identifiable as human.[99] As Paschalis details, 'at each turn Seneca mocks the late emperor's physical and moral failings: head-shaking, deformity, limping gait, stuttering and inarticulateness, gluttony, amnesia, heedlessness, and cruelty; and his various habits and obsessions, especially with the administration of justice and dice-playing'.[100] As for Byron's King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, 'He died!—his death made no great stir on earth' while in heaven, when a Cherub announces 'George III is dead', a blasé St. Peter replies 'And who *is* George the Third?…*What George? what Third*?' (sts. 9, 18). Like Seneca, Byron insists on recording the mental and physical infirmities airbrushed out in Southey's version of George III. '[E]ach sense withdrawn/ Left him nor mental nor external sun', so that in Sathan's unflinching summation he has become 'this old, blind, mad, helpless, weak, poor worm' (sts. 8, 42). Even this, in its acknowledgment of the wretchedness of George's incapacity, is a softened echo of Shelley's pitiless condemnation two years before: 'An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King'.[101]

For all their humour, *Apocolocyntosis* and *The Vision of Judgment* are deeply felt political works. For Seneca, the presumption of the Roman Senate in deifying Claudius and, for Byron, 'the incubus of [Southey]'s impudent anticipation of the Apotheosis of George the Third' are interrogated in the grave charges brought against Claudius in Augustus' speech and in the underworld, and against George III in *The Vision*'s proem and the prosecution speeches of Sathan and his witnesses, John

[99] *Apocol.* 4.3, 5.2-4.
[100] Paschalis (2009) 200.
[101] Shelley, 'England in 1819'.

Wilkes and 'Junius'.[102] There are moments of vehemently expressed vituperation, as in Byron's resonant rhetoric on the interment:

> And when the gorgeous coffin was laid low
> It seemed the mockery of hell to fold
> The rottenness of eighty years in gold. (st. 10)

Similarly, Augustus in the *Apocolocyntosis* bluntly tells the honourable members of the *curia*, *Hic, p.c., qui vobis non posse videtur muscam excitare, tam facile homines occidebat, quam canis adsidit* ('This man [Claudius], honourable members, who gives you the impression of not being able to startle a fly, used to kill people as effectively as a dog squats on its haunches', *Apocol.* 10.3).

At the same time, there is a wider condemnation of the institutional systems and society in which these leaders operated. Suetonius recorded that 'in the greater part of his administration, [Claudius] was directed not so much by his own judgment, as by the influence of his wives and freedmen', a situation to which Seneca scathingly alludes when nobody in heaven tries to understand what Claudius is saying as he mutters and gestures for the goddess Fever to be decapitated: *putares omnes illius esse libertos: adeo illum nemo curabat* ('you would think they were all his own freedmen: so little attention did anyone pay to him').[103] Byron in turn concedes that George was a 'puppet' (st. 22), but as one who 'although no tyrant,… shielded tyrants' (st. 8), he cannot escape culpability: ''Tis true, he was a tool from first to last;…but as a tool,/ So let him be consumed!' (st. 44). The vocabulary here is interesting. Alexander Thomson's 1796 translation of Suetonius' life of Claudius translates *his…uxoribus addictus, non principem se, sed ministrum egit* (29.1) as 'being entirely governed by these freedmen, [Narcissus and Pallas], and…by his

[102] *BLJ* 8.236.
[103] Suet. *Cl.* 25.5; *Apocol.* 6.2.

wives, he was a tool to others, rather than a prince'. It is tempting to think that Byron absorbed Thomson's wording, especially since Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* have been identified as the source of several references in *Don Juan* which Byron was writing in the years around *The Vision of Judgment*.[104]

Both Seneca and Byron reflect their personal experience, the one as a senator and the other as a Lord, in portraying the divine judgment process in terms respectively of the Roman senate and the British House of Lords, the latter a topical setting for Byron, after what had been tantamount to a trial of George IV's wife, Caroline of Brunswick, during the Lords' 1820 consideration of a Pains and Penalties Bill to annul the marriage on the grounds of Caroline's adultery. (Shelley had already seized on this contentious royal and constitutional scandal for his rapidly suppressed satire, *Oedipus Tyrannus; or Swellfoot the Tyrant*).[105] Seneca's Jupiter and Byron's Archangel Michael each issue rebukes for abuse of procedure during the judgment trial, and Carl Woodring proposes plausibly that Byron's appropriates 'the courtesies of lethal Parliamentary debate' for his heavenly parody.[106] The Arch-angel Michael assures his 'good old friend' Sathan that 'I ne'er mistake you for a *personal* foe;/ Our difference is *political*' (st. 62):

> And therefore Michael and the other wore
> A civil aspect: though they did not kiss,
> Yet still between his Darkness and his Brightness
> There passed a mutual glance of great politeness. (st. 35)

Alongside the House of Lords' code of politesse, Byron impishly attributes that august assembly's sense of the social niceties of rank to his angelic hosts and saints. St. Peter, one of the original twelve apostles, disdainfully derides the later convert

[104] Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* have been cited for references in *Don Juan* to the emperors Tiberius (Appendix on the Apophthegms of Bacon, 221), Caligula (6.27), Nero (3.109, 8.134) and Titus (2.205, 3.92, 16.11).
[105] Hall and Macintosh (2005) 229-40.
[106] *Apocol.* 9.1, *VoJ* st. 63. Woodring (1970) 193, quoted at Peterfreund (1979) 278.

St. Paul as 'That fellow Paul—the parvenù'. Yet he himself, by origin a fisherman, is here characterised not as the august first Bishop of Rome, but as 'an impetuous saint', churlish and irascible, who is censured by Michael for lack of civility. Prone to violence, he strikes Louis XVI's guillotined head from his hands and, to silence Southey's recitation of his *Vision,* uses his keys to knock the Lake School poet, 'like Phaeton', down from the skies to 'his' lake, Derwentwater.[107]

There is an echo here of Seneca's *minime vafro* ('not exactly shrewd') Hercules, who threatens to shake Claudius' nonsense out of him unless he states who he is and where from.[108] Claudius' 'nonsense' lies in his cryptically speaking a verse from Homer to explain that he is Caesar, 'Ιλιόθεν με φέρων ἄνεμος Κικόνεσσι πέλασσεν ('the wind, bearing me from Ilium, brought me to the Cicones'), a reference lost on Hercules but offering the narrator the opportunity to add that the next verse was truer: ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼ πόλιν ἔπραθον, ὤλεσα δ' αὐτούς ('there I sacked the city and destroyed the people').[109] Here Seneca parodies Claudius' style and mannerisms, including the emperor's attested proclivity for quoting Greek, and Homer in particular, even in inappropriate environments like the law courts.[110]

Byron for his part allows his almost completely passive George III to speak only once in *The Vision* when Southey's attempts to recite his dire verse finally rouse the King from torpor to protest. At that moment the verse also mimics George III's speech patterns: 'What! What!/ *Pye* come again? No more—no more of that!' (st. 92), the lines simultaneously spotlighting George's verbal tic of repetition and equating Southey with his much derided predecessor, Henry Pye, 'the worst Poet Laureate in English history with the possible exception of Alfred Austin' in the view

[107] References to St. Peter at sts. 20, 104, 51, 19, 104.
[108] *Apocol*. 6.1, 7.1-2.
[109] *Apocol*. 5.4, quoting Hom. *Od.* 9.39, 40.
[110] Suet. *Cl.* 42.

of the historian, Robert Blake.[111] Byron pillories Southey for lack of political principles and poetical skills less with the harsh invective of *English Bards* than with a devastating mockery which undermines the self-regarding pretensions evident in the Laureate's own poem. Alluding back to Byron's declaration that 'it is the business and proof of the poet…sometimes "to make a silken purse out of a sow's ear"', McGann makes the enviably witty observation that 'in his "Vision" Byron made silk verse out of Southey's ear'—a reference to the 'experimental' English hexameter metre which the Poet Laureate laboriously explicates in the preface to his *Vision* and which Byron, in his own free-flowing *ottava rima*, precisely skewers as 'spavin'd dactyls', 'Not one of all whose gouty feet would stir'.[112]

Literary standards are as much a concern as the political in both the *Apocolocyntosis* and *The Vision of Judgment.* Seneca's prosimetric work opens with an exaggerated parody of epic periphrasis in six lines of elaborate verse specifying the date of Claudius' death, which is immediately undercut by a prose rendering: *puto magis intellegi, si dixero: mensis erat October, dies III idus* Octobris ('I shall make myself better understood, if I say the month was October, the day was the thirteenth', *Apocol.* 2.1-2). Seneca's debunking of historiography—'whoever demanded sworn referees from a historian?', *Apocol.* 1.2—also aligns well with Byron's perennial concern about the elusive veracity of the historical record and his, often tongue in cheek, insistence on the truth of his texts as in *The Vision,* deemed 'a true narrative' at st. 34 and a paradoxically 'true dream' in its closing stanza.

In sum, then, this analysis suggests that Byron's *The Vision of Judgment* is another example of Byron gesturing to a Greek antecedent, in this case Lucian, but

[111] Blake (1998) 110 n.3.
[112] *CMP* 146; *CPW* 6.671; *VoJ* sts. 90-91.

in fact working materially from a Latin one, Seneca. Seneca's is not, of course, the only intertext, nor is Byron's own inventiveness to be undervalued. One of the triumphs of *The Vision* is the charm of the angelic horde, with their winged bodies but anthropomorphic characteristics. No mere ornaments, they serve to sharpen rather than soften the satire. Under the two King Georges, vice and woe are presented as having multiplied with such rapidity that the Recording Angel 'had stripped off both his wings in quills', and, like an earthly bureaucrat, demanded an increase in his staff to the sum of six angels and twelve saints, all of whom were kept at full stretch,

> Till at the crowning carnage, Waterloo,
> They threw their pens down in divine disgust—
> The page was so besmear'd with blood and dust. (st. 5)

The image is Byron's, but he shares with Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* the mode, where the comic and the consequential are not merely juxtaposed but fused in an irreverent fantasy with an intensely serious intent.

Conclusion

In 1820 John Murray responded with preposterously exaggerated praise to 'Question and Answer', Byron's disagreeably malevolent satire on the unnamed Samuel Rogers and, in so doing, pointed Byron firmly backwards:

> This is certainly your natural talent and you should improve it into a Classical Standard series of Satires—& be at once Persius—Juvenal—Boileau & our own Pope', [provided] 'you could do this upon a plan not of selecting individuals but general Characters Manners &c.[113]

But this was to misread Byron's temperament—his essential mode of satiric attack was *ad hominem* not universalising, Lucilius and Catullus not Juvenal. And it undervalued the restlessly experimental impulse that led to the distinctively Byronic

[113] Nicholson (2007) 350-51.

masterpieces of his later years. He had developed from his youthful versions of the eighteenth century's contemporising imitations of specific classical texts, particularly the satires of Juvenal and Horace, to more subtle usages of the classical in the underlay of plots, forms and quotations in *Beppo, The Vision of Judgment* and (see Chapter 5) *Don Juan.*

The extent and resonance of that classical presence is sometimes overlooked. Peter Manning identifies allusions in *English Bards* to Shakespeare and to Churchill's popular *The Rosciad* and concludes that in an era when the expansion of the reading public meant that 'Byron could no longer rely on his readers' recognition of classical allusion', he 'had found in the native tradition an equivalent resource through which to achieve a similar resonance and complexity'.[114] The implication here of Byron's substituting 'the native tradition' for the classics is, though, misleading. Certainly Shakespeare's works were extensively embedded in Byron's works and mental landscape; Lady Blessington recorded: 'I have rarely met with a person more conversant with the works of Shakspeare [sic] than was Byron'.[115] But Shakespeare himself provided a model of writing for a socially-mixed audience, the court as well as the groundlings, and Churchill's work is not without classical allusions. In his epigraph to *The Apology: Addressed to the Critical Reviewers*, Churchill punned amusingly on the opening lines of Horace *Odes* 1.26 by substituting *Tristitiam et metus/ Tradam protervis in mare CRITICUM/ Portare ventis* for Horace's original *in mare Creticum,* to yield 'I shall fling gloom and fear to the turbulent winds to carry them into the sea of critics' rather than 'the Cretan sea'.

[114] Manning (1970) 11. For Shakespearean allusions in *EBSR*, see also Bate (1989) 231.
[115] Lovell (1969) 203.

In his final political satire Byron was still incorporating a flurry of classical and neo-classical references, from the very title on: *The Age of Bronze or, Carmen Seculare et Annus Haud Mirabilis.*[116] Byron himself felt that the work was 'somewhat too full of "epithets of war" and classical & historical allusions', as perhaps it is, though he bet Leigh Hunt 'a flask of Falernum that the most *stilted* parts of the political "Age of Bronze"…will be the most agreeable to the enlightened Public'.[117] A particularly deft touch in this poem about the 1822 Congress of Verona and the diplomatic failure there of Britain's representative, the Duke of Wellington, is its Virgilian epigraph, 'Impar *Congressus* Achilli' ('ill-matched in conflict with Achilles', *Aen.* 1.475), not just for the pun on Congress but for the derisive glance at Westmacott's colossal and controversially nude statue of Achilles with Wellington's features which had been erected in Hyde Park a few months before (*Fig. 9).* Byron's epigraph artfully conveys how far Wellington falls short of Achilles, a more effective strike than the poem's blunt: 'there Wellington forgets to fight' (713).



Fig. 9: Westmacott's 'Achilles' statue, Hyde park, London, erected in honour of Wellington and his companions in arms.

[116] *'The Age of Bronze'* from Hesiod originally but here more likely drawn from Hor. *Epod*. 16.63-6 or Ov. *Met.* 1.125-27; *'Carmen Seculare'* after Horace's imperial commission for Augustus' 17 BCE celebrations; and a negatived version of Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders, 1666*.
[117] *BLJ* 10.81 and 10.90.

The over-riding point is that Byron throughout his career drew unconcernedly on his remarkably eclectic reading, both ancient and modern, and his satires are rich in meaningful allusions to both. The classical never ceases to be a key component of his attack on conventional dogmatism, illiberalism and those whose writing he deplored.

Chapter 5: 'My poem's epic'

'Begin Paulo majora' (Don Juan 12.25)

'My poem's epic…after the style of Virgil and of Homer', declared Byron in the first canto of *Don Juan,* his epic-scale work begun in 1818 and left unfinished at his death.[1] Epic was in fashion. For Stuart Curran, the proliferation of epics in England between 1790 and 1825 was a 'truly amazing phenomenon', 'unique in the history of Western literature'.[2] The trend is captured in Byron's jibe that, while the British do not have a comparable *word* for the French '*longueurs*', we 'have the *thing*/ In that complete perfection which ensures/ An epic from Bob Southey every spring' (*DJ* 3.97). Byron himself had come under pressure to tackle epic from his publisher and friends, not least Shelley who repeatedly urged hierarchical ambition on Byron throughout their acquaintance:

> I still feel impressed with the persuasion that you *ought*—and if there is prophecy in hope, that you *will* write a great and connected poem, which shall bear the same relation to this age as 'The Iliad', the 'Divina Commedia', and 'Paradise Lost' did to theirs; not that you will imitate the structure, or borrow from the subjects, of any of these, or in any degree assume them as your models. You know the enthusiasm of my admiration for what you have already done; but these are as 'disjecti membra poetae' for what you may do.[3]

Eventually, as noted in the Introduction, Byron's 1818 poem, *E Nihilo Nihil*, announced his intention to 'sing…in a book that's bigger' (34), and Byron marks his generic ascent in *Don Juan* by echoing Virgil's words: 'I am sick of politics. Begin,/ "*Paulo majora*"' (*DJ* 12.25).[4] But this dissonant declaration undercuts the elevated

[1] *DJ* 1.200.
[2] Curran (1986) 158-59; see also Tucker (2008) 49.
[3] Jones (F.L.) (1964) 2.309; see also 1.507; 2.283-84. The classically attuned Shelley would have been well aware that his Horatian 'limbs of a dismembered poet' (Hor. *Sat.*1.4.60-61) related to Ennius' epic *Annales*, though it is perhaps going too far to read an implicit comparison between Byron and Ennius as spirited and prolific writers but ones not greatly given to the *limae labor* ('toil of the file', Hor. *Ars P.* 291).
[4] *Paulo majora* from Verg. *Ecl.* 4.1.

tone of the *Aeneid,* as the vulgar colloquialism of the Old English 'sick of' collides with Virgil's *Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus* ('Sicilian Muses, let us sing a somewhat loftier strain', Verg. *Ecl.* 4.1).[5] This is paradigmatic of the character of *Don Juan.* Byron's final choice of epigraph was Horace's *difficile est proprie communia dicere* (*Ars P.* 128), for which his 1811 version of *Hints from Horace* 183-84 offers the expansive translation: ''Tis hard to venture where our betters fail/ Or lend fresh interest to a twice told tale'. A quintessential 'fresh interest' in *Don Juan* is its simultaneous embrace and repudiation of the epic tradition.

The mode is established in the poem's first stanza. In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace summarises the content of epic as *res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella* ('the exploits of kings and captains and the sorrows of wars', *Ars P.* 73). The *Iliad,* the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* each open by spotlighting the hero whose deeds will be chronicled: Peleus' fatally wrathful son, Achilles; Odysseus, the man of many devices; and Aeneas, the man who, exiled by fate, comes from Troy to Italy to prepare for the foundation of Rome. By contrast, in the disillusioned post-bellum Europe of 1818, *Don Juan*'s *incipit* is the stark 'I want a hero', where 'want' implies both 'wish for' and 'lack'. Given the dearth of appropriately heroic characters, the narrator selects 'our ancient friend, Don Juan', the choice of the heartless libertine scarcely an obvious fit for epic and, on the face of it, potentially perilous for a man of Byron's reputation.

Coleridge, in a *Biographia Literaria* review of Charles Maturin's *Bertram* which incensed Byron, discusses at length the attractiveness of Don Juan, a creation entirely wicked, but 'from beginning to end, an intelligible character: as much so as

[5] Ovid similarly forewarns of his shift to tragedy with an allusion at *Am.* 3.1.24, *incipe maius opus* ('enter on greater work'), to Virgil's *maius opus moveo* ('greater is the task I attempt', *Aen*. 7.45).

the Satan of Milton'.[6] Byron's Don Juan, however, is announced not as the legendary version of works like Tirsa de Molina's 1630 *El Burlador de Sevilla* (which E.H. Coleridge suggests he had not read) but as the debased figure 'We all have seen…in the pantomime' (*DJ* 1.1).[7] Byron had certainly seen Delpini's pantomime, *Don Juan*, and Moyra Haslett shows that 'Don Juans dominated the London stage' from 1817–25, with at least eleven parodies, burlesques and pantomimes, a contemporary portrayal which corresponded with Byron's more general reflection on 'what was once romantic' turning 'to burlesque' (*DJ* 4.3). Shelley and Thomas Love Peacock's attendance at the more culturally respectable London premiere of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in 1817 validates Byron's appeal 'to plays in five, and operas in three acts' (*DJ* 1.203) for the truth of his story (though Mozart's opera is actually in two acts).[8]

Byron was *au fait* too with burlesque on the Homeric front. In relation to his 1810 trip to Troy, he recorded in his Ravenna journal that, 'because Hobhouse and others bored me with their learned localities, and I love quizzing', he had read Thomas Bridges' popular 'Homer Travestied', which, retitled *A Burlesque Translation of Homer* for its enlarged 1770 edition, began:[9]

> I sing the man whose dreadful rage
> Not even money could asswage:
> That's mighty strange; I hear you say,
> There's no such people now-a-day.

In *Don Juan* itself, Lloyd Jeffrey registers 'the impression of a fairly persistent effort to burlesque the style of Homer', 'despite Byron's notoriously saccadic narrative method'.[10]

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[6] Coleridge, S.T. (London, 1817) 263.
[7] Coleridge, E.H. (1903) Vol. 6, xvi.
[8] Haslett (1997) 4.
[9] *BLJ* 8.22; Kahn (1970) 144.
[10] Jeffrey (1971) 191.

For his most ambitious work, then, Byron again took up the challenge of melding the voguish with the ancient. In his early *The Death of Calmar and Orla,* he had recast classical epic material from the *Aeneid* in ultra-fashionable Ossianic form, itself epic in genre (see Chapter 2). Now conversely, in *Don Juan,* he set out to relocate immensely popular stage material in ostensibly classical epic form, where, as 'Begin,/ "*Paulo majora*"' demonstrates, full appreciation of the substantial element of parodic play depends upon a readership aware of classical conventions and alert to classical allusions.

'*with strict regard to Aristotle's rules'*

The scholarship on several aspects of Byron's engagement with classical models in *Don Juan*—principally its relationship to Homeric and Virgilian epic, especially the *Odyssey*, and any Horatian or Juvenalian tone—is so voluminous (and at times, so contradictory) as to preclude an attempt at summary.[11] This chapter will focus primarily on examining some less considered passages related to Byron's handling of classical quotation and allusion in a work saturated in them. Inescapably, however, it begins with Byron's humorously reductive encapsulation of the essence of classical epic which he pledges to replicate:

> My poem's epic, and is meant to be
> Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
> With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
> A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
> New characters; the episodes are three:
> A panorama view of hell's in training,
> After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
> So that my name of Epic's no Misnomer.

[11] As an example of differences of view, Fuess considers *Don Juan* 'unrelated to the work of either Homer or Virgil' (Fuess (1912) 160n); de Almeida argues that Don Juan is modelled on the plan of the *Odyssey* (de Almeida (1981) 14); Kelsall that there are major elements in common between the *Odyssey* and both *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Kelsall (2007) 3).

All these things will be specified in time,
  With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,…
I've got new mythological machinery,
And very handsome supernatural scenery. (*DJ* 1.200-1)

By Canto 8, he claims to have satisfied these requirements:

Reader! I have kept my word,—at least so far
  As the first Canto promised. You have now
Had sketches of love, tempest, travel, war—
  All very accurate, you must allow,
And *Epic*… *(DJ* 8.138)

To these classically epic elements in *Don Juan*, Byron might have added simile, ekphrasis and catalogues, notwithstanding his quip about the *Iliad's* 'Catalogue of Ships' proving Homer was an auctioneer.[12] As the poem races away, Canto 1's initial aim of twelve books akin to the *Aeneid* is superseded by that of a Homeric twenty-four books:

> Poor Juan shall be guillotined in the French Revolution! What do you think of my plot? It shall have twenty-four books too, the legitimate number. Episodes it has, and will have, out of number; and my spirits good or bad, will serve for the machinery. If that be not an epic, if it be not strictly according to Aristotle, I don't know what an epic poem means'.[13]

Divine machinery is, however, rather curbed by Byron's scepticism and partiality for 'Circumstance, that unspiritual god/ And miscreator'.[14] He cited *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in protesting to Murray about the pressure on him for 'a great work, an epic poem, I suppose or some such pyramid': 'You have so many "*divine"* poems, is it nothing to have written a *human* one? Without any of your worn-out machinery'.[15] Brian Wilkie points to the punning play at work in his 'spirits…serving for the machinery', with 'spirits' variously denoting supernatural ghosts in Canto 15,

[12] *DJ* 13.74. For examples of Byron's catalogues, see the 'followers of fame' not fit to be the hero of his poem (*DJ* 1.2-4) and the Russian generals at Ismail at *DJ* 7.15-18.
[13] Medwin (1824) 202-3. By Canto 12, Byron was threatening 100 cantos (*DJ* 12.55).
[14] *CHP* 4.125.
[15] *BLJ* 6.105.

Byron's consumption of alcohol, and his own 'whim and disposition' as the poem's creator in a world without divine providence. For Wilkie, Byron's running joke about his authorial rambling is the richer 'if we see his digressiveness and high-handed manipulation of his action analogous to the oscillation of epic narrative between the hero and his guiding destiny, between earth and heaven'.[16]

On this evidence, Byron's ostensible criteria of epic status are formal, in Malcolm Kelsall's view 'probably mocking the formalistic criticism represented by le Bossu', and they broadly align with those Herbert Tucker offers in his examination of epic from 1790–1910 as the working definition of epic correlated with leading conventions: 'length and scope, incorporation of subordinate genres, cultural comprehensiveness, verse medium, narrative content, heroism, invocation, superhuman machinery, combat, simile, catalogue'.[17] With over 16,000 lines, the still incomplete *Don Juan* exceeds the c.15,690 of the *Iliad*, 12,110 of the *Odyssey* and 9,896 of the *Aeneid*, and this epic scale is matched by the epic scope of the narrator's commentary and of Juan's travels and experiences across Europe. Jerome McGann concludes that *Don Juan* 'is the one work of the period which grasps—in a coherent way and from a particular point of view—the whole drama of Europe's upheaval between the French revolution and the period of Restoration', that is, 'the period of political reaction, restored thrones, and displaced or isolated/nationalized revolutionary activity' in 1818–24.[18] Beyond that, it is a compendium of information and rumination, as W.H. Auden recognises in his *Letter to Lord Byron* and appropriates for himself:

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[16] Wilkie (1965) 213-14.
[17] Kelsall (2007) 2; Tucker (2008) Ch.1 online abstract. DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199232987.001.0001.
[18] *CPW* 5.xxiv.

I want a form that's large enough to swim in,
And talk on any subject that I choose,
From natural scenery to men and women,
Myself, the arts, the European news.

Timothy Youngs sees *Don Juan* as providing Auden with a model for the literary journey as radical commentary on Europe and satire on Britain, as well as a precedent for parodying the forms on which it draws.[19]

Don Juan's form is, too, 'large enough' for what James Thompson terms 'a kind of generic explosion' incorporating passages of pastoral (the Haidée and Juan episode), elegy (for example, Donna Julia's letter about woman's lot in love, and the shipwrecked father observing the death of his son), lyric (for example, 'The Isles of Greece' and the stanzas on the Angelus hour at 3.102-9) and the omnipresent satire.[20] Alastair Fowler has pointed out that 'allusions are often used as indicators of temporary changes in mode' within the prevailing genre, in *Don Juan*'s case 'epic', and that 'the most highly developed and subtlest allusions, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, were to classical authors' (and Milton).[21] Accordingly, at points Byron explicitly signals his shift with a classical reference, as for example in stanza 8.138 quoted above, when he follows up his claim that his 'sketches of love, tempest, travel, war' are all very '*Epic'* with a nonchalant admission of occasional lyric moments: 'Carelessly I sing,/ But Phoebus lends me now and then a string' (8.138). At *DJ* 4.7 too, he flags his turn to the pastoral Eden of Juan and Haidée by borrowing 'Apollo plucks me by the ear' from Virgil's *Eclogue* 6.3-4 (*Cynthius*

[19] Youngs (2004) 72. For ease of rhyming in English, Auden substituted Chaucerian rhyme royal (seven-line stanzas in iambic pentameter rhyming *ababbcc*) for Byron's *ottava rima* (eight-line stanzas rhyming *abababcc*):

Ottava Rima would, I know, be proper,
The proper instrument on which to pay
My compliments, but I should come a cropper;
Rhyme-royal's difficult enough to play. (*Letter to Lord Byron* 1.148-54)

[20] Thompson (1967) 26, cited in Beaty (1985) 138.
[21] Fowler (1982) 91.

aurem/ vellit), when the Augustan poet claims Apollo directs him to write pastoral rather than stories of kings and battles.

Curran sees *Don Juan* as an entirety realigning 'itself according to the conventions of one genre after another, analytically deconstructing each as to sufficiency or even adequacy, yet always, if obliquely, reinforcing them'—a statement in which Curran's qualifications indicate the difficulty of being definitive about a work of iterative contradictions and constant denial of the possibility of being definitive.[22] If, on one reading, this phenomenon is in line with *Don Juan*'s pervasive ambivalence about epic, on another it mirrors the capaciousness of epic generally and what Hardie terms the 'generic polyphony' of the *Aeneid,* embracing elements of tragedy, pastoral, didactic and elegy. Even so, Stephen Harrison's discussion of generic enrichment in Virgil's *Aeneid* finds that 'such alternative voices need not…be consistently subversive of the epic action' but are often appropriated to enhance, rather than oppose, traditional epic plot and values.[23]

Don Juan is in verse, though Byron had shortly before begun and abandoned a novel about the marital mishaps of a young Andalusian nobleman in which, according to Hobhouse, 'he adumbrates himself Don Julian', a view supported by the brief extract Thomas Moore provided in his biography.[24] As Harrison notes, epic is 'one of the few parallels in antiquity for a long fictional story of adventure'.[25] In his choice of verse form, Byron rejected both the heroic couplets which Dryden and Pope had established as the English language standard for translations of epic, and

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[22] Curran (1986) 192. On contradictions, see *DJ* 15.88:

> If people contradict themselves, can I
> Help contradicting them, and every body,
> Even my veracious self?—But that's a lie;
> I never did so, never will—how should I?

[23] Harrison (2007a) 207-8.

[24] Hobhouse's diary, 4 January 1818. https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/26-venice-1817.pdf; Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.522-23.

[25] Harrison (2013) 125.

the Lakers' 'Blank Verse—which unless in the Drama—no one except Milton ever wrote who could rhyme' (Byron).[26] Instead, surprisingly but nonetheless appropriately for a work with epic, satirical and romance elements, he opted for the *ottava rima* which he had used the year before for light-hearted satire in *Beppo.* Byron was well aware that *ottava rima* was the metre instituted for Italian romantic epic by Boccaccio and subsequently employed by writers he admired like Pulci, Ariosto, Tasso and Casti; and he used the metre for his 1820 translation of the first canto of Pulci's serio-comic epic, *Morgante Maggiore*.[27] (However, Bate's suggestion that these Italian models gave Byron 'a precedent for the casual, unanxious use of quotations' seems unlikely, given Byron's consistent habit of quotation in poetry and letters from early on).[28] Drummond Bone points out that Byron increases the unnaturalness of the *ottava rima*'s *abababcc* rhyme scheme, which of itself sounds exotic in English, by devices like a weak or mis-stressed rhyme in the couplet, or polysyllabic rhymes spread over two or even three words (the latter identified by Fowler as a marker of satire or light verse).[29] The tension between the conspicuous constructedness of the *ottava rima* and the surface *realismo* of much of the narrative reinforces the narrator's metaleptic reminders that the work is fiction.

At given points in *Don Juan*, Byron flags up where he is departing from classical convention, his comments nonetheless demonstrating his familiarity with the contextual details of epic narratives.[30] At the outset, for instance, he rejects Horace's commendation of the author of the *Odyssey,* who *semper ad eventum*

[26] *CMP* 112. In the same piece of 1820, Byron also opined that 'there is not a living poet (except Rogers, Gifford, and Crabbe) who can write an heroic couplet' (*CMP* 111).
[27] Keach points additionally to the influence of John Merivale, Byron's friend, and William Stewart Rose (whom Byron saw in Italy in 1817–18) as imitators of Pulci and Casti respectively (Keach (2004) 61-62).
[28] Bate (1989) 240.
[29] Bone (2004b) 156, 169 n.4; Fowler (1982) 62.
[30] For example, Byron draws attention to his omission of detailed coverage of councils of war, 'For if I wrote down every warrior's speech,/ I doubt few readers e'er would mount the breach' (*DJ* 7.35).

festinat et in medias res/ non secus ac notas auditorem rapit ('Ever he hastens to the issues, and hurries his hearer into the story's midst, as if already known', Hor. *Ars P.* 148-49):

> Most epic poets plunge 'in medias res,'
> (Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road)
> And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
> What went before—by way of episode,
> While seated after dinner at his ease,
> Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
> Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
> Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.
>
> That is the usual method, but not mine—
> My way is to begin with the beginning. (*DJ* 1.6-7)[31]

In this, Byron follows Aristotle's prescription that epic should be constructed dramatically as in tragedy, with 'a beginning, middle and end' (Aristot. *Poet.* 1459a, 17-20). The core narrative of *Don Juan* is indeed essentially linear, without the analepsis (flashback) typical of his models.

There are, though, frequent interruptions, which Peter Cochran identifies not as narrative digressions but as cessations in the narrative during which the extradiegetic Byronic narrator thinks aloud.[32] It is this overlay of narratorial reflection which makes *Don Juan* so distinctive, and which contrasts strongly with its ancient models. Aristotle praises Homer for being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself: αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν, ('The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person', Arist. *Poet.* 1460a, 7). On William Ridgeway's calculations, out of the many thousands of lines in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* the poet himself speaks only twenty-four.[33] Virgil is

[31] Haynes notes that 'Byron takes care to use a verb of motion with "in medias res"' (Haynes (2003, ppbk. 2007) 38.
[32] Cochran (2013a) 48.
[33] Ridgeway (1912) 238.

similarly restrained, with rare narratorial intrusions, for example in the proems to Book 1 and 7, and apostrophes, including to Nisus and Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.446-49).[34] Byron, however, constructs a radically different balance: 'This narrative is not meant for narration,/ But a mere airy and fantastic basis,/ To build up common things with common places'; 'So on I ramble, now and then narrating,/ Now pondering'.[35] Bernard Beatty estimates that digression forms as much as 34 per cent of all completed cantos in *Don Juan*, an astonishingly high proportion reflected in Byron's explanation that 'I meant it [*Don Juan*] for a poetical T. Shandy or Montaigne's essays, with a story for a hinge'.[36] Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is notably a work of digressions and innuendo, and Montaigne's *Essays,* full of anecdotes and personal reflections, are famously prefaced by the declaration: 'I am myself the subject of my book'.[37]

Above all, though, it is in language and in tone that *Don Juan* breaches epic decorum. Its renunciation of epic grandiloquence is signalled in the Dedication when Byron declares himself not in contention with the 'epic renegade' 'on the winged steed', Bob Southey, but 'wandering with pedestrian Muses', an allusion which indicates from the outset its affiliation with satire in its reference to Horace (*Musaque pedestri, Sat.* 2.6.17) who professed that he lacked the powers for epic (*Sat.* 2.1.12-15).[38] The keystone to *Don Juan* is the vernacular narrator who is chiefly characterised by a 'conversational facility' (*DJ* 15.20) akin to Horace's *sermo merus* (*Sat*. 1.4.48), combined with a latitude in tone from the serious, impassioned or poignant to the irreverent, sardonic or bawdy: 'March!/ March, my Muse! If you

[34] See also Heinze (2004) 295-97.
[35] *DJ* 14.7, 9.42.
[36] Beatty also cites an earlier estimate of 33 per cent by M.K. Joseph (Beatty (1985) 39, n.2, 84-85).
[37] Byron also refers to *Tristram Shandy* at *BLJ* 10.150.
[38] *DJ* Dedication 1.8.

cannot fly, yet flutter,/ And when you may not be sublime, be arch/ Or starch' (15.27).

As McGann points out, core passages like 'the Shipwreck episode, the Haidée idyll, and the Siege of Ismail imitate certain *topoi* of heroic poetry but in none of these cases…is the treatment generally mock-heroic'.[39] At the same time, Byron rhymes 'Odysseys' and 'goddesses' with 'boddices' (1.41) and flaunts what Tucker calls 'generically self-conscious flippancies', as, famously, in 'Hail, Muse! *et cetera*' (3.1) which detonates the customary effect of secondary characteristics like invocations in earning a work 'legitimacy within the genre, affiliating the modern text with a venerable line of precursors'.[40] This is one of fifty-two references to the Muses in *Don Juan*, often with a deflationary effect, as at the end of Canto 5 where Byron's intermittent commentary on the process of composition follows Homeric (and Ovidian, though not Virgilian) epic precedent in splitting the seraglio episode across books, and plays on Horace's comment about Homer nodding:[41]

> Thus far our chronicle, and now we pause,
> Though not for want of matter; but 'tis time,
> According to the ancient epic laws,
> To slacken sail, and anchor with our rhyme. …
> Meanwhile, as Homer sometimes sleeps, perhaps
> You'll pardon to my muse a few short naps. (*DJ* 5.159)

In *Don Juan*, then, Byron asserts his claim to be writing an epic, whose classical conventions he specifies with seemingly unironic exactitude in Canto 1, only to flout key elements of epic decorum and destabilise the character of epic. Nicholas Halmi demonstrates the effectiveness of this destabilisation in his collation

[39] McGann (1976) 81-82.
[40] Higashinaka (2013a) 231; Tucker (2008) 223, 29.
[41] Byron also uses Horace's *quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus* (*Ars P.* 359) epigrammatically in *DJ* 3.98: 'We learn from Horace, Homer sometimes sleeps;/ We feel without him: Wordsworth sometimes wakes'.

of critical descriptions of *Don Juan* as a modern epic, a comic epic, a mock-epic, an epic of negation, an anti-epic, an epic satire, an ironic epic romance, a versified picaresque novel or Shelley's 'totally of its own species'.[42] Yet however the outcome might be described, Byron's project in *Don Juan* is founded on a sound understanding of epic, both classical and more contemporary. In Jane Stabler's words, 'Byron is clearly on the side of artistic frame breaking that has mastered traditional discipline first'.[43]

There has been extensive critical commentary on Byron's reworking in *Don Juan* of elements from the epics of Virgil and Homer, in particular the *Odyssey,* as in the intertextualities identified between Donna Julia and Juan, and Dido and Aeneas, with Donna Inez as Venus; the hero's shipwreck and rescue; Juan and Haidée, and Odysseus and Nausicaa; Lambro's unnamed bard and Demodocus at the Phaeacian court; Lambro's delayed and undetected return to his palace *en fête* and Odysseus' to his; Juan and Gulbayez as Odysseus and Circe; Juan and Dudù as Odysseus and Calypso (Calypso elsewhere associated with Lady Adeline); the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke as a Siren; and the presentation of war as 'a history of genocide and rape' at both the siege of Ismail and the sack of Troy (Kelsall).[44] Assessed collectively, however, they support rather than undermine Timothy Webb's salutary observation that 'the connections between Homer and *Don Juan* are not much more than intermittent…nor, in so richly allusive a poem, does [the Homeric parallel] seem to provide a predominant and ever-present framework'.[45] The same is true of *Don Juan*'s relationship to Virgil's epic.

[42] Halmi (2010) 589.
[43] Stabler (2004) 269-70.
[44] See, for example, Kahn (1970), Kelsall (2007), Jeffrey (1971); de Almeida (1981) and Garber (1984).
[45] Webb (1982) 2.

It is, in addition, worth noting that literary exploitation of the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* as parody has itself an ancient antecedent in a text familiar to Byron, Petronius' *Satyrica*, whose very title, like *Don Juan,* connotes lecherous adventures and which was probably planned on epic scale (Gareth Schmeling hypothesises 24 books).[46] Without pressing the point too hard, there seem tenable correspondences between *Don Juan* and the *Satyrica* beyond plot incidents like the storm and shipwreck which may derive from their common epic source material (and de Molina's play also sees Don Juan shipwrecked and rescued by a young peasant girl, whom he seduces and deserts).

So far as is evident from their respectively incomplete states, both the *Satyrica* and *Don Juan* depart from the great classical epics—and indeed the Greek romances to which both also allude—in their lack of any teleological progression. The *Odyssey* is a tale of *nostos*, its narrative arc, however episodic, impelled by Odysseus' goal of returning home, just as the *Aeneid* is driven by Aeneas' fated mission in Latium. The *Satyrica* in its surviving fragmentary form suggests no such motif, and Peter Walsh sees 'strong evidence' that Petronius' work 'played a modest role in the rise of the picaresque novel towards the close of the sixteenth century'.[47] Don Juan's adventures are likewise, and meaningfully, picaresque, the absence of any specific quest consonant with Byron's view of the world as highly contingent and driven by chance.

Don Juan and the *Satyrica* are also both 'firmly embedded in reality'—Hubert Petersmann's observation on the *Satyrica*—and have markedly similar concerns, each satirising contemporary or near-contemporary society through the

[46] M.S. Smith (1975, repr. 2004) xvi, also Courtney (2001) 29; Schmeling (2011) xxii-xxv. (Chapter 3 above has further discussion of Byron and Petronius).
[47] Walsh (1997, ppbk. 1999) xxxvi.

experiences of an anti-hero related by a first person narrator, though Byron's detachment of his worldly-wise extradiegetic narrator from the narrative offers greater scope for commentary than the scabrous Encolpius' account of his own story in Petronius.[48] Byron was explicit about his aim:

> D[on] Juan will be known by and bye [sic] for what it is intended a *satire* on *abuses* of the present *states* of Society—and not an eulogy of vice: it may be now and then voluptuous; I can't help that.[49]

Equally both works are vitally concerned with literary culture and language, and attack current trends. Byron's conviction that 'we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system' is a theme pursued throughout *Don Juan* from the opening Dedication which discharges a broadside against the literary and political deficiencies of the Poet Laureate dedicatee, Robert Southey, and his fellow 'Lakers', Coleridge and Wordsworth (see also Introduction and Chapter 4).[50]

Petronius is likewise held to have been attacking Seneca and Lucan. Lucan's poetic theme of *bellum civile* is revisited in the *Satyrica* to comically dire effect by the poetaster Eumolpus, whose recitation of a hexameter mini-epic called *Bellum Civile* (*Sat.* 118-24) follows a passage which expounds a set of theoretical principles about the dependence of literary creativity on the mind being 'steeped in the vast flood of literature' (*neque concipere aut edere partum mens potest nisi ingenti flumine litterarum inundata, Sat.* 118) and the need to avoid 'empty phrases,… vulgarisms, and glittering sententiae', sentiments Kenneth Rose finds 'not unworthy of a serious literary critic'.[51] Byron makes clear his familiarity with this speech in his description at *DJ* 16.102 of Lady Adeline's dress draping 'her form with curious

[48] Petersmann (1999) 107.
[49] *BLJ* 10.68.
[50] *BLJ* 5.265.
[51] Rose (1971) 61.

felicity', an appropriation of Eumolpus' term *curiosa felicitas* to commend the painstaking artistry of Horace, from whom Eumolpus quotes in arguing that in poetry 'one must flee away from all diction that is, so to speak, cheap, and choose words divorced from popular use, putting into practice, "*odi profanum vulgus et arceo*"' ('I hate the common herd and hold it far', Horace, *Odes* 3.1.1). Both Petronius and Byron audaciously flout Eumolpus' advice in their admixture of high and low styles. While the narrative of the *Satyrica* is for the greater part in a refined *sermo urbanus*, the *cena* scene, for example, reflects the lower-class idioms of the social parvenu, Trimalchio, his slaves and individual freedmen colleagues whose speech patterns Petronius differentiates in a *sermo vulgaris*.[52] Despite his allegedly epic setting, Byron mirrors this in rather broader strokes in the encounter between Juan, the Spanish gentleman whose father was 'a true Hidalgo', and Tom the highwayman who threatens him with a knife on Shooter's Hill. Juan talks in lengthy, sophisticated sentences but Tom in staccato exclamations, full of slang: 'Oh Jack! I'm floored by that 'ere bloody Frenchman!', 'Hold! I've got my gruel/ Oh! for a glass of *max* [gin]!'.[53] Byron, though, goes further in undermining epic elevation by allowing Tom's 'flash cant' to seep into his narrator's language as Tom's blood seeps into his kerchief: 'Poor Tom was once a kiddy upon town,/ A thorough varmint, and a *real* swell,/ Full flash, all fancy, until fairly diddled'.[54]

Individually innovative and idiosyncratic, the *Satyrica* and *Don Juan* nonetheless share important characteristics, even if Byron does not emulate Petronius' prosimetric classical impropriety. Both are generically diverse, tonally variegated and super-abundantly allusive. Schmeling notes 'the thick literary texture'

[52] For discussion of Petronius' linguistic differentiation of characters, see Petersmann (1999) 105-23.
[53] *DJ* 11.16.
[54] *DJ* 11.17; see also 11.19.

of the *Satyrica*, in which 'Petronius parodies lines, episodes, characters, motifs, and structures from every known genre and most literary figures (or models sections of the *Satyrica* on the same)' and 'most often alludes to Homer, the tragedians, Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Seneca, Lucan'.[55] This description could broadly be applied to *Don Juan*, with a few differences in target classical authors (though clearly they form only a subset of the much wider range of authors to whom Byron by the early nineteenth century had recourse). Despite the judgment of the Victorian critic, Lionel Johnson, that 'Byron was much a Lucan' and Shelley's claim that Lucan's *Pharsalia* was 'of wonderful genius, & transcending Virgil', Lucan does not figure among *Don Juan*'s classical intertexts. The Greek tragedians also appear very rarely: it is to the quick feelings of 'Ovid's Miss Medea' that Juan's are compared at *DJ* 1.86.[56] Longinus and Lucretius should, however, be added to such a list, and Terence ranked alongside Seneca.

In *Don Juan*, these are only the most frequently referenced writers among a considerably wider circle of Greeks and Romans, including philosophers and historians as well as literary figures. By far the pre-eminent source is Horace, quotations from whom equal the total from all other classical writers. They are taken from across the genres of Horace's poetry, an indication of the range of Byron's engagement with an author he professed to hate (*CHP* 4.77), in part perhaps because of a sense of rapport with their first-person self-representation.[57] As Harrison suggests:

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[55] Schmeling (2011) xxix.
[56] Johnson in Bloom (2009) 115; Jones, F.L. (1964) 1.432; Ov. *Met.* 7.9-11 and *Her.* 12. Byron quotes Lucan in a letter (*BLJ* 2.14), see Chapter 3.
[57] *Don Juan* quotations from Horace include *Sat.* 1.3, 2.2, 2.6 and 2.7; *Odes* 1.2, 2.18, 3.14, 4.9; *Epod.* 3.4; *Epist.* 1.14, 2.2; and four quotations from the *Ars Poetica.*

> [Horace's] different poetic genres…all seem to have been chosen in part because of the primacy of the poet's voice: Lucilian *sermo* with its strong 'autobiographical' element, Archilochean iambus with its 'personal' invective, Lesbian 'monodic' lyric with its prominent 'I', and epistolary *sermo* with its inevitably central letter-writer, further layered in the *Ars Poetica* with the didactic voice of the instructor.[58]

Despite Byron's translations of Martial, his only actual quotation in *Don Juan* is a complete epigram, Mart. 10.46, which Byron embeds at 15.21 without attribution or translation as a form of riddle—'this conundrum of a dish': 'Omnia vult belle Matho dicere—dic aliquando/ Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male' ('Matho, you want everything you say to be smart. Say something good as well from time to time. Say something neither good nor bad. From time to time say something bad).

There are, predictably, very few quotations in ancient Greek. The main exception to this dearth, beyond a cry of 'Αι Αι ταν Κυθερειαν!' ('Woe for Cytherea!') from Bion's lament for Adonis at 16.109, is Sappho. Kenneth Haynes' assessment is that Sappho 'aroused the enthusiasm of the Romantic poets, particularly Byron', and Byron does reference Sappho repeatedly in *Don Juan,* including twice in Greek in notes, though notably both times taken from ancient literary critics not direct from the poetry itself.[59] First, Byron annotates his declaration that 'I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,/ Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn/ Where the Sublime soars forth on wings more ample' (1.42.4-6) with 'See Longinus Section 10th., "Ινα μὴ ἕν τι περὶ αὐτὴν πάθος φαίνηται, παθων δὲ σύνοδος"'.[60] This last prompted Hobhouse at proof stage to correct Byron's Greek and dispute that it meant what his verse suggested, only to elicit Byron's unscholarly rejoinder: 'I do not care for that—it must stand'.[61] In Canto

[58] Harrison (2007b) 22.
[59] Haynes (2006) 160.
[60] Longinus: 'so that she displays not a single emotion but a whole congeries of emotions'.
[61] *CPW* 5.676, n.to sts.42-43.

1, Byron proposed that 'if ever I should condescend to prose,/ I'll write poetical commandments…I'll call the work 'Longinus o'er a Bottle',/ Or, Every Poet his *own* Aristotle', perhaps a reference back to his Dedication's critique of Wordsworth's determining his own critical criteria for his 'rather long "Excursion"': ''Tis poetry—at least by his assertion'.

In Canto 3 of *Don Juan*, Byron refers to 'The Isles of Greece, The Isles of Greece,/Where burning Sappho loved and sung' (3.86.1), with Sappho, as his first exemplar of Greece in its glory, taking precedence over Homer and Anacreon, 'the Scian and the Teian Muse' (3.86.2).[62] Some stanzas further on, in a lyrical meditation on the beauty and spirituality of the Angelus hour (3.101-109), a late addition inserts a Sappho-based 'Hesperus' stanza (3.107). The effect of the ancient Greek intertext is to universalise in time and space the particularity of the narrator's experience and that of his fictional lovers, Juan and Haidée. In a note, Byron provides the source, Sappho's fragment 104a quoted in Demetrius' *De Elocutione,* 141, to illustrate her 'attractive use of anaphora':

> Εσπερε παντα φερεις
> Φερεις οινον, φερεις αιγα
> Φερεις ματερι παιδα [sic].
>
> ('Hesperus, you bring everything, you bring wine, you bring the goat,
> you bring the child to its mother').

This closeness of Byron's (somewhat clumsy) verse to a Greek source is a very rare phenomenon in mature Byron, and even then, the presence of Roman history remains a notable feature of the Angelus passage as a whole, in providing atmosphere as

[62] Byron's allusion to Sappho as 'burning' may draw directly on her works (eg fragments 31, 38 and 48). Alternatively, he may be referencing Ovid's *Her.* 15, Sappho to Phaon, either in the Latin (*uror* 15.9, *non ignibus aequis, ureris* 15.163-64) or in Pope's translation ('I burn, I burn', line 9). Evidence suggests that Byron knew Ovid's *Heroides*: Hobhouse's diary of 3 May 1810 recorded that he had Ovid's *Hero to Leander* (*Her.* 19) open before him while Byron swam the Hellespont (Nicholson (1991) 205), and in correspondence Byron quoted '*ipse veni'* from *Her.* 1.2 (Penelope to Ulysses), though this may have become a commonplace.

Byron rides in the pinetum at Ravenna where 'the last Cesarean fortress stood' (3.105), and then the climax at 3.109 with a surprisingly compassionate glance at flowers strewn on Nero's tomb, from Suetonius' *Life of Nero* (57).

Taken as a whole, then, it is impossible to read *Don Juan* without being struck by the dense deployment of classical quotation and allusion, a literary phenomenon that was itself characteristic of Virgil, Ovid, Petronius and other ancient authors with whom Byron engaged. The question, as Byron plunders the past, is how those references, explicit and implicit, engage the reader.

'Horace said, and so/ Say I'[63]

One of the most important, but under-discussed, examples of Byron's technique of quoting from the classics is the passage in which he first unequivocally signals his deviation from the epic prototype. Having made his claim to epic status in following 'the style of Virgil and of Homer' in stanza 200 of Canto 1, he turns in stanzas 212-16 not to his professed epic models, but, in a characteristically deliberate and disruptive act of generic transgression, to Horace, and notably Horace in introspective lyric mode.

There are other allusions to Horace up to this point but all are brief and, in a canto much concerned with 'poetical commandments', all appropriately related to literary issues, with the possible exception of Byron's original proposal for the epigraph, *domestica facta* with its coded reference to his failed marriage.[64] In stanzas

[63] Some material in this chapter, first published in an article in *The Byron Journal*, Vol. 45(2) (2017): 127–34, appears here by kind permission of the Liverpool University Press.

[64] Other allusions to Horace in *Don Juan* up to 1.212 include the published epigraph, *difficile est proprie communia dicere* (*Ars P.* 128, ''Tis no slight task to write on common things') and the original epigraph, *domestica facta* (*Ars P.* 287, 'deeds at home'); the Dedication, line 57 'pedestrian Muses' (*Musaque pedestri, Sat.* 2.6.17) and line 112 'with God and man's abhorrence for its gains' (*mediocribus esse poetis / non homines, non di, non concessere columnae,* 'that poets be of middling rank, neither men nor gods nor booksellers ever brooked' *Ars P.* 372-73); Canto 1.5, 'Brave men were living before Agamemnon' (*vixere fortes ante Agamemnona/ multi, Odes* 4.9.25) and 1.6,

212-16, however, the canto offers an extended engagement with Horace in a 40-line passage which, in its final form, plays with the expectations of that segment of Byron's readership willing to 'rake' 'his recollections' of 'the lyric Roman'.[65] The original draft shows a sequence of three stanzas (now numbered *DJ* 1.212, 213 and 216) based largely on Horace's *Odes*, the first two from *Odes* 3.14 and the third from *Odes* 4.1. Byron's reflections on lost youth, premature ageing and dulled passions mirror Horace's and, while the English can be understood by those with no Latin, the *cognoscenti* are implicitly challenged to detect a range of allusions.[66]

Immediately before this section, Byron muses on the likely reception of his 'epical pretensions' in his new opus, *Don Juan,* and, while he expects 'public approbation', he resolves to 'defy/ All other magazines of art or science', including the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews,* known for their 'martyrly' treatment of 'dissenting' authors (1.209-11). Behind this lies the unspoken memory of the swingeing criticism years before of his first publication, *Hours of Idleness,* by *The Edinburgh Review* in particular, and the merciless revenge he took in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (see Chapters 2 and 4). The question is, therefore, whether he would now respond similarly. For answer, Byron aligns himself with a classical referent and the opening of stanza 212 insistently attunes the reader to a shift in the cultural frame of reference by embedding a line and a half of Latin within the text:

'Most epic poets plunge "*in medias res*"', discussed in this chapter.

[65] *CHP* 4.74-75.

[66] Lost youth was not, of course, a new theme for Byron; it had pervaded *Hours of Idleness,* for example in the opening lines of *L'Amitié est L'Amour sans Ailes*, written when Byron was eighteen: 'Why should my anxious breast repine/ Because my youth is fled?'.

'Non ego hoc ferrem calida juventa
Consule Planco', Horace said, and so
Say I; by which quotation there is meant a
Hint that some six or seven good years ago
(Long ere I dreamt of dating from the Brenta)
I was most ready to return a blow,
And would not brook at all this sort of thing
In my hot youth—when George the Third was King. ([sic] *DJ* 1.212)

Few intertextualities in Byron's poetry are more emphatically identified to the reader. Byron signals the extract by quotation marks and explicitly labels it a 'quotation'; he cites the name of the author, Horace; and he provides the original Latin from *Odes* 3.14.27-28, albeit with a minor slip in *calida* (presumably mistakenly thought to agree with *iuventa*) instead of *calidus*. The final couplet of the *ottava rima* then neatly rounds off the stanza with a contemporised translation.

The acerbic analogue at the stanza's close mimics Horace's investment of his final line, *consule Planco* ('when Plancus was consul'), with a deeper resonance than simply the conventional Roman system of dating years by the name of an incumbent consul. Romans of Horace's generation would instantly have recognised in Plancus' consular year an oblique but powerfully charged reference to 42 BCE when the hot-headed 22-year old Horace, as a *tribunus militum* of the republican Brutus at the battle of Philippi, fought on the losing side against Octavian, the very leader whom two decades later Horace's ode was eulogising (*ego nec tumultum / nec mori per vim metuam tenente/ Caesare terras*, 'I shall not be afraid of insurrection or violent death while Caesar is in charge of the world', Hor. *Odes* 3.14.14-16). Byron appositely substitutes for the Roman formula of dating by consuls an equivalent British nineteenth-century chronological marker related to the head of state, the King, and in so doing, highlights the woeful condition of the contemporary monarchy.

In 1818 when this stanza was written, George III was still alive and king in title, but the incisive use of the past tense—'when George the Third was King'—foregrounds the fact that in 1811, because of his 'severe indisposition', he had been removed from power and the Prince of Wales appointed as Regent. David West points to the political subtext in Horace's ode of a Roman state progressing from the turmoil of civil war to stability, peace and prosperity under the firm hand of Octavian (later known by his honorific of Augustus).[67] Byron allusively contrasts this with the United Kingdom of his day, just emerging from a prolonged war under a king sunk in acute mental and physical incapacity and a Prince Regent responsible, in Byron's words, for 'a realm's decay' (*Lines to A Lady Weeping,* 2).

As an aside, Jonathan Bate, in his discussion of Byron's quotation of Shakespeare, notes that 'the occurrence of two allusions in quick succession, the second usually quieter than the first, is very frequent in *Don Juan*; once the mind is sent to Shakespeare, it dwells there for a moment and picks up a second treasure'.[68] In line with Bate's *aperçu,* the translation from Horace of 'in my hot youth' in Canto 1 sensitises the reader to a 'quieter' allusion in Canto 3 when Byron describes the poet of Lambro's court—'a man who had seen many changes,/ And always changed as true as any needle'—as, momentarily in 'a short armistice with truth', 'singing as he sung in his warm youth'.[69] At one level, the comparison is between the poet's present and past, but that careful calibration of his youth as merely 'warm' rather than 'hot' also distinguishes it from the fiery juvenile passion of both the Horace and Byron narrator figures in Canto 1's stanza 212. Lambro's 'sad trimmer', who now 'sung the Sultan and the Pacha/ With truth like Southey'—a sardonic jibe at the

[67] West (2002, repr. 2009) 130; see also Fitzgerald (2013) 125.
[68] Bate (1986, corr. 1989) 242.
[69] *DJ* 3.80, 83.

turncoat Poet Laureate and his 'Sultan Sham', a nickname for George IV—had never been a man of full-blooded conviction, even when young.[70]

Byron pursues the subject of temper moderating with age in the following stanza (213) where his lines, 'But now at thirty years my hair is gray […]/ And [I] feel no more the spirit to retort', continue to echo Horace's *Ode*s 3.14:

> lenit albescens animos capillus
> litium et rixae cupidos protervae
>
> ('My graying hair is mellowing my temper, which used to be eager for wrangling and impulsive brawls', 3.14.25-26).[71]

In pointing up the Byronic narrator's prematurely grey hair at thirty, they underscore his rueful affirmation, 'I/ Have squander'd my whole summer while 'twas May' (1.213). Byron may have found in Horace's *mercedem aut nummos* ('interest or principal', *Sat.* 1.3.88) the basis for his arresting pecuniary image, 'I/ have spent my life, both interest and principal' (*DJ* 1.213), an oddly moving line and one in context open to the punning alternative interpretation of depletion of interest in life and of princip*le*, given Byron's recent period of debauchery in Venice.

As Byron's developing train of thought leads to a valediction to love, he turns next to *Odes* 4.1. This was a work Byron had used earlier to express similar thoughts. In 1811, as he sailed home from Athens at the end of his post-university travels 'in bad health & worse spirits', he outlined in a memorandum to himself 'Four or five reasons in favour of a change'.[72] His jaded summation, 'I have outlived all my

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[70] *DJ* 3.82, 79; Bevis (2007) 70. See *Sultan Sham and his Seven Wives* by Hudibras the Younger (1820).
[71] Cochran alternatively suggests that stanza 213's references to hair and ageing have their origin in the *elegidarion* drunkenly improvised by Eumolpus in Petronius' *Satyrica* 109, after Encolpius and Giton, at Eumolpus' suggestion, have had their heads and eyebrows shaved to divert suspicion (Cochran (2013c) 102-3). But this suggestion overlooks the continuation of Byron's allusion to Hor. *Odes* 3.14 from the previous stanza and does not capture Byron's reflection on a mellowing temper which also features in the Horace. Byron's specification of his age may reflect Horace's reference to his own as *circa lustra decem* ('about fifty years') at *Odes* 4.1.6, on which Byron draws at st. 216.
[72] *BLJ* 2.44; 2.47.

appetites and most of my vanities aye even the vanity of authorship', was to prove deeply ironic on both counts: on arrival in England, his 'appetites' experienced a lively renaissance and the publication of *Childe Harold* brought him well-nigh unprecedented international success as an author. Yet at that moment of homebound reflection, Byron confessed that he was 'sick at heart' and quoted three lines from *Odes* 4.1, with a slight misplacement of *jam* and one conspicuous omission:

> Me jam nec fæmina…
> Nec *Spes animi credula mutui,*
> Nec *certare* iuvat *Mero*. [sic]
>
> ('As for me, neither woman […] nor the fond hope of a kindred spirit gives me pleasure now, nor competitive drinking bouts', Hor. *Odes* 4.1.29-31).

Again in a letter while still at sea, he asked Hobhouse to tell their friend, Charles Skinner Matthews, that 'I have bade adieu to every species of affection, and may say with Horace "Me jam nec fæmina" &c.—he will finish the lines'.[73] Matthews, Downing College's first elected Fellow, would have been well-equipped to supply Horace's homoerotic *nec puer* ('nor boy') after *nec fæmina*, where even in his private memorandum Byron had left a lacuna. At this period of Byron's life, the Horace quotations seem no more than an elegant expression of his *ennui*. But seven years later, in the innovative first canto of *Don Juan*, Byron returns to the same lines for a more complex literary engagement.

In his first draft, Byron moves directly to his own 'imitation' of *Odes* 4.1 However, on revision, Byron inserts two anticipatory stanzas, 214 and 215, each emphatically announcing itself with a clamorous anaphoric exclamation, 'No more—no more—Oh! never more'. Developed from Horace's *nec…iam* but framed in a

[73] *BLJ* 2.49.

higher emotional register, they introduce a Romantic moment of intensely expressed feeling amid the Horatian composure:

> No more—no more—Oh! never more on me
> The freshness of the heart can fall like dew,
> Which out of all the lovely things we see
> Extracts emotions beautiful and new,
> […]
> No more—no more—Oh! never more, my heart!
> Canst thou be my sole world, my universe! (*DJ* 1.214.1-6, 215.1-2)

Immediately after this 16-line interpolation, however, in what is now stanza 216, Byron reverts to the original final stanza of his sequence and its controlled, Horatian understatement of the large claim of having retired from love:

> My days of love are over, me no more
> The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,
> Can make the fool of which they made before,
> In short, I must not lead the life I did do;
> The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
> The copious use of claret is forbid too. (*DJ* 1.216.1-6)

Its opening line repeats the 'no more' (*nec…iam*) motif but without the inserted stanzas' hectic rhetorical flourishes of dashes, exclamation marks, apostrophe and duplication ('world'/'universe'), which fracture the classical mood.

This disjuncture unsettles the alert reader. In part it is a matter of style: Fraenkel notes the 'bare minimum of ornamentation' which characterises the last part of Horace's *Odes* 3.14, and this Byron emulates in stanzas 212, 213 and 216.[74] There is a spare but compelling simplicity to 'My days of love are over' which contrasts strikingly with 'No more—no more—Oh! never more on me/ The freshness of the heart can fall like dew' of sixteen lines before. In part it is a matter of a cooler tone, a shift towards Horace's more detached stance (if not going as far as Ezra Pound's

[74] Fraenkel (1957, ppbk. 1980) 289.

declaration that Horace had 'the clubman's poise and no stronger emotion than might move one towards a particularly luscious oyster').[75]

In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Byron wrote of the curse 'to understand, not feel [Horace's] lyric flow' (4.77). In this *Don Juan* sequence, by counterposing a faithfully understood rendering of Horace's *me nec femina* in *DJ* 1.216 to his interpolated reworking of Horace's thought in Romantic vein at *DJ* 1.214-15, Byron demonstrates what, in a different poetic mode, it is to feel. McGann, for whom 'the whole point, stylistically, of *Don Juan*…was to have Byron come forward as an avatar of Horace, as a "moderate minded bard" (*DJ* 1.118)', reads this as Byron turning away from 'his earlier poetry of the "heart", the poetry of strong emotion': 'the days of his…Romantic assertiveness and bombast are (he says) over'.[76] If so, it stands in ironic contrast to Horace's—over-stated—metapoetic profession in *Odes* 4.1 of a late return to lyric.

In a note to stanza 216, Byron provided the Latin text *tout court* for an implied reader conversant with source (Hor. *Odes* 4.1.29-32) and meaning:

> Me nec femina, nec puer
> Jam, nec spes animi credula mutui,
> Nec certare juvat mero;
> Nec vincire novis tempora floribus.

One effect of the Latin is to demonstrate how closely in the sestet the *Don Juan* stanza reflects the sense of the Horace, including a rather schoolboyishly literal translation of *spes animi credula mutui* as 'the credulous hope of mutual minds', compared for instance with Pope's more passionate 'fond hope of mutual fire'.[77] Byron's stanza also follows the Latin's construction, unnatural in English, in placing 'me' (*me*) in the emphatic first position and deferring the verb to the third line: 'me

[75] Pound quoted in Martindale (1993) 1.
[76] McGann (1976) 71-72.
[77] Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Ode 4.1.33.

no more/ The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,/ Can make the fool of which they made before'. There is, however, one notable exception in the absence of any English equivalent for *nec puer* ('nor boy'), Horace's bisexual pairing to *nec femina.* Indeed, in Byron's manuscript draft and first proof, as in his 1811 memorandum, *nec puer* was also omitted in the Latin. It was added in response to Hobhouse's comment on the proof, 'Better add the whole or scratch out all after *femina'*, to which Byron replied: 'Quote the whole then—it was only in compliance with your Settentrionale [Northern] notions that I left out the remnant of the line'.[78] By 1818, both would have been sensitive to the rumours of pederasty circulating about Byron after his separation from his wife. Byron's initial instinct was to bowdlerise.

This was precisely the period when the Bowdler siblings were publishing their expurgated versions of *The Family Shakespeare*, and classical works were being sanitised.[79] Thomas Moore, in his 1800 *Odes of Anacreon,* criticised 'the substitution of asterisks…in the popular interpretations of the classics' as serving 'but to bring whatever is exceptionable into notice', a sentiment he backed by a quotation from Juvenal 8.139, *claramque facem praeferre pudendis* ('to hold a bright torch over things to be ashamed of').[80] Byron's adoption of Hobhouse's advice to quote Horace's well-known line in full avoided this effect, as well as any ambiguity that a *puer* might still provide pleasure, even if a *femina* no longer did.[81]

In some respects, the two interpolated stanzas 214-15 might logically have followed, rather than preceded, this stanza but Byron's Romanticised afterthought

[78] *CPW* 5.681, note to lines 1721-23.
[79] Thomas Bowdler's comprehensive *The Family Shakspeare* [sic] of 1818 replaced an 1807 edition of 20 Shakespeare plays, probably expurgated by Henrietta Bowdler but published anonymously. https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2016/07/11/bowdlerize/
[80] Moore (1800) 76.
[81] Dyer (2001) 573.

could not be allowed to spoil the culminating effect of his original sequence. The fidelity in stanza 216 to the text of *Odes* 4.1's disavowal of love leads the classically-versed reader to anticipate a closural equivalent of Horace's touching reverse as, unexpectedly given his renunciation of love in the previous 32 lines, the Roman poet suddenly questions the *rara lacrima* ('rare tear') coursing down his cheeks. With the pathos of indecorous elderly eroticism, in nocturnal dreams he at one moment captures, at another chases, the hard-hearted youth Ligurinus flying across the Campus Martius and through the rolling waters (Hor. *Odes* 4.1.33-40). Later, in Byron's final poem written in Missolonghi, 'On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year' (1824), he was indeed to tackle Horace's subject of love revived but rejected by a beautiful young man, in Byron's case by Loukas Chalandritsanos, his young Greek page. But, here in *Don Juan*, the final couplet of stanza 216 offers the classicist a textual affront to his expectations:

> So for a good old gentlemanly vice,
> I think I must take up with avarice.

The abrupt change of tone and the cynical proposal to abandon love for acquisitiveness subvert the Horace, the more provocatively since the *Don Juan* narrator's avowed new 'vice' is starkly at odds with Horace's habitual *topos* of antipathy for avarice and promotion of a modest sufficiency, a theme markedly evident in Book 3 of the *Odes* from which Byron draws in stanzas 212 and 213.[82] Ironically, it is the very fact of a reader's close engagement with allusions to Horace throughout the sequence which allows Byron to wrongfoot assumptions about the conclusion in terms of both tone and content. It reflects also the acute consciousness of the possibility of alternative outcomes, in life and death, displayed in the works of

[82] See for example Hor. *Ode*s 3.1 and 3.16.17-18, and among others *Sat.*1.1 and *Sat.* 2.3.

an author who became a lord only through the chance of a cannonball eliminating the heir presumptive at the Siege of Calvi, where Nelson lost his eye.

Norman Vance judges Horace the best-remembered classical author in nineteenth-century England, 'the common possession of well educated men', but even so not all readers, then or now, would be equipped to read Byron through Horace.[83] As McGann notes, 'Byron uses different levels of poetic coding to define his audiences', a procedure on 'spectacular display' in *Don Juan* and one which requires 'some special kind of knowledge to decipher'.[84] The sequence examined above is one example of how Byron, at the height of his poetical mastery, melds the contemporary and the classical in lines which can be read differentially by distinct elements of his readership. While stanzas 212-16 of *Don Juan* Canto 1 may be enjoyed at one level by all, Byron playfully exploits classical knowledge of epic, and of Horace in lyric mode, in order to tease, puzzle, and enrich the reading experience of that élite, predominantly male, audience reared like him on the 'drill'd dull lesson, forc'd down word by word'.[85]

'I like so much to quote', Don Juan 2.17

Some years ago James Thomson suggested that Byron has 'plenty of classical quotations and allusions, drawn from a not inconsiderable reading, but they are purely accessory'.[86] Certainly many are used as a form of poetic ornament, to add an erudite flourish, as with the Homeric description of 'a She epistle' as being as 'full of cunning as Ulysses' whistle,/ When he allured poor Dolon' (*DJ* 13.105) and

[83] Vance (1993) 199.
[84] McGann (1992) 194.
[85] *CHP* 4.75 referring specifically to Horace.
[86] Thomson (1948) 226; Thayer similarly judges 'the many traces of Horace…on the whole, external embellishments' (Thayer (1916) 39).

sometimes a Horatian reference falls in the same class, like 'the Vates irritabilis' of *DJ* 3.81 or '"Carpe diem", Juan, "Carpe, carpe!"' at 11.86.[87] Yet this is far from the whole picture. At times Byron imports a reference with a more emotive colouration, from Virgil rather than Horace, say, as when Haidée throws herself in front of Juan to protect him from being shot: '"On me", she cried, "let death/Descend—the fault is mine"', heightening the pathos by echoing Nisus' agonised cries in defence of his beloved Euryalus, *me, me,…in me convertite ferrum…mea fraus omnis* ('on me—on me—on me turn your sword…the guilt is all mine') from one of Byron's favourite passages from the *Aeneid*, the Nisus and Euryalus episode (see Chapter 2).[88] Or cuttingly, when Byron describes 'married dames' with 'such pure disinterestedness of passion,/ I've known them court an heiress for their lover./ "Tantaene!"'. That single word *tantaene,* emphatically placed in isolation at the beginning of a line, associates these women with the enormity of Juno's implacable resentment and 'feminine' jealousy at the opening of the *Aeneid*, and exposes the falsity of their 'pure disinterestedness'.[89]

Elsewhere, as in the example of Horace's *Odes* 3.14 and 4.1 explored above, Byron's allusions are longer and more meaningfully utilized in the text. In his examination of Byron's attitude towards the works of Shakespeare, Bate notes a complex allusion to *Macbeth* in Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* and comments:

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[87] *DJ* 13.105 alludes to Hom. *Il.* 10.394ff.; *vates irritabilis* to Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.102 (Byron earlier referred to Horace's *genus irritabile vatum* in the preface to his 1811 *Hints from Horace* but he may have been reminded of it by Coleridge's discussion of the 'supposed irritability of men of genius' in his 1817 *Biographia Literaria,* Ch.2)*; carpe diem* to Hor. *Odes* 1.11.8.

[88] *DJ* 4.42; Verg. *Aen.* 9.427-28. Byron uses 'Me—me adsum qui feci' about attacks on John Murray for publishing his *Cain* (*BLJ* 9.103).

[89] *DJ* 12.33 quoting from Verg. Aen.1.11 *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* ('Can heavenly spirits cherish resentment so dire?').

> A neo-classical allusion such as this is intended to be recognized; it works towards the ideal of poetry as cultivated discourse, conversation between educated writer and educated reader. A Romantic allusion is more for the benefit of the poet himself; it serves to enrich his language and secure his relationship with his admired forebear.[90]

Bate's taxonomical distinction between Byron's 'neo-classical' and 'Romantic' allusions to the same author—a distinction based on function rather than style or content—may also be applied to Byron's classical references.

On this basis, Byron's allusion to Horace's *Odes* 4.1 in *DJ* 1.214-16 (discussed above) would be 'Romantic', speaking to some more personal expression and 'enriching his language'. That Horace's poignant meditation on time and *eros* had an especial resonance for Byron is evidenced by his citation at key points of his life and poetry of its memorable third line, *non sum qualis eram* ('I am not the man I was', *Odes* 4.1.3). The sentiment clearly had general appeal to a poet who, at just seventeen, complained of not possessing 'that *Gaieté de Cœur* which formerly distinguished me', but in 1811, as he wrestled in verse with his response to the deaths of mother, friends, and 'more than friend', John Edleston, the line had such immediacy that Byron used it in English in two poems, one of his 'Thyrza' laments and *Epistle to a Friend*.[91] Byron returned to 'I am not now/ That which I have been' in the positionally consequential, penultimate stanza (4.185) of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* and finally in ['To the Countess of Blessington'], one of his last works before he sailed to Greece and silence. Here, in simple quatrains like the Horace, Byron appropriated not just *non sum qualis eram,* but the play on *mollis* (soft) and *durus* (hard) in Horace's following lines: *desine, dulcium/ mater saeva Cupidinum,/ circa lustra decem flectere mollibus/ iam durum imperiis* ('Cruel mother of sweet

[90] *Macbeth* 5.5.12; Bate (1986, corr. 1989) 232.
[91] *BLJ* 1.87; *Stanzas* 'Away, away ye notes of woe!', 7-8; *Epistle to a Friend, In Answer to Some Lines Exhorting the Author to be Cheerful, and to 'Banish Care'* (12).

desires, stop driving one who after nearly fifty years is now too hardened to answer your soft commands', *Odes* 4.1.4-7). Like Horace, Byron was too hardened by age for the soft demands of love and poetry, and had not yet met his own Ligurinus.

If these 'Romantic' allusions are essentially for Byron's benefit, as Bate argues, the primary effect of his 'neoclassical' category is to forge a knowing bridge between author and reader from the same, classically educated élite—a bridge that at times Byron mischievously blows up. Sometimes the allusion, by triangulation of ancient authority, modern author and reader, does indeed act to induce a sense of shared values. In these cases, Byron's text may advertise the provenance in order to enlist the prestige of a celebrated classical author, as in a passage from *Don Juan* which, deploring 'an enormous room without a Soul' by comparison with 'A neat, snug study on a winter's night', invokes Horace, a poet *satis beatus unicis Sabinis* ('quite happy enough with his unmatched Sabine acres'):[92]

> Yet let them think that Horace has exprest
> Shortly and sweetly the masonic folly
> Of those, forgetting the great place of rest,
> Who give themselves to architecture wholly;
> We know where things and men must end at best,
> A moral (like all morals) melancholy,
> And 'Et Sepulchri immemor struis domos'
> Shows that we build when we should but entomb us. (*DJ* 5.63)[93]

En passant, while Byron highlights the graceful brevity of Horace's expression, he himself repetitively takes seven lines to say much the same, though 'masonic folly' is a phrase to treasure.

In other verses, Byron toys with his readers. He may, for example, misdirect them by alluding to a classical pronouncement, only to undercut it irreverently. For example, Horace's *Ars Poetica* had advised poets

[92] *DJ* 5.56 and 58; Hor. *Odes* 2.18.14.
[93] Hor. *Odes* 2.18.118-19 ('And you build houses without giving a thought to your tomb').

> ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus adsunt
> humani uoltus; si vis me flere, dolendum est
> primum ipsi tibi.
>
> ('As men's faces smile on those who smile, so they respond to those who weep. If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself', *Ars P.* 101-3).

Byron summarises the precept neatly, and then sardonically pinpoints the duplicity it entails:

> And feeling, in a poet, is the source
> Of others' feeling; but they are such liars,
> And take all colours. (*DJ* 3.87)

Or he may play on the reader's pride in his knowledge of classical texts, as in a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 2.137 misattributed to Horace, possibly by error though Vance suggests that design is much more likely in order 'to dress up cynical Ovidian shrewdness as Horatian wisdom':[94]

> In short, the maxim for the amorous tribe is
> Horatian, 'Medio tu tutissimus ibis.'
> The 'tu' 's *too* much,—but let it stand—the verse
> Requires it, that's to say the English rhyme,
> And not the pink of old Hexameters. (*DJ* 6.17-18)[95]

At stanza 17's couplet, Byron audaciously stretches the actual quotation to fit his metre, and then, while readers are still preening themselves on registering the inaccuracy, disarms criticism by confessing at the start of stanza 18 that he has deliberately inserted a redundant *tu*.

Elsewhere, Byron uses Latin quotations for suggestive purposes. Consider, for example, some lines from *DJ* 13.40 which, extracted from context, appear to offer a moving expression of the *carpe diem* theme in the face of *ineluctabile tempus,* in

[94] Vance (1988) 217. *medio tutissimus ibis:* the Sun advises Phaethon that the middle route is safest.
[95] In earlier drafts, 'Not the [Latin][Roman] of old Hexameters'.

particular through leveraging the semantic impact of *fuimus* in the past tense from the priest Panthus' tragically elliptical report to Aeneas that Troy has fallen: *fuimus Troes* ('we have been'—but by implication, are no longer—'Trojans', Verg. *Aen.* 2.325).

> While those who are not beginners, should have sense
> Enough to make for port, ere Time shall summon
> With his grey signal flag: and the past tense,
> The dreary *'Fuimus'* of all things human,
> Must be declined, while life's thin thread's spun out
> Between the gaping heir and the gnawing gout. (*DJ* 13.40)

But context is all, and the passage comes in a covertly indecent disquisition on the likes of the patrician Lady Adeline, fiery beneath her snowy exterior: 'And your cold people are beyond all price,/ When once you have broken their confounded ice', 'But after all they are a North-West Passage', though gentleman may perhaps 'run upon a shoal', 'if the Pole's not open, but all frost'. So 'young beginners may as well commence/ With quiet cruising o'er the ocean woman;/ While those who are not beginners should…make for port'.[96] The intertext of Dryden's translation of Juvenal's indelicate and arguably misogynistic Sixth Satire, with its 'gaping Heir' and 'Th'*Aruspex*…forc'd to stand so long, he gets the gout' amplifies the sexual undertow.[97]

On a similar note, in Canto 9 of *Don Juan* Byron introduces an extended account of Juan's involvement in the siege of Ismail during the Russo-Turkish War and of his subsequently attracting the attentions of the amorous Catherine the Great, by announcing his intention to 'sing' of 'Fierce Loves and faithless wars', a pointed parody of Edmund Spenser's declaration in *The Faerie Queene* that 'Fierce warres

[96] *DJ* 13.36-40.
[97] Dryden, *Juvenal's Sixth Satire*, lines 54 and 519-20.

and faithful loves shall moralize my song'.[98] Reflecting on the 'fierce loves' of the Empress Catherine, (a female monarch represented as the inversion of Spenser's virginal Elizabeth I), Byron audaciously combines the notion celebrated in *The Faerie Queene* of the *felix culpa,* Man's fortunate fault or fall*,* with an incomplete quotation from Horace's *Satires* 1.3.107-8, to yield a wickedly salacious passage with quite other falls and rises:

> Oh thou 'teterrima Causa' of all 'belli'—
> Thou gate of Life and Death—thou nondescript!
> Whence is our exit and our entrance;—well I
> May pause in pondering how all Souls are dipt
> In thy perennial fountain; how man *fell,* I
> Know not, since Knowledge saw her branches stript
> Of her first fruit; but how he falls and rises
> *Since, thou* hast settled beyond all surmises.
>
> Some call thee 'the worst Cause of War', but I
> Maintain thou art the *best;* for after all
> From thee we come, to thee we go, and why
> To get at thee not batter down a wall,
> Or waste a world? Since no one can deny
> Thou dost replenish worlds both great and small:
> With, or without thee, all things at a stand
> Are, or would be, thou Sea of Life's dry Land! (*DJ* 9.55-6)

The Horace is an unexceptionable, if blunt, comment in a treatment of the evolution of civilisation based on Lucretius, to whom Byron also alludes at *DJ* 9.73 among 'heathenish philosophers' who 'Make Love the Main Spring of the Universe'.[99] But what Bernard Blackstone musically terms Byron's 'fantasia above the ground-bass of [Horace]' leaves the reader to supply the crucial omission from the quotation: *cunnus taeterrima belli/ causa* ('a cunt was the most terrible cause of war').[100] The classical initiate's understanding of *cunnus* as Byron's gate of Life and Death is the

[98] *DJ* 7.8; *The Faerie Queene* 1.1.9, a text Leigh Hunt claimed to have lent in 1817 to Byron, who declared he 'could not see anything' in Spenser (Hunt (1828) 45).
[99] See Lucr.1.1-5.
[100] Blackstone (1975) cited in Edgecombe (2006) 5; translation by Davie (2011) 13.

key to unlock the orgasmic run of sexual *double entendres* in his address to the vagina. It is, perhaps, not wholly surprising that Byron's friend, Douglas Kinnaird, found it difficult to find a publisher for cantos 6-9 of *Don Juan*.

Though undeniably based on 'conversation between educated writer and educated reader', the more risqué of Byron's classical allusions might be thought spectacularly to undermine Bate's 'neo-classical' concept of 'work[ing] towards the ideal of poetry as cultivated discourse'. Byron himself indicated that 'cultivated discourse' was not, or at least not wholly, his intent:

> As to 'Don Juan'…it may be bawdy…but is it not *life*, is it not *the thing*?—Could any man have written it—who has not lived in the world?—and tooled in a post-chaise? in a hackney coach? in a Gondola? against a wall? in a court carriage? in a vis-à-vis?—on a table?—and under it?[101]

At the same time, classical literature, and predominantly Latin literature, was unquestionably part of his life and those of his peers. Full appreciation of the richness of *Don Juan* depends on the reader's grasp of the references, serious, satirical, teasing and, yes, bawdy.

Achillean undertones in the seraglio

Finally, *Don Juan*'s seraglio episode in Cantos 4 to 6, which Beatty judges 'Byron at his best', provides an example of how awareness of the classical repertoire can inform the reader's appreciation of Byron's lacunose narrative.[102]

The core plot is that Juan, torn from his beloved Haidée, is overcome by her father's pirates and taken as a slave to Constantinople where he is bought in the slave market by a eunuch servant to a Sultana. Then—against his will—he is dressed as a

[101] *BLJ* 6.232.
[102] Beatty acknowledges his is not a universal view (Beatty (1985) 97).

girl so that he can be smuggled illicitly into the Sultan's harem to 'serve a Sultana's sensual phantasy' (5.126). In the event, Juan rejects the sultan's fourth wife, the sexually predatory Gulbeyaz, (who alone, with her eunuch, knows that Juan is male) and is assigned by the unsuspecting harem mistress to share the couch of a young girl in the harem, the 'luxuriant, budding' Dudù. During the night, Dudù 'on a sudden…screamed out' (6.70). Pressed as to why, the 'agitated, flushed and frightened' girl cannot 'at first expound what was amiss', then eventually describes a Freudian dream of walking in a wood, picking up a hitherto unobtainable golden apple and being stung by a bee that flew out of it (6.74-76). The following morning the Sultana, though apparently kept in ignorance of the dream, is suspicious and, ordering Juan's death, demands the pair be brought to her, at which point Canto 6 ends. What really made Dudù cry out is presented as a mystery, but the classically alert reader can not only understand, but anticipate, the cry.

In this harem episode, as throughout *Don Juan,* Byron draws eclectically on a range of sources, classical and non-classical, in addition to his personal experience of visiting the Constantinople seraglio (though not its sequestered harem) in 1810. Byron advises that much of the description of Lambro's furniture in Canto 3 is taken from 'Tully's Tripoli', and Miss Tully's *Letters Written During a Ten Years' Residence at the Court of Tripoli* could also have furnished or reinforced ideas for key plot elements in Cantos 4-5, with her autoptic accounts of Christian prisoners being seized at sea and sold at auction in the slave market, and, as remarked by Margaret McGing, of males affecting female disguise.[103] Reading Tully's memoirs while staying with Byron in 1816, Hobhouse noted in his diary her account of Sidy Useph, a power-hungry member of the local ruling family, repeatedly infiltrating

[103] *BLJ* 8.186; [Tully] (1819) 1.154-55, 1.308 and 2.176-7; McGing (1940) 39-42.

female gatherings in the guise of a woman, and he drew an analogy with the 62 BCE Bona Dea scandal in Julius Caesar's house when Clodius gained access to rites reserved for women by dressing as a female harpist: 'Siddy Useph seems to have been a complete Clodius. he came disguised to a female feast' [sic].[104] Clodius' exploit is also mentioned in Juvenal's sixth satire (6.336-45), to which, together with the tenth satire, F.L. Beaty asserts Byron was 'certainly' indebted for the encounter involving Juan and 'the lustful sultana Gulbayez'.[105] Undoubtedly there is specific verbal echo of Juvenal 6.270, *tunc orba tigride peior* ('then [she's] worse than a tigress deprived [of her cubs]') in the comparison of the spurned Gulbayez, robbed of lying in the arms of a slave (cf. *iacet in servi complexibus,* Juv. 6.279), to a 'tigress robb'd of young' (*DJ* 5.132), but Beaty's further suggestion that Juan's transvestism had precedents in the attacks on effeminacy in Juvenal's second and tenth satires seems less convincing.

Tales of tactical masculine cross-dressing are prevalent in history and literature, and other similar sources for Byron's story have been suggested, but, as in the cases of Sidy Useph and Clodius and as in Juvenal's satires, they commonly entail the male's deliberate and willing adoption of the guise.[106] The crucial difference with Byron's Juan is his vehement initial abhorrence at the prospect of donning women's clothing. I propose, instead, an apparently undiscussed parallel. In a context where

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[104] Hobhouse's Swiss diary, Friday 13th September 1816, https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/22-switzerland.pdf

[105] Beaty (1985) 143. As noted above, Byron quoted from Dryden's translation of Juvenal's sixth satire at *DJ* 13.40.

[106] For example, the actual exploits of Dan Mackinnon whom apparently Byron met in Lisbon (Gronow, *Reminiscences* (London, 1862) discussed in McGing (1940) 39-40). Cochran adds Tournefort's *A Voyage into the Levant* and a note to Jonathan Scott's 1811 translation of *Arabian Nights Entertainments* (https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/don-juan-052.pdf). Other elements may be influenced by Thomas Hope's *Anastasius* (Cochran (2013) 432-71). Boyd (1945, edn. 1958) 124-27 argues that Byron relied on Sotheby's translation of Wieland's *Oberon* for the materials for the scenes between Gulbeyaz and Juan but in *Oberon* the hero Huon enters the harem as a male gardener, not *en travesti.*

Achilles is referenced three times during Juan's enslaved sea-journey to Constantinople (*DJ* 4.76, 101 and 104), Juan's protests might well trigger in the classically-educated among Byron's readers thoughts of Achilles' reluctantly-adopted disguise for his sojourn in the Scyrian gynaeceum.

Since the opening lines of *Don Juan* strip its protagonist of heroic stature, it is fitting of his poem, as well as temperamentally characteristic of Byron, that he should appropriate the marginal rather than the martial version of Achilles. The account of Achilles' cross-dressing is not found in the *Iliad*, where Fantuzzi argues that Homer 'preserved a heroic dimension for Achilles' connection with Scyros that contrasted with the alternative tale of his transvestism', but Byron would have been well-acquainted with the story from a number of classical works, including Horace's *Odes* 1.8 and 2.5, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13.168–9 and Suetonius' life of Tiberius 70.3, which records that the emperor quizzed grammarians about the name Achilles assumed among the virgins (with the answer Pyrrha, according to Hyginus, *fab.* 96.1).[107] In particular, however, the extent of specific correspondences is persuasive of considerable exploitation in *Don Juan* of Statius' *Achilleid* 1.198-960 and its earlier intertext, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 1.681–704, even though the accounts of Achilles on Scyros and Juan in the harem are not analogous in every detail (Juan does not, for example, fall in love among the women, nor is he confronted by a Ulysses figure).[108]

[107] Fantuzzi (2012) 27, 34; Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 75.
[108] During composition of this episode, Byron referred to Statius in a letter, *BLJ* 8.200. Byron had earlier quoted from Statius' *Thebaid* 1.335 in a note to *CHP* 2.73: 'if the Polynices of Statius, '*In mediis audit duo litora campis',* did actually hear both shores in crossing the isthmus of Corinth, he had better ears than have ever been worn in such a journey since' (*CPW* 2.200). It is noteworthy too that Canto 5 opens with a reference to Ovid's amatory verse, and that at 5.122 the sultana, like Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria,* 'meant to tutor [Juan] in love's ways'.

In both the *Achilleid* and *Don Juan,* an external female party (Achilles' mother, Thetis, and the sultana, directing her eunuch, Baba) proposes that the hero (Achilles/ Juan) should dress in women's clothing rather than the idea being self-generated, and the hero, each a truculent boy (*trux puer, Achil*. 1.302), reacts with fierce indignation.[109] After this initial resistance is overcome and female dress donned, the hero is groomed and tutored in feminine ways: Thetis 'subdues' (*domat*) Achilles' unkempt hair (*Achil.* 1.328) just as the eunuch, having attached false long tresses to Juan's hair, makes him 'comb his head and oil it' (*DJ* 5.79). Then Thetis (at *Achil.* 1.330-1 and again at 1.338-343) and the eunuch (*DJ* 5.91*)* alike instruct Achilles/ Juan (now to be known as Juanna) on how to walk, move and speak, and each specifically advises modesty, a lesson later repeated for Achilles by Deidamia, the Scyrian king's daughter with whom he falls in love (*Achil.* 1.580).

Such tutorials may be typical of a cross-dressing scene, but the distinctive comparison to Venus in both texts of the prime sexual interests, Deidamia in the *Achilleid* and the sultana and Dudù in *Don Juan*, is suggestive of a conscious intertext.

> sed quantum virides pelagi Venus addita Nymphas
> obruit, aut umeris quantum Diana relinquit
> Naidas, effulget tantum regina decori
> Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat.
>
> ('But as Venus overwhelms the green Sea Nymphs when she joins them, as Diana's shoulders outtop the Naiads, so far does Deidamia, queen of the fair choir, shine out eclipsing her lovely sisters', *Achil.* 1.293-96).

From this, Byron extracts the key referents—Venus, nymphs, Diana, a choir of girls—to frame an epic simile of his own with clear verbal parallels: 'The lady [ie the sultana] rising up with such an air/ As Venus rose with from the wave, on them/

[109] Stat. *Achil*. 1.259-82, *DJ* 5.73-76.

Bent like an antelope a Paphian pair/ Of Eyes', with 'her attendants, who/ Composed a choir of girls…a very nymph-like looking crew, Which might have call'd Diana's Chorus "Cousin,"' (*DJ* 5.96, 99). Its classical grandiloquence conveys the beauty and the imperial status of the sultana, compared with the more unassuming description of the harem girl Dudù as 'a kind of sleepy Venus' (*DJ* 6.42), and offers a sharp stylistic contrast to the preceding vernacular exchanges between Juan and Baba, who calls Juan 'fool' and 'blockhead'.

The similarities continue. Both Achilles and Juan blush in the presence of Deidamia/ Gulbeyaz, though Juan subsequently pales (*Achil.* 1.304-10*, DJ* 5.117), and both express aggrieved humiliation at impersonating a woman, with spinning highlighted as the representative degrading activity. Achilles, after Deidamia's spinning lessons, angrily berates himself that while Patroclus may now be taking Achilles' part in battle, he Achilles knows how to spin thread, *pudet haec taedetque fateri* ('shame and disgust to confess it', *Achil.* 1.632-36). Juan bridles at the libidinous sultana's question, 'Christian, canst thou love?' and rebuffs her advances with the cry, 'In this vile garb the distaff, web, and woof/ Were fitter for me: Love is for the free!' (*DJ* 5.127). What happens then is explicit in Statius: Achilles ends his mortified soliloquy by asking how long he will shamefully not prove himself a man even in love, a demand that leads him to take Deidamia by force that night in a reassertion of his masculinity (*Achil.* 1.638-43). Clearly this is a storyline not applicable to Gulbayez, given her exigent and unwelcome carnal demands, so Juan is saved by the arrival of the Sultan and removed to the Oda, the quarters of the 'lovely Odalisques' of the harem, where Byron provides a second female focus of interest in Dudù, equivalent in innocence yet emergent sexuality to Achilles' Deidamia (*DJ* 42-43).

In the ensuing narrative, Byron adopts a technique much favoured in *Don Juan*: he ensures deniability by taking refuge in opacity and narratorial claims of ignorance, and invites the reader's imagination to fill the lacunae on the basis of clues and innuendo, thus rendering the reader exposed to accusations of salaciousness and hypocrisy.[110] Reading the scene with the Achilles plot in mind leaves little doubt of implied rape. Once in the Oda, Juan's characterisation shifts from a passive figure responding to the sexual appetites of women to something more like the philandering Don Juan of stage representations, with Juan 'ogling all [the girls'] charms from breasts to backs' (6.29). During the night, Juan assaults the sultana's young attendant, Dudù, whom he has only just met but with whom he is assigned to share a bed—a circumstance close to Ovid's narrative, where rape is also facilitated by the fact that Achilles and Deidameia occupy the same bedroom (*Ars am.* 1.697).[111] In both Statius and Byron the public signal of the deed is a girl's cry piercing the silence of the night: in the *Achilleid*, *illa quidem clamore nemus montemque replevit,* ('the girl [Deidamia] filled wood and mountain with her cries' *Achil.* 1.645) and in *Don Juan* 'on a sudden she [Dudù] screamed out;/ And that so loudly, that upstarted all/ The Oda in a general commotion' (6.70-71). Censured for disturbing her harem companions, Dudù begs that the new girl, Juan(na), should not be taken from her on the promise that 'Her future dreams should all be kept in hand', a line pregnant with Byronic sexual *double entendre* (6.82).

Though the narrator disingenuously finds himself unable to 'expound the mystery of this rupture of their rest' ('rupture' another suggestive word, 6.85),

[110] See, for example, stanzas 6.70, 71 and 85.
[111] In Statius' *Achilleid,* Achilles and Deidamia are participating in Bacchic rites in a forest.

Dudù's pleas to retain Juan(na) call to mind Ovid's claim in the *Ars Amatoria* account that Achilles' Deidamia wanted to be raped:

> Viribus illa quidem victa est, ita credere oportet:
> Sed voluit vinci viribus illa tamen.
> ……..Quid blanda voce moraris
> Auctorem stupri, Deïdamia, tui?
>
> ('By force indeed was she vanquished, so one must believe; yet by force did she wish to be vanquished at the same. …Why with a coaxing voice do you delay the author of your rape, Deidamia?', Ov. *Ars am.* 1.699-700, 703-4).

Ovid recounts the story of Achilles and Deidamia as an example of his distasteful lesson in love, *grata est vis ista puellis:/ Quod iuvat, invitae saepe dedisse volunt,* 'women welcome the use of force: they often wish to give unwillingly what they like to give', *Ars am.* 1.673-74). With misogynistic mirth, Byron reprises this idea in the immediately subsequent siege episode when the great 'continence' of the Russian army in victory disappoints those ladies 'who had felt the inconvenient state/ Of "single blessedness"' and widows of forty wonder 'wherefore the ravishing did not begin!' (*DJ* 8.131-32).

Byron's radically simplified episode curtails the story after the cry—to the detriment of narrative continuity in *Don Juan*—and, as the plotlines diverge, omits core incidents in the *Achilleid* like Deidamia's hidden pregnancy, her eventual marriage to Achilles and the machinations of Ulysses. There are, though, some further points of correspondence. First, while Achilles and Deidamia do spend time together illicitly after the rape, they enjoy only one night as husband and wife (*Achil.* 1.936–37) before Achilles' fateful departure for the Trojan War so that Book 1 ends on a note of pathos.[112] Juan(na) and Dudù similarly spend only one night together in the seraglio before the sultana exacts a somewhat obscured vengeance, though there

[112] Fantuzzi (2012) 31-32.

is no suggestion of remorse on Juan's part or pathos on either's. There is, too, the same swift transition in both plots from the heroes' sexual encounters to their participation in singularly bloody wars, Achilles at Troy and Juan at the siege of Ismail. How and why Juan arrived there is unexplained. In a breathtakingly perfunctory treatment, the poem merely says that he is one of five captives escaped from Constantinople, the others his slave-market soldier-companion, Johnson, two unnamed Turkish women from the harem (one presumably Dudù), and one 'neither man nor woman' (the eunuch, surely), the last three of whom rapidly disappear from the story.

As a coda, Byron utilises in the seraglio episode another epic feature, one Harrison has termed the 'proleptic ekphrasis' motif.[113] When Juan is led into the harem, he passes through a 'massy portal', its hinges 'smooth as Rogers' rhymes':

> The giant door was broad, and bright, and high,
> Of gilded bronze, and carved in curious guise;
> Warriors thereon were battling furiously;
> Here stalks the victor, there the vanquished lies;
> There captives led in triumph droop the eye,
> And in perspective many a Squadron flies;
> It seems the work of times before the line
> Of Rome transplanted fell with Constantine. (*DJ* 5.86)

It is a description reminiscent of Virgil's ominous ekphrasis in the first book of the *Aeneid* when Aeneas, arriving at Carthage, sees the giant (*ingens)* temple Dido is building to Juno with its doors of bronze and is transfixed by similar, if not identical, scenes from the Trojan War, including Achilles' pursuit of the Phrygians, the slaughter of Troilus and the desecration of Hector's body (*Aen*. 1.446-93). Byron's covert allusion works with the historical reference of the final couplet to underscore the mutability of imperial fortunes down the ages: Troy fell, Rome rose, Carthage

[113] Harrison (2001) 70-71.

fell, then Rome was transplanted to Constantinople but fell when Constantine XI was killed as the Ottomans seized Constantinople in 1453. Here the ekphrasis foreshadows the military carnage Juan is shortly to encounter at Ismail, where the Ottomans in turn are shown losing to the Russians in 1790.

At the same time, the Virgilian allusion has a more targeted effect within the seraglio narrative, especially given its proximity to the comparison of the sultana's harem girls to Diana's chorus (*DJ* 5.99), just as Aeneas' first sight of Dido and her train is cast in terms of Diana guiding her chorus (*qualis…excercet Diana choros, Aen.* 1.498-99).[114] These parallels trigger echoes of the sexuality tragically evoked in the *infelix* Dido by a stranger's arrival by sea. Dido's plight is vividly portrayed by Virgil's famous transition in imagery from the Carthaginian queen as a huntress goddess to a wounded deer impaled on love's arrow (*Aen.* 4.68-73). The description of Dudù, whose very name is reminiscent of Dido (and, less directly, of Deidamia), as like a fawn as she prepares for bed (*DJ* 6.60) therefore carries inauspicious connotations.

An 1823 review in *The Literary Examiner* declared of Canto 6 that 'the general complexion of this canto…is *couleur de rose*, and skittish…a step in the education of Don Juan pleasantly related and rapidly dismissed'.[115] Viewed through a classical lens, the handling of Juan and Dudù takes on a darker hue. Deidamia was at least loved, courted and eventually married by Achilles, while Dido enjoyed a period of passion before desertion and she determined her own end in one of the great tragic moments of epic. Dudù, an underspecified character apparently created only to afford titillating scope for the cry in the night from Byron's source text, appears to

[114] For Byron's use of *Aen.* 1.498-99 in *The Waltz*, see Chapter 4.
[115] *The Literary Examiner* (London, 1823) 11.

have been raped by another sea-borne stranger (however welcome), and then to have been discarded, nameless and storyless.

'an epic…in the spirit of our day'

In conclusion then, in *Don Juan* Byron offers his readers an amalgam of professed epic form with a burlesqued figure of legend transposed to the turbulent times of Catherine the Great's imperialist expansion and the nascent French Revolution. Infused with energy and genre-bending irony, it was written at a time of post-revolutionary, post-war disillusionment, and one moreover when in the literary sphere the novel had gained the high—or, in some cases, low—ground. David Duff detects 'Byron's sense of the sheer improbability of a modern epic poem', a sense which results in his 'subjecting [epic] to a *reductio ad absurdum* in *Don Juan*'.[116] Byron gives his own views on the subject forcibly, if Delphically: 'If you must have an epic, there's 'Don Juan' for you. I call that an epic: it is an epic as much in the spirit of our day as the Iliad was in Homer's'.[117]

It is 'the spirit of our day' which affords Byron extensive literary liberties. Despite his claims to be writing in the style of Homer and Virgil and his appropriation of some elements of their plots and character, tonally and structurally *Don Juan*'s affinities are more with the picaresque Petronius in an epic parody of satirical colour than the essentially serious and holistic Homer or Virgil. The *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid* are each episodic but the episodes are contained within a framing teleological narrative, and their synthesis into a single artistic entity substantially enhances the reader's appreciation of the works. By contrast, for all *Don Juan*'s epic scope and

[116] Duff (2009) 17.
[117] Medwin (1824) 200.

scale, its whole is not greater than the sum of its parts. Byron's indisputable brilliance lies above all in his handling of the incident, the idea, the stanza, the line, the rhyme, the pun. The more closely one reads the text of *Don Juan*, the more rewarding it becomes.

A significant component of that aesthetic is the extensive substratum of classical references in both the narrative of *Don Juan* and the reflections of the well-educated, cosmopolitan, man of the world narrator. Byron's classical allusiveness is deep-seated, not as a display of arcane scholarship but as a feature of his habit of mind—and, Wordsworth notwithstanding, a habit still very much in 'the spirit of our day', shared with others in the contemporary literary milieu like Sir Walter Scott in his immensely popular novels. For the greater part, the text of *Don Juan* remains intelligible without the reader discerning all the allusions, but it is infinitely richer (not to mention bawdier) if one does. Clearly, in this work the Odyssean strand is important, particularly in plot elements of Juan's encounter with Haidée and Lambro in cantos 2-4, and there are wider references to Greek literature and philosophy. Yet for all that, I argue that Byron's instinctive bias in the flow of his writing remains Latinist—to Petronius, Statius, Ovid, Virgil, Lucretius and above all, Horace.

Even if Byron's comic manipulation of professedly epic pretensions and less elevated attitudes and tone did not produce the work Shelley might perhaps have envisaged, in 1821 (unlike many of Byron's friends and professional acquaintances) Shelley nonetheless instantly greeted Byron's recital of canto 5 with acclamation and a prophecy of its longevity:

> It sets him not above but far above all the poets of the day: every word has the stamp of immortality…it fulfils in a certain degree what I have long preached of producing something wholly new & relative to the age—and yet surpassingly beautiful.[118]

Goethe concurred, calling *Don Juan* 'ein gränzenlos-geniales Werk' ('a work of boundless genius').[119]

[118] Jones, F.L. (1964) 2.323.
[119] Goethe cited in Coleridge, E.H. (1903) xix.

Chapter 6: Byron's (non)-performative turn

Introduction

While Byron composed in a range of genres to the end of his life, from around the age of thirty he worked increasingly with the two classically-based models of epic and tragedy, albeit in distinctly different modes. Clement Goode argues that '[f]rom 1816 to the end of his career he was a writer of drama. Except *Don Juan* his plays for that period are his most considerable work'.[1] If the scale and brilliance of Byron's subversive epic, *Don Juan,* makes Goode's exception a large one, the observation does highlight the importance of tragedy alongside epic in Byron's later oeuvre. However, where Byron drew playfully on epic norms for comic purposes in *Don Juan* (see Chapter 5), he controversially demonstrated a serious commitment to classical conventions for his tragedies. Jane Stabler argues that 'one of the effects of Byron's writing was to bring the reader to question Johnsonian constructions of normative decorum and taste in poetry', so it seems paradoxical that at just that period when his *Don Juan* was launching his most intense assault on traditional orthodoxies, Byron was simultaneously insisting in his tragedies on a classical formality received even by admirers with a note of sorrowful scepticism.[2]

Writing plays was not unusual among the Romantics but Byron was exceptionally prolific, producing seven in all between 1820–22, in the context of his profound dissatisfaction with the contemporary English theatre.[3] Richard Lansdown judges his three historical tragedies—*Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus* and *The Two*

[1] Goode (1923, repr.1964) 107.
[2] Stabler (2002, ppbk. 2009) 57.
[3] Byron's plays were *Marino Faliero* (1820)*, Sardanapalus* (1821)*, The Two Foscari* (1821)*, Cain* (1821)*, Heaven and Earth* (1821)*, Werner* (1822)*,* and *The Deformed Transformed* (begun 1822 and unfinished at his death)*.* This list excludes his earlier *Manfred,* which Byron instructed his publisher to call '"a poem" for it is *no* drama' (*BLJ* 5.209).

Foscari—'in nearly every respect, superior' to Wordsworth's *The Borderers;* Coleridge's *Zapolya* and *Osorio*, later successfully remodelled as *Remorse;* Keats' *Otho the Great* (co-written with Charles Armitage Brown) and Shelley's *The Cenci*.[4] Composing them over an intensive 16-month period, Byron eventually, but only belatedly, aligned himself with Greek drama on the continental model, in repudiation of the native English Shakespearean tradition:

> My object has been to dramatize like the Greeks (a *modest* phrase!) striking passages of history, as they did of history & mythology.—You will find all this very *un*like Shakespeare.[5]

This chapter examines Byron's deceptive positioning of himself as dramaturgically Hellenic, and, while acknowledging a characteristically Byronic wealth of intertexts, discusses the classical debt to Horace and Seneca, alongside Aristotle, in these works. It then scrutinises Byron's much-quoted suggestion that he could easily conceive that Aeschylus's *Prometheus Vinctus* had influenced everything he had written.[6]

Byron's classical approach to dramaturgy

From his youth on, Byron demonstrated a deep-rooted interest in the theatre, as audience member, as critic, and in 1815 as appointee to the Drury Lane theatre management sub-committee, an experience that brought a degree of disillusionment with plays and theatre people. However, a single, incomplete act of *Werner* had been his only attempt at play-writing until the last few years of his life when, as noted in earlier chapters, Byron was waging battle against the literary fashions of the day. His declaration of a new 'dramatic system' was another strand of this broader campaign.[7] Byron's general disenchantment with the calibre of contemporary English tastes in

[4] Lansdown (1992) 203.
[5] *BLJ* 8.152.
[6] *BLJ* 5.268.
[7] McGann (1989) 249; *BLJ* 8.218.

the theatre had been exacerbated by Coleridge's caustic critique, in Chapter 23 of his 1817 *Biographia Literaria,* of Charles Maturin's *Bertram*, a play which Byron, with Sir Walter Scott's support, had championed at Drury Lane. Meanwhile, as a theatre-goer in Italy from late 1816 on, Byron had found in Vittorio Alfieri's neo-classical plays an alternative, and acutely affecting, model (despite a dyspeptic comment at one point that 'the Italians have as yet *no tragedy*—Alfieri's are political dialogues—except Mirra').[8] Lady Blessington recorded that 'he frequently talks of Alfieri, and always with enthusiastic admiration', a sentiment which may have been reinforced by conversations with Count Guiccioli, Teresa's elderly husband, who in his youth had been a friend of Alfieri.[9] Byron was here somewhat ahead of his time. Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh have demonstrated that it was the Greek Revolution, which flared into action in 1821, that inspired Western Europe to 'unearth Greek tragedies', with a handful of adaptations in Great Britain, while the Continent rediscovered the works of Alfieri and Voltaire (whom also Byron much admired).[10]

Like Alfieri, Byron determined to vernacularise classical precepts. In this, he was very deliberately writing *à contre-courant* of the English Romantic movement in tragedy, the key features of which Jeffrey Cox defines as rejection of 'the rules set down by the neo-classical theorists—primarily the unities, but also the structures of decorum on style and subject matter'; protest 'against the idea that formal features define a genre'; and replacement of 'the moral emphasis of the doctrine of poetic justice with…"a metaphysic of tragedy"'.[11] Byron, however, not only adopted, but advocated, the classical and neo-classical stances other Romantics were denouncing. To his friend Douglas Kinnaird's 'Damn the Unities', he responded 'don't abuse the

[8] *BLJ* 6.206, 7.150.
[9] Lovell (1969) 64; Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.256.
[10] Hall and Macintosh (2005) 272-73.
[11] Cox (1994) 155.

"*Unities"*—there can be no drama without an approach to them.—The rest is barbarism'.[12] His classical tragedies substantiate his sincerity here, even if the declaration in his discursive *Don Juan* that 'poems must confine/ Themselves to Unity, like this of mine' (11.44) was an obvious tease. Shelley, not without misgivings, recorded Byron's reformist intent:

> He…is determined to write a series of plays, in which he will follow the French tragedians and Alfieri, rather than those of England and Spain, and produce something new, at least, to England. This seems to me the wrong road; but genius like his is destined to lead and not to follow.[13]

Just as *Don Juan* was a work designed to plot a new direction in poetry, so Byron's dramas, and particularly his classically-framed historical tragedies, were designed programmatically as exemplars of his vision of a reformed theatre.

Despite his affection for stage comedy and the humorous tone of other key works of this period, Byron chose tragedy as the genre for three of his first four dramas. Critical discussions of Byron's historical tragedies typically cite his claims to be adopting the model of the ancient Greek tragedians. But there is a twin conundrum. One is that, in extant letters and journals, Byron himself makes no such claims for the first nine months of the sixteen-month period in which he was writing these works. 'The Greeks' are notably absent from his many 1820 letters about his first historical tragedy, *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice,* though it exhibits similar formal features to its two successors. Moreover, when he does at last mention the Greeks, he does not cite individual Greek tragedies or tragedians as models, only 'the Greeks' or 'the Greek tragedians' collectively, plus the theorist Aristotle, whose *Poetics* had been a treasured prize for Byron at Harrow and whose formal prescriptions Byron adduced as an influence on his tragedies: 'I have sent to Murray

[12] *BLJ* 8.158.
[13] Jones (1964) 2.349.

a new tragedy, ycleped "Sardanapalus," written according to Aristotle—all, save the chorus—I could not reconcile me to that'.[14] However, a comment about the evocation of cathartic terror and pity suggests that in 1821 he may have been reading Aristotle via René Rapin and Thomas Rymer:

> I must remark from *Aristotle* and *Rymer*, that the *hero* of tragedy and (I add meo periculo) a *tragic* poem must *be guilty*, to excite "*terror* and *pity*," the end of tragic poetry. …is Achilles a *good* character? Or is even Aeneas anything but a successful runaway? It is for *Turnus* men feel and not for the Trojan.[15]

Rymer, whose own works on tragedy advocated a return to an Aeschylean model of tragedy, had in 1674 translated René Rapin's *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie…With Reflections on the Works of the Ancient and Modern Poets, and their Faults* Noted, which drew on Horace as well as Aristotle. This, with Boileau's *L'Art Poétique,* an imitation of Horace's *Ars Poetica,* introduced French neo-classical criticism to England. In his translator's preface, Rymer added a defence of the classical unities which claimed 'how unhappy the greatest English poets have been through their ignorance or negligence of these fundamental Rules and Laws of Aristotle', a view, like Rymer's criticism of Shakespeare, which chimed with Byron's own. Byron clearly read Rymer's version of Rapin since he appropriated Rymer's sentence, 'If a Poem made by these Rules fails of success, the fault lies not in the Art, but in the Artist', for a statement about his own adherence to the 'unities' in *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*: 'Where he [Byron, the writer] has failed, the failure is in the architect,—and not in the art'.[16]

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[14] *BLJ* 5.36*,* 8.141. Byron refers to the Greeks on January 4, July 14, August 23 1821, and to Aristotle on May 12, June 22 and September 21 1821. Byron does not refer to individual Greek dramatists in *Don Juan* (Higashinaka (2013a) 232).
[15] *BLJ* 8.115.
[16] Rymer (1694 edn,) unnumbered first page of 'Advertisement'; *CPW* 6.16.

The second conundrum is the 'critical puzzle' which Lansdown poses in his extensive study of Byron's historical dramas: 'why—given the extent of Byron's propagandizing—is the influence of classical Greek drama over his historical plays a minimal one?…Why is it that Byron, who was so proud of his first-hand knowledge of Greece, makes so little use of the Greeks' dramatic heritage?' He suggests two answers. First, that programmatically 'taking a defiantly anti-Romantic and anti-Shakespearean stance, [Byron] pointed to an alternative tragic tradition of which he made little creative use in actuality'. Second, Lansdown mounts the curious argument that 'it was just *because* Byron was so ardent a philhellene…that his references to Greek tragedy are so few, and so offhand'.[17] More plausible answers to Lansdown's questions lie in Byron's earlier implication that he was not particularly fond of Greek tragedies, since only *Prometheus Vinctus, Medea* and *Seven before Thebes* [sic] ever much pleased him, and in his reported claim around the time of writing his tragedies never to have read plays by Aeschylus or Euripides since he had left Harrow: 'I never open a Greek book'.[18] Moreover, the evidence suggests that, in practice, to the extent that Byron was drawing on the ancient rather than the neo-classical world for dramaturgical models, he was looking primarily to Rome rather than Greece.

For all Byron's claim of a Greek cast to his tragedies, this seems to relate to their formal characteristics rather than their texture, and even then, to have been mediated, Aristotle and Rymer excepted, through Horace's *Ars Poetica* and *Epistola ad Augustum (Epist.* 2.1) and through Seneca. Byron's journal makes clear that his late revision of his own contemporised version of Horace's *Ars Poetica* proceeded in tandem with producing his first two historical tragedies: he corrected both *Hints from*

[17] Lansdown (1992) 199-200.
[18] *BLJ* 5.268; Medwin (1847) 1.268 and Medwin (1824) 188-89,166.

Horace and *Marino Faliero* on the same day in January 1821, and he continued to work on *Hints* as he tackled his next tragedy, *Sardanapalus.*[19] Given both relevance and Byron's lively synthesising tendencies, it is unsurprising that Horace's *dicta* are reflected in Byron's tragedies. The explicit rejection of a chorus apart, *Marino Faliero* observes most of Horace's rules for drama, including five acts, simplicity and unity of plot, no fourth speaker, and reportage rather than staging of violent action. Byron listed some of these attributes to his publisher, Murray, in arguing that his play is 'too long—and too regular for your stage.—The persons too few—and the unity too much observed'.[20]

Furthermore, as Byron embarked on *Sardanapalus,* he has left evidence in his journal that he turned, not to Aeschylus, Euripides or Sophocles, but to the Roman tragedian, Lucius Annaeus Seneca:

> January 14th, 1821.
>
> Turned over Seneca's tragedies. Wrote the opening lines of the intended tragedy of Sardanapalus. Rode out some miles into the forest. Misty and rainy. Returned—dined—wrote some more of my tragedy.
>
> Read Diodorus Siculus—turned over Seneca, and some other books. Wrote some more of the tragedy. Took a glass of grog.[21]

Byron's preface to *Sardanapalus* attests to his intention to follow Diodorus Siculus' account of Sardanapalus, whose history he professed he had known since the age of twelve; the following day he 'dipped into a volume of Mitford's Greece'.[22] Seneca's tragedies, however, cannot have provided source material for the plot so his focus on them, at the moment of writing the first pages, must have been as models of tragic dramaturgy.

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[19] *BLJ* 8.21.
[20] *BLJ* 7.182.
[21] *BLJ* 8.27. Byron's 1589 edition of *Senecæ Tragœdiæ* was bought by Hobhouse in the 1827 library sale after Byron's death.
[22] *BLJ* 8.26–27.

Byron's scrutiny of Seneca is noteworthy in terms of classical reception, given the *communis opinio doctorum* until very recently that Seneca's writings, including his tragedies, held negligible interest for the Romantics, and more broadly for nineteenth-century writers as a cohort until late in the century. Don Share, for example, offering a conspectus of Seneca in English, concludes that 'the influence of Seneca's tragedies, so strongly felt during the Renaissance, all but vanished by the Restoration and the eighteenth century', Dryden excepted.[23] Alexandra Lianeri in 2006 dismissively stated that 'Seneca's nineteenth-century reception is well summarized by Coleridge's dry rejection of his value as a philosopher: "you may get a motto for every sect or line of thought or religion from Seneca—yet nothing is ever thought out in him"'.[24] However, Coleridge's notebooks show that early in the century he was reading Seneca's *Thyestes* and *Troades,* perhaps while lying '*in Caelibe Toro meo'*, a term he used in 1803, which Paul Cheshire persuasively suggests that Coleridge derived from Seneca's *Agamemnon* (185).[25] Chris Murray notes in relation to Coleridge's youthful school exercises that 'to British school students, Senecan and Greek tragedies were taught on curricula with the assumption that the ancient texts were morally beneficial'.[26] Coleridge's critical comment about Senecan mottoes was made in 1830, years after a perceived *damnatio* of Seneca came from August von Schlegel in his influential Berlin lectures on dramatic art and literature (*Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*) of 1808, which John Black published in English in 1815.

[23] Share (1998) 145.
[24] Lianeri (2006) 478.
[25] Cheshire (2006) 65.
[26] Murray, C.M. (2013) 12.

Schlegel delivered a devastating indictment of Seneca's tragedies as 'beyond description bombastic and frigid, unnatural in character and action, revolting from their violation of propriety, and so destitute of everything like theatrical effect, that I am inclined to believe they were never destined to leave the rhetorical schools for the stage'.[27] Byron's friend, Sir Walter Scott, echoed both Schlegel's sentiment and the vocabulary of John Black's English translation in his 1819 *An Essay on the Drama:*

> [H]is [Seneca's] tragedies afford no very favourable specimen of Roman art. They are in the false taste which succeeded the age of Augustus, and debased the style of composition in that of Nero; bombastic, tedious, and pedantic; treating, indeed, of Grecian subjects but not with Grecian art.[28]

As Helen Slaney has argued, prior to Schlegel's attack and to the broader philhellenic phenomenon, 'Seneca had been receiving serious attention comparable to that which had been afforded the Greek tragedians…afterwards, his work was reinvented as stylistic anathema'.[29] Yet despite this Romantic vilification of Seneca on stylistic grounds, Slaney identifies a number of Senecan affiliations on the verbal, dramaturgical, and thematic levels in Shelley's 1819 tragedy, *The Cenci*, written in Italy when Shelley was in touch with Byron (who privately damned it as 'sad work'). She suggests, though, that certain elements of *The Cenci* may be tracked back to Seneca via the revenge dramas of Shakespeare's contemporaries and indeed Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.[30] Byron, however, appears to have worked direct from Senecan texts, unmediated by English predecessors. Similarly, Francesco Citti has concluded more broadly that though 'the negative judgment of authors like

[27] Schlegel, trans. Black (1815) 288. Slaney (2015) 200 rejects as unfounded Schlegel's argument that Senecan dramas are unperformable; see also Kragelund (2008) 181-94 and Stroh (2008) 195-220).
[28] Scott (1827) Vol. 6, 306.
[29] Slaney (2015) 189.
[30] Slaney (2015) Ch. 7 abstract and 221-22; *BLJ* 7.174.

Schiller, Lessing and Schlegel affected Seneca's influence on nineteenth-century theatre…significant examples of his influence are still evident'.[31]

Charles Wheelwright, a contemporary of Byron's at Trinity College, Cambridge (1805-9), provides evidence for the case that Seneca's tragedies were felt to be out of fashion early in the nineteenth century, while at the same time his own example indicates that Seneca retained a higher profile in Byron's milieu. In 1810 Wheelwright published *Poems Original and Translated; Including Versions of the Medea and Octavia of Seneca*, with the 'partial aim to secure to these Plays some share of attention'. His preface acknowledged the unpopularity of Seneca's tragedies and speculated exhaustively on the causes of their 'neglect'.[32] Yet despite this alleged neglect, Samuel Rogers, in the same year, quoted from Seneca's *Medea* (374) in an opening note to *The Voyage of Columbus;* and Leigh Hunt, whose autobiography records a school friend at Christ's Hospital toppling into the Thames with a volume of Seneca in his pocket, published a translation, alongside the Latin, of 'Part of a Chorus in Seneca's Tragedy of Thyestes' (Sen. *Thy*. 344-90) in his 1814 volume, *The Feast of the Poets*.[33] Byron himself quoted from Seneca's *Troades* in a letter of 1811.[34]

Possibly stimulated by Shelley (whom in 1815 Mary Shelley recorded as reading 'Seneca every day and all day', both tragedies and philosophical works), Byron's works from 1819 on exhibit a renewed interest in Senecan verse and prose, in a cluster of usages ranging from allusion to his selective imitation of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* in *The Vision of Judgement,* written in the same year as

[31] Citti (2016) 255. See Slaney (2015) for the Senecan imprint on nineteenth-century melodrama.
[32] Plummer (2010) 360; Wheelwright (1810) v-vi. Wheelwright's preface recognised the uncertain authorship of four plays, including *Octavia* now thought not to be by Seneca.
[33] Rogers (1810) 1; Hunt (1850) 1.182; Hunt (1814) 147-52.
[34] *BLJ* 2.88–89; see Chapter 3.

Sardanapalus and *The Two Foscari* (see Chapter 4).[35] In addition to allusions in *Sardanapalus* to Seneca's *Hercules Furens* which are explored below, late *Don Juan* cantos twice refer to *Hercules Furens* without specifying the author, so that Edith Hall claims it for Euripides and others (Truman Steffan et al., Peter Cochran) for Seneca.[36] The latter seems the more probable, given Byron's self-attested 'turning-over' of Seneca, and his reading of Rymer's version of Rapin's *Reflections on Aristotle* which cites Seneca's *Hercules,* along with Aeschylus's *Prometheus,* as models of the 'simple' tragedy.[37] Kathleen Riley sees Byron's references to *Hercules Furens* as 'surprising' and 'unusual' on the grounds that while 'the choice, labours, and death of Herakles were comparatively fertile and popular themes for 19th-century writers and artists', 'the episode of Herakles' madness scarcely features in the concordances to the major English poets of the 19th century'.[38] In one instance, Byron simply deploys the title in a paradoxical description of his own character as 'Mild, but at times a sort of "Hercules furens"' (*DJ* 17.11). In the other, he has rather more fun:

> That prodigy, Miss Araminta Smith
> (Who at sixteen translated "Hercules Furens"
> Into as furious English) (*DJ* 11.52)

Araminta, the name of Byron's frantic blue-stocking, is taken from Congreve's *The Old Bachelor* (1693) and Vanbrugh's *The Confederacy* (1695) and, in declaring that 'these literary predecessors seem unrelated to Byron's prodigy and furious translator of Seneca's tragedy *Hercules Furens',* Steffan et al. surely miss Byron's neat transgeneric joke in ascribing translation of Seneca's—or indeed, Euripides'—grim

[35] Feldman and Scott-Kilvert (1987) 1.78.
[36] Hall (2010) 265; Steffan et al. (1973, repr. 2004) 756; Cochran *Don Juan* 17.11, n.16. https://petercochran.wordpress.com/byron-2/byrons-works/ottava-rima-poems/
[37] Rymer (1694) 32.
[38] Riley (2008) 153 and n.11.

tragedy to the heroines of the foppish Restoration comedies he relished.[39]

Senecan undertones in Byron's tragedies are part of this wider pattern of engagement. Byron's sense of playing a part in life, his self-dramatization, sits compatibly with what Cedric Littlewood describes as Seneca's metatheatrical consciousness and presentation of life as a role.[40] This in turn maps onto Byron's tragic heroes whose formal positions, as Doge or King, necessitate their playing a role in conflict with personality, principles or family position. Moore comments that Byron 'necessarily found himself in the situation of an actor obliged to sustain a character' while in *Marino Faliero,* the Doge describes himself as 'the poor puppet, who must play its part' (1.2.415-16).[41]

The riddle then is why Byron abruptly cited the Greeks over halfway through his programme of writing tragedies, particularly if their influence was not, in fact, great. A speculative reason might be that his (neo-)classical approach was being greeted in the UK, even by friends and admirers, with substantial reservations. Byron became aware of concerns, amidst the flattery, about his draft of *Marino Faliero*. Ugo Foscolo, the Italian author and adviser to John Murray, Byron's publisher, trod a carefully equivocating path:

> The tragedy, possibly, is too long: they act less than they talk—yet I would not expunge a single Line. The Doge is magnificent:…although I would not attempt to put in his mouth so long speeches nor make repeat so often the same things [sic].[42]

Hobhouse similarly presumed 'to object to the long account which Lioni gives to himself of a Venetian masked ball—It may be poetic but I doubt whether it is dramatic or comes within the latitude of soliloquizing'. However, lengthy speeches,

[39] Steffan et al. (1973, repr. 2004) 699.
[40] Littlewood (2004) 57.
[41] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.256.
[42] Nicholson (2007) 341.

especially of description, were very much a feature of Senecan tragedy.[43] Byron acknowledged that 'many people think my talent *"essentially undramatic*"' in the very letter in which he first cited 'the Greeks', when he assured John Murray that producing a great tragedy:

> is not to be done by following the old dramatists—who are full of gross faults—pardoned only for the beauty of their language—but by writing naturally and *regularly*—& producing *regular* tragedies like the *Greeks*—but not in imitation—merely the outline of their conduct adapted to our own times and circumstances—and of course no chorus. …If you want to have a notion of what I am trying—take up a *translation* of any of the *Greek* tragedians…Then Judge of the "simplicity of plot—&c."…Or take up a translation of Alfieri.[44]

In a cultural climate where public reference to the discredited Seneca as a template for tragedy might have undermined Byron's crusade for a reform of English drama on the classical lines he had embraced, ascription of his approach to the ancient Greeks, however tenuous, implicitly vindicated it. And equally revealing here is his invocation, as model, of that deeply Senecan Italian playwright, Alfieri.

There is, of course, a fundamental problem in commenting on the works of so assiduous a reader and eclectic a writer as Byron, in that the range of potential intertexts is extensive and often inextricable. In relation to Byron's tragedies, it can be difficult to disaggregate definitive influences, either direct or through the network of reception, from among proposed candidates which include the following: the Greek tragedians, Aristotle, Rapin and Rymer, Horace, Seneca both *tragicus* and *philosophicus*, Shakespeare (despite Byron's disclaimers), neo-classical Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, Racine, Corneille, Voltaire (both as dramatic theorist and practitioner), Alfieri and Grillparzer. In addition, it is possible to detect reflections of specific works like Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* and Schiller's *Fiesco* in *Marino*

[43] Graham (1984) 302.
[44] *BLJ* 8.56-57.

Faliero, and Dryden's *All for Love* in *Sardanapalus*. Byron is likely also to have known Hugh Blair's best-selling *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, a text familiar to schoolboys and literate Englishmen of Byron's generation as a key source for classically-based rhetorical theory.[45]

Moreover, there is no consensus in the academy about the robustness of these claims or their relative weighting. In relation to Seneca, Jerome McGann acknowledges the possibility of some influence on *Sardanapalus,* but intimates that Arthur Kahn's view that 'Seneca's influence pervades every page' is overstated.[46] Philip Martin acknowledges the problem but concludes that 'despite the fact that many of the motifs in Byron's dramas that one is tempted to trace to Seneca probably found their way to the early nineteenth century via Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and Otway, there is some evidence to suggest that Byron's reading of Seneca played an important part in the composition of his tragedies'.[47] Given the focus of this thesis, this chapter confines itself to Byron's direct engagement with classical works in his tragedies.

Speech over spectacle

One striking parallel can be discerned in the theatrical context which confronted Horace, Seneca and Byron. Sander Goldberg notes the debased taste for ostentatious spectacle in the Roman theatre of the late Republic and early Principate, as lamented by Cicero to his cultured friend Marius on the inauguration in 55 BCE of Pompey's vast stone theatre:[48]

[45] Covino (1981) 238; see also *DJ* 2.165.
[46] *CPW* 6.608; Kahn (1969) 655. See also Lansdown (1992) p.199 n.34; Pudbres (1903) 40-83.
[47] Martin (1982) 143-44.
[48] Goldberg (1996) 265-66.

> quid enim delectationis habent sescenti muli in 'Clytaemestra' aut in 'Equo Troiano' creterrarum tria milia aut armatura varia peditatus et equitatus in aliqua pugna? quae popularem admirationem habuerunt, delectationem tibi nullam attulissent.
>
> ('What pleasure is there in getting a Clytemnestra with six hundred mules or a Trojan Horse with three thousand mixing bowls or a variegated display of cavalry and infantry equipment in some battle or other? The public gaped at all this; it would not have amused you at all'.
> (Cic. *Fam*. 24.3 (7.1))[49]

Horace likewise complained that the rabble called for a bear or boxers in the middle of a play, and that even the interest of the *equites* had moved on *ab aure…ad incertos oculos et gaudia vana,* ('from the ear…to roaming eyes and empty delights'), with cavalcades of riders, chariots, carriages, wagons and ships (*Epist*. 2.1.185-92).

There is a close analogy with the popularity in the London theatre of Byron's lifetime of melodrama and of what Kemble described as 'the most impossible extravaganzas', phenomena which Wang Shou-Ren relates to the vast size of the new patent theatres in Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and a shift in audience demography from the upper to the lower classes.[50] The Drury Lane venue was castigated in distinctly Horatian terms as 'a theatre…for spectators rather than a playhouse for hearers' by Richard Cumberland, a dramatist whom Byron had called upon to 'ring the alarum bell' about the 'degradation of our vaunted stage' in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (578, 575).[51]

In their efforts as dramatists to remedy the theatrical defects of their day, Seneca and Byron adopted similar tactics in privileging words over visual images, though with markedly different degrees of success. With Seneca, tragedy in the first

[49] Re Accius' *Clytemnestra* and the *Equus Troianus*, probably of Naevius. Shackleton Bailey (2001) 172-75.
[50] Wang (1990) 4.
[51] Cumberland (1807/2002) 2.201, cited in Klancher (2009) 240.

century CE was revitalised, largely through what Goldberg terms his declamatory rhetoric's assertion of 'the primacy of language over spectacle' as the vehicle for galvanising sensation.[52] Christopher Trinacty sees Seneca's 'shift from visual bombast to verbal bombast [as] one of the defining features of his work', with the audience invited to enjoy the 'paradox, striking sententiae, oscillating between elaboration and concision, and…literary and mythological erudition' characteristic of the writers of the Neronian tragic renaissance.[53]

Byron was explicit in his preface to *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari* and *Cain* that his tragedies were 'not composed with the most remote view to the stage', an aspect of his reform he also described to his friend, Douglas Kinnaird:

> It is an experiment whether the English *Closet*—or *mental* theatre will or will not bear a *regular* drama instead of a melo-drama.[54]

The extensive critical debate about Byron's 'closet dramas' encompasses disparate shades of opinion about the true rationale for his insistence that his plays were neither meant, nor fit, for performance, but one factor in this debate, given Byron's evident distaste for submitting his tragedies to London audiences, was that he had before him, in classical tragedy, an example of drama experienced by his contemporaries primarily on the page, not the stage.[55] While he was an avid theatre-goer, it seems unlikely that he himself had opportunity to witness any full production of a Greek or Roman (that is, Senecan) tragedy, though he would have heard individual speeches declaimed at Harrow's Speech days, and may possibly have known of the Reading School tradition of mounting plays by Sophocles and Euripides triennially between

[52] Goldberg (1996) 276, 284.
[53] Trinacty (2014) 5.
[54] *BLJ* 8.210.
[55] For the 'closet drama' debate, see for example Erdman (1939) 219-43; Webb (1986) 42; Wang (1990) 7; Lansdown (1992) 39-40; Simpson (1998) 128, 123; Richardson (2004) 136; Murray (2013) 97.

1806 and 1827.[56] When he learnt of an unauthorised production of his first tragedy, he commented on 'the absurdity of the attempt':

> I cannot conceive how Harris or Elliston can be so insane as to think of acting M[arino] F[aliero]—they might as well act the Prometheus of Æschylus.[57]

Here he yoked *Marino Faliero* with the *Prometheus Vinctus* as texts to be read, not dramas to be staged.

Unrestricted by the requirements of performance, Byron exploited the textuality of his published volumes of tragedies, which replicated the scholarly notes of the classical texts with which he was familiar. *Marino Faliero,* for example, was published with an extensive paratextual apparatus, including a largely historiographical preface and seven appendices of historical material and commentary, which Byron insisted was intrinsic to the experience of the work, (though editions published after Byron's death excised increasing amounts).[58] In these circumstances, it seems not unreasonable to accept his cry to a friend about *Marino Faliero*: 'I write only for the *reader*, and care for nothing but the *silent* approbation of those who close one's book with good humour and quiet contentment'.[59] One may catch here another hint of Horace's *Epistola ad Augustum*, with Byron joining *qui se lectori credere malunt/ quam spectatoris fastidia ferre superbi* ('those who prefer to put themselves in a reader's hands, rather than brook the disdain of a scornful spectator', *Epist*. 2.1.214-5). Horace himself declined to expose himself to public reaction by writing for the stage and his description of an

[56] Tyerman (2000) 163; Hall and Macintosh (2005) 244-63.
[57] *BLJ* 8.67.
[58] *BLJ* 7.141-42.
[59] *BLJ* 8.68.

asinine audience is as splenetic as Byron's in his preface to *Marino Faliero*.[60]

Byron's 'Ravenna journal' indicates that in early 1821, with *Marino Faliero* soon to be published, Byron saw dramatic composition not as a limited experiment but as a prospectively long-running commitment:

> Pondered the subjects of four tragedies to be written (life and circumstances permitting) to wit, Sardanapalus, already begun, Cain, a metaphysical subject, something in the style of Manfred, but in five *acts*, perhaps, with the chorus; Francesca of Rimini, in five acts; and I am not sure that I would not try Tiberius. I think I could extract a something, of *my* tragic, at least, out of the gloomy sequestration and old age of the tyrant—and even out of his sojourn at Caprea—by softening the *details*, and exhibiting the despair which must have led to those very vicious pleasures. For none but a powerful and gloomy mind overthrown would have had recourse to such solitary horrors,—being also, at the same time, *old*, and the master of the world.[61]

The subjects he contemplated were a mixture of fictive 'tragic' history, 'metaphysics', and passionate, ill-fated love. Unlike Alfieri, he did not attempt stories treated by the Greek tragedians or Seneca, and only *Sardanapalus* and the unrealised dramatisation of the old age of the emperor Tiberius presupposed material from classical history, which Alfieri drew on extensively. Byron's brief vignette of a Tiberian drama illustrates his continuing absorption with Roman history, here as a site for exploration of the human psyche in circumstances not simply of power and pleasure, as in *Sardanapalus*, but also, with Tiberius, of vice, ageing and the isolation of high office. It may be no more than coincidence but Juvenal's tenth satire, well known to Byron, could have provided prompts to consider the subjects of both Sardanapalus (*et venere et cenis et pluma Sardanapalli*, 'the sex and feasts and downy cushions of Sardanapalus', Juv. *Sat.* 10.362) and Tiberius on Capri (Juv. *Sat.* 10.71-72), especially since he certainly had Juvenal's second satire in mind while writing

[60] *Epist*. 2.1.177-81, 208; and 182-207, including *scriptores autem narrare putaret asello / fabellam surdo* ('But for the authors—he would suppose that they were telling their tales to a deaf ass', Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.199-200).
[61] *BLJ* 8.36-37.

Sardanapalus (see below). In the event, Byron reverted to the Venetian dogal history he had used for *Marino Faliero* and dramatised the fifteenth-century story of the Foscari rather than Tiberius' history.

All three subjects of his historical tragedies offered, in Aristotelian terms, a mimesis of the actions of noble people who experienced a *peripeteia,* in falling from prosperity to adversity: Sardanapalus suffered the overthrow of a long-standing dynastic empire, while Faliero and Foscari were doges expelled from an office which was abolished in Byron's lifetime, when the last doge was deposed after surrender to Napoleon.[62] With strident claims to factual accuracy, Byron rooted these tragedies in historical detail but exploited the narratives to focus attention on issues of personal and public conduct. *Sardanapalus*, for example, raises matters still of current concern about the problematics of historiography, gender identity, and the role of leaders in relation to peace and war.[63] As Adrian Poole points out, 'tragedy stages moments of crisis in a community's understanding of itself, moments when it risks being torn apart by conflicting beliefs about gods, political authority, relations between generations and the sexes, between natives and immigrants'.[64]

Recent scholarship has focused extensively on the underlying political messages of Byron's tragedies, in the context of what Terence Hoagwood sees as 'the central fact about Romantic drama' generally, that is, 'the suppression and consequent displacement of revolutionary socio-political content' onto 'exotic, magical or historically removed surface content'.[65] On this reading, despite Byron's—arguably disingenuous—protest that *Marino Faliero* was '*not* a *political*

[62] Aristotle's *Poetics* 1448b, 25-26; 1452a-b.
[63] Crisafulli and Liberto (2014) 18.
[64] Poole (2005) 36.
[65] Hoagwood (1998) 28. See also, among others, Simpson's chapter, 'The Matter of Political Drama' in Simpson (1998) 111-203; Kerrigan (1996) 242-47, 254-55; Lansdown (1992), particularly 140-44, 162-69; and Kucich (1998) 77.

play', a further impetus for Byron's shift to drama, in the febrile political situation of 1820, may have originated in his acute concern with a nexus of contemporary debates: cosmopolitanism versus nationalism, the citizen versus the state, libertarian uprisings versus authoritarian rule, the role of the leader and the relationship between social classes.[66]

However, the political message of his tragedies is not without complexity. For all Byron's support for the wave of libertarian movements sweeping the world at that time, and his own immediate circumstances of awaiting almost daily a revolution in Italy, these dramas scarcely provide a rallying cry. Whatever the shortcomings of the Venetian state, Marino Faliero's rebellion is presented as largely propelled by personal animus and immoderate anger, and in the event it fails. By contrast, the uprising by subject nations against Sardanapalus, the last 'King of Nineveh and Assyria', succeeds, and the outline story as recounted by ancient historians might appear apt to Byron's own support of Italy against oppression by Austria and of Greece by Turkey.

Byron's primary source was the Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, whose works he appears from his library catalogue to have been reading in Giuseppe Compagnoni's Italian translation. Diodorus depicts Sardanapalus as an effeminate king, outdoing all his predecessors in luxury and sluggishnesss (πρὸ αὐτοῦ τρυφῇ καὶ ῥᾳθυμίᾳ), whereas the rebel Mede general, Arbaces, is conspicuous for his bravery and nobility of spirit (ἀνδρείᾳ δὲ καὶ ψυχῆς λαμπρότητι διαφέρων).[67] Byron does not mask Sardanapalus' effeminacy, urging his publisher, 'when Sardanapalus calls for a *mirror* to look at himself in his armour—recollect—to quote the Latin passage from

[66] *BLJ* 7.184.
[67] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 2.23.1, 24.1.

Juvenal upon *Otho*…The trait is perhaps too familiar—but it is historical (of *Otho* at least) & natural in an effeminate character'.[68] Juvenal's second Satire offers a very specific reflection on Byron's 'she-king' Sardanapalus (*Sard*. 2.1.48), in ironically describing Otho's attempt to kill Galba while pampering his skin (*occidere Galbam / et curare cutem)* as something *not* done by Sardanapalus' quiver-bearing grandmother, Semiramis, in Nineveh (Juv. *Sat*. 2.104-8). Byron would also have encountered the brief précis of Sardanapalus' fall in Herodotus 1.95, couched in terms of what Tom Holland in his 2013 translation calls 'a war of independence':

> Now, for a period of 520 years, it was the Assyrians who were the masters of Asia; and the first to revolt against their rule were the Medes. In fact, this war of independence proved to be the making of the rebels, for so heroically did they fight the Assyrians, that they succeeded in casting off the yoke of slavery altogether and securing their freedom.[69]

The paradox then, given the tone of classical sources, is that in dramatising the final hours of Sardanapalus, Byron chose to attribute heroism not to the independence-seeking rebels but to the imperialist king, who, far from ending his own life αἰσχρῶς ('disgracefully') as in Diodorus Siculus, dies with nobility and magnanimity.[70]

'my tragic': Byron's classical formalism

Byron's heavy emphasis on '*my* tragic' in contemplating a drama about Tiberius marked his consciousness of embracing an idiosyncratic approach to tragedy, which was characterised above all by an insistence, by then démodé in England, on certain formal qualities prescribed as being intrinsic to the genre in Aristotle's *Poetics,* Horace's *Ars Poetica* and neo-classical literary theory. Byron stresses above all two

[68] *BLJ* 8.128; Juv. *Sat.* 2.99-103.
[69] Holland (2013) 50.
[70] Diodorus Siculus 2.23.4.

specific elements his tragedies respected: simplicity of plot, and the 'unities' of action, time and place. Blair, in his lecture on 'Dramatic Poetry: Tragedy, No. 45', distinguished *simplicity of plot*, i.e. one with a small number of incidents, from *unity of action*, where the plot could include a considerable number of persons and events and yet not lack unity, provided all the incidents bore on, and were properly connected to, the principal object of the play. He offered a criticism of Greek tragedies which was later to be made of Byron's:

> All the Greek Tragedies not only maintain Unity in the Action, but are remarkably simple in the plot; to such a degree indeed as sometimes to appear to us too naked, and destitute of interesting events.[71]

Byron highlighted his 'dramatic Simplicity', which he categorised, though only after completion of all three historical tragedies, as '*studiously* Greek': the 'Simplicity of plot is intentional—and the avoidance of *rant* also—as also the compression of the Speeches in the more severe situations'.[72] Rymer gives Aristotle's injunction that the 'Action' of the plot 'must be *one* and *simple*, to avoid *confusion'*, a thought captured in Horace's *denique sit quod vis, simplex dumtaxat et unum* ('In short, be the work what you will, let it at least be simple and uniform', *Ars P.* 23).[73] To achieve this, some of the key defining characteristics of Byron's broadly contemporaneous *Don Juan*—its digressive perambulations, its daring mixing of modes and moods, the simultaneous 'scorching and drenching' complained of by Francis Cohen—are suppressed in Byron's tragedies which present themselves as thematically, tonally and formally more unified.[74] All three drive inexorably to their *telos*, without distracting sub-plots and, as Horace advised, without an unanticipated

[71] Blair (1812) 3.283.
[72] *BLJ* 8.186, 218.
[73] Rymer (1694 edn.) 81.
[74] *BLJ* 6.207.

deus ex machina. There are no comic characters or interludes as in Shakespeare. Even the Byronic asides which might fit well in a Senecanesque work find no place. It is this simplicity, already evident in *Marino Faliero,* which Byron subsequently admired in Grillparzer's play, *Sappho*, a text he read in an Italian translation two days before embarking on *Sardanapalus,* when he declared Grillparzer 'grand—antique—*not so simple* as the ancients, but very simple for a modern—too Madame de Staël-ish now and then—but altogether a great and goodly writer'.[75]

Byron commented most fully on his close adherence to the classical unities in his preface to *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari:*

> The Author has in one instance attempted to preserve, and in the other to approach the 'unities;' conceiving that with any very distant departure from them, there may be poetry, but can be no drama. He is aware of the unpopularity of this notion in present English literature; but it is not a system of his own, being merely an opinion, which, not very long ago, was the law of literature throughout the world, and is still so in the more civilised parts of it.[76]

Byron's remarks elsewhere identify the 'more civilised' parts of the world he referred to as Italy and France, as opposed to England and Germany. Sir Walter Scott summarised a perception of antithetical national requirements of drama in his 1819 *An Essay on the Drama*:

> While the Frenchman judges of the form and shape of the play, the observance of the unities, and the denouement of the plot, the German demands the powerful contrast of character and passion,—the sublime in tragedy and the grotesque in comedy. The former may be called the formalist of dramatic criticism;…the latter is the fanatic.[77]

Byron exhaustively noted, even in prefaces to individual tragedies, the extent to which he observed the unities, (as, in *Sardanapalus,* by compressing 'the long war of the history' to a single day), and where he departed, as in locations in *Marino*

[75] *BLJ* 8.26.
[76] *CPW* 6.16. *Cain*, published in the same volume, did not observe the unities.
[77] Scott (1827) 6.455-56. Scott also criticised 'the stern and unbending composition' of Alfieri's dramas (6.339).

Faliero. Unity of place appeared neither in Aristotle or Horace but was codified by Corneille in the third of his 1660 *Trois Discours sur la poème dramatique*, and was factually apposite to Byron's Venetian plots since, among other restrictions, doges were legally required to stay within their palace and St. Mark's Basilica. Byron was aware that historically all Marino Faliero's consultations with conspirators took place in the palace; however, he advised readers that, to avoid monotony, he allowed Faliero to participate in the full assembly of the conspirators outside.[78] In *Sardanapalus,* place is impregnated with meaning in the context of the play, where neglect of visiting the lands of the vast Assyrian empire by a 'Monarch who ne'er looks/ Beyond his palace walls' is seen as contributory to their rebellion (1.2.109-12). The location of the drama's action wholly within the Hall of Nimrod in the Royal Palace of Nineveh—the very seat of the Assyrian empire, but repeatedly figured as a place of confinement, a prison—charts the escalating degree of threat to the dynasty, from Sardanapalus' forced abandonment of his plan to feast in his pavilion across the Euphrates ('What! am I then cooped? Already captive?' 1.2.573-74), to the fighting within the hall itself, and finally to the firing of a pyre reminiscent of Dido's, piled round his throne.[79]

Similarly, all three historical tragedies observe the Aristotelian confinement of time in tragedy, as far as possible, to 'a single revolution of the sun' or slightly more, in contrast to the temporally limitless epic, a freedom of which Byron was taking full advantage in *Don Juan*.[80] This contributes, perhaps more convincingly in *Marino Faliero* and *Sardanapalus* than *The Two Foscari,* to a narrative sense of urgency. Time is a powerful motif in the two earlier dramas, both in the immediacy of the 'miserable minutes' of their action (with the heroes under pressure of time,

[78] *CPW* 6.17, 4.305-6.
[79] For examples of the palace as a prison, see *Sardanapalus* 1.2.636, 2.1.419 and 5.1.183.
[80] Aristotle *Poetics* 1449b, 12-14.

respectively, to seize power in a conspiratorial uprising or to quash an attack), and in the prominence given to the more remote verdict of history, a *topos* emphasised in their final scenes and one of importance to Byron at a moment when he was writing his own ill-fated memoirs.[81] Faliero begins his final, grandiloquent speech before execution with the pronouncement, 'I speak to Time and to Eternity'; so too Sardanapalus, nearing his end, sees his 'most royal of funeral pyres' as 'a light/ To lesson ages'.[82] So Byron's historical tragedies do attempt something more significant than a purely mechanical commitment to the unities of time and place, but nonetheless they were severely criticised on this account.

Horace in his *Ars Poetica* may have recommended handling Greek models of tragedy by night and day (268-69) but it seems clear that, working simultaneously on his imitation, *Hints from Horace,* and his historical tragedies, Byron was paying close attention to Horace's principles and Seneca's practice rather than the Greek tragedians direct. One perhaps unexpected feature is that, despite his general insistence on rhyme elsewhere and the precedent of rhyme in French neo-classical tragedies, Byron adopted blank verse, possibly following Blair who thought English blank verse 'happily suited' to tragedy, while 'one of the greatest misfortunes of the French tragedy is, its always being written in rhyme'.[83] Byron correspondingly advocated it in his imitation of Horace's account of the appropriate metre for tragedy (*Ars P.* 79-82):

> Blank verse is now with one consent allied
> To Tragedy, and rarely quits her side;
> Though mad Almanzor rhymed in Dryden's days,
> No sing-song Hero rants in modern plays. (*Hints,* 117-20)

[81] See, for example, *BLJ* 7.16, 219.
[82] *Marino Faliero* 5.3.26; *Sard.* 5.1.440-41.
[83] Blair (1812) 3.312-13.

He also rather elaborately rephrased lines 182-84 of the *Ars Poetica* (*non tamen intus/ digna geri promes in scaenam, multaque tolles/ ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens*) about what might appropriately be shown on stage:

> Yet many deeds preserved in History's page
> Are better told than acted on the stage;
> The ear sustains what shocks the timid eye,
> And Horror thus subsides to Sympathy:
> True Briton all beside, I here am French,
> Bloodshed 'tis surely better to retrench. (*Hints,* 267-72)

Though Byron as a tragedian was scarcely 'True Briton all beside' by 1820, his distinction may do his fellow British Romantics some disservice. As Steven Bruhm describes, against the background of the popularity of stage violence in plays by Gothic dramatists like Matthew 'Monk' Lewis and Maturin, Romantic dramatists like Shelley and Wordsworth as well as Byron chose as their subject matter 'extreme and violent situations: political revolution, murder, rape, torture—tyrannies both political and domestic', but in all cases, they sought 'to move the excess of spectacle off-stage and make the real site of theatre a more internalised mental, pedagogical one'.[84] This is a key mode of Byron's tragedies. Eschewing sensation-seeking effect, both *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari* involve torture on the rack, but off-stage and described more in terms of how it is borne than carried out, just as Faliero's eventual execution is covered by the citizens' eye-witness account. As for the scene of incipient violent death in *Sardanapalus*, if Seneca could show Medea killing her children onstage in unabashed contravention of Horace's dictum, *ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet* ('Medea is not to butcher her boys before the people', *Ars P.* 185), then Byron could allow the theatrically scripted curtain—metaphorical in a

[84] Bruhm (1994) 61-62.

closet drama—to come down as Myrrha, Sardanapalus' 'favourite mistress', sprang forward to join him on the pyre she had just lit.

Structurally, all three historical tragedies open *in medias res* (*Ars P.* 148), an all but inevitable consequence of confining the action to twenty-four hours, and follow Senecan rather than Greek models in their, by then normative, division into five Acts, declared by Blair as 'purely arbitrary' and based on 'no other foundation than common practice and the authority of Horace' (*neve minor neu sit quinto productior actu/ fabula,* 'Let no play be either shorter or longer than five acts', *Ars P.* 189–90).[85] Analysis also shows that, in almost all cases, Byron observed Horace's injunction *nec quarta loqui persona laboret* ('Nor let a fourth actor essay to speak', 192), a more stringent constraint given his rejection of a chorus, in line with Blair who felt the chorus had 'too much the air of a theatrical decoration' and required 'too great a sacrifice of probability in the conduct of the action'.[86]

When Byron wrote to Murray of *Marino Faliero,* 'and, of course, no chorus', the assured tone of the Byronic 'of course' is potent, drawing the reader into assenting that a chorus would be inconceivable.[87] This carries with it an implicit criticism of Shelley's approach in *Prometheus Unbound*, which Hall has judged 'one of the most influential poems in the history of the Greek chorus in modernity', with its counterposed choruses pitting 'the sympathetic and progressive spirits against the chorus of reactionary Furies', just as the chorus in his *Persae*-inflected *Hellas* was also 'a vehicle for emancipatory sentiments'.[88] But there is a dramaturgical chasm between Byron and Shelley. Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry* (c.1821) located the 'true philosophy' of drama in ancient Athens, 'for the Athenians employed language,

[85] Blair (1812) 3.284-85.
[86] Blair (1812) 3.279.
[87] *BLJ* 8.57.
[88] Hall (2013) 295-96.

action, music, painting, the dance, and religious institution to produce a common effect in the representation of the highest idealisms of passion and power'—a vision of the Greek union of the arts which was very much in accord with his enthusiasm for Viganò's *correodrame* and in which there is latitude for a chorus.[89] Byron's tragedies, by contrast, are grounded in a verbally-realised rendition of a historical reality, with a tight focus on a few characters.[90]

'Turned over Seneca's tragedies. Wrote the opening…of Sardanapalus'

The classical characteristics which Byron most strenuously stressed to his friends and his readers were formal, but he undoubtedly took from Seneca a wider range of influences. Moore explicitly noted that it was Byron's 'practice, when engaged in the composition of any work, to excite his vein by the perusal of others, on the same subject or plan', and Byron's journal entry for January 14th 1821 quoted above suggests a clear degree of intertextuality between Seneca's tragedies and, as a minimum, *Sardanapalus*.[91] Even allowing for indirect neo-classical influences, Kahn's detailed account of the correspondences, if occasionally exaggerated, is more persuasive than is sometimes allowed.[92] To take one instance, Kahn's general point that monologues and quasi-monologues, a Senecan convention, make up over ten per cent of *Sardanapalus* is not, of itself, conclusive of a direct relationship. However, more detailed analysis than his article provides supports his proposition that two choruses from Seneca's *Hercules Furens* (to sleep, 1066ff., and to dawn, 125ff.) suggested Myrhha's quasi-monologic appeal to sleep (4.1.1-23) and her song to the

[89] Reiman and Fraistat (2002) 518. Medwin noted that Shelley 'never could understand the beauty of Racine' (Medwin (1824) 313).
[90] Nonetheless, both Byron's Venetian plays were set as operas, *I Due Foscari* with some success by Verdi (1844), and *Marino Faliero* with rather less by Donizetti (1835).
[91] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.269.
[92] Kahn (1969) 655-71; McGann, *CPW* 6.608.

dawn (5.1.1-38).[93] Addresses to sleep are found in classical literature from the *Iliad* on, but the specificities in *Sardanapalus* are convincing of a link to *Hercules Furens*, a drama which, as noted above, Byron twice cited in *Don Juan* the following year.[94] Both Sardanapalus (4.1.2 and 10-16) and Seneca's Hercules (1079ff.) are violently restless in their sleep; and in each case their condition is described in terms of wind disturbing water, in *Sardanapalus* a lake (11-13) and in *Hercules* the sea (1089-91). Both addresses refer to Sleep as the brother of Death, a term from *Iliad* 14.231, and also, in the same line, as respectively 'so still—so stirless' (*Sard.* 6) and *languide* (*Her. F.* 1069); Byron's Sleep is 'thou God of Quiet' (3), Seneca's *requies animi* (1067).[95] Similarly, both tragedies offer a lyrical description of sunrise which progresses to an acknowledgment of the quotidian life of toil.

As a case study, the two opening scenes of *Sardanapalus,* written between short bursts of reading Senecan tragedies, provide a textbook example of Byron's ability to synthesise his own style and approach with characteristic components of Seneca's rhetoric and dramatic technique. In John Fitch's general introduction to his editions of Seneca's tragedies, the two features of dramaturgy which he describes as particularly characteristic of Seneca (though not without precedent) are a prologue, often spoken by a character voicing his thoughts before interacting with others, which establishes an atmosphere of dark foreboding and emotional intensity, and a scene in which one of the *dramatis personae*, usually an inferior, attempts to restrain a leading character.[96] Both are found in *Sardanapalus*, where the impassioned entrance

[93] Kahn (1969) 661.
[94] Addresses to sleep in, for example, Hom. *Il.* 14.233-41; Soph. *Phil.* 827-38; Ovid *Met.* 623-28.
[95] McGann (*CPW* 6.621) notes Shelley's *Queen Mab,* line 2, 'Death, and his brother Sleep!', the inverse of Homer's 'Sleep, the brother of Death'. Shelley had sent Byron a copy of *Queen Mab* in 1816, but his poem lacks the other correspondences found between *Sardanapalus* and Seneca's *Hercules Furens.*
[96] Fitch (2002) 1-5, 16-18.

monologue (1.1.1-47) of Salamenes, Sardanapalus' brother-in-law and loyal general, succinctly sets both the scene and a tone of dread and disgust. With its ominous cry of 'there is no sound/ To rouse him short of thunder' (27-28), it foreshadows the thunder heralding the storm that will destroy Sardanapalus' defences and lead to his death. Then in the next scene, Salamenes fruitlessly urges Sardanapalus to foreswear 'the despotism of vice' and defend his throne (1.2). In their debate about the virtues and duties of a king, Sardanapalus portrays himself as a man and monarch who has desired only peace, 'not decimated [his peoples] with savage laws', and 'not shed blood as I/ Might have done, in oceans'.[97] His philosophy reflects Theseus' *sententia* in Seneca's *Hercules Furens, sanguine humano abstine/ quicumque regnas* ('Avoid shedding human blood, all you who reign', *Her. F.* 745-46), where long life, followed by heaven or the Elysian grove, awaits 'anyone who governs mildly, who keeps his hands guiltless as master of life and death, who conducts a gentle, bloodless reign and spares lives' (739-42).

Perhaps most striking, though, in its emulation of Seneca is the mannered rhetoric of Salamenes' opening monologue, marrying Senecan tropes with Byron's brilliant verse-handling skills. The densely oratorical opening lines begin with a ringing triad of antitheses, introduced by anaphora to hammer home the wrong Sardanapalus has done:

> He hath wrong'd his queen, but still he is her lord;
> He hath wrong'd my sister, still he is my brother;
> He hath wrong'd his people, still he is their sovereign.
> And I must be his friend as well as subject:
> He must not perish thus. I will not see
> The blood of Nimrod and Semiramis
> Sink in the earth, and thirteen hundred years
> Of Empire ending like a shepherd's tale;
> He must be roused. In his effeminate heart
> There is a careless courage which corruption

[97] See *Sard.* 226-32, 370-72, 402-3.

Has not all quenched. (*Sardanapalus* 1.1.1-11)

In a powerful invocation of the past centuries of empire, Sardanapalus is figured metaphorically as the blood of his illustrious predecessors, prospectively about to 'sink into the earth', just as in Seneca's dramas, Fitch notes that the past is constantly invoked as a paradigm for the present, and characters are defined (though in Seneca, usually self-defined) in terms of family history, as with Medea, Phaedra and Oedipus.[98] In lines 5-9, Byron deploys to great effect the Senecan device of contrasting this high-flown poetic language with simple direct speech, and a flowing sentence with a brief, pithy one, first with line 5's imperative, 'He must not perish thus', and then with 'He must be roused' (9), a vehement declaration which is repeated for emphasis at line 27, after a lengthy reflection on Sardanapalus' effeminised 'sloth and shame' (19).

A later passage of the speech features the senses: smell ('the reeking odours of the perfumed trains', 38), sight ('the bright gems of the glittering girls,/…flash/ Along the gallery', 39-41), touch ('his diadem/ Lies negligently by to be caught up/ By the first manly hand', 34-5) and, most extensively, sound, where the thunder, which will be heard in a 'strong peal' in Act III, is contrasted with the stage direction's actual 'sound of soft music heard from within':

> He must be roused. Alas! there is no sound
> To rouse him short of thunder. Hark! the lute,
> The lyre, the timbrel; the lascivious tinklings
> Of lulling instruments, the softening voices
> Of women, and of beings less than women,
> Must chime in to the echo of his revel… (1.1.27-32)

Byron loads his effects in these lines, with onomatopoeia, extended alliteration, a Senecan-style catalogue and additive asyndeton to layer the different sounds and

[98] Fitch (2002) 5.

their sources. Byron's poetry often exhibits a propensity for alliteration, but here its use is almost excessively abundant (see lines 10-11 and 28-30 above as examples). Nor are these all the display in this single speech. Byron also offers rhetorical questions: 'Were it less toil/ To sway his nations than consume his life?/ To head an army than to rule a harem?' (1.1.21-3). Like Seneca, he takes delight in epigram: 'If born a peasant, he had been a man/ To have reach'd an empire: to an empire born,/ He will bequeath none' (1.1.14-16). Finally, the speech ends with a paradox, as Sardanapalus' physical entrance among his effete entourage reinforces Salamenes' consciousness of his king's degraded state: 'They come, the slaves/ Led by the monarch subject to his slaves'.

These verbal pyrotechnics, offering the same pleasures as Seneca's in their play with language, are not intended to characterise Salamenes, who is presented as a level-headed, practical general. Rather, his monologue is a bravura flourish to provide *Sardanapalus* with a dazzling opening, after which rhetorical display remains important but is not sustained at this pitch. As a generality, Martin argues that the soliloquies in Byron's tragedies are not concerned to present individual psychology so much as 'an ideal on which the notion of character is utterly dependent', just as 'Sardanapalus' character as a hero…depends less on the audience's interpretations of his actions than on the rhetoric of the other dramatis personae', a technique Martin also attributes to Seneca.[99] This runs the risk of a wearisome repetitiveness in characterisation which is avoided in *Sardanapalus* by the sheer *brio* of the language but becomes obtrusive in *The Two Foscari*.

To this catalogue of allusive features may be added Sardanapalus' nightmare vision of what prove to be his ancestors, Nimrod and Semiramis (4.1.24-165), who

[99] Martin (1982) 144-45.

contribute a distinctly Senecan note of bloody grotesquerie. The one appears as a giant Hunter with serpent hair; the other, as a crone, alarmingly burns Sardanapalus' lips with her noisome kisses:

> A gray-hair'd, wither'd, bloody-eyed,
> And bloody-handed, ghastly, ghostly thing,
> Female in garb, and crown'd upon the brow,
> Furrow'd with years, yet sneering with the passion
> Of vengeance, leering too with that of lust,
> Sate: —my veins curdled! …Upon
> Her right hand—her lank, bird-like, right hand—stood
> A goblet, bubbling o'er with blood. (*Sardanapalus* 4.1.104-11)

Sardanapalus is left 'dead, yet feeling—/ Buried, and raised again—consumed by worms,/ Purged by the flames, and wither'd in the air!' (160-62). Kahn suggests as possible Senecan models Tiresias' summoning of the shades in *Oedipus* (585-658) and Poppaea's nightmare in *Octavia* (712-39) where the menacing appearance of Poppaea's mother-in-law wielding a bloodstained torch has a curious parallel in Byron's hallucination when he was deliriously ill in 1819 about the presence of his hated mother-in-law.[100] There is, though, one major feature of Senecan tragedy that is, strikingly and meaningfully, not pursued in *Sardanapalus*: revenge. Despite Semiramis' 'sneering with the passion/ Of vengeance', revenge is decisively rejected by the forbearing Sardanapalus, though urged to it by Salamenes and Myrrha. When Myrrha claims, ''Tis a Greek virtue', he responds 'but not a kingly one—I'll none on't', unless with kings of equal rank.[101]

'I want to simplify your drama… & to make it more Doric and austere'

On completion of all three historical tragedies, Byron protested to Kinnaird:

> you want me to write a *love*-play—but this were contrary to all my principles—as well as to those of Aristotle.—I want to simplify your

[100] Kahn (1969) 663; Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.284n.
[101] *Sardanapalus* 2.579-83.

> drama—to render it fit for the *higher* passions–& to make it more Doric and austere.[102]

Byron's concern about decorum and 'the *higher* passions' reflects Rapin's criticism of poets who bend all their subjects to 'Love and Tenderness…to please the women': ''tis to degrade Tragedy from that Majesty which is proper to it, to mingle in it Love'.[103] Byron maintained both to himself and to others that *Marino Faliero* was 'a play without love', despite the tender relationship between the elderly Doge and his much younger wife, Angiolina.[104] In *Sardanapalus*, though, to please Teresa Guiccioli, he included 'more love…than I intended' in Sardanapalus' intimate relationship with Myrrha and the final, forgiving farewell from his abandoned wife.[105]

However, after the flamboyance of *Sardanapalus,* the rigorous severity of Byron's concept became more marked in his final historical tragedy, *The Two Foscari.* Doric, a masculine architectural order unadorned by ornamental detail, is an apt image for the particularly 'austere' *Two Foscari*, which is characterised by a strict adherence to the unities, an agonistic structure and, for Byron, an unusual spareness of verse. Written in the space of one month, and with each of its five acts composed of only one scene, all set within the Doge's palace or prison, it is a tightly coherent exposition of a historical narrative with two inextricably inter-related strands. The first is a generational family feud, akin to one from Greek tragedy but attested in Sismondi's historical account, involving the families of Loredano, a patrician Venetian politician, and of the elderly Doge, Francis Foscari. The other is the trial of the Doge's son, Jacopo, which he has self-destructively engineered out of an

[102] *BLJ* 8.223.
[103] Rymer (1694 edn) 118.
[104] *BLJ* 8.78.
[105] *BLJ* 8.26.

overwhelming desire to be returned to Venice from exile, and which Loredano seeks to manipulate to inflict maximum distress on father and son. The unity of action is total: there are no distracting sub-plots and every encounter drives to the dénouement.

Framed within this historical story and featuring the Senecan *topoi* of revenge and torture, *The Two Foscari* is organised to explore issues about fate, reason (*ratio)*, endurance, condemnation of power, contempt for the fear of death and the destructive consequences of passion, especially anger—features which Anthony Boyle, in his commentary on Seneca's *Medea,* identifies as Stoic ideas found in Seneca's prose works.[106] The restriction to three speaking characters at any one time, breached only exceptionally, is not here an empty observance of Horace's dictum, but the architectonic framework for a rapid succession of intense *agones* between *dramatis personae* brought together in twos and threes to debate issues of public and private fealty and conduct. Similar adversarial juxtapositions are found in Alfieri's works, where they are criticised by Mme. de Staël in her best-selling *Corinna,* Teresa Guiccioli's favourite book: 'Most of the scenes are made to bring vice and virtue into contact, but the comparison is not made with the gradations of truth'.[107] *The Two Foscari*, however, largely avoids this risk in that no character represents unsullied morality.

Loredano's excessive pursuit of vengeance for the unproven murder of his father and uncle is critiqued at intervals by his more measured associate, Barbarigo, whose final, disillusioned appraisal invokes a vicious inversion of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*:

> You are ingenious, Loredano, in
> Your modes of vengeance, nay, poetical,
> A very Ovid in the art of *hating*. (5.1.134-36)

[106] Boyle (2014) xvii, xix.
[107] de Staël (1807) 1.355-56.

The Doge and his son's wife, Marina, contest priorities between public office and paternal love, calmness versus passion, and their conflicting assessment of the Venetian state, while each engage in antagonistic interactions with Loredano and the state's Council of Ten. Of particular power are the altercations between Marina and her husband over his refusal to leave Venice, against her willingness to go into exile with him, as Byron, severed from his own country, debates whether exile can ever be unbearable, and patriotism cease to be praiseworthy. Marina hurls at Jacopo that 'This love of thine/ For an ungrateful and tyrannic soil/ Is passion, and not patriotism' (3.1.141-43). In her eyes, such 'passion' for a corrupt state is 'useless', an undeserved excess of emotion to be censured rather than respected (4.1.152-53).

The word 'passion' throughout the play is associated with a reprehensible, unStoic lack of control. Jacopo's counter-argument is expressed as a Senecan-style *sententia,* that 'He who loves not his country, can love nothing' (3.1.184), but his hyperbolic discourse about Venice, often infused with a quasi-eroticism expressive of his excessive attachment to the physical fabric of the city (for example, 3.1.206-14), undermines his stance. His death wish, so vigorously contested by Marina, has a parallel in Seneca's Stoic sense of death as deliverance, reflected in tragedies like the *Troades* and in his letters.[108] Byron periodically makes similar references himself, including in the year of writing *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari,* when he declared that, after a year of bitter business in England, his affairs in Italy were luckily 'a little pleasanter…else I would have taken the liberty of Hannibal's ring', an allusion to Juvenal 10's account of Hannibal's suicide by poison secreted in his ring.[109]

[108] See, for example, Sen. *Ep.* 91.21: *At illud scis,...quam multos liberet tormentis, egestate, querellis, suppliciis, taedio* ('But you know...how many it [death] will set free from torture, want, complaints, torments, and weariness'), cited in Fantham (1982) 81.
[109] *BLJ* 8.69; Juv. *Sat.* 10.163-66.

Byron shackled and unshackled

Contemporary reception of Byron's 'system' met with disparagement among his critics and disappointment among friends like Shelley, Gifford and Moore.[110] Among the critics whom Byron termed the 'Actaeon hunters of literature', *The Edinburgh Review* designated 'the Unities at this time of day' as 'mere caprice and contradiction' and 'affectation', and, in concluding that 'we hold that English dramatic poetry soars above the Unities', sounded a nationalistic note that was echoed over several xenophobic pages in *The Quarterly Review*.[111] *The Quarterly*'s reviewer questioned the basis for regarding Aristotle and Horace as 'sturdy champions not only of the unities, but of all the other fetters with which the great tragic writers of France have encumbered themselves', and 'perceived' that for Byron likewise 'to run a race in chains (though those chains be voluntary) is too much for the speed of Achilles himself'. While Byron's historical tragedies were acknowledged to have occasional passages of power and beauty, they were generally pronounced failures, a result, Moore felt, perhaps stemming from their 'severe classic model, the most uncongenial to his own habits and temperament, and the most remote from that bold, unshackled license which it had been the great mission of his genius, throughout the whole realms of Mind, to assert'.[112]

A clear sense of what is lacking in Byron's neo-classical historical tragedies can be gained by comparing them with his powerfully 'bold, unshackled' rendering of a Greek tragic hero in his poem, *Prometheus*, the only major example of Byron working closely with an ancient Greek text. Terry Eagleton, arguing for the

[110] Medwin (1824) 145; Jones (1964) 2.317; Nicholson (2007) 412; Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.647.
[111] Medwin (1824) 181; *Edinburgh Review* XXXV (July 1821) 422; *Quarterly Review* XXVII (July 1822) 479-89.
[112] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.647.

transhistorical nature of 'tragedy', defines its key characteristics as 'heroic resistance, exultant self-affirmation, dignified endurance, the peace which comes from knowing that one's actions are predestined, and the like'.[113] In *The Two Foscari,* Jacopo Foscari, the Doge's son, ostensibly represents a form of 'resistance' and 'exultant self-affirmation' in choosing death before exile from his beloved Venice, and the Doge represents 'dignified endurance' until deposed, when he dies rather than leave the palace to which he has dedicated so much of his life. Superficially the characters embody the Stoic creed found in Seneca, but Byron's tone problematises their somewhat theatrical stances. While Jacopo is subjected to an 'inhuman artifice of pain' under judicial torture (1.1.336), his wife Marina asserts that 'we all must bear our tortures' (1.1.239) and, in elucidation of that 'we', strips him of any heroic stature by equating his exceptional, masculine experience of pain with hers in the routine, and societally unremarkable, female 'pangs' of childbirth:

> I have endured as much in giving life
> To those who will succeed them [the Doge and his son], as they can
> In leaving it: but mine were joyful pangs:
> And yet they wrung me till I *could* have shriek'd,
> But I did not; for my hope was to bring forth
> Heroes, and would not welcome them with tears. (1.1.242-47)

Given Byron's repeated references to Medea in his letters of 1818–19, it is a comparison strongly reminiscent of Medea's 'Women of Corinth' speech:

> ὡς τρὶς ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα
> στῆναι θέλοιμ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἅπαξ.
>
> ('I would rather stand three times with a shield in battle than give birth once', Euripides, *Medea,* 250-51)

[113] Eagleton (2003) 1.

At the dénouement, Jacopo dies rather than leave Venice, but neither his death nor that of the Doge is felt to be heroic—they are rather the logical *telos* of inexorable forces of character and circumstance, and the resolution of the revenge plot.

This is radically different from Byron's Romantic version of Eagleton's concept in his Aeschylean poem, *Prometheus,* where a similar scenario of unbroken will and endurance under trial and suffering evokes empathy for the protagonist's stance of heroic defiance. In the culture of Byron's day, Aeschylus in general, and the *Prometheus Vinctus* in particular, enjoyed an extraordinary and relatively new-found popularity. By contrast, for example, with Sophocles whose *Electra* had been tackled in an 'eccentric' English version as early as 1649 and all of whose plays had been published in English by 1729, vernacular translations of Aeschylus into modern languages appeared only in the 1770s, initially in French, then English, German and others.[114] The first of his dramas available in English was the 1773 *Prometheus in Chains* by Thomas Morell, whose 1798 Eton edition of the Greek text *in usum studiosae juventutis* Byron used at Harrow and donated to the Monitors' Library before he left (see Chapter 1).[115] By the early 1800s, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Vinctus* had won a firm place in the élite academic curriculum: just as it was a set text at Harrow, so Shelley recounted being instructed, soon after his arrival in 1810 at University College, Oxford, that he 'must read' the *Prometheus Vinctus,* Demosthenes *De Coronâ,* and Euclid.[116]

[114] Walton (2012) 140; Hall (2013) 293. The first complete vernacular translation of Aeschylus' plays was the (initially anonymous) 1770 French version by Le Franc de Pompignan: see Macintosh (2009) 435-68.
[115] For Morell's 1773 English translation of *Prometheus in Chains* and Robert Potter's well-received complete translations of Aeschylus in1777, see Hall and Macintosh (2005) 209.
[116] 'Percy Bysshe Shelley at Oxford', April 1 1832, *The New Monthly Magazine* 1832, p.346.

Moreover, the pre-eminence afforded the *Prometheus Vinctus*, the Latinized title by which Byron referred to the tragedy, was not a matter solely for the academy at this moment when enlarged access to its text, in the original and the vernacular, coincided with the advent of the Romantic movement. By contrast with his condemnation of Seneca, Schlegel's 1808 lectures declared eulogistically:

> [T]he other poems of the Greek tragedians are single tragedies, but this *[Prometheus Bound]* may be called tragedy itself: its purest spirit is revealed with all the annihilating and overpowering force of its first unmitigated austerity…The triumph of subjection was never celebrated in more glorious strains.[117]

A rather Protean figure, the mythological Titan variously created mankind from clay; bestowed on him divine fire stolen from heaven; and taught him cultural and technical skills. Zeus' punishment was that Prometheus be chained to a rock where each day an eagle (or vulture) pecked out his liver, which regrew overnight, until his eventual rescue by Heracles. In Aeschylus's drama, Prometheus (whose very name implies a man who can envisage the future) is shackled to a rock but defiantly rejects Zeus' offer of freedom in return for revealing to Zeus 'the fate thou didst so well foresee/ but would not to appease him tell' (*Prometheus,* 29-30).

Prometheus is a figure emblematic of the early nineteenth-century *Zeitgeist* with, on the one hand, its interest in the arts, science and the classical world, and, on the other, the vigorous libertarianism which found a perfect symbol in Prometheus's resistance to Zeus' alleged tyranny. Stuart Curran defines the Prometheus of the Romantic period as standing for 'a humanity bound to an undeserved state and no longer acquiescent in its degradation, a humanity with the will to be free and the power to dictate the terms of that freedom'.[118] Understandably then, Prometheus

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[117] Black (1815) 113-14.
[118] Curran (1986) 455. Dodds (1973) 31: 'To the imagination of the poets—Goethe, Shelley, Byron—…[Prometheus] was a symbol of the revolt of human intelligence against "a world it never made"'.

features to a remarkable extent at this time in the arts of different countries, particularly Germany, and across a range of media: poetry, fiction, drama, ballet, music, art and literary criticism.[119]



Fig. 10: John Flaxman's illustration for Richard Porson's 1795 *Prometheus Bound.* Hephaistos is reluctantly shackling an agonised but resolutely silent Prometheus to a rock, assisted by Kratos (power) and Bia (force).

Within Byron's own lifetime, associations were made between Byron, the Byronic hero of his poetry, and Prometheus, in the guise of that quintessentially Romantic combination—creative artist and resistant rebel. In 1813, after publication of the first cantos of *Childe Harold,* Thomas Mitchell, whose translations of *The Comedies of Aristophanes* Byron was to acquire and praise, proposed (fruitlessly) that Byron should translate the *Prometheus Vinctus* on the grounds that it exhibited

[119] Artists treating the Prometheus story include, in literature, Goethe, Monti, A.W. Schlegel as a poet, Von Herder; in music, Beethoven, Schubert and later Liszt; in choreography, Viganò; and in the visual arts, Romney, Flaxman and Fuseli.

'features of mind & character…very congenial with Lord B's turn of thinking'.[120] The association also suggested itself to Moore when he read Byron's late play, *Cain*: '*Cain* is wonderful—terrible—never to be forgotten. …Talk of Aeschylus and his Prometheus!—here is the true spirit both of the Poet—and the Devil'.[121] When in 1817 Byron published his Dramatic Poem *Manfred*, an *Edinburgh Review* critic identified it as reminding him of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Vinctus* on a number of counts, including 'tone and pitch of the composition', 'the character of the diction in the more solemn parts', 'the tremendous solitude of the principal person', 'the guilt—the firmness—the misery'.[122] Byron's response was to concede the possibility that the *Prometheus* had influenced all his writing, even if subconsciously:

> The Prometheus—if not exactly in my plan—has always been so much in my head—that I can easily conceive its influence over all or anything that I have written.[123]

This is a superficially plausible proposition, given Byron's personal tastes and the totemic status of Prometheus in the Romantic pantheon. John Clubbe, for example, asserts that 'the play [Byron] struggled through in Greek in school… struck a chord deep in his innermost being, one that would resonate through the poetry of a lifetime'.[124] It is, though, a material factor that Byron's comment was reactive not spontaneous, and moreover made precisely at a period when his literary deployment of Prometheus might have been felt as verging on the obsessive. The telling fact is that, before his intense engagement with the Promethean myth was triggered by a conjunction of personal circumstances in 1816, Byron named Prometheus in only three of his published works: an 1804 school translation of lines from Aeschylus's

[120] Webb (2015) 386.
[121] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.583.
[122] *The Edinburgh Review*, August 1817, vol. 28, 431.
[123] *BLJ* 5.268
[124] Clubbe (1997) (unpaginated).

Prometheus Vinctus, a brief allusion (incorporated only on revision) in his 1808 song *The Girl of Cadiz,* and a substantive stanza plus four-line pendant in his 1814 *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte.* From the literary sensations of Byron's London years of fame, the Titan is wholly absent, despite Prometheus' potential affinity with some aspects of the emergent Byronic hero in the figures of Childe Harold and the protagonists of the Oriental tales. Nor does Prometheus appear until 1817 in Byron's personal correspondence, permeated though it is with allusions to classical and mythological characters. There is no foundation for Peter Thorslev's assertion that 'the references to Prometheus in Byron's poetry and in his correspondence before [Byron and Shelley] met in 1816 are legion', nor is there persuasive contemporary evidence to indicate that the mythological stature of Prometheus exhibited in the wider educational and artistic environment had particular resonance for Byron as a schoolboy.[125]

Byron's undistinguished published translations, *Fragments of School Exercises, from the Prometheus Vinctus of Aeschylus*, were dated precisely 'Harrow, 1 Dec. 1804', just before his seventeenth birthday when notes on his school text show that the drama was being set in class. His very first Harrow verses were translations of a chorus from the tragedy, and were recollected by Byron in 1817 as having been received 'but coolly' by Dr. Drury, 'my grand patron (our headmaster)'.[126] Similarly, in a note to the original 1810 text of his *Hints from Horace,* Byron commented that 'when I was in the fifth form, I carried to my master the translation of a chorus in Prometheus, wherein was a pestilent expression about "staining a voice" which met

[125] Thorslev (1962) 123. Chew (1918) 309 also specifies only three poetical references to the Prometheus legend as predating Byron's meeting with Shelley in Switzerland but omitted *The Girl of Cadiz* reference, and erroneously included Byron's *Monody on Sheridan* which in fact postdated the meeting by several weeks.
[126] *BLJ* 9.43.

with no quarter'.[127] On Byron's own account, then, what was memorable in fine detail years later about his Promethean school exercises was not the power of Aeschylus's tragedy but the criticism of phrases in his juvenile poetical offerings.

With the sole exception of an ornamental revision in his *Song (The Girl of Cadiz,* 9-10), it was not until a decade after his Harrow perusal of the Aeschylus that, fired by what he saw as the unduly abject abdication of Napoleon as ruler of the French Empire in April 1814, Byron turned materially to Prometheus. Even then, the immediate cue may have originated from Hobhouse, his friend and fellow-admirer of Napoleon, who had been working on Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* while regularly socialising with Byron in February–March of that year.[128] The first edition of Byron's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte,* which angrily critiqued his long-standing idol's behaviour*,* built through a series of biblical and historical references (including Sulla, Dionysius II tyrant of Syracuse, and the wrestler, Milo of Croton) to a final stanza which offered Napoleon in exile the redemptive, post-lapsarian example of 'the thief of fire from heaven', Prometheus:

> Or, like the thief of fire from heaven,
> Wilt thou withstand the shock?
> And share with him, the unforgiven,
> His vulture and his rock!
> Foredoomed by God—by man accurst,
> And that last act, though not thy worst,
> The very Fiend's arch mock;
> He in his fall preserved his pride,
> And, if a mortal, had as proudly died!
>
> *(Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte,* 136-144)

[127] *CPW* 438.
[128] Hobhouse's Diary, https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/13-early1814.pdf, pp.176, 188, 194; Clubbe (1974) 22.

Crucially, what Byron's characterization offered here was not the Enlightenment vision of Prometheus as creator and teacher, but Prometheus as self-determining being, dignified by resistance to oppressive power under punishment and pain. This was the element identified by Schoenberg when in 1942 he chose to set Byron's poem for his own *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* (Op. 41) as a symbol of opposition to Hitler: 'I knew it was the moral duty of the intelligentsia to take a stand against tyranny'.[129] For Byron, Napoleon fell lamentably short in allowing 'the thunderbolt' to be wrung from his reluctant hand (73-74) and opting to live a slave rather than die a prince (44): 'Weigh'd in the balance, hero dust / Is vile as vulgar clay' (100-1), an image taken from the ode's first epigraph from Juvenal: *Expende Annibalem—quot libras in duce summo / invenies,* ('Weigh Hannibal: how many pounds [of ashes] will you find in the greatest general?', Juv. *Sat.* 10.147-48). The heart of Byron's poem, then, was not an Aeschylean sympathy with Napoleon's nineteenth-century version of the 'vulture' and the 'rock' but disillusionment, as the *Morning Chronicle* perceived in judging that 'the noble poet speaks with becoming indignation of the manner in which the tyrant has borne himself in his fall'.[130]

The *Buonaparte Ode* notwithstanding, there is little to suggest that Prometheus became actively part of Byron's poetical armamentarium before 1816. That year marked the conjunction of the cataclysmic implosion of Byron's personal and public life and of his subsequent close encounter in Geneva with Percy Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (already calling herself Mary Shelley). In England in the early months of 1816, Byron lived through domestic, social and financial ruin: the breakdown of his marriage entailing lifelong estrangement from his wife and

[129] Feisst (2011) 146.
[130] *BLJ* 4.102, n.2.

baby daughter, Ada; irreparable damage to his reputation, amid lurid gossip about sodomy and incest; loss of home and goods, including the sale of his library, in the face of such debts that 'only the privileges of rank saved him from prison'; and, with enforced exile, separation from his beloved sister, Augusta.[131] Moore's biography makes clear 'the angry and inquisitorial mood…abroad against him' which drove Byron to quit England for what proved to be for ever. Crucially it argues that the 'base calumnies…everywhere heaped on him' and 'the storm of invective so utterly out of proportion' had the effect of rousing his 'instinct of resistance to injustice', a mirror of Prometheus's instinct of resistance to disproportionate punishment, and with it a resurgence of Byron's poetic inspiration.[132]

En route to Italy, Byron halted for the summer near Geneva, where he lived in what was for him an unusual degree of intimacy with the Shelleys, along with others in their respective households. This relationship, developed amid Alpine scenery of savage grandeur and apocalyptically stormy weather resulting from a volcanic ash cloud, was catalytic for Byron's engagement with Prometheus. During that summer of 1816, Shelley was principally engaged in reading the Greek dramatists, especially Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound,* whose hero Shelley described in the preface to his own later work, *Prometheus Unbound,* as the prototype of 'the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and truest motives to the best and noblest of ends'. Medwin's *Life of Shelley* is flawed and partisan but there seems no reason to doubt his account that at Geneva Shelley 'translated this greatest of tragedies to Byron, an indifferent Greek scholar, which produced his sublime ode on Prometheus'.[133] At a moment when Byron, like

[131] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.1.
[132] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 1.644; 2.2.
[133] Medwin (1847) 1.268; see also Medwin (1824) 1.188.

Prometheus, was on the rack (*Prometheus* 28), he was disposed to sympathise with a hero whose final words in Aeschylus's play are ἐσορᾶθ' ἔκδικα πάσχω ('see how unjustly I suffer', 1093). Byron's correspondence at this time points up the similarities, not least in his insistence on endurance under suffering. Later in the year he wrote to Lady Byron, his estranged wife:

> I do not think a human being ever suffered a greater degree of mental torture than I have undergone since & during our separation:—if it has not destroyed my health with my peace—it is because I have a great capacity of suffering—and that my constitution appears to be so predisposed to endure agitation rather than repose'. [134]

In his 'sublime ode on Prometheus', he nods to the Greek but, as Nancy Goslee has argued in a thoughtful article, Byron in his customary magpie manner draws not only on Aeschylus but also on Schlegel's 1808 lecture for the structure and pessimism of *Prometheus*, and on both French and English translations of the Schlegel, plus a Hazlitt review of the latter, for 'much of [his] magnificent vocabulary and phrasing'.[135] He does, though, meld them into his own powerful rendition, an illustration of G. Wilson Knight's judgment that few poets have accomplished so much effortless force in single lines as Byron.[136] The powerful poetry of *Prometheus*' strongly felt lines highlights the manneredness of even the finest speeches in, say, *Sardanapalus.* In the ode's first stanza, Byron adopts a strikingly pared down mode of expression for the answers to the rhetorical question posed by the unnamed narrator about Prometheus' reward for his amelioration of human suffering:

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[134] *BLJ* 5.120.
[135] Goslee (1982) 20-36.
[136] Wilson Knight (1986) 215.

What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness. (5-11)

Correspondingly, the final stanza opens emphatically with 'Thy Godlike crime was to be kind' (35), crystallising the poem's verdict on Prometheus' acts in seven words which paradoxically equate generosity of spirit with divine offence and justify the charge of tyranny against 'the Thunderer'.

The poem drives to a potent conclusion which transmutes into poetical gold John Black's translation of Schlegel's observation that Aeschylus' Prometheus is 'an image of human nature itself; endowed with a miserable foresight and bound down to a narrow existence, without an ally, and with nothing to oppose to the combined and inexorable powers of nature, but an unshaken will, and the consciousness of elevated claims':[137]

Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself – an equal to all woes. (45-54)

Leslie Brisman has pointed to 'the metaphor-making power' in Byron's *Cain* and *Prometheus,* and here the densely alliterative, Schlegel-inflected lines, 'Thou art a symbol and a sign/ To Mortals of their fate and force', transform Prometheus to a

[137] Schlegel, trans. Black (1815) 113-14.

metaphor for the human condition.[138] For the 'impenetrable spirit', 'triumphant where it dares defy', the endurance is all, 'making Death a Victory' (42, 58-59).

While Byron's fullest and finest account of Prometheus was this 1816 ode, the powerful impact of Shelley's translation of Aeschylus's tragedy was not merely transitory. The myth also pervades *Manfred*, as *The Edinburgh Review* critic observed, and features repeatedly and regularly in Byron's later work, sometimes as a brief allusion, sometimes substantively. Clubbe has suggested that Byron makes as few references to Prometheus after 1816 as before, but in fact there are explicit references in almost every year of his writing life from 1816 on (see footnote).[139]

From the multivariant aspects of the Prometheus myth, Byron selects for emphasis in his poems both the notion of the vital spark of life and creativity and the broader themes of defiance of tyrannical oppression and unjust punishment, indissolubly coupled with suffering and alienation from society: 'Titan! to thee the strife was given/ Between the suffering and the will' (*Prometheus,* 15). These lines express a typically Romantic sense of inner conflict, what Goslee terms 'the dialectical pattern of divided consciousness', but interestingly the leitmotif of transgression and guilt so prevalent in portrayals of the quintessential Byronic hero, and arguably relevant to Prometheus, is notably underplayed, despite references to the theft of fire.[140]

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[138] Brisman (1986) 227.
[139] Clubbe (1974) 24. References to Prometheus are found in the following works from 1816 on:
1816: *Monody on the death of the Rt. Hon. R.B. Sheridan* 56*; Prometheus; CHP* 3.59.
1816-17: *Manfred*, especially 1.1.154 and 1.2.
1818: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 4.163; *Don Juan* 1.127.
1819: *The Prophecy of Dante* (i) 3.174-82 and (ii) 4.14-20; *Don Juan* 2.75.
1821: *The Irish Avatar* 46; *The Blues* Ecl. 2.37.
1822-3: *The Deformed Transformed,* Pt III, 88-89.
1823: *The Age of Bronze* 227-32, plus Byron's note at *CPW* 7.123.
[140] Goslee (1982) 34. References to the theft of fire in *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* 136*,* and pendant quatrain*; CHP* 4.163; *DJ* 1.127; *The Prophecy of Dante* 4.15.

One figure in whom Byron perceived *both topoi* was Dante, for Byron 'the poet of liberty. Persecution, exile, the dread of a foreign grave could not shake his principles'.[141] In *The Prophecy of Dante*, a work its Preface declares influenced by 'the Cassandra of Lycophron, and the Prophecy of Nereus by Horace' (Odes 1.15), Byron extrapolates from Dante's condition and his own to that of the creative artist generally:

> Many are Poets but without the name,
> For what is Poesy but to create
> From overfeeling Good or Ill; and aim
> At an external life beyond our fate,
> And be the new Prometheus of new men,
> Bestowing fire from heaven, and then, too late,
> Finding the pleasure given repaid with pain,
> And Vultures to the heart of the Bestower,
> Who, having lavished his high gift in vain,
> Lies chained to his lone rock by the Sea-shore.
> So be it, we can bear. (*The Prophecy of Dante,* 4.10-20)

The 'we' of that final line unequivocally associates the authorial *persona* with both the pain and the resilience of Prometheus and all his successors.[142]

Conclusion

Byron's concentrated preoccupation with writing historical tragedies in 1820–21 was another moment when, in venturing in a new direction, Byron turned back to the ancient world. This time, however, he was not playful but in earnest: in *Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*, there is no trace of pastiche or parody. And again his classicism proved more Roman than Greek.

[141] Medwin (1824) 145.
[142] Other references to the sufferings of the artist include *Monody on the death of the Rt. Hon. R.B. Sheridan* (65-60) and *The Lament of Tasso.*

Initially he cited only continental neo-classical influences for his tragedies, Alfieri above all, until the early reception of *Marino Faliero* proved unenthusiastic. He then misleadingly professed adherence to the doctrine instilled in schools like Harrow of the hegemony of the classical over the native, and ancient Greek over Latin. Having condemned the English theatrical tradition of Shakespeare, Byron implicitly sought valorisation of his tragedies by presenting them as the products of an author who, like Horace's Roman, *quaerere coepit,/ quid Sophocles et Thespis et Aeschylus utile ferrent* ('began to ask what service Sophocles and Thespis and Aeschylus could render', Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.162-63). In fact, however, the principal classical affinity of Byron's 'closet' dramas was with the—by then unfashionable—Roman tragedies of Seneca, just as the greatest technical influence seems less Aristotle's *Poetics* than Horace's *Ars Poetica,* the source text for Byron's concurrent revision of *Hints from Horace.* In defiance of contemporary British tastes, he chose to advocate Horace's rigorously formalist approach as the basis of a reformed tragic mode, a venture which Martin sees as 'the last in his exercises of self-deception, allowing him to persuade himself of the relevance of [the tragedies'] abstract idealism'.[143] While the long-standing critical debate about the sincerity, or otherwise, of Byron's resistance to staging his tragedies is irresolvable, Barry Weller's account of the extravagantly spectacular nineteenth-century performance history of Byron's plays testifies to the frustration of his aspirations for an era of classical simplicity and restraint on the London stage.[144]

Importantly though, Byron did not look to classical drama or myths for plotlines, like Alfieri and Shelley, however catalytic his encounters with their

[143] Martin (1982) 147.
[144] Weller (1991) 580-84.

perspectives. The Greek tragedy with the greatest influence on Byron, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Vinctus,* provided inspiration not for dramas but poetry. Even then, whatever Byron may have suggested later, Prometheus was a rare image in his verse until 1816, a year when personal calamity coincided with Byron's reacquaintance with Aeschylus's drama through a translation by Shelley. It was at that point, not as a schoolboy, that the work impressed him indelibly, and it stands as the only individual Greek tragedy to be incorporated powerfully into Byron's creative imagination.

Despite Moore's general comment that 'as might be expected, from Lord Byron's facility in receiving new impressions, the opinions of his companion [Shelley] were not altogether without some influence on his mind', those of Byron's works influenced by their Genevan exploration of Aeschylus did not reflect the rarefied idealism subsequently to be expressed in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* nor the vision of Romantic Hellenism encapsulated by Shelley in the preface to his *Hellas*.[145] Nor did they appraise the potential and liabilities of the creative spirit set against the over-riding imperative of community, as explored by Mary Shelley in her *Frankenstein: A Modern Prometheus*, a book Harold Bloom reads as 'a powerful implicit critique of the Romantic Prometheanism of her husband and the radical rationalism of her parents'.[146]

Rather Byron's stance was personal. His concentrated engagement with Prometheus from 1816 on reflected a renewed self-fashioning in the aftermath of the abrupt disintegration of his hard-won status as a literary lion in London and aristocratic family man. In an act of emotionally charged mythopoeia, Byron

[145] Moore (1830, repr. 2012) 2.25.
[146] Bloom (2007) 7.

appropriated the Aeschylean image of the Titanic hero. His work thereafter incorporated the drama's themes of creativity and generosity, injustice and ingratitude, punishment and pain, alienation and exile, and yet the ultimate triumph of the spirit over wretchedness through resistance and endurance.

For Byron, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Vinctus* was not a closed text for translation, nor a myth to be dramatised. It was a generative text from which, in his *Prometheus* ode, he first distilled in his own majestic language the Titan's endurance under pain, and then in his final stanza moved beyond Aeschylus to read across from the divine Prometheus to mankind. He ensured that *Prometheus* is not just another tale of a mythological hero: it is a tale of everyman. Our mortal fate may be wretched, but in our ability to remain free in our minds, we are 'part divine'. So it was fitting that when Heinrich Heine heard of Byron's death, he spontaneously equated Byron with Prometheus—the pain, the creation and the defiance:

> Ja dieser Mann war groß, er hat im Schmerze neue Welten entdeckt, er hat den miserabelen Menschen und ihren noch miserableren Göttern prometheisch getrozt.
>
> Yes, this man was great—from his pain he created new worlds, Prometheus-like he defied miserable man and his still more miserable gods.[147]

[147] Heine letter of May 27th 1824 to Rudolf Christiani, cited in Cochran (2014) 376.

Conclusion: 'I'm classic now'

In the *Helena-Akt* of Goethe's *Faust* Part II, written soon after Byron's death, Byron is the model for Euphorion, the Icarus-like son not of Helen of Troy and Achilles as in myth, but of Helena and Faust, and hence a fusion of the classical and the Romantic.[1] Elaborating on the rationale for his choice of Byron as 'the representative of the modern poetical era', Goethe declared admiringly: 'Byron ist nicht antik und ist nicht romantisch, sondern er ist wie der gegenwärtige Tag selbst'—'Byron is neither antique nor romantic, but like the present day itself'.[2] Or alternatively, as the Euphorion analogy implies, he is both, and more, so as to yield in the combination a fresh and 'modern' poetic voice.

The analysis of Byron's engagement with antiquity in this thesis has not simply substantiated its vital importance as an integral component of his creativity, as recognised by Goethe. It has revealed an arc of development on several fronts: in field of engagement, with Byron's turn away from classical translation as a serious poetic endeavour, unlike his fellow Romantics, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Hunt; in nature, from an educationally imposed classicism and early neo-classical 'imitations' to a personally embraced classicism and more original uses of classical models; and in generic range and progression. It has indicated the powerful impact of situatedness and contingency in Byron's classical poetic choices. It has highlighted the consistent evidence throughout his life of his indifferent classical language skills, and particularly his demonstrable and self-confessed weakness in ancient Greek, which underlay the conviction of Francis Hodgson, a friend and Fellow of King's, Cambridge, that even at university Byron must have worked from

[1] For Euphorion, see *Brill's New Pauly* (Cancik and Schneider (2004) Vol. 5, 182).
[2] Eckermann (1998) 211.

translations in reading Greek texts.[3] Most importantly, this thesis has demonstrated Byron's overwhelming bias towards Latinity in his reading and writing practices from his youth until his death, an era commonly perceived as one of Hellenophilia.

Classicism and creativity

On close examination, Byron has emerged as a sophisticated reader and inventive re-imaginer of classical texts and approaches. His instincts in this regard were not antiquarian. So, for example, in his most ambitious classical adaptation enterprise, *Hints from Horace,* he sought to leverage the value of Horace's *Ars Poetica* as programmatic for his own poetry and that of London literary society, rather than as an explication of classical literary criticism. The value of the classical to Byron was not primarily to recover the past but to illuminate the present.

There are some conventional elements customary in the reception of ancient literature that he did not utilise. For example, he did not typically develop entire stories from classical works and myths, with the rare and early exception that Virgil's *Nisus and Euryalus* episode provided the basis for *The Death of Calmar and Orla*.[4] Nor did he refashion classical plots for his tragedies, as Alfieri and Shelley did.[5] But spontaneously and habitually, he drew on the literature of the ancient world as a repository of thought, incident and language and as a model of form and source of parody. At times, too, he capitalised on the freedom that reference to ancient works provided to write of sexuality, homosexual and heterosexual.[6]

[3] See Chapter 1.
[4] See Chapter 2.
[5] See Chapter 6.
[6] See Chapters 3 and 5.

Classicism and neo-classicism were fundamental also to his sense of what constituted good writing. The evidence presented above has demonstrated the strong association between Byron's critiques of contemporary literature and ancient texts, from his early *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* to his impassioned involvement in the Pope-Bowles controversy.[7] As Jonathan Sachs argues, 'the fantasy of [literary] decline provokes the need for a standard by which an author can be measured against his contemporaries and for Byron that is always classical'.[8] And, perhaps, something of Byron's respect for the order and discipline to be found in classical literature is reflected in his concern with metre and stanza form (especially the taxing *ottava rima*), and his dedicated allegiance to rhyme in the face of the Romantic revival of blank verse.[9]

During his inspirational travels on release from the trammels of education and Britain, Byron produced two works in diametrically distinct modes: the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, A Romaunt*, which is for Stuart Curran 'the quintessential Romance of the period', and the classically-based *Hints from Horace.*[10] If Romance dominated in the years when he enjoyed world fame with *Childe Harold* and his Oriental tales, even then he sustained his entrenched habit of classical quotation and allusion. By age thirty, however, Byron was publicly repudiating those works and announcing 'Whatever I was, I'm classic now. / I saw and left my fault in time'.[11] In his greatest works, *Don Juan* above all, there is no perceptible caesura between the Romantic and the classical. The chapters above have demonstrated his persistent and resistant hybridities, his refusal to fit neatly the

[7] See, in particular, *Introduction* and Chapter 4.
[8] Sachs (2010) 129.
[9] As examples, William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads, The Prelude* and *The Excursion,* and Shelley's classically-influenced *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci* were written in blank verse.
[10] Curran (1990) 151.
[11] *E Nihilo Nihil* (1818).

categories and periodicities of literary criticism. If the Romantic poets as a group are more diverse than is sometimes popularly presented, Byron was exceptionally individualistic—characteristically inclusive not exclusive, 'both' not 'either/or', contradictory not consistent. One thinks of Whitman, who in old age listed Byron and his works as among those he referred to as his 'daily food': 'Do I contradict myself?/ Very well, then I contradict myself,/ (I am large, I contain multitudes.)'.[12]

Apparently untroubled by what Harold Bloom later identified as 'the burden of individuating a style' under 'the anxiety of influence', Byron was happy to assimilate the classical, the contemporary and many points between, from which he triumphantly 'individuated' his own distinctive voice.[13] His technique of appropriation is well illustrated by the often-quoted verdict in *Don Juan* that 'Ovid's a rake', which must be an echo, conscious or unconscious, of the remark in his friend Thomas Moore's 1801 preface to *The Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Little, Esq.* that 'Ovid made love like a rake, and Propertius like a schoolmaster'.[14] At times, this trait led to the charges of plagiarism which Shelley mentions as 'censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine' and which lie behind Shelley's defensive reflections on the reception of texts in his *Preface to Prometheus Unbound*:

> Poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. …There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Aeschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged.[15]

[12] French (1998) 76; Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*.
[13] Bloom (1973) 148.
[14] *DJ* 1.42; Moore (1801) vi.
[15] Reiman and Fraistat (2002) 207-8.

In conversation with Lady Blessington in 1823, Byron more bluntly dismissed accusations against him with the argument that every author, intentionally or unintentionally, is a plagiarist, since after 'the expressions of others…have been some time stored in our minds, [they] appear to us to come forth fully formed, like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, and we fancy them our own progeny'.[16] Tilar Mazzeo, however, in her detailed discussion of originality and aesthetic plagiarism in Byron's work, discerns a more profound informing philosophy:

> Byron articulates a model of authorship that posits appropriation, adoption, digestion, and even plagiarism as the conditions of invention and self-expression. …For Byron, the texts of one's predecessors and one's contemporaries become not the Wordsworthian private estates but the cultural superstructure upon which public works are built.[17]

Intertextuality was, then, a foundational component of Byron's creativity, one that by British literary tradition and his immediate social environment looked to exploit ancient works and words. And appropriately too, since there are clear correspondences, in aim and execution, with the Roman literary model of quotation and imitation, particularly its challenge to the author's ingenuity in reframing his or her literary borrowings and to the reader's erudition in identifying the source materials and appreciating their manipulation.

Niall Rudd, in outlining his hypothesis about the working practices of the Neronian-period Latin satirist, Persius, describes a basic difference between Persius the Roman and Keats the Romantic.[18] Keats, he argues, did not expect a reader of 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' to think, indeed did not himself think, of William Robertson's *The History of America* as the source for his phrase 'silent, upon a peak in Darien'. However, Rudd's (by no means wild) surmise is that Persius'

[16] Lovell (1969) 206.
[17] Mazzeo (2007) 10; see also Saunders (2012) 66.
[18] Rudd (1976) 82.

allusions to Horace are in the main deliberate and to be appreciated as such, even if the results suggest that Persius did not compose with a text of Horace in front of him and that the generative process, reliant on his having memorised Horatian phrases, 'may often have been only partly conscious' with intermediate stages suppressed. Byron's poetry suggests precisely this kind of mental processing—deeply retentive of powerful phrase-making in others and strongly associative in its train of thought. The result is a rich amalgam of original and allusive verse that creates a literary intellectual puzzle to challenge or tease, or on occasion misdirect, the informed reader. At the same time, Byron's great skill as a communicator is that a passage dense with meaningful allusion can often be enjoyed at a more superficial level without undue learnedness, as in the examples discussed in earlier chapters of Byron's exploitation of Horace in *Don Juan* 1.212–16, of Statius and Ovid in *Don Juan*'s seraglio scene and of Terence in *The Waltz*.[19]

Sometimes the effect of introducing these disparate elements may be deliberately disruptive or dissociative (as again with his Horace allusions in *DJ* 1.212–16), and Bate sees the more conspicuous instances of Byron's intertextuality as freighted with intent in relation to contemporary literary theorizing:

> [T]he retention of quotations on the surface of the text contributed to his [Byron's] implied attack on the Coleridgean ideal of a unified, organic work of art…as De Quincey put it, overt references to books interrupt the current of the feeling.[20]

The De Quincey argument here is similar to August Schlegel's condemnation of Virgil as 'a "skilful mosaicist"…whose "patchwork system" deprived his borrowed material of its "own true meaning"'—a condemnation which Timothy Saunders contrasts with Shelley's commendation of Virgil, during the lively debate in early

[19] See Chapters 4 and 5.
[20] Bate (1989) 240.

nineteenth-century literary circles about the lack of originality of the Roman poets in relation to the Greeks:[21]

> Lucretius is in the highest, and Virgil in a very high sense, a creator. … Livy is instinct with poetry. Yet Horace, Catullus, Ovid, and generally the other great writers of the Virgilian age, saw man and nature in the mirror of Greece. (Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*)[22]

Byron, who once casually declared Virgil a 'harmonious plagiarist', cited Virgil during the Pope-Bowles period as representing the high-water mark of Roman literary excellence, and he shared with Virgil the ability to integrate classical quotation and allusion with his own words in the, surely not to be despised, 'mosaicist' mould.[23] Byron's was an exceptionally creative, synthesising intelligence, blessed with a flowing facility for poetry as capable of producing powerfully emotive verse, full of De Quincey's 'feeling', as of wicked satirical bite.

Byron the Latinist

The question, then, is on which ancient authors did Byron draw? To write of Byron is, ineluctably, to be driven, again and again, to the words 'irony' and 'paradox'. And there is certainly a twin irony that Byron, responding ecstatically to the natural environment of Greece as a young man in his first exploration of the world, lived in Athens and imitated the Roman Horace, while Shelley, responding ecstatically to the natural environment of Rome in 1819, explicitly claimed it as the inspiration of his Aeschylean *Prometheus Unbound*.[24] Byron was—unequivocally as much as

[21] Saunders (2012) 71.
[22] Reiman and Fraistat (2002) 523.
[23] *BLJ* 5.211, 8.200-1.
[24] Shelley: 'The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama', Author's Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* (Reiman and Fraistat (2002) 207).

'unexpectedly'—a Latinist, as Shelley was a Hellenist.[25]

It is not wholly incidental that the pilgrimage of Childe Harold culminates in Rome and the Alban hills rather than Athens: 'Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul!' (*CHP* 4.78). Byron's ultimate judgment, when eventually he visited Rome in 1817, favoured the Italian over the Greek city:

> I am delighted with Rome—…it is a fine thing to see—finer than Greece…As a *whole—ancient* & *modern*—it beats Greece—Constantinople—every thing—at least that I have ever seen.[26]

Moreover, as Drummond Bone notes, 'from the appearance of Rome "the home/ Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree" in stanza 26 [of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto 4] it is Roman civilization rather than Attic nature which has the upper hand'.[27]

After the externally directed curricula of school and university, the literary classical writers on whom Byron draws significantly are overwhelmingly Latin rather than Greek, other than his recurrence to Homer. His choices of favoured authors tend to be relatively commonplace, except that Seneca—whose *Apocolocyntosis* is discernible in *The Vision of Judgment* and elements of his tragedies in Byron's—figures perhaps more prominently than might have been expected in the climate of the times after his denunciation by A.W. Schlegel.[28]

As Norman Vance notes, in the nineteenth century, among male cognoscenti, 'to know Horace was to participate in the English as well as the Roman cultural tradition'.[29] Hence the centrality of Horace in much of Byron's work, despite his distaste for how Horace was taught at school. There is too, of course, Juvenal, from *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* onwards, but he is more often referenced in

[25] Webb (2015a): 'The Unexpected Latinist: Byron and the Roman Muse'.
[26] *BLJ* 5.221.
[27] Bone (2004b) 154.
[28] See Chapters 5 and 6.
[29] Vance (1997) 177.

commentaries as an indicator of tone than as the author of a quotation or allusion embedded in Byron's textual fabric in the same way as Horace. Among other key Latin sources after Horace are Virgil; Martial's epigrams, under the external influence of Rogers and Moore; Petronius' *Satyrica* in Byron's correspondence and in *Don Juan*; Ovid and Statius in *Don Juan;* and, in a more diffused fashion, allusions to Terence, Cicero, Propertius and Lucretius, though Persius does not appear to stand high in Byron's pantheon.

Conversely, after Byron's school days, while he continued to read Greek historians and refer to Greek philosophers and to aesthetic theoreticians like Aristotle and 'Longinus', there is scant evidence of an artistic response to ancient Greek drama beyond his *Prometheus* ode and passing references to characters like Medea and Clytemnestra, and less than might be envisaged to Greek poetry, even at the impressionable period of his residence in the country.[30] This is not, of course, to deny the evident presence of some ancient Greek intertexts. Most obviously, there are important and very substantial Homeric elements in *Don Juan*, particularly in relation to narrative and characters*:* a poet educated almost exclusively in the classics, like Byron, could scarcely avoid impregnation with Homer. Yet in the same vast poem, while there are occasional references to the likes of Bion, Pindar and Anacreon, there is a paucity of the detailed textual echoes and quotations from the Greek which Byron deploys for Latin authors, other than from Sappho, though as noted in Chapter 5, these seem to have been mediated via 'Longinus' and Demetrius.[31] This is a marked bias, probably as a consequence of 'All the Greek I

[30] See *Introduction*, Chapter 1 and Chapter 3; also Clarke (1945) 166-67.
[31] For direct verbal echoes in *Don Juan* of Latin authors over and above Horace's many appearances, see as examples *DJ* 4.7, 4.42, 4.93, 12.25, 15.92 for Virgil; 5.1, 6.17 (misattributed) for Ovid; 16.11 for Suetonius; 2.169, 13.13, 16.86 for Terence; 15.9 for Propertius; 15.21 for Martial; 5.132 for Juvenal; and 16.102 for Petronius.

since [college] have lost', or indeed, perhaps never truly acquired.[32] Byron certainly seems likely to have been working from Greek texts in translation at this stage, as at university. The only volume of Homer in the section of the (problematic) posthumous 1827 library sale catalogue attributed to Byron is an 1820 Italian translation of the *Iliad* by Vincenzo Monti.[33]

The preponderance of Byron' affiliations with Latin authors stands in stark contrast with Timothy Webb's account of the Hellenophile Shelley's views on classical literature by the time he left England in 1818: 'Apart from Virgil, Lucretius and Lucan, Latin poets almost disappear from his reading lists. Almost every Greek author of significance occurs in the lists; many were read again and again'.[34]

Generic progression and versatility

Apropos Virgil, the normativity of the *rota Vergiliana*, with the poetic career's generic ascent from pastoral eclogues to didactic georgics to epic *Aeneid*, was, according to Michael Putnam, still operative for the Romantic Wordsworth, as it had been for the Augustan Pope. Stuart Peterfreund makes the point more generally:

> The collective wisdom inherited by the Romantics is that rather than just breaking spontaneously into the epic strain, the aspirant to the genre works up to it, moving through a well-defined program of preparation and progress through the lesser genres.[35]

It could certainly be argued that—in practice, if not necessarily by intention—Byron's literary trajectory exemplifies a latter-day version of the *rota* in its progression through the generic hierarchy, from early success with lyric and satire in

[32] *DJ* 1.53.
[33] There are, however, a number of sets of Homer, including Heyne's, in the catalogue of 'the library of a gentleman, deceased', which Cochran believes also contained books belonging to Byron (Cochran (2013d)).
[34] Webb (1976) 54; see also Highet (2015) 419-22.
[35] Putnam (2010) 19; Peterfreund (1981) 442.

Hours of Idleness and *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* to the contemporaneously less well-received tragedies and the epic, *Don Juan,* of his later years. On the other hand, Lawrence Lipking sounds a warning note that 'a sceptic might view the career ideal as a convenient illusion, a way of imposing some sense of order on the chance inspirations that come and go during a lifetime'.[36] Byron, a poet abnormally responsive to random external triggers, might be an instance of just such an illusion. Like Latin authors of relatively high status such as Lucilius and Persius, Byron's acute awareness of his aristocratic status would have precluded any consideration of commissions or patrons, with their concomitant demands for specific genres such as political epic, but he did nonetheless come under aspirational pressure from friend and publisher alike.[37]

Byron would, though, score highly in what Hardie and Moore see as a new, post-Renaissance career criticism emphasizing range and quantity, given his prolific output and the impressive breadth of his poetry's generic compass: lyric, pastoral, satire, (satiric)-didactic in *Hints from Horace,* epigram, tragedy (though not stage comedy, despite his admiration for the likes of Sheridan and his own comic flair) and epic of an idiosyncratic variety in *Don Juan*.[38] Byron was scarcely looking to a classical model here, since there are few ancient writers who tackle both tragedy and epic, other than the ambitious and multi-faceted Ovid who turned his pen to elegy for his *Amores,* exilic poems and calendrical *Fasti* (where Stephen Hinds points out that the elegiac form is put under strain by the epic weightiness of the content); to (mock)-didacticism, still in elegiacs, for the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*; to tragedy

[36] Lipking (2010) 289.
[37] See Chapter 5. Juvenal also did not dedicate works to a patron (Braund (1992) 40).
[38] Hardie and Moore (2010)13-14. For classical elements in Byron's pastoral, see Kahn (1973) 275, 281-83.

for his lost *Medea*; and to epic hexameter for his *Metamorphoses*.[39] Nonetheless, in all the genres of Byron's writing, though least perhaps in his lyric poetry, there are marked classical elements.

Contingency and constellations

The issue of external influences on Byron, touched on above, is a more general feature of his artistic conduct. Lady Blessington famously described Byron as 'a perfect chameleon,…taking the colour of whatever touches him. He is conscious of this, and says it is owing to the extreme *mobilité* of his nature', a characteristic which Byron defined as 'an excessive susceptibility of immediate impressions—at the same time without *losing* the past'.[40] One striking exemplification of this is the frequently contingent nature of Byron's engagements with classical literature, which are to be read as a revealing aspect of his literary project and practice, as much as acts of reception generally.

The chapters above have demonstrated the importance of Byron's own situatedness, as, for example, in the exercise of Latin composition and translation while staying in a Latin-oriented Capuchin convent and, on the death of John Edleston, in the precedent of Latin elegy for mourning a young, male beloved. And in particular, they have indicated the impact of specific constellations of confrères on his interests at different periods. Undertaking classical translations at school was obviously not a matter of choice, but publication of the products in volumes of verse, while at Cambridge, perhaps reflects the interests of university friends like Hodgson and Hobhouse, just as some degree of relationship may be suspected between

[39] Hinds (1992) 82.
[40] Lovell (1969) 71; *CPW* 5.769, note to line 820.

Hodgson's translation of Juvenal and Byron's Juvenalian *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* and between Hobhouse's efforts in translating Horace during their post-university travels and Byron's *Hints from Horace* and other works of Horace in Athens.[41] In 1814 Hobhouse's reading of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vinctus* may also have reminded Byron of the work as he came to write his *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* referencing Prometheus.[42]

If these associations can only be conjectural, other instances are compelling. It is clear that in 1812, after his extraordinary success in London literary society with *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron had recourse to translating Martial's epigrams as part of a conversational culture, and of specific literary exchanges, with the established poets, Samuel Rogers and Thomas Moore. Moore was a fellow spirit, irreverent as well as politically liberal, whose work influenced Byron's abandonment of somewhat heavy-handed satirical 'imitations' in favour of freer socio-political satires.[43] He remained a close friend—indeed it was to Moore that Byron entrusted his memoirs—but after Byron left England, they met in person only once and then briefly.

Thereafter, in relation to Byron's classicism, it is the influence of Shelley that is most apparent. Shelley was never a simpatico intimate like Moore, and Byron did not share his metaphysical mindset but, crucially, Shelley was present—present in Geneva and, at periods, in Italy when Byron was distanced from direct contact with English literary circles. And Byron 'admired and esteemed' the man, if not his poetry.[44] This is not to imply that Byron imitated Shelley's verse, but simply to

[41] On the friends' sea journey out in 1809, Hobhouse translated Horace' *Epistles* 1.10 and *Odes* 3.29, and the *Ars Poetica* on his lone journey home (see Chapter 4).
[42] See Chapter 6.
[43] See Chapter 4.
[44] *BLJ* 10.34

indicate that, at different times and in different ways, Shelley served as a trigger for Byron's creative engagement with a classical text or form. So, for example, Shelley's absorption in Greek tragedy and his fortuitous oral translation to Byron of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vinctus* in Geneva in 1816 inspired Byron's *Prometheus Ode*, a work with little resemblance to Shelley's own *Prometheus Unbound,* just as Byron manifested a Wordsworthian moment in the third canto of *Childe Harold* after Shelley dosed him with 'Wordsworth physic even to nausea' during the same visit.[45] Later, the Senecan flavour in Shelley's tragedy, *The Cenci* (1819), which reflected his keen interest in the Roman author, provided a precedent for Senecan elements in Byron's tragedies.[46]

In relation to satire, too, Shelley's parody of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* in his *Peter Bell the Third* of 1819*,* and his anti-Laker, anti-monarchical satire of the following year, *Oedipus Tyrannus, or, Swellfoot the Tyrant* (1820), were forerunners of Byron's parody of Southey in his 1822 *The Vision of Judgment*. However, in line with his Latinist orientation, Byron drew not on the Greek Aristophanes, as Shelley had done in *Swellfoot*, but on the Roman Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*.[47] Shelley's dedication of *Peter Bell the Third* was, incidentally, to 'Thomas Brown, Esq., The Younger, H.F.', Thomas Moore's *nom de plume* for his satires, *The Twopenny Post-bag* and *The Fudge Family in Paris*, and indicates the reciprocal interactions between Shelley, Moore and Byron.[48]

Then, too, it was Shelley particularly who urged Byron to aspire to epic, and, just as Roderick Beaton finds that in real life politics, Shelley 'played a crucial part

[45] Webb (1976) 15; Medwin (1824) 237. Mary Hembree sees a circularity of influence with Byron's *Manfred* influencing Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, which in turn influenced Byron's *Cain,* though Shelley denied this (Hembree (1977) 198-202).
[46] See Chapter 6.
[47] See Chapter 4.
[48] Vail (2001) 193.

in bringing Byron to commit himself to Greece' (see Introduction), so Beaton suggests Shelley may have influenced Don Juan's relocation from Spain to Greece:

> The idea of linking up his [Byron's] own epic with the world of Homer's heroes may have been prompted, or encouraged, by his recent conversations with Shelley. But Homer's world, for Byron, meant primarily his own, the one he had experienced on his travels in Greece.[49]

Beaton's rider points to a more general conclusion from this analysis: Byron may often have been reactive to others in his reception of the classics, but the brilliance of his appropriations is that he always made them, and the ancient world from which they came, unmistakably his own.

Conclusion

Finally, there is an issue about social change and readership in the Romantic period. Richard Jenkyns sees one result of 'the Age of the Common Man' as 'a gradual jettisoning of the social and literary ideals fostered by a classical education'. This is a trend illustrated by the denunciation in Wordsworth's *Prelude* of 'the trade in classic niceties,/ The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase,/ From languages that want the living voice/ To carry meaning to the natural heart' (*Prelude,* 6.107-22).[50] It is characteristically paradoxical that Byron—whose castigation of the classical education he received is vehemently expressed in his poetry and letters—should, against the tide of advancing Romanticism, mount a rearguard action in defence of the English models founded on classicism (Milton, Dryden and Pope above all); and should himself engage so substantively with classical texts and forms throughout most of his writing life, while effortlessly forging a poetry that carried 'meaning to the natural heart'.

[49] Beaton (2010) xviii; Beaton (2013) 53.
[50] Jenkyns (1992) 236.

Byron was popular not populist and, as illustrated in this thesis, his literary engagement with antiquity remained live and vibrant to the end, even as he sought to move forward and create new models for the English literary culture of his day. Indeed, it is not impossible that his insistence towards the end of his life on formal classical norms in his historical tragedies and his unexpected return to translating one or two Martial epigrams for his own journal, *The Liberal,* may have presaged a reinforcement of such an engagement. Byron evidently had no qualms about 'culling terms and phrases' from Latin, despite its lack of a 'living voice', while simultaneously pointing the way forward to new forms of poetry, and promoting publication of his later works to wider audiences.

Shelley may have been politically radical but he was poetically élitist; in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound,* he declared his purpose as having been 'to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence'.[51] Byron was keen to reach beyond that narrow élite, and when he broke away from his conservative, long-term publisher, John Murray, for later cantos of *Don Juan*, he adopted a broader marketing strategy. Where Murray had initially issued Cantos 1 and 2 only in expensive quarto and octavo formats (respectively 31s. 6d., thirty-one shillings and sixpence—a standard book-price as this was one-and-a half guineas—and 9s. 6d., nine shillings and sixpence) for a total print run of 5,100, John Hunt published Cantos 6, 7 and 8 in three formats, including a 'common' edition at one shilling with a print run of 17,000.[52] The poem was also extensively pirated at low prices, notwithstanding its classical elements. William St Clair concludes that *Don Juan*—in his judgment, 'by

[51] Reiman and Fraistat (2002) 209.
[52] St Clair (2004) 327.

far, the most original work of literature produced in Great Britain during the age of romanticism'—'was read by more people in its first twenty years than any previous work of English literature', and 'penetrated more deeply and more widely within the reading nation'.[53] He cites Friedrich Engels' observation of 1845 Manchester that, by comparison with the middle classes, 'it is the workers who are more familiar with the poetry of Shelley and Byron'.[54]

Byron's classicism was, then, no bar to appreciation across the classes domestically and, given its shared cultural heritage across Europe and Latin's status as a *lingua franca,* it is likely to have assisted rather than impeded reception of his works on the Continent. In 1821, Byron wrote that he had seen three or four French translations of his works, as well as several in German and Italian, and he passed on Thomas Moore's report from Paris that 'the French had caught the contagion of Byronism to the highest pitch', (probably after publication of the first eight volumes of a French translation of Byron's complete works).[55]

Richard Cardwell has charted the phenomenon of Byron's reception in Europe, and notes that Byron is still read and valued in Eastern Europe.[56] By contrast, even the best of Byron's works are today too little read in the UK, though they offer much to suit current tastes: the 'sampling' of others' materials; the pervasively ironic perspective, underscored by a sensitivity sometimes amounting to sentimentality; the recurrent questioning of the possibility of apprehending 'truth' and 'fact'; and, in *Don Juan,* the poetical equivalent of the long-form TV series, breaking out of highly

[53] St Clair (2004) 323, 333. McGann similarly regards *Don Juan* as 'the most important poem published in England between 1667 (when *Paradise Lost* was issued) and 1850 (when *The Prelude* finally appeared in print)' (*CPW* 5.xvii).
[54] St Clair (2004) 338.
[55] *BLJ* 8.114 and n.2.
[56] Cardwell (2004) 10, and *passim.*

formalised and predictable generic formats and the simplistic presentation of issues necessitated by constrained space or time.[57]

Another characteristic with contemporary resonance is Byron's partiality for paratextuality, both in attaching appendices of information (see, for example, discussion of his tragedy, *Marino Faliero,* in Chapter 6) and in—often classically-related—annotations to lines of verse which were sometimes intended to be printed on the page and hence comprehended in a single, synthesised, readerly response. In the years since his death, his notes have usually been abbreviated or omitted altogether or, at best in scholarly editions like *CPW*, unhelpfully distanced from the poetry. Today, digital technologies provide artists with simple and inexpensive mechanisms to present works of art, literary and visual, with inbuilt commentary, and some hard copy literature has also adopted a Byronesque approach. See, for example, Junot Díaz's sporadically annotated, 2007 Pulitzer prize-winning novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* where, as one example, successive and markedly heterogeneous footnotes early in section five provide a metaliterary comment on the right of the characters rather than the author to determine the opening, and factual details of Hatüey who in 1511–12 led resistance to the invading Spaniards in Cuba.[58]

Such features may provide fertile ground for extending current popular interest in Byron from his celebrity biography to his works, an endeavour which should be facilitated by his proven record of having created verse appreciated both by those classically-educated and those not. There is equally considerable scope for

[57] Byron would have relished the claim by Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to the US President Donald Trump, that the President's press secretary had given 'alternative facts' about the size of the crowd at the President's inaugural ceremony (22 January 2017).
[58] Díaz (2007, ppbk. 2009) 211-12. In David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, hundreds of endnotes provide Byronic digressions, commentary, side stories and alternative narratives.

further research to elucidate his reception of the ancient world. High on the agenda would be a detailed commentary on classical intertextuality in *Don Juan,* and a scholarly edition, with commentary, on *Hints from Horace* with the parallel passages of Byron's imitation 'adapted' to the Latin original *en face,* as he requested.[59] A fuller appreciation would enrich our understanding of the 'classic', the Latinist, Lord Byron.

(99,495 words, excluding translations and abstract)

[59] *BLJ* 2.90.

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