

*Byron's Life and His Biographers**Paul Douglass*

After the mid-nineteenth century, it became a stereotype for asylum inmates to imagine themselves as the omnipotent Napoleon – but also the brilliant Byron.<sup>1</sup> The desire to translate one's life into the idealisation of another is common enough that Albert Camus defined biography itself as 'nostalgia for other people's lives'.<sup>2</sup> Camus thought that our fascination with famous people stems from our belief that their lives have strong plots, while our own lives seem fragmentary and directionless. However, since even the careers of celebrities are not as neatly plotted as we imagine, the production of that nostalgia requires an unholy alliance between fiction and biography. Lord Byron knew this as well as perhaps anyone in history, writing his own story and seeming to live what he wrote:

'Tis to create, and in creating live  
 A being more intense, that we endow  
 With form our fancy, gaining as we give  
 The life we image, even as I do now. (CHP, III.6.46–50)

The vignettes and anecdotes he relished and promulgated produced a tale of sex, violence, genius, and adventure, or – as some see it – sex, violence, cruelty, and hypocrisy. However you choose to perceive Byron, the conflation of the life and the work explains much of the delight and frustration to be found in the immense canon of Byron biography, from laurel wreaths to slash-and-burn character assassination, from dry factual accounts to encounters beyond the grave, such as Quevedo Redivivus's *A Spiritual Interview with Lord Byron* (1840) and Amanda Prantera's *Conversations with Lord Byron on Perversion, 163 Years After His Lordship's Death* (1987).

The deepest vein in Byronic portraits is undoubtedly the Gothic. Transgressors such as Childe Harold, Selim, Lara, Conrad, Manfred, and Cain have inspired scores of writers. Even before he died, Byron had appeared in at least a dozen novels, most notably as the eponymous heroes

of Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816) and *Ada Reis* (1823), and as the self-dramatising Mr Cypress in Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) – but also in hilariously serious works like *The Baron of Falconberg; or, Childe Harold in Prose* (1815).<sup>3</sup> Byron biography sometimes reads like Gothic melodrama. That is no accident, for Byron encouraged readers to imagine him as a Gothic hero.<sup>4</sup> As he wrote in a letter to Francis Hodgson in 1821, 'the *hero* of tragedy and (I add meo periculo) a *tragic* poem must be *guilty*, to excite "terror and pity"'. And, he asked blithely, 'Who is the hero of 'Paradise Lost'? Why Satan' (*BLJ*, XIII, 115). Byron's biographers have been so often drawn to Gothic elements in his life because Byron helped them along, portraying himself as a fallen angel haunted by a secret past.<sup>5</sup>

That 'fallen angel' image was born in 1812 when, at the age of twenty-four, Byron published what everyone took to be a thinly disguised autobiography titled *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. His own hero had been Napoleon, whose bust he kept upon his desk at Harrow, and his goal was to establish himself as a conquering force as well – in letters rather than the battlefield. *Harold* was his first victory. It made Byron the inventor of what Claire Tuite has called a new kind of notoriety: 'scandalous celebrity'.<sup>6</sup> Harold/Byron's Gothic aspects mesmerised readers immediately, and the fascination persisted throughout his life and after, with his injured foot, imperious (and painfully crass) mother, prodigious swimming ability, sexual ambivalence, incestuous attraction to his half-sister, illegitimate children, vituperous separation from his wife, exile from England, effortless writing talent, friendships with the famous, and death as a hero of the Greek independence movement in 1824. This irresistible material has proven fodder for a mountain of biographical writing, including more than 200 biographies, dozens of memoirs, countless pamphlets and biographical essays, and innumerable fictional treatments in novels, poems, plays, movies, and operas.

Prodigious as it is, and prompt as it was to pursue Byron after his death in 1824, biography still arrived late. Byron had already been telling his own story for years, engaging others in a creative process of living through him and his fictional personae. At thirty-three, less than two and a half years before his death in Greece, Byron ruminated on his own growing legend:

I have seen myself compared personally or poetically . . . to Rousseau – Goethe – Young – Aretine – Timon of Athens – 'An Alabaster Vase lighted up within', Satan – Shakespeare – Buonaparte – Tiberius – Aeschylus – Sophocles – Euripides – Harlequin – The Clown – Sternhold and Hopkins – to the Phantasmagoria – to Henry the 8th . . . The object of so many contradictory comparisons must probably be like something different

from them all, – but what *that* is, is more than *I* know, or any body else. ('Detached Thoughts', 15 October 1821; *BLJ*, IX, 11)

He liked most such comparisons – for example, to Alexander Pope, whose wit and physical infirmity had stirred Byron's imagination when he was merely a boy with a bad foot. Better to 'err with Pope' than to shine with another (*English Bards*, 102). Aware of becoming a legend, Byron yet conveys a bemused sense of joining the spectators of his own life. Indeed, he left a record of dispassionate self-evaluation that has been corroborated in his letters. Though Byron used the tools of fiction to create illusions about himself as an author and a man, he also carefully recorded his experiences.

### The Life

Byron's childhood was not easy. He was born in London, on 22 January 1788, to a first-time mother and a profligate father who shortly abandoned child and wife. Captain John Byron, nicknamed 'Mad Jack', was a widower with a daughter named Augusta when he looked for an heiress to snare, and he found her in Catherine Gordon of Gight. A sincere, impetuous woman, her most attractive trait to Captain Byron was her estate, which rapidly disappeared after they married. Pursued by creditors and wounded emotionally by her little boy's deformed foot, she retreated with her child to her ancestral Scotland. There Byron received a grammar school education and possibly a sexual initiation at the hands of his nurse, May Gray. His father died in 1791 – perhaps by his own hand – bequeathing nothing but debt.

In 1794 Byron became the heir to the barony held by his profligate great-uncle ('The Wicked Lord'), to which he acceded in 1798. Though the family seat, Newstead Abbey, still had to be rented out, Byron's prospects had soared, and his sense of entitlement increased commensurately. He moved to England and attended school at Dulwich and Harrow. During his Harrow years, he formed the first of his many attachments to females, including Elizabeth Pigot, Margaret Parker (his cousin), and Mary Chaworth, the latter of whom inspired both pain and poetry. Harrow did not appeal to him at first, but in time he found his stride. He played cricket avidly (other boys ran for him) and met the Earl of Clare, a friend for life. He also began corresponding with his half-sister, Augusta. At this time, he had a shocking encounter with Lord Grey de Ruthyn, the lease-holder for Newstead Abbey. Perhaps, as some have guessed, de Ruthyn tried to seduce Byron. Possibly for that reason, the ruins at Newstead seemed to lose their

attraction for him and came to symbolise ‘the wreck of the [family] line’ (*Newstead Abbey*, l. 24; *CPW*, 1, p. 342). At Cambridge, by virtue of his peerage, Byron endured no examinations. He kept a pet bear, drank, and bet on the horses and the prizefighters. It was a wild life, memorialised in *Hints from Horace* (1811):

Fines, tutors, tasks, conventions threat in vain,  
 Before hounds, hunters, and Newmarket plain.  
 Rough with his elders, with his equals rash,  
 Civil to sharpers, prodigal of cash,  
 Constant to nought – save hazard<sup>7</sup> and a whore,  
 Yet cursing both, for both have made him sore.

*(Hints from Horace*, ll. 229–34; *CPW*, 1, pp. 297–8)

But in addition to excess there was abstemiousness. At one point, Byron appears to have dieted off fifty-one pounds over a period of five months. He formed several close relationships at Cambridge as well, including those with John Cam Hobhouse, Charles Matthews, and a young chorister named John Edleston, to whom Byron dedicated several poems under the sexually ambiguous name of ‘Thyrza’. He wrote more earnestly than he studied, and published by private means four books of poetry: *Fugitive Pieces* (1806), *Poems on Various Occasions* (1807), *Hours of Idleness* (1807), and *Poems Original and Translated* (1808). *Hours of Idleness* received a stinging dismissal in the *Edinburgh Review*, a Whig quarterly of literary and political critique.

Two years later, Byron turned twenty-one and entered the House of Lords. He also finished at Cambridge and retorted to his critics with *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). He looked forward now to crossing Europe with his friend Hobhouse, cavalierly ignoring the Napoleonic Wars. Travelling through Portugal and Spain to Greece, Albania, and Turkey, Byron had many adventures. He swam the Hellespont, an achievement of which he was rightly proud. He experimented with everything, including homo- and heterosexual partners, and visited the tyrannical ruler of Albania, Ali Pasha. He began to write *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, composing it in Spenserian stanzas. Soon after his return to England, he learned that his mother had died. He had not been in any haste to see her, and the news staggered him. Immediately thereafter, he received news of the deaths of his Cambridge friends Matthews and Edleston.

After the publication of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* in March 1812, Byron found himself famous, as he described it to Thomas Moore.<sup>8</sup> In *Childe Harold*, Byron had invented a special kind of hero, behind whose mask he

slipped. A growing public perceived him as having an infectious charisma that produced what we might today call a 'fan base' of female readers.<sup>9</sup> Lady Caroline Lamb is the most famous of those women who wrote to 'Harold' offering him respite from the murky sorrows and shadowy demons haunting his pallid features. Unlike her competitors, she got to meet him, and they carried on an intense and very public affair over that summer, until finally her husband and mother were forced to send her to Ireland. She returned in the autumn of 1812, gaunt and distressed, and never entirely got over the experience. But it wasn't just Byron's sexual charisma that had made such an impression; it was also his writing. Lady Caroline was inspired to write three novels and numerous songs and poems as she tried to work out what had happened to her. She was not atypical of Byron's female readership, who fantasised about *becoming* Byron as well as possessing – or being possessed by – him.

Childe Harold was an amalgam of the Aristotelian tragic hero and other heroic elements, as Peter Thorslev shows in *The Byronic Hero* (1962). Yet Harold was also a character Byron would outgrow. Like modern celebrities, Byron confronted the paradox that his audience loved him not for himself but for what they imagined him to be.

with women he was what  
 They pleased to make or take him for; and their  
 Imagination's quite enough for that:  
 So that the outline's tolerably fair,  
 They fill the canvas up – and 'verbum sat.'  
 If once their phantasies be brought to bear  
 Upon an object, whether sad or playful,  
 They can transfigure brighter than a Raphael.

(DJ, xv.16; CPW, v, p. 593)

Byron knew his readers were meeting him half way – and more.<sup>10</sup> He became anxious to present himself – in person, in portraits, and in print – as a man of action, not a foppish poet. He had himself painted in various military get-ups and sporting a rugged, open-shirted look. Like celebrities of all ages, he obsessed about his weight and carefully prepared for public appearances. He practised a special gloomy, smouldering glance that he called his 'under-look'. It was a type of Ossianic 'cool' that devastated his admirers.<sup>11</sup>

A student of stagecraft, he created characters who paralleled his personality and circumstances so closely that it is still impossible to avoid asking, in the words of Peter Cochran, 'Is this then verse, or documentation? Poetry, or journalism? Art, or life?'<sup>12</sup> In these confusions, Byron speaks to our time, with

its bloggers, vloggers, and self-promoting social media influencers. Again and again, biography returns to the cold truth that almost anything it may say of Byron he has already said of himself – in his jottings, poetry, and letters. He found himself protean; so do we. He found himself mad (and maddening), brilliant and perverse, magnanimous and jealous, egotistic and idealistic, homosexual and heterosexual, domineering and acquiescent, and a host of other contradictory things – and so do we. Byron described himself in language so memorable that all one can do is quote it: ‘My muse admires digression’ (*To the Earl of Clare*, l. 72; *CPW*, I, p. 97).

Among poets published and read in England, Byron is also one of the most antagonistic to England herself. The decisive period of his life may have been the two years that intervened between his marriage in 1814 and his departure in 1816. Having disentangled himself from Lady Caroline Lamb, more or less, and having had a lengthy affair with Lady Oxford, he pursued and eventually won the hand of Annabella Milbanke, who happened to be the niece of Lady Caroline’s mother-in-law, Lady Melbourne. Byron had at least two motives for marrying. First, his financial problems had become more pressing and he needed the income of a wealthy wife while the sale of Newstead Abbey was concluded. The second motive, harder to fathom, was to be rescued from his own demons – to be made, in some sense, good and moral. This would turn out to be an impossible role for a spouse, as anyone could have imagined. The marriage started off badly, and Byron’s attachment to his half-sister Augusta became obtrusive. By the time he separated from Annabella, they had a daughter; he also probably had a daughter by Augusta. His money problems exacerbated his tendency to outbursts of temper and violent alterations of mood. His behaviour during his wife’s pregnancy was apparently so terrifying that she longed to believe he was mad.

When Annabella made it clear that there would have to be a separation, Byron decided to leave England in order to avoid pursuit by creditors and those who might get him charged with sodomy. He and his country now rejected and vilified each other. He had invented himself as a brooding and restless figure of sexual allure, haunted by transgressions of the past. Now he seemed to have become the Corsair he wrote about in the poem of that name: Conrad whose name was ‘link’d with one virtue, and a thousand crimes’ (*The Corsair* 3, l. 696; *CPW*, III, p. 214). When he left, stories circulated that he had abused his pregnant wife, that he had fathered a child by his half-sister, and that he had committed sodomy with boys. The last was an offence punishable by execution or the public pillory. As Louis Crompton has argued, the public revulsion that inundated such

transgressors was so heinous that many would have chosen the gallows over the pillory.<sup>13</sup> Byron's permanent exile from England, and the stories and denials it occasioned, continues to dominate his biographical legacy.

It is therefore especially sad that we do not have Byron's own account of his life, contained in a special journal that he had entrusted to his friend, Thomas Moore. Moore did not want to destroy the memoir but, under extreme pressure from Byron's publisher John Murray and others, he allowed the manuscript to be burnt, in an infamous act of loyalty committed just days after news of Byron's death reached London in May 1824. Doris Langley Moore has given us a compelling account of the loss of this important document in *The Late Lord Byron: Posthumous Dramas* (1961). Though we cannot absolve those who did the burning, neither should we fail to note Byron's ambivalence. He left his manuscript to an uncertain fate, just as he had put his illegitimate daughter Allegra (born to Claire Clairmont, Mary Shelley's stepsister) in a convent where she would die of cold and neglect.

When John Cam Hobhouse learned from Byron that he had entrusted the manuscript to Moore, he jealously impugned Moore's motives. Byron dismissed Hobhouse's objections:

Do you really mean to say that I have not as good a right to leave such a M.S. after my death – as the thousands before me who have done the same? – – Is there no *reason* that I should? Will not my life (it is egotism but you know this is true of all men who have *had* a name even if they survive it) be given in a false and unfair point of view by others? – I mean *false* as to *praise* as well as *censure*? (*BLJ*, IX, 68)

Unsatisfied, Hobhouse accused Byron of 'purchasing a biographer under pretext of doing a generous action'.<sup>14</sup> Byron retorted,

I am willing to bear that imputation rather than have Moore or anyone else suppose that He is at all obliged to me. – – I suppose however that like most men who have been talked about – I might have had – (if I did not outlive my reputation which however is not unlikely) a biographer without purchase – since most other scribblers have two or three – gratis. – Besides – I thought I had written my *own*. (*BLJ*, IX, 88)

Byron died believing the manuscript would survive. One of his acquaintances later reported that he had said 'Literary lives are compiled for the biblioplists, as puffs to sell their wares; they are nothing. When I die you will see mine, written by myself.'<sup>15</sup> Not that he necessarily thought the facts would make him revered – quite the opposite, for he knew that while transgressions are 'essential to [the] hero's story, / They do not much contribute to his glory' (*DJ*, III. 93).



Byron had underestimated the determination of his friends to protect him, and possibly themselves, from revelations of his bad behaviour. Those memoirs are almost certainly gone for good, though some still nurse the hope that the manuscript was copied, or that it was never really burnt. The burning of the memoirs is emblematic of the problems Byron's biographers have faced in gathering the literary and social remains of their subject. The record is always damaged. The surviving allies always 'spin' the story by silence if not publication. There will always be proprietary interests that influence the writing of any famous author's biography.

Readers will also always prefer Gothic drama to facts. Byron harnessed the power of his readers' imaginations, and what happened then, as he himself acknowledged, no one could predict or control. Many of the episodes of his life subsequent to the collapse of his marriage became raw material for poems, novels, plays and operas, and (later) movies. His friendship with the Shelleys, for example, though it was fleeting, has been frequently recounted. Byron, however, did not continue to cooperate with the creation of this myth of the doomed poets and their fatal passions. Indeed, in the years before he conceived the desire to aid in the Greek independence movement, he adopted a very different incarnation: the character of Don Juan, the sex-obsessed figure who, in Byron's retelling, seems more victim than victimiser. Though the poem is now considered a work of genius, to Byron's contemporaries it appeared he had settled for 'the literary *lower Empire*' (*DJ*, II.62; *CPW*, v, p. 484). What had happened to the grandiosity of *Manfred* and *Cain*? When Byron died in Greece, it appeared he had abandoned them for the chatty, catty, risqué narrator of *Don Juan* – a model that influenced Oscar Wilde's campy voice. Must one sacrifice Don Juan to sanctify *Manfred*? Many have done so in order to preserve what they believed to be the Faustian quintessence of Byron, essentially ignoring the seriousness of Byron's commitment to *Don Juan*.

As Byron's life neared its sudden end in Greece, he had already become the object of covetous minds. Some cared not at all to preserve his 'original' character; they only cared that his name brought in money. As a result, after 1813, many works were falsely attributed to him. Some were satirical send-ups, some straight forgeries. One famous example is *The Vampyre*, a short story penned by his unstable and pretentious doctor-assistant John Polidori, who wrote it during the 'Frankenstein' summer of 1816. Polidori's publishers fudged the distinction between its being *influenced* by Byron and its being *written* by him in order to increase sales. Byron's protestations failed to squelch the canard of his authorship, and the rumour still occasionally returns from the grave.



He was not merely the victim of such hoaxes, however. He chose to circulate some of his own works anonymously at first, just to see how they were received. For example, *The Waltz*, a condemnation of the dance fad, was published under the pen name 'Horace Hornem' in 1813 because Byron feared to attack the German influence upon England through the Hanoverian kings (that is, the Georges, the fourth of whom adored waltzing). At the same time, he would also be able to take credit for the poem in liberal Whig circles. Thus, he took advantage of the pirated and forged work that appeared under his name to say things he would otherwise have been forced to keep private. Such are the complications the biographer faces in seeking the truth of Byron's relatively short life, which ended, so we are now persuaded, because his ignorant doctors bled him promiscuously, despite his protests.<sup>16</sup>

### The Biographers

What *was* biography in Byron's era? Its roots lay in hagiography, a term originating in the third division of the Jewish Scripture, referring to the stories of saints and venerated persons. The lives of the saints were intended to inspire readers, and, with few exceptions, hagiography was the principal mode of biography down through the reign of Elizabeth the First and beyond, as Byron knew: 'Sermons he read, and lectures he endured, / And homilies, and lives of all the Saints' (*DJ*, 1:47). Seventeenth-century biography had focused primarily upon the lives of religious men, most of whom were writers of sermons and tracts, and this had led to a greater interest in literary figures – Milton, for example. Byron was just three years old when Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson* was published in 1791. It was a harbinger of the modern biographical mode, with its meticulous research and psychological sophistication. Unfortunately, it was too far ahead of its time. While it showed that literary men made excellent subjects, its example was honoured relentlessly in the breach. More importantly, perhaps, the artist had yet to emerge as an independent object of interest, another change in which Byron played a crucial role. The handful of English 'lives' of literary men published in the 1700s had afforded the reading public only 'curiosity and amusement'.<sup>17</sup> Byron's life was a different matter.

Before any full-scale biography could be produced, the memoirists weighed in. Thomas Medwin's *Conversations of Lord Byron* was rushed into print in October 1824, just six months after Byron's death. It was followed immediately by Robert Dallas's *Recollections of the Life of Lord*

*Byron, from the Year 1808 to the End of 1814* (1824), Pietro Gamba's *A Narrative of Lord Byron's Last Journey to Greece* (1825), and William Parry's *The Last Days of Lord Byron* (1825). Each of these depictions incorporates conversation supposedly quoted from the author's notes. In 1828, Leigh Hunt produced *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, an account of the ill-fated plans of Byron, Hunt, and Shelley in 1822 to found a journal to be called *The Liberal*. Shelley had drowned, the whole project went to hell, and so did Hunt's relations with Byron, on whom he vented his frustration in this act of character assassination that did serious damage to Byron's reputation. After the death of Lady Caroline Lamb in 1828, her friend and collaborator Isaac Nathan published *Fugitive Pieces and Reminiscences of Lord Byron: Containing an Entire New Edition of the Hebrew Melodies . . . Also Some Original Poetry, Letters, and Recollections of Lady Caroline Lamb* (1829). Nathan's praise of Byron and Lady Caroline (who was godmother to his children) was viewed sceptically by critics who preferred not to believe a Jew had standing with either the Lady or the Lord.

After this revelation of Byron's private conversations, Thomas Moore finished his *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of His Life* (1830), sold by Byron's publisher, John Murray. Moore's work has stood up well, considering its closeness in time to Byron's death and the intense pressures placed upon him by Byron's many powerful friends and enemies. Moore is also one of the few who had read Byron's memoirs before they were burned, and this has prompted careful rereading of the 1830 biography for clues to lost material. *Letters and Journals* is an edition of Byron's correspondence and other writings, with commentary and anecdotes contributed by Moore. Often candid, Moore still drew the curtain over many aspects of Byron's life. Faced with the impossible task of describing (much less explaining) Byron's abominable behaviour towards his wife, Moore offered the bromide that great persons are ill-equipped to pursue domestic happiness. Yet Moore knew that readers wished to be told that famous people are as flawed as anyone, and he gave his audience what it wanted.<sup>18</sup> Though he defended Byron stoutly and gave ample evidence of the poet's genial character in the letters, he also recounted such anecdotes, and quoted such letters, as will leave the reader in no doubt about Byron's volatile temperament. Moore's was the party line: Byron's difficult nature must be acknowledged, but it was all part of his genius – and ultimately a strength of his remarkable character. If there were rumours of incest and homosexuality, these were to be ignored.

While Moore was Byron's biographer, it must be noted he was also Byron's competitor. Out of deference to those with whom he and John

Murray still maintained relationships, Moore omitted much troublesome detail, such as Byron's affair with Lady Caroline Lamb and the very existence of Isaac Nathan, who had collaborated with Byron on the *Hebrew Melodies*, a collection which competed with Moore's own *Irish Melodies*. John Galt's *The Life of Lord Byron* (1830) must have annoyed Moore, because it cribbed two-thirds of its material from other books published to that date, including Moore's. The remaining third of Galt's book focused on his short personal encounter with Byron in 1809–10, amounting to perhaps seven weeks of contact. Galt put on a show of trying to balance Moore's overly positive view of Byron, and he further damaged Byron's reputation by impugning his motives for going to Greece and charging (falsely) that Byron was a plagiarist.

And still the memoirs spilled forth. An army doctor named James Kennedy had once tried to convert Byron; now he produced *Conversations on Religion with Lord Byron and Others* (1830). Julius Millingen, one of the physicians who had inadvertently hastened Byron's death, published *Memoirs of the Affairs of Greece* (1831). Another acquaintance of Byron's, the Countess Blessington, offered her own extensive volume of recollected *Conversations* (1834). A hiatus ensued, into which stepped Edward John Trelawny with his *Recollections of Shelley and Byron* (1858). Twenty years later he revised and republished it as *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author* (1878). His is also among the least reliable of the works discussed here, as might be guessed from the change in his title. After Lady Byron died in 1860, Countess Teresa Guiccioli, Byron's last truly intimate lover, finally came out with her own memoir, a volume of hero-worship entitled *My Recollections of Lord Byron and Those of Eye-Witnesses of His Life* (1868, translated 1869). It may have surprised any surviving objects of Byron's satirical pen to learn that 'To praise was almost a besetting sin in Lord Byron', and that he had been 'indulgent to mediocrity'.<sup>19</sup>

Tainted invariably by self-interest, these memoirs still have great value, and biographers have revisited them continuously for fresh insights. But all are limited by the problematic nature of the authors' relationships to Byron and the unreliability of their memories. Each book has provided tantalising and often misleading material which biographers must accept only with caution. Sometimes, as is especially true of Dallas, the memoirist has tried to faithfully present his subject in viva voce, but has failed to notice that Byron finds him amusing. In all cases, the motives of the memoirist have to be taken into account. Dallas wanted money and had some personal grudges to settle with his late benefactor. Medwin sought to make himself appear Byron's equal and close friend, though he had known Byron

scarcely four months (Hobhouse was so offended by the exaggeration of that closeness that he published an attack on Medwin in the *Westminster Review* detailing at least fifty errors of fact). Gamba was the brother of Byron's last love, Teresa Guiccioli, and an ardent supporter and admirer of Byron. Isaac Nathan clearly knew his collaboration with Byron on the *Hebrew Melodies* was the pinnacle of his career as a composer. He has often been ignored as a self-promoter, but his recollections of that collaboration have gained credence among recent biographers, just as some of the accounts canonised by earlier biographers, like that of Blessington, have been subjected to more and more scrutiny. It has taken almost two centuries of research to separate myths, canards, and flim-flam from the facts. And we aren't done yet.

Despite the plethora of memoirs of Byron in the three decades after his death, two key persons chose to remain mostly silent, namely Lady Byron and John Cam Hobhouse. Hobhouse may have regretted leaving a vacuum to be filled by the imaginations of sharply antagonistic camps who revered and reviled his friend. He, who knew so much, had foregone his chance to publish his own version when it could have countered the misstatements of Hunt, Medwin, Galt, and Dallas. Byron's reputation had eroded. Gradually, so had the public's interest. When Hobhouse, now Baron Broughton de Gyfford, privately printed his own extensive memoir, *Some Account of a Long Life* (1865, later published as *Recollections of a Long Life* in 1870), most of the actors in the drama were dead. Now that he could have his say, Hobhouse did little more than print his diaries, which were circumspect, divulging that Byron lost his cane in Berne on 26 September 1816, but not whether he confessed any illicit desire for his half-sister Augusta. It was a perfect transition to the Victorian attitude to Byron, epitomised in Thomas Carlyle's phrase, 'Close thy Byron, open thy Goethe'. One was supposed to read Byron only to comprehend Romantic excess.<sup>20</sup> Still, Byron sold well, and the publication of a new edition of his poems annoyed Lady Byron's surviving friends, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe. Stowe grew further incensed when she read Teresa Guiccioli's tribute to Byron, and she inaugurated a campaign of fury against Byron by publishing a twenty-page article in the September 1869 editions of *Macmillan's Magazine* and the *Atlantic Monthly* titled 'The True Story of Lady Byron's Life'.

Mrs Stowe's defence of her friend consisted in arguing that Byron had been guilty of incest with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, and that Lady Byron had gone to her grave as a martyr to her estranged husband's egotism and perversity. Hobhouse attempted to counter this story. In response to

Mrs Stowe's attack, he wrote *A Contemporary Account of the Separation of Lord and Lady Byron: Also of the Destruction of Lord Byron's Memoirs*, which was published after his death (1870). His work was drowned out as a new wave of memoirists and commentators weighed in. Hobhouse's contribution to the story of Byron's turbulent career would not be fully appreciated until Lady Dorchester edited and republished his *Recollections of a Long Life* in 1909. In the meantime, Mrs Stowe expanded her attack and published *Lady Byron Vindicated* (1870). Anyone who had met Byron and failed to publish now seized the opportunity to offer reminiscences, including Byron's school chum at Harrow, William Harness (*Personal Reminiscences*, 1875), and his friend at Cambridge, Francis Hodgson (*Memoir*, 1878).

Perhaps not surprisingly, after Harriet Beecher Stowe's attack, Byron's reputation actually rose. For forty years, no one had seriously challenged Moore's version of the facts. Over the course of the next twenty years, full-length biographies were published by Karl Elze, J. C. Jeaffreson, Roden Noel, and John Nichol. As Clement Goode has noted, the issues raised by Mrs Stowe's book passed rather quickly from the public eye, but Byron himself was reborn in a massive re-evaluation of his life and work.<sup>21</sup> Many unpublished letters began to appear in print, and scholars buckled down to the tasks of bibliography and textual scholarship. Nineteenth-century Byron scholarship was crowned by the appearance of Coleridge and Prothero's thirteen-volume *The Works of Lord Byron*.

Mrs Stowe's inability to make the charge of incest stick would seem to have returned us to Moore's deflection of the issue. (Interestingly, Byron's sexual interest in boys was not even on Mrs Stowe's list of charges.) However, the increasing availability of Byron's correspondence inevitably led critics back to the incest question. Motivated apparently by recollections of his grandmother's outrage and sense of injustice, Lady Byron's grandson, Ralph, Earl of Lovelace, supported Mrs Stowe's argument against Byron in a privately printed book titled *Astarte* (1905). It was a pedantic, difficult work that failed to support its claims sufficiently, but *Astarte* had been written by one of Byron's descendants, and it circulated widely. Its tone of certainty reignited the slumbering fires of Byronic controversy, prompting yet another round of publications, including *Lord Byron and His Detractors* (1906), which contained an essay by John Murray IV defending the publishing family's honour against the Earl of Lovelace's sometimes obscure imputations of collaboration with infamy.

When *Astarte* was subsequently augmented and edited by the earl's wife for posthumous publication in 1921, some unpublished Byron correspondence, chiefly to Lady Melbourne, appeared. The letters tended to support

the claims of the Earl of Lovelace and Mrs Stowe. This made it harder for Byron's defenders to refute the incest charges. The tide had turned in favour of admitting that Byron's behaviour towards his wife and half-sister was certainly not all that might have been expected from a gentleman. Richard Edgcumbe's *Byron: The Last Phase* (1909) defended Byron against charges upon which he would ultimately be convicted, but it also marks the first appearance of what became a series of objective and lively biographical treatments of restricted parts of Byron's life. To complete this intimate portrait, Ethel Colburn Mayne published her two-volume *Byron* in 1912, accepting the assertions of *Astarte* and in general supporting Lady Byron's perspective. Mayne abridged the book into one volume in 1924, updating and improving it. Scholarship was indeed doing its work. But Thomas Moore's version of Byron's life still had staying power. In 1932, John Murray brought out a centenary reprint of Moore's *Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, augmented by a cursory index and a sprinkling of commentary culled from the work of some of his contemporaries, including Walter Scott, Lord Broughton (Hobhouse), and Thomas Campbell.

Despite the reprinting of the Moore biography, there was no going back. As André Maurois wrote in his influential 1930 biography titled simply *Byron*, 'Willingly or unwillingly, every biographer of Byron must take sides on the incest question'. Maurois endorsed the views of Stowe, Lovelace, and Mayne, declaring the issue settled. But he also observed that Byron and Augusta had not really known each other until adulthood, arguing ingeniously that the charge of incest was more in the nature of 'an imaginary crime'.<sup>22</sup> Maurois's book assumes that there must now be index entries for Byron's affairs, for incest, and even for debauchery, but none for paedophilia, homosexuality, or sodomy. For Maurois, it was enough to quote Byron's passionate description of his relationship with John Edleston and leave the rest to our imaginations.

At the midpoint of the twentieth century, a great period in Byron Biography was inaugurated by the work of Leslie Marchand, whose exhaustive recounting of the poet's day-to-day existence, *Byron: A Biography*, was published in 1957. Marchand's meticulous research and his sympathetic but fair-minded approach set a high standard. Where others had been content to allude and to quote out of context, Marchand penetrated and documented, answering hundreds of questions himself and opening the way to answering hundreds more about Byron's life. As one might have expected, however, Marchand's was not the last word on Byron. Hampered by restrictions imposed on his ability to discuss Byron's sexuality, Marchand was forced to pass over his homosexual

experiences in virtual silence. *Byron: a Biography* had scarcely appeared when an argument erupted in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* over Byron's sexual proclivities. Specifically, the question was raised whether Byron's attempt to engage in 'unnatural' intercourse with his wife, rather than an incestuous relationship with his sister, had driven Lady Byron to separate from her husband. This was a possibility first raised by Michael Joyce in 1948, and now he and G. Wilson Knight lined up for the affirmative. Malcolm Elwin and Doris Langley Moore took antagonistic views, sometimes with each other as well as with Knight and Joyce. Moore and Elwin had each had access to the papers of the 2nd Earl of Lovelace, and they tended to support the family's position that Augusta Leigh's relationship with Byron was the key to the breakup of their marriage, although both acknowledged Byron's abysmal behaviour towards his wife, without conceding that an overture to anal intercourse could be assumed, much less proven. Agreeing on this point, Elwin still accused Moore of gross inaccuracies, and under his influence the 2nd Earl forbade her to quote further from the Lovelace papers.<sup>23</sup> Leslie Marchand published a shortened and updated one-volume edition of *Byron: a Biography* in 1971 under the title *Byron: A Portrait*. He attempted to respond to the work of Elwin and D. L. Moore, but essentially stuck to his former conclusions. Of the possibility that Byron had fathered a child with his half-sister, Marchand wrote only that 'No positive proof survives on either side of the question'.<sup>24</sup>

That was not the case with Byron's homosexual affairs, and Knight called strongly for biography to confront the facts of Byron's queer life, asking that 'admission and a Greek name' be attached to the explanation for Byron's offence against his wife.<sup>25</sup> And yet Knight wasn't quite ready to insist on public acknowledgement that Byron was bisexual. It would be almost twenty-five years before Louis Crompton extended Knight's charge, arguing that Marchand had consistently failed to explain and describe Byron's involvements with male lovers, such as his page Robert Rushton and the Greek youths Nicolo Giraud and Loukas Chaladritsanos. Crompton's *Byron and Greek Love* (1985) exemplifies a type of biographical study that focuses Byron's life around a single issue, rather than attempting to create a larger, but inevitably less sharply argued view. For example, Edna O'Brien's *Byron in Love* (2009) contends that Byron's career can be explained by his desperate need to be continuously 'in love', even if his lovemaking was generally more epistolary than carnal. Antony Peattie's recent crowd-funded book project, *The Private Life of Lord Byron*, contends that Byron was anorexic from at least the age of eighteen, and that his death



in Missolonghi in 1824 resulted from a lifelong pattern of self-starvation. Such studies get negative responses from those who feel the writer warps Byron's life to fit the argument. Nonetheless, polemical biographies often make important contributions. Crompton makes a strong case that Byron's sense of doom and guilt for 'nameless crimes' stemmed from homosexual impulses and activities. The acknowledgement of Byron's bisexuality might indeed seem to resolve disputes about his relationships with lovers such as Edleston and the androgynous Lady Caroline Lamb. Yet the exact nature of those relationships remains elusive.

Time will tell whether O'Brien's and Peattie's works will have the kind of impact Crompton's has had upon Byron biographies. The full-length traditional biographies published about Byron since the appearance of Crompton's book are certainly marked by his approach: Phyllis Grosskurth's *Byron: The Flawed Angel* (1997), Benita Eisler's *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* (1999), and Fiona MacCarthy's *Byron: Life and Legend* (2002) have accepted Crompton's conclusions. Building also on the work of Doris Langley Moore and Malcolm Elwin, they have sought fresh perspectives on cruxes in Byron's life. For example, Eisler writes compellingly about Byron's marriage, and Grosskurth writes with insight about his childhood and love affairs with older women such as Lady Oxford and Lady Melbourne. As indicated by their books' subtitles, Grosskurth and Eisler return us to the bad, Gothic Byron. And even MacCarthy's very even-handed volume creates a darker picture of Byron's character than that offered by Marchand.

Perhaps as a result of her long engagement with Freudian psychology, Grosskurth emphasises Byron's lifelong obsession with his mother. She asserts that Byron was blinded by conflicted feelings towards his mother, unaware of his own arrogance and shortcomings, and that he was 'seized' by periods of 'rampant' promiscuity throughout his life, which was, from her perspective, an unconscious search for a maternal substitute ('intense attachments to a series of mother-figures') to replace the one he had lost in 1812.<sup>26</sup> Grosskurth shrewdly points out that we should always question the stories Byron tells, because of his proclivity for exaggeration and for telling people what they preferred to hear. One finds similar notes of judicious caution in Fiona MacCarthy's later biography, which warns us not to accept too readily the story of Byron's sexual initiation by his nursemaid, May Gray – a story that Benita Eisler does not seem to doubt. Eisler's assessment of Byron's character is driven not by a psychological theory as in Grosskurth's case, but it does follow Byron's career with a keen eye for his deeper flaws, such as the 'vindictiveness' she detects in his comfortable

attitude towards the flogging of a slave he witnessed in 1810. At times Eisler finds Byron so shameless that he 'would say anything, no matter how compromising to his real beliefs, for a word of praise from his listeners'.<sup>27</sup> Though Grosskurth and Eisler detail Byron's flaws and cruelties unflinchingly and are prone to strike the notes of melodrama that pervade Byron biography, they each did prodigious research and their books yield many insights flowing from what seems (despite the criticisms) to be a fundamental empathy for their subject.

The most difficult thing in writing about Byron is, apparently, dealing with his poetry as art. Byron's genius is the primary reason, after all, that he engaged his peers and posterity so profoundly. Yet in Byron biographies the poetry tends to recede from view, cited only to corroborate the biographer's interpretation of events. Exceptions to this rule may be found in the numerous biographical essays of Peter Cochran and in Peter Graham's pithy and insightful *Lord Byron* (1998), which includes sensitive discussions of *Childe Harold*, *Don Juan*, and Byron's major lyric poems and plays.<sup>28</sup> Cochran's work, including books on Byron's relations with Robert Southey and John Cam Hobhouse, is also published in an online archive ([petercochran.wordpress.com](http://petercochran.wordpress.com)), which includes insightful and lively discussions of Byron's relationships with figures such as Hobhouse, Douglas Kinnaird, Lady Melbourne, Lady Caroline Lamb, and John Murray, as well as annotated texts of Byron's works. Before his death in 2015, Cochran became a major influence in Byron studies as an independent scholar and editor of the *Newstead Abbey Review*.

Fiona MacCarthy's is the most comprehensive, even-handed, and carefully researched of the full-length biographies of Byron that have appeared since 1990. She is generous towards her predecessors and thorough in her treatment. She was invited to write her book by the Murray publishing house and was given exclusive access to their huge cache of materials, which has since moved to the National Library of Scotland. Well researched as it is, her book still cannot equal the thoroughness of Marchand's grand opus – if we excuse him, as she does, for having been hamstrung in his treatment of Byron's sexuality. MacCarthy claims to have settled the question of Byron's sexuality: He had 'an innate sexual orientation towards boys'.<sup>29</sup> This proves to be another argument that can only be made convincing by selective use of evidence. MacCarthy also finds that, however badly behaved he could be, Byron had an innate 'capacity for empathy' that others – including Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, and W. H. Auden – appreciated and absorbed. Tellingly, she writes that the things that mattered most to him may have received 'a throwaway response'.<sup>30</sup> That is a good caution to bear in mind as

one reads his letters and poems, searching for the evidence that might confirm the speculations readers inevitably find themselves making about him as a person – and a poet.

### Conclusion

Biographers aim at historical truth, but they must create artistic illusion. Moreover, theirs is an illusion that threatens to become a delusion, for authorial empathy leads them to project themselves into their subjects, like novelists. Furthermore, the biographer is rarely able to work objectively. All life stories are written in a maelstrom, and all facts ferreted out over someone's objections. Even worse, the biographer always lacks essential information. As Freud said, 'Whoever undertakes to write a biography binds himself to lying, to concealment, to hypocrisy, to flummery, and even to hiding his own lack of understanding, since biographical material is not to be had and if it were it could not be used. Truth is not accessible.'<sup>31</sup> Or, to quote Byron and to put the case less charitably, biographers are like politicians who 'live by lies, yet dare not boldly lie' (*DJ*, XI:36).

Byron himself played a crucial role in the development of the modern sense of biography. He rose to fame in a period when the individual strongly emerged. Along with Napoleon, he left his stamp upon subsequent portrayals of extraordinary people and all the theatre of celebrity. Also, Byron's life is well documented and controversial. But what seems most remarkable about Byron in this respect – and what makes him so interesting for students of the biographical genre – is that he fully understood the creative nature of truth. 'I really cannot know', he wrote to an admiring Isaac Disraeli in 1822, 'whether I am or am not the Genius you are pleased to call me, but I am very willing to put up with the mistake, if it be one' (*BLJ*, IX, 172). If human life is a sort of collaborative process of self-invention, then how can one represent it? To capture this protean subjectivity, the biographer must inevitably confront his or her own subjectivity and acknowledge ours. In biography we confront the mystery of personality, which was Byron's bailiwick, as Walter Scott recognised in the *Quarterly Review* in 1818 when he declared that the interest of Byron's works remains inseparable from his mind, wit, and (one must add) ironic detachment from his public image.<sup>32</sup>

Consistent with their subject's celebrity, biographies of Byron often seem haunted by the sense that they must be written not simply to establish facts but to *render justice*, either to Byron or to those who opposed him. A great deal of writing about him has been motivated by an apparent desire to vilify or exalt him, particularly in his behaviour towards his wife.<sup>33</sup> Some

support his wife and ex-lovers; others see him as he sometimes saw himself: persecuted by wrangling interlocutors – often women – who had it in for him. Nor has the issue fundamentally changed at the date of this writing, though the charges are different. Incest and bisexuality are generally viewed as Byron's guilty secrets, while his abusiveness is more hotly debated. Many critics (not all of them women) emphasise Byron's misogynist side, while others (not all of them men) come to Byron's defence. Some believe that he was afflicted with manic-depressive illness.<sup>34</sup> Some see him as a political radical: Byron's name has been invoked in Greece, Turkey, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Republic of Georgia, and other places around the world as a rallying cry for revolution. After Shakespeare, he is undoubtedly the most influential English poet around the world, and he has been the subject of several biographically based studies exploring his political legacy.<sup>35</sup> In the aftermath of the Romantic era, he was often viewed exclusively as an egotist and a libertine, a bad father and husband, and (worst of all) a self-indulgent writer who squandered his God-given talents. At the beginning of the twentieth century, he was acquitted as a poet and elevated to the ranks of genius, yet convicted of incest. Latterly, he has been adopted into the evolving Queer Canon. The story of his life has changed as facts have emerged, but it has also fluctuated with changes in culture and in practices of reading. With his ironic distance and scepticism, he appears more and more like our contemporary.

Is he really? Or are we labouring under our own illusion, responding to a portrait we have half created? The slippage between life and art persists, even as the biographical facts have become more numerous and seemingly certain. Byron's life is the quintessential problem for biography, because it contains at its core that practice of fictionalisation which is believed to 'taint' the genre. One doesn't just read about Byron, or read his works; one enters into him, as the corpus of dream, a figure containing infinite possibilities. The term 'Byron' has become the site of artistic and intellectual speculations, and of repeated moral and ethical struggles.

Byron's apparent belief in the durability of an historical record and the authenticity of an authorial voice would seem to sit uneasily beside his knowledge that the imagination shapes reality. However, his belief in history and his embrace with imagination are not necessarily in conflict. Though there has been much said, much more will yet be written about why Byron was motivated to 'tell all the Truth, but tell it slant'.<sup>36</sup> As an artist, he employed the imaginative intensity created by saltatory leaps in narrative – the way the mind fills gaps and supplies continuity. His own personae rehearse such stuttering steps, from Harold to Conrad to Juan;

we, as readers, meet him at least half way. Perhaps Byron's story is, as much as anything, the tale of the self questioning itself, reforming under the pressure of its own demands and those of its friends and enemies. In our era, biography itself has undergone such self-questioning and reinvention, to the point of inserting fictional characters in the text<sup>37</sup> or imagining a dialogue between two historical figures.<sup>38</sup> Such experiments were encouraged by books such as Richard Holmes's *Footsteps* (1985), which attempted to 'cross-question' the nature of biographical authenticity in the very act of creating it.<sup>39</sup> Though such experimentation may suggest that biographers have now transcended the perennial problems of the genre, we would do well to remember that all biographical studies are ephemeral, written to excite the interest of particular people at specific times. To trace the many biographies written of Byron is to trace the development of the contemporary biographical mode, with its meticulous research, its psychological sophistication, and its awareness that imagination (as much as fact) is required for understanding another human being. In the latter aspect, it so often seems, Byron got there before us.

### Notes

1. Poet John Clare, while incarcerated for mental illness in the 1840s, imagined himself Byron and wrote his own 'Don Juan' and 'Child[e] Harold'.
2. Albert Camus, *Carnets, 1942–51*, trans. P. Thody. 2 vols. (London: Hamilton, 1966) 2:17.
3. See Bridget Bluemantle (Elizabeth Thomas) *The Baron of Falconberg; or, Childe Harold in Prose*. 3 vols. (London: A. K. Newman, 1815). Byron also appears in Blake's *The Ghost of Abel* and Goethe's *Faust* Part 2.
4. Like the protagonists of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, William Beckford's *Vathek*, and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, all of which Byron read in his youth.
5. See Caroline Franklin's thumbnail sketch of Byron's Gothic family background and its effect upon him: 'Prelude: Byron's Gothic Inheritance', in *Byron: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 2000).
6. See Claire Tuite, *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
7. 'hazard': a game of dice.
8. Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of His Life*. 2 vols. (New York: J. J. Harper, 1830), 1: 255.
9. Miss Anne Isabella Milbanke, his future bride, described this swirl of attention as 'the Byromania': 'Reforming Byron with his magic sway / Compels all hearts to love him and obey'. See Ethel Colburn Mayne, *The Life and Letters of Anne Isabella, Lady Byron* (New York: Scribner, 1929).

10. James Soderholm details ways in which women contributed to Byron's work by enlightening him about their responses to him and his writing. See *Fantasy, Forgery, and the Byron Legend* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p. 7. I am indebted to Soderholm also for his perspective on the passages from *Don Juan* and 'Detached Thoughts' quoted earlier.
11. Jerome Christensen has explored Byron's status as a commodity in *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). See also Philip W. Martin's *Byron: A Poet Before His Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Caroline Franklin's *Byron: A Literary Life* is a major contribution to this effort.
12. Peter Cochran, 'Byron in the Weird World of 1999', *The Byron Journal* 28 (2000): 54.
13. See Louis Crompton's *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 163–6 and 251–2.
14. *Byron's Bulldog: The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron*, ed. Peter W. Graham, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1984.
15. Edward John Trelawney, *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author*, New York: New York Review of Books, 2000 (first published in 1858 as *Recollections of Shelley and Byron*), p. 48.
16. Raymond Mills, 'The Last Illness of Lord Byron', *The Byron Journal* 28 (2000): 56–67.
17. I am indebted to Richard D. Altick's landmark study of literary biography, *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 37.
18. I am indebted here to Werner Huber, 'Dead Poets Society: Byron, Postmodernism, and the Biographical Mode', in *Lord Byron the European: Essays from the International Byron Society*, ed. Richard A. Cardwell (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997) 75–90.
19. Countess Teresa Guiccioli, *My Recollections of Lord Byron and Those of Eye-Witnesses of His Life* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), p. 268.
20. On the Victorian attitude to Byron, see Andrew Elfenbein's *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Also see *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Andrew Rutherford (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), which reprints contemporary and late-nineteenth-century reviews and criticism.
21. Clement Tyson Goode, Jr., 'A Critical Review of Research', in Oscar José Santucho (ed.), *George Gordon, Lord Byron: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Secondary Materials in English, 1809–1974* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1977), p. 35.
22. André Maurois, *Byron*, trans. Hamish Miles (New York: D. Appleton, 1930), p. vi.
23. Malcolm Elwin, 'The Lovelace Papers,' *Times Literary Supplement* (1961): 753.
24. Leslie Marchand, *Byron: A Portrait* (London: John Murray, 1970), p. 166. Marchand went on to edit thirteen volumes of Byron's letters (including an index and a supplement).

25. G. Wilson Knight, 'Lord Byron's Wife', *Times Literary Supplement* (1962): 955. By 'Greek name' Knight means the name of 'queer' or homosexual identity.
26. See Phyllis Grosskurth, *Byron: The Flawed Angel* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; London: Hodder and Stoughton 1997), pp. 116ff, 119, 177.
27. See Benita Eisler, *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* (New York: Knopf, 1999), pp. 247, 543.
28. Graham is also the editor of Byron's correspondence with Hobhouse, *Byron's Bulldog* (Ohio State University Press, 1984).
29. Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend* (London: John Murray, 2002), p. xiii.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 546, 198.
31. Sigmund Freud, as quoted in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (3 vols. New York: Basic Books, 1957), 3: p. 208.
32. *Quarterly Review* 19 (April 1818), reprinted in Donald Reiman, *The Romantics Reviewed: Part B*, 5, 2048–57. See page 2054.
33. See Anne Fleming's *The Myth of the Bad Lord Byron* (West Sussex: Old Forge Press, 1999).
34. See Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched With Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: Free Press, 1994), pp. 149–90.
35. See, for example, Malcolm Kelsall's *Byron's Politics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), Michael Foot's *The Politics of Paradise* (London: Collins, 1988), and Jonathan Gross's *Byron: The Erotic Liberal* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001).
36. Emily Dickinson, poem #1129. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), p. 506.
37. See Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999).
38. See David Crane's *The Kindness of Sisters: Annabella Milbanke and the Destruction of the Byrons* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), which includes a sixty-page fictional dialogue between Lady Byron and Augusta Leigh.
39. See also Richard Holmes, *Sidetracks: Explorations of a Romantic Biographer* (New York: Pantheon, 2000), p. 197.