

BYRON'S MEDITERRANEAN POEMS, 1809-11



Byron and Ali Pasha

Byron's first voyage to Greece and Turkey began when he left Falmouth in Cornwall on July 2nd 1809, and ended with his return at Sheerness in Kent on July 14th 1811. The three most important poems he wrote while away were *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I and II, *Hints from Horace*, and *The Curse of Minerva* – all of which have separate editions on this website. But he wrote several more, in a variety of metres and moods.

He travelled with John Cam Hobhouse, his valet William Fletcher, and – at first – two servants from the Newstead estate, Joe Murray and Robert Rushton. The voyage to Lisbon took five days. They arrived on July 7th.

The first poem pretends to have been composed at sea, but as it appears in Hobhouse's 1809 "Miss-selling-any" *Imitations and Translations*, cannot have been. It anticipates a *Childe Harold*-style dream departure, which the comical realism of the second poem (which really was written at sea), undercuts.

I have made much use, in the notes, of Hobhouse's diary. All of the relevant parts of this document may be found transcribed on the website <<Hobby-o.com>>.

Stanzas to a Lady¹ on Leaving England

'Tis done – and shivering in the gale
 The bark unfurls her snowy sail;
 And whistling o'er the bending mast,
 Loud sings on high the fresh'ning blast;
 And I must from this land be gone,
 Because I cannot love but one.

5

1: The poem seems addressed to Mary Chaworth (now Chaworth-Musters), whom B. had loved hopelessly, and who had got married to a fox-hunting Tory squire.

But could I be what I have been,
 And could I see what I have seen –
 Could I repose upon the breast
 Which once my warmest wishes blest – 10
 I should not seek another zone,
 Because I cannot love but one.

'Tis long since I beheld that eye
 Which gave me bliss or misery;
 And I have striven, but in vain, 15
 Never to think of it again:
 For though I fly from Albion,
 I still can only love but one.

As some lone bird, without a mate,
 My weary heart is desolate; 20
 I look around, and cannot trace
 One friendly smile or welcome face,
 And ev'n in crowds am still alone,
 Because I cannot love but one.

And I will cross the whitening foam, 25
 And I will seek a foreign home;
 Till I forget a false fair face,
 I ne'er shall find a resting-place;
 My own dark thoughts I cannot shun,
 But ever love, and love but one. 30

The poorest, veriest wretch on earth
 Still finds some hospitable hearth,
 Where Friendship's or Love's softer glow
 May smile in joy or soothe in woe;
 But friend or leman² I have none, 35
 Because I cannot love but one.

I go – but wheresoe'er I flee
 There's not an eye will weep for me;
 There's not a kind congenial heart,
 Where I can claim the meanest part; 40
 Nor thou, who hast my hopes undone,
 Wilt sigh, although I love but one.

To think of every early scene,
 Of what we are, and what we've been,
 Would whelm some softer hearts with woe – 45
 But mine, alas! has stood the blow;
 Yet still beats on as it begun,
 And never truly loves but one.

2: leman – woman, girlfriend, mistress: compare *CHP* I, 9, 5: *Yea! none did love him – not his lemans dear ...*

And who that dear lov'd one may be,
 Is not for vulgar eyes to see; 50
 And why that early love was cross'd,
 Thou know'st the best, I feel the most;
 But few that dwell beneath the sun
 Have loved so long, and loved but one.

I've tried another's fetters too,³ 55
 With charms perchance as fair to view;
 And I would fain have loved as well,
 But some unconquerable spell
 Forbade my bleeding breast to own
 A kindred care for aught but one. 60

'Twould soothe to take one lingering view,
 And bless thee in my last adieu;
 Yet wish I not those eyes to weep
 For him that wanders o'er the deep;⁴
 His home, his hope, his youth are gone, 65
 Yet still he loves, and loves but one.



Lisbon, by Finden

3: B.'s principal liaison – it does not seem to have been a love-affair – had been with Caroline Cameron.
 4: Looks back to the Ancient Mariner, and forward to the Flying Dutchman.

Lines to Mr. Hodgson written on board the Lisbon Packet⁵

Falmouth Roads, June 30th, 1809.

1.

Huzza! Hodgson, we are going,
 Our embargo's off at last;⁶
 Favourable Breezes blowing
 Bend the canvass o'er the mast.
 From aloft the signal's streaming, 5
 Hark! the farewell gun is fired;
 Women screeching, Tars blaspheming,
 Tells us that our time's expired.
 Here's a rascal
 Come to task all, 10
 Prying from the custom house,
 Trunks unpacking,
 Cases cracking,
 Not a corner for a mouse
 'Scapes unsearch'd amid the racket 15
 Ere we sail on board the Packet. –

2.

Now our boatmen quit their mooring,
 And all hands must ply the oar;
 Baggage from the quay is lowering,
 We're impatient, – push from shore – 20
 “Have a care! that Case holds liquor!
 Stop the boat – I'm sick – oh Lord!”
 “Sick, Ma'am! damme, you'll be sicker
 Ere you've been an hour on board.”
 Thus are screaming 25
 Men and women,
 Gemmen, ladies, servants, Jacks;
 Here entangling,
 All are wrangling,
 Stuck together close as wax, 30
 Such the genial noise and racket,
 Ere we reach the Lisbon Packet.

3.

Now we've reach'd her, lo! the captain,
Gallant Kidd, commands the crew;⁷
 Passengers their berths are clapt in, 35
 Some to grumble, some to spew.
 “Heyday! call you that a Cabin?
 Why 'tis hardly three feet square:
 Not enough to stow Queen Mab in –
 Who the deuce can harbour there?” 40
 “Who, Sir? plenty!
 Nobles twenty
 Did at once my vessel fill.”

5: Francis Hodgson was a friend of B. and Hobhouse from their days at Cambridge.

6: *our embargo's off* – the inhibitions of England no longer constrain them.

7: **BYRON'S NOTE: Erratum: For “*gallant*” read “*gallows*”.**

“Did they – Jesus! 45
 How you squeeze us!
 Would to God they did so still:
 Then I’d scape the heat and racket
 Of the good ship, Lisbon Packet.”

4.
 Fletcher!⁸ Murray!⁹ Bob!¹⁰ where are you?
 Stretch’d along the deck like logs 50
 Bear a hand, you jolly tar, you!
 Here’s a rope’s end for the dogs.
 Hobhouse¹¹ muttering fearful curses,
 As the hatchway down he rolls,
 Now his breakfast, now his verses, 55
 Vomits forth – and damns our souls.
 “Here’s a stanza
 On Braganza¹² –
 Help!” – “A couplet?” – “No, a cup
 Of warm water –” 60
 “What’s the matter?”
 “Zounds! my liver’s coming up:
 I shall not survive the racket
 Of this brutal Lisbon Packet.”

5.
 Now at length we’re off for Turkey, 65
 Lord knows when we shall come back!
 Breezes foul, and tempests murky,
 May unship us in a crack.
 But, since life at most a jest is,
 As Philosophers allow, 70
 Still to laugh by far the best is,
 Then laugh on – as I do now.
 Laugh at all things,
 Great and small things,
 Sick or well, at sea or shore; 75
 While we’re quaffing,
 Let’s have laughing
 Who the Devil cares for more?
 Some good wine! and who would lack it,
 Ev’n on board the Lisbon Packet? 80

8: William Fletcher, B.’s valet from the Newstead estate,

9: Old Joe Murray, who managed Newstead Abbey.

10: Robert Rushton, B.’s page and perhaps his teenage lover, though Fletcher had in passing through London, taken him to a brothel, and was nearly sacked. He and Joe Murray were sent back from Gibraltar.

11: John Cam Hobhouse, B.’s best friend, who accompanied him for the first half of the journey.

12: Braganza was the royal house of Portugal. B. compares Hobhouse’s versifying with that of the hack Robert Stott: see B.’s note to *EBSR* 142: *I remember, when the reigning family left Portugal, a special ode of Master STOTT’S beginning thus: ... “Princely offspring of Braganza, / Erin greets thee with a Stanza,” &c. &c. Also a sonnets to Rats ...*

Byron and Hobhouse – with Fletcher, but without “Bob” and “Joe” – reached Malta via Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar, and Caligari in Sardinia, on August 31st. There Byron met Constance Spencer Smith, who is called “Florence” both in the poems below and in *Childe Harold*. Byron and Hobhouse stayed until September 19th. In the first of the two “outward-bound” Malta poems Byron asserts his love for Constance Spencer Smith to be eternal.

Lines written in an album at Malta,

September 14th, 1809.

1.

As o'er the cold sepulchral stone
 Some name arrests the passer-by;
 Thus, when thou view'st this page alone,
 May mine attract thy pensive eye!

2.

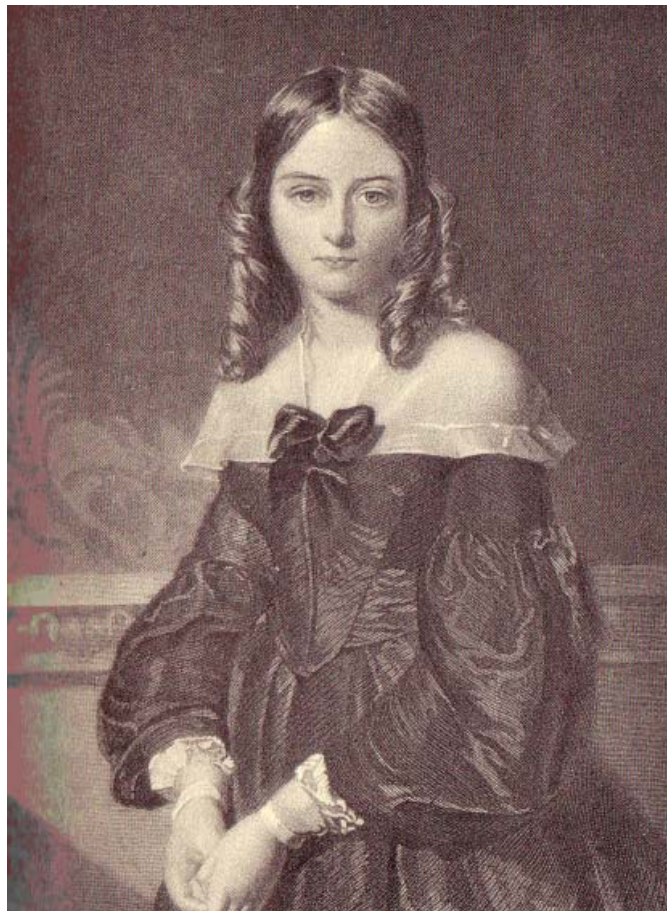
And when by thee that name is read, 5
 Perchance in some succeeding year,
 Reflect on me as on the dead,
 And think my heart is buried here.

To Florence, September 1809

Oh Lady! when I left the shore,
 The distant shore which gave me birth,
 I hardly thought to grieve once more
 To quit another spot on earth:
 Yet here, amidst this barren isle, 5
 Where panting Nature droops the head,
 Where only thou art seen to smile,
 I view my parting hour with dread.
 Though far from Albin's¹³ craggy shore,
 Divided by the dark-blue main; 10
 A few, brief, rolling seasons o'er,
 Perchance I view her cliffs again:
 But wheresoe'er I now may roam,
 Through scorching clime, and varied sea,
 Though Time restore me to my home, 15
 I ne'er shall bend mine eyes on thee:
 On thee, in whom at once conspire
 All charms which heedless hearts can move,
 Whom but to see is to admire,
 And, oh! forgive the word – to love. 20
 Forgive the word, in one who ne'er
 With such a word can more offend;
 And since thy heart I cannot share,
 Believe me, what I am, thy friend.
 And who so cold as look on thee, 25
 Thou lovely wand'rer, and be less?
 Nor be, what man should ever be,
 The friend of Beauty in distress?
 Ah! who would think that form had past

13: Albin – “Albion”, England.

Through Danger's most destructive path 30
 Had braved the death-wing'd tempest's blast,
 And 'scaped a tyrant's fiercer wrath?¹⁴
 Lady! when I shall view the walls
 Where free Byzantium once arose,
 And Stamboul's Oriental halls 35
 The Turkish tyrants now enclose;¹⁵
 Though mightiest in the lists of fame,
 That glorious city still shall be;
 On me 'twill hold a dearer claim,
 As spot of thy nativity:¹⁶ 40
 And though I bid thee now farewell,
 When I behold that wondrous scene,
 Since where thou art I may not dwell,
 'Twill soothe to be where thou hast been.



Constance Spencer Smith

14: Spencer Smith had tangled with Napoleon, imprisoned by him, and rescued.

15: When he wrote the poem B. thought his destination was not Albania but Constantinople ("Stamboul").

16: Spencer Smith was born in Constantinople, where her father had been Austrian ambassador.

3.
 Is yon a cot¹⁸ I saw, though low?
 When lightning broke the gloom – 10
 How welcome were its shade! – ah, no!
 'Tis but a Turkish tomb.

4.
 Through sounds of foaming waterfalls,
 I hear a voice exclaim –
 My way-worn countryman,¹⁹ who calls 15
 On distant England's name.

5.
 A shot is fired – by foe or friend?
 Another – 'tis to tell
 The mountain-peasants to descend,
 And lead us where they dwell. 20

6.
 Oh! who in such a night will dare
 To tempt the wilderness?
 And who mid thunder-peals can hear
 Our signal of distress?

7.
 And who that heard our shouts would rise 25
 To try the dubious road?
 Nor rather deem from nightly cries
 That outlaws were abroad.

8.
 Clouds burst, skies flash, oh, dreadful hour!
 More fiercely pours the storm! 30
 Yet here one thought has still the power
 To keep my bosom warm.

9.
 While wandering through each broken path,
 O'er brake and craggy brow;
 While elements exhaust their wrath, 35
 Sweet Florence, where art thou?

10.
 Not on the sea, not on the sea,
 Thy bark hath long been gone:
 Oh, may the storm that pours on me
 Bow down my head alone! 40

18: *cot* – cottage.

19: *My way-worn countryman* – Fletcher.

11.
Full swiftly blew the swift Siroc,²⁰
When last I press'd thy lip,
And long ere now, with foaming shock
Impell'd thy gallant ship.
12. 45
Now thou art safe; nay, long ere now
Hast trod the shore of Spain;
'Twere hard if aught so fair as thou
Should linger on the main.
13. 50
And since I now remember thee
In darkness and in dread,
As in those hours of revelry
Which mirth and music sped;
14. 55
Do thou, amid the fair white walls,
If Cadiz yet be free,
At times from out her latticed halls
Look o'er the dark blue sea;
15. 60
Then think upon Calypso's isles,²¹
Endear'd by days gone by;
To others give a thousand smiles,
To me a single sigh.
16.
And when the admiring circle mark
The paleness once,
A half-form'd tear, a transient spark
Of melancholy grace,
17. 65
Again thou'lt smile, and blushing shun
Some coxcomb's raillery;
Nor own for once thou thought'st on one,
Who ever thinks on thee.
18. 70
Though smile and sigh alike are vain,
When sever'd hearts repine
My spirit flies o'er mount and main,
And mourns in search of thine.

20: *Siroc* – scirocco, a dry, hot wind from the Sahara. Same as *Simoom*. Compare *The Giaour*, 282, or *DJ IV*, 57, 8, and *XIV*, 58, 6.

21: *Calypso's isles* – in this case, Malta. Compare *CHP II* 29, 1, and B.'s note. Kalypso is in *Odyssey V* and *VII* the nymph who seduces Odysseus from his homeward voyage.

Stanzas *written in passing the Ambracian Gulph,*
*November 14th, 1809*²²

- 1.
- Through cloudless skies, in silvery sheen,
Full beams the moon on Actium's coast:
And on these waves for Egypt's queen,²³
The ancient world was won and lost.
- 2.
- And now upon the scene I look, 5
The azure grave of many a Roman;
Where stern Ambition once forsook
His wavering crown to follow woman.
- 3.
- Florence! whom I will love as well 10
As ever yet was said or sung
(Since Orpheus sang his spouse from hell),
Whilst thou art fair and I am young;
- 4.
- Sweet Florence! those were pleasant times;
When worlds were staked for ladies
Had bards as many realms as rhymes; 15
Thy charms might raise new Antonies.
- 5.
- Though Fate forbids such things to be
Yet, by thine eyes and ringlets curl'd!
I cannot lose a world for thee,
But would not lose thee for a world! 20

22: HOBHOUSE'S DIARY: Sunrise over the hills of Agrapha at the bottom of the Ambracian Gulf. Fine sail under the woody hills to the right (south). Anchored four o'clock at Utraique, situate in a pretty, deep bay at the south-east corner of the Gulf. There is a custom house, and a lodge for soldiers, surrounded by a high wall, except at the water's edge. Fifteen days past, thirty-five robbers made their appearance close to the house and carried off a Turk and a Greek, the former of whom they shot, and the latter of whom they stoned, on a small green spot at the bottom of the bay (by way of bravado, as we heard).

We had with us, from Prevesa, including Captain Lato and Vasily, thirty-seven soldiers, and the scene at night-time was not a little picturesque, a goat being roasted whole for the Albanians. They assembled in four parties round as many fires, and the night being fine they sung and danced to their songs round the largest blaze after their manner. Several of these songs turned on the exploits of robbers, one beginning thus "When we set sail a band of thieves from Parga – we were in number eighty-two." "κλεπτεις ποτε Παργα! κλεπτεις ποτε Παργα!" ["Robbers all at Parga!"] Indeed, we afterwards learnt that the most polished *Boli Basha* amongst them had been, only four years ago, a most formidable thief, commanding nearly two hundred men in the mountains of Hepacto, which, it seems, was also the condition of His Highness once, who began the world, at the death of the last Pacha for lower Albania, with, as he says, sixty *parasi*. This night, including the guard of the place, our company amounted to sixty-seven people.

23: The mouth of the Ambracian Gulf in western Greece has Prevesa to the north and to the south Actium, where the navy of Octavius Caesar beat the navy of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC. B. parallels himself with Antony, and Spencer Smith – previously his Calypso – is now his Cleopatra.

Byron's adventures with Ali Pacha in Albania are hinted at in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* II. He and Hobhouse travelled back south, and, via Patras and Mount Parnassus, reached Athens on Christmas Day 1809. They stayed with Mrs Macri, widow of the late English Vice-Consul.

Lines in a travellers' book at Mrs Macri's house in Athens

In this book a traveller had written:

“Fair Albion, smiling, sees her son depart
To trace the birth and nursery of art:
Noble his object, glorious is his aim;
He comes to Athens, and he writes his name.”

Beneath which Lord Byron inserted the following:

THE modest bard, like many a bard unknown,
Rhymes on our names, but wisely hides his own;
But yet, whoe'er he be, to say no worse,
His name would bring more credit than his verse.

Substitute for an epitaph, January 12th 1810

Kind Reader! Take your choice to cry or laugh;
A Man here lies – but where's his Epitaph?
If such you seek, try Westminster, and view
Ten thousand just as fit for him as you.



The Franciscan Convent at Athens, by Finden

Whether or not impressed with the charms of Mrs Macri's three teenage daughters, Byron found in Athens that his love for Constance Spencer Smith was fading.

Written at Athens, January 16th, 1810

The spell is broke; the charm is flown!
 Thus is it with life's fitful fever:²⁴
 We madly smile when we should groan:
 Delirium is our best deceiver.
 Each lucid interval of thought
 Recalls the woes of Nature's charter;
 And he that acts as wise men ought,
 But lives, as saints have died, a martyr.

5



The Maid of Athens by Finden

24: *Macbeth* III ii 22-3: *Duncan is in his grave; / After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.*

Before he and Hobhouse had to leave Athens (on March 5th 1810), to escape the compromising situation which was developing in the Macri household, Byron was on excellent terms not only with Teresa, but with her sisters Mariana (sixteen in 1810), Katinka (fourteen in 1810) and their half-sister Dudu Roque, all of whom much later got into *Don Juan* as the odalisques Lola, Kattinka, and Dudu. Byron said that he was “dying for love of” all of them, and that two had promised to accompany him to England.

Song, *Zóh mou, sas agapó.*²⁵
Athens, 1810.

1.

Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh give me back my heart!
Or, since that has left my breast,
Keep it now, and take the rest!
Hear my vow before I go, 5
Zóh mou, sas agapó.

2.

By those tresses unconfined,
Wood by each Ægean wind;
By those lids whose jetty fringe
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge; 10
By those wild eyes like the roe,
Zóh mou, sas agapó.

3.

By that lip I long to taste;
By that zone-encircled waist;
By all the token-flowers that tell 15
What words can never speak so well;²⁶
By love's alternate joy and woe.
Zóh mou, sas agapó.

4.

Maid of Athens! I am gone:
Think of me, sweet! when alone. 20
Though I fly to Istambol,
Athens holds my heart and soul:
Can I cease to love thee? No!
Zóh mou, sas agapó.

25: BYRON'S NOTE: *Zoë mou, sas agapó*, or, *Zóh mou, sas agapó*, a Romaic expression of tenderness: if I translate it I shall affront the gentlemen, as it may seem I supposed they could not; and if I do not I may affront the ladies. For fear of any misconstruction on the part of the latter I shall do so, begging pardon of the learned. It means, “My Life, I love you!” which sounds very prettily in all languages, and is as much in fashion in Greece at this day as, Juvenal tells us, the two first words were amongst the Roman ladies, whose erotic expressions were all Hellenized.

26: BYRON'S NOTE: In the East (where the ladies are not taught to write, lest they should scribble assignments) flowers, cinders, pebbles, &c. convey the sentiments of the parties by that universal deputy of Mercury—an old woman. A cinder says, “I burn for thee”; a bunch of flowers tied with hair, “take me and fly”; but a pebble declares – what nothing else can.

Written after swimming from Sestos to Abydos,
*May 9th 1810.*²⁷

1.

IF, in the month of dark December,
Leander,²⁸ who was nightly wont
(What maid will not the tale remember?)
To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

2.

If, when the wintry tempest roar'd, 5
He sped to Hero, nothing loth,
And thus of old thy current pour'd,
Fair Venus! how I pity both!

3.

For me, degenerate modern wretch, 10
Though in the genial month of May,
My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
And think I've done a feat today.

27: BYRON'S NOTE: On the 3d [*sic*] of May, 1810, while the Salsettc frigate (Captain Bathurst) was lying in the Dardanelles, Lieutenant Ekenhead of that frigate and the writer of these rhymes swam from the European shore to the Asiatic – by-the-by, from Abydos to Sestos would have been more correct. The whole distance from the place whence we started to our landing on the other side, including the length we were carried by the current, was computed by those on board the frigate at upwards of four English miles; though the actual breadth is barely one. The rapidity of the current is such that no boat can row directly across, and it may in some measure be estimated from the circumstance of the whole distance being accomplished by one of the parties in an hour and five, and by the other in an hour and ten, minutes. The water was extremely cold from the melting of the mountain-snows. About three weeks before, in April, we had made an attempt, but having ridden all the way from the Troad the same morning, and the water being of an icy chillness, we found it necessary to postpone the completion till the frigate anchored below the castles, when we swam the straits, as above stated; entering a considerable way above the European, and landing below the Asiatic, fort. Chevalier says that a young Jew swam the same distance for his mistress; and Oliver mentions its having been done by a Neapolitan; but our consul, Tarragona, remembered neither of these circumstances, and tried to dissuade us from the attempt. A number of the Salsette's crew were known to have accomplished a greater distance; and the only thing that surprised me was, that, as doubts had been entertained of the truth of Leander's story, no traveller had ever endeavoured to ascertain its practicability.

HOBHOUSE'S DIARY (for May 3rd, not 9th): This instant, three minutes past ten a.m. – write this in the Dardanelles at anchor. Byron and Ekenhead gone to swim, and now swimming across the Hellespont, Ovid's Hero to Leander open before me. Mr Ekenhead performed this in one hour and five minutes, setting off two miles above Europe castle, and coming out a mile at least below Dardanelles. Lord Byron in one hour and ten minutes. Got under weigh, and, wind failing, only drifted farther below, where anchored.

[*In right-hand margin, in B.'s hand:*] **P.S. Constantinople The whole distance E[kenhead], and myself swum was more than 4 miles the current very strong and cold, some large fish near us when half across, we were not fatigued but a little chilled. did it with little difficulty may 26th 1810. Byron.**

For B.'s pride in this feat, see letters to Henry Drury (BLJ I 237) to his mother (BLJ I 242, 243-4 and II 34) and to R.C.Dallas (BLJ I 247-8). For his furious reaction to a book querying it, see BLJ VIII 80-3. See also *Don Juan* II 105, 7-8:

A better Swimmer you could scarce see Ever;
He [*Juan*] could, perhaps, have passed the Hellespont,
As Once (a feat on which ourselves we prided)
Leander, Mr. Ekenhead, and I did. –

28: In the story, Leander swam nightly across the Hellespont to make love to Hero. See Ovid, *Heroides* XVIII and XIX. At last he got the cramp and drowned.

4.

But since he cross'd the rapid tide,
 According to the doubtful story,
 To woo – and – Lord knows what beside – 15
 And swam for Love, as I for Glory;

5.

'Twere hard to say who fared the best:
 Sad mortals! thus the gods still plague you!
 He lost his labour, I my jest;
 For he was drown'd, and I've the ague. 20

Byron and Hobhouse stayed in Constantinople (Istanbul) from May 13th to July 14th 1810. Many of their more squalid experiences <<see Hobby-o.com>> were unsuitable for poetry, but their visit to the Seraglio gave Byron material for *Don Juan* V and VI. Hobhouse visited the rocks at the entrance to Black Sea (the Symplegades) on May 31st; but Byron was not invited to accompany him, and broke off their friendship (temporarily), the following day. His visit was on June 17th, and this facetious version of the very opening of Euripides' tragedy *Medea* was the creative result. It is from a letter to Henry Drury, written on the day of his visit (BLJ I 245-6).

Translation of the Nurse's dole in the *Medea* of Euripides

Oh how I wish that an embargo
 Had kept in port the good ship Argo!²⁹
 Who, still unlaunch'd from Grecian docks,
 Had never pass'd the Azure rocks;
 But now I fear her trip will be a 5
 Damned business for my Miss Medea, &c. &c.

29: The Nurse laments Jason's voyage to Colchis (via the Bosphorus, and the Symplegades), for if he hadn't gone, he wouldn't have fallen for the sorceress Medea, and the tragedy about to occur would not have occurred.

They left Constantinople on July 14th, and parted off the southern Greek island of Zea on July 17th. This poem was written a week previous to their setting out, and is a jovial anticipation of their severance.

Farewell Petition to J.C.H. Esq.,
*Constantinople, June 7th 1810.*³⁰

Oh thou yclep'd by vulgar sons of men,
Cam Hobhouse! but by wags Byzantian Ben!
Twin sacred titles, which combined appear
To grace thy volume's front, and gild its rear –
Since now thou put'st thyself and work to Sea 5
And leav'st all Greece to *Fletcher* and to me,³¹
Oh hear my single muse our sorrows tell,
One song for *self*, and *Fletcher* quite as well. –

First to the *Castle* of that man of woes³²
Dispatch the letter which *I must* enclose; 10
And when his lone *Penelope*³³ shall say,
Why, where, and wherefore doth my *William* stay?
Spare not to move her pity, or her pride –
By all that *Hero*³⁴ suffered, or defied;
The *chicken's toughness*, and the *lack of Ale*, 15
The *stoney mountain*, and the *miry vale*,
The *Garlick* steams, which *half* his meals enrich,
The *impending vermin*, and the threatened *Itch*;
That *ever-breaking* Bed, beyond repair!
The hat too *old*, the coat too *cold* to wear; 20
The hunger, *which, repulsed from Sally's door*,
Pursues her grumbling half from shore to shore;
Be these the themes to greet his faithful *Rib*,³⁵
So may thy pen be smooth, thy tongue be glib!

This duty done, let me in turn demand 25
Some friendly office in my native land;
Yet let me ponder well, before I ask,
And set thee swearing at the tedious task.

First the *Miscellany*!³⁶ – to *Southwell town*
Per coach for *Mrs. Pigot*³⁷ frank it down; 30
So may'st thou prosper in the paths of *Sale*,³⁸

30: The account in **HOBHOUSE'S DIARY** of their actual farewell, on **Tuesday July 17th 1810:** In the strait of Tihura. Little wind, but passed the passage at last – come off the very narrow entrance of the port of Zea – the hill above covered with windmills, and the capital hanging upon the rocks. Went on shore with Lord Byron and suite. Took leave, *non sine lacrymis*, [“not without tears”: Horace, *Odes* III vii] of this singular young person on a little stone terrace near some paltry magazines at the end of the bay, dividing with him a little nosegay of flowers, the last thing perhaps I shall ever divide with him. Four o'clock p.m., came on board again. Contrary light winds all the evening.

Farewell to Hymettus

31: Echoes Gray's *Elegy*, l.4: *And leaves the world to darkness and to me.*

32: Fletcher's home on the Newstead estate.

33: Mrs Fletcher.

34: *That Hero* – Fletcher.

35: ... *his faithful Rib* – Mrs Fletcher.

36: *Imitations and Translations.*

37: The mother of Elizabeth Pigot, who lived on the Green in Southwell.

And Longman³⁹ smirk and critics cease to rail.

All hail to Matthews!⁴⁰ wash his reverend feet,
 And in my name the man of Method greet,⁴¹
 Tell him, my guide, Philosopher, and Friend, 35
 Who cannot love me, and who will not mend,
 Tell him, that not in vain I shall essay
 To tread and trace our “old Horatian way”,
 And be (with prose supply my dearth of rhymes)
 What better men have been in better times.⁴² 40

Here let me cease, for why should I prolong
 My notes, and vex a *Singer* with a *Song*?
 Oh thou with pen perpetual in thy fist!
 Dubbed for thy sins a stark Miscellanist,⁴³
 So pleased the printer’s orders to perform, 45
 For Messrs. *Longman, Hurst, and Rees and Orme*,⁴⁴
 Go, get thee hence to Paternoster Row,⁴⁵
 Thy patrons wave a duodecimo!
 (Best form for *letters* from a distant land,
 It fits the pocket, nor fatigues the hand.) 50
 Then go, once more the joyous work commence
 With stores of anecdote, and grains of sense.
 Oh may Mammams relent, and Sires forgive!⁴⁶
 And scribbling Sons grow dutiful and live!

38: Compare “I hope you and Bland roll down the stream of Sale” (BLJ I 241); refers to the book market.

39: Longman – the publisher.

40: C.S. Matthews, their Cambridge friend.

41: “man of Method” implies Matthews’ homosexuality (“Methodist” was their private slang for “gay”).

42: “our old Horatian way” is a remote way of implying that B. intends to take lots of boys to bed. The rest of the sentence implies that although he will write no verse about it, he will write Matthews letters.

43: *Imitations and Translations* was dubbed *The Miss-Selling-Any*.

44: *Longman, Hurst, and Rees and Orme* were a famous publishing house.

45: Paternoster Row housed the premises of many London publishers.

46: Hobhouse had left England in the middle of a row with his father and stepmother, and hadn’t even told them where he was.

Byron stayed on in Greece until April 22 1811; eventually Fletcher was sent home too, and Byron had nothing but Greek and Albanian servants. Two of these nursed him when he was struck down with malaria at Patrass in September 1810. Upon recovering, he wrote three squibs on the subjects in letters to Hobhouse and Hodgson.

Lines written after a fever.⁴⁷

| | |
|---|----|
| On a cold room's cold floor, within a bed | |
| Of iron, with three coverlids like lead, | |
| A coat and breeches dangling o'er a nook, | |
| Where sits a doctor, and prescribes a puke, | |
| Poor B-r-n sweats – alas! how changed from him | 5 |
| So plump in feature, and so round in limb, | |
| Grinning and gay in Newstead's monkish fane, | |
| The scene of profanation and Champagne; | |
| Or just as gay with scribblers in a ring | |
| Of twenty hungry authors banqueting. | 10 |
| No whore to fondle left of half a score, | |
| Yet one thing left him, which he values more, | |
| Here victor of a fever, and its friends, | |
| Physicians and their art, his lordship <i>mends</i> . | |

47: From letter to Hobhouse, September 25 1810; BLJ II 15. The poem parodies Pope, *Epistle to Bathurst*, 299-14:

In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
 The floors of plaister, and the walls of dung,
 On once a flock-bed, but repair'd with straw,
 With tape-ty'd curtains, never meant to draw,
 The George and Garter dangling from that bed
 Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
 Great Villiers lies – alas! how changed from him,
 That life of pleasure, and that soul of whim!
 Gallant and gay, in Cliveden's proud alcove,
 The bower of wanton Shrewsbury, and love;
 Or just as gay, at Council, in a ring
 Of mimick'd Statesmen, and their merry King.
 No Wit to flatter, left of all his store;
 No Fool to laugh at, which he valued more.
 There, Victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
 And fame, this lord of useless thousands ends.

The same.⁴⁸

Odious! in boards, 'twould any Bard provoke,
 (Were the last words that dying Byron spoke).
 No, let some charming cuts and frontispiece
 Adorn my volume, and the sale increase;
 One would not be unpublished when one's dead,
 And, Hobhouse, let my works be bound in *Red*.

5

Epitaph⁴⁹

Youth, Nature, and relenting Jove,
 To keep my *lamp in* strongly strove;
 But *Romanelli*⁵⁰ was so stout
 He beat all three – and *blew it out*. –



The Hagia Sophia, by Finden

48: From letter to Hobhouse, September 25 1810; BLJ II 15. B. parodies Pope, *Epistle to Cobham*, 242-7:

“Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke,”
 (Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke),
 “No, let a charming Chintz, and Brussels lace
 Wrap my cold limbs, and shade my lifeless face:
 One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead –
 And – Betty – give this Cheek a little Red.”

49: From letter to Hodgson, October 3 1810; BLJ II 19.

50: Romanelli was one of B.'s doctors.

At Athens, Byron lived at the Capuchin Convent. There, early in 1811, as well as writing *Hints from Horace* and *The Curse of Minerva*, he began the following narrative poem in Spenserians, but did not finish it – unless its monastic setting became the background to *The Giaour*, written in octosyllabics two years later in London.

The Monk of Athos

Oh ye, whose lips have touch'd the Sacred Stream
 That from the Mount of classic Sweetness flows,
 Whose gen'rous Souls have drunk the vital Beam
 Of ardent Glory which resistless glows
 Through ev'ry page of Grecian lore, and throws 5
 A lustre mellowed by the hand of Time
 Around the bleeding Hero's laurell'd Brows –
 To you I sing, though all uncouth my rhyme,
 And far unmeet I ween for audience so sublime.

Yet deem I not unwelcome to your Ear 10
 The feeble strain shall prove which thus essays
 To wake Remembrance to a theme so dear,
 And mourne in simple and incondite lays
 The fate of Greece in those disastrous days,
 When late, though sunk beneath a tyrant's might, 15
 She boldly ventured (Oh immortal praise)
 In arms to reassert her ancient light,
 And Freedom's standard rear'd, and dared the unequal fight.⁵¹

Alas, that with the ever-blooming need 20
 Which Virtue wreathes around the Patriot's head,
 The Muse must intertwine the mournful weed
 That crowns the ashes of the Glorious Dead.
 Alas, that clouds of woe should overspread
 The blush of Freedom's renovated Dawn,
 While Desolation stalks with blasting tread 25
 Mid scenes of Honour wasted and forlorn,
 And waves her lurid torch, and smiles in baleful scorn.

Ah, who unmoved had seen both field and flood⁵²
 With undistinguished carnage all defiled,
 And vengeance gorg'd with unoffending Blood, 30
 Or heard the widow's shriek of Anguish wild
 When from her arms was torn her only child,
 Sad pledge of him whom death so lately reft; 35
 As yet unconscious of her grief it smil'd,
 Her only Hope of earthly solace left,
 Now on the Spear impaled, or by the Sabre cleft.

51: The Russo-Turkish War of the 1770s is outlined at the start of Chapter II of Thomas Hope's 1820 novel *Anastasis*. The Greeks faked a rebellion; the Russians, hoodwinked, came to their assistance; the Greeks sat back and expected the Russians to do all the fighting. Twenty thousand Arnouts swarmed into the Morea ("Wavering for the most part between Christ and Mohammed, the worship of the Arnouts is generally determined by the master they serve"); massacres ensued, and the Russians pulled out. All this was later construed as treachery on the part of Russia.

52: *Othello*, I iii 135.

Full well I know how ev'ry gen'rous Heart
 Shares in the ills which desolate Mankind,
 Yet are there private woes that oft impart
 A deeper Sorrow to the feeling mind, 40
 That wake the sense of sympathy refined
 And bid the tide of wild Emotion roll,
 Thrilling those chords which Nature has entwined
 In closest union with the Human Soul,
 With now resistless force and absolute controul. 45

Of such I tell; of fond domestic ties
 Asunder torn by War's relentless Hand
 (Like Blossoms withered by inclement Skies
 That perish ere their tender sweets expand),
 Proscription's sword and Persecution's brand, 50
 The hopeless Exile's Anguish and Despair,
 As he still lingers near his native Land,
 Or drags a weary load of Grief and Care
 From clime to clime astray, forlorn, and reckless where.

Beside the confines of the Ægean main 55
 Where northward Macedonia bounds the flood
 And views opposed the Asiatic Plain
 Where once the pride of lofty Ilion stood,
 Like the great father of the giant Brood,
 With lowering port Majestic Athos stands,⁵³ 60
 Crowned with the verdure of Eternal Wood
 As yet unspoil'd by sacrilegious Hands,
 And throws his Mighty shade o'er seas and distant lands.

And deep embosomed in his shady groves
 Full many a Convent rears its glittering spire 65
 Mid scenes where heav'nly Contemplation loves
 To kindle in the soul her hallowed fire;⁵⁴
 Where Air and Sea with Rocks and Woods conspire
 To breathe a sweet religious calm around,
 Weaning the thoughts from every low desire; 70
 And the wild waves that break with Murm'ring Sound
 Along the rocky shore proclaim it Holy Ground.

53: B. never visited Mount Athos or its area. The nearest he got was the Troad, over the sea from it in Asian Turkey. See, however, *CHP* IV 74, 5-7:

I've looked on Ida with a Trojan's eye;
 Athos – Olympus – Ætna – Atlas – made
 These hills seem things of lesser dignity ...

54: Compare Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, opening:

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
 Where heavenly-pensive Contemplation dwells,
 And ever-musing Melancholy reigns,
 What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?

Sequestered shades where Piety has given
A quiet refuge from each Earthly care,
Whence the rapt Spirit may ascend to Heaven 75
In holy strains of Penitence and Prayer
Oh ye, condemn'd the ills of life to bear,
As with advancing age your woes increase,
What bliss amidst these solitudes to share
The happy foretaste of Eternal Peace, 80
Till Heaven in mercy bids your pains and sorrows cease.



Patras, by Finden

2.

Then manfully despising
 The Turkish tyrant's yoke, 10
 Let your country see you rising,
 And all her chains are broke.
 Brave shades of chiefs and sages,
 Behold the coming strife!
 Hellenes of past ages, 15
 Oh, start again to life!
 At the sound of my trumpet, breaking
 Your sleep, oh, join with me!
 And the seven-hill'd city seeking,⁵⁷
 Fight, conquer, till we're free. 20
 Sons of Greeks, &c.

3.

Sparta, Sparta, why in slumbers
 Lethargic dost thou lie?
 Awake, and join thy numbers
 With Athens, old ally!
 Leonidas recalling,⁵⁸ 25
 That chief of ancient song,
 Who saved ye once from falling,
 The terrible! the strong!
 Who made that bold diversion
 In old Thermopylæ 30
 And warring with the Persian
 To keep his country free;
 With his three hundred waging
 The battle, long he stood,
 And like a lion raging, 35
 Expired in seas of blood.
 Sons of Greeks, &c.

57: BYRON'S NOTE: Constantinople. "Επτάλοφος".

58: In 480 BC Leonidas, King of Sparta, with his three hundred men, held the pass at Thermopylæ against the invading Persians, and saved Greece from being the slave-state of an Asian tyranny (which, claims Byron, she was in his day). Compare CHP II st.73:

Fair Greece! Sad relic of departed worth!
 Immortal though no more; though fallen, great!
 Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
 And long accustomed bondage uncreate?
 Not such thy sons who whilome did await,
 The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
 In bleak Thermopylæ's sepulchral strait –
 Oh! Who that gallant spirit shall resume,
 Leap from Eurota's banks, and call thee from the tomb?

Four songs of love, three apparently translated from Greek but one perhaps translated from French, and one apparently original, conclude Byron's output while in Greece. Whether all the translations really are translations, who the poems are addressed to if anyone, whether those supposedly addressed are male or female, we do not know.

Translation of a Romaic love song⁵⁹

1.

AH! Love was never yet without
The pang, the agony, the doubt,
Which rend my heart with ceaseless sigh,
While day and night roll darkling by.⁶⁰

2.

Without one friend to hear my woe, 5
I faint, I die beneath the blow.
That Love had arrows, well I knew;
Alas! I find them poison'd too.

3.

Birds, yet in freedom, shun the net
Which Love around your haunts hath set; 10
Or circled by his fatal fire,
Your hearts shall burn, your hopes expire.

4.

A bird of free and careless wing
Was I, through many a smiling spring;
But caught within the subtle snare, 15
I burn, and feebly flutter there.

5.

Who ne'er have loved, and loved in vain,
Can neither feel nor pity pain –
The cold repulse – the look askance –
The lightning of Love's angry glance. 20

6.

In flattering dreams I deemed thee mine;
Now hope, and he who hoped, decline;
Like melting wax, or withering flower,
I feel my passion, and thy power.

⁵⁹: This first appeared in Hobhouse's *A Journey through Albania and other Provinces of Turkey*, the book which he finally brought out in 1813, and which earned him a fellowship of the Royal Society. It therefore may not have been written in Greece at all. He writes, "The following translation of a Romaic love-song, which is given in Dr. Pouqueville's volume on the Morea" [*Voyage en Morée à Constantinople*, 1805 I p.284], "has just been transmitted to me by my friend Lord Byron; and I have only to regret, that it did not arrive in time to be inserted in its proper place in the Appendix" (*Journey*, 1148). The first line is given by Pouqueville as *Αγάπη δέν έξασθη ποτε χαρίς καϊμους*.

⁶⁰: B.'s version may be interestingly compared with Pouqueville's French translation ("Pouqueville is always out" – *CHP* I, 47, 1, B.'s note):

Jamais amour ne fut sans peines,
Sans tourmens, sans souffrances, sans soupirs.
Jour et nuit, il n'est point possible
Que je ne soupire, que je ne dise hélas!

7.

My light of life! ah, tell me why
 That pouting lip, and altered eye? 25
 My bird of love! my beauteous mate!
 And art thou changed, and can'st thou hate?

8.

Mine eyes like wint'ry streams o'erflow:
 What wretch with me would barter woe? 30
 My bird! relent: one note could give
 A charm to bid thy lover live.

9.

My curdling blood, my madd'ning brain,
 In silent anguish I sustain;
 And still thy heart, without partaking 35
 One pang, exults – while mine is breaking.

10.

Pour me the poison; fear not thou!
 Thou can'st not murder more than now:
 I've lived to curse my natal day,
 And Love, that thus can lingering slay. 40

11.⁶¹

My wounded soul, my bleeding breast,
 Can patience preach thee into rest?
 Alas! too late, I dearly know
 That joy is harbinger of woe.

61: Pouqueville's translation of the last verse goes,

O mon ame blessée! ô mon pauvre cœur!
 O mon corps tyrannisé! prends patience,
 Je sais enfin, et je le vois clairement,
 Que la joie ne vient jamais sans le chagrin.

On Parting

I.

The kiss, dear maid! thy lip has left,
 Shall never part from mine,
 Till happier hours restore the gift
 Untainted back to thine.

2.

Thy parting glance, which fondly beams, 5
 An equal love may see:
 The tear that from thine eyelid streams
 Can weep no change in me.

3.

I ask no pledge to make me blest
 In gazing when alone; 10
 Nor one memorial for a breast,
 Whose thoughts are all thine own.

4.

Nor need I write – to tell the tale
 My pen were doubly weak:
 Oh! what can idle words avail, 15
 Unless the heart could speak?

5.

By day or night, in weal or woe,
 That heart, no longer free,
 Must bear the love it cannot show,
 And silent ache for thee. 20



Gibraltar, by Finden

**Translation of the Romaic song,
Μπένω μεσ' τό περιβόλι,
'Ωραιότατη Χαηδή, &c.⁶²**

“The song from which this is taken is a great favourite with the young girls of Athens of all classes. Their manner of singing it is by verses in rotation, the whole number present joining in the chorus. I have heard it frequently at our *χόροι* in the winter of 1810-11. The air is plaintive and pretty.”

1.

I enter thy garden of roses,
Beloved and fair Haidée,⁶³
Each morning where Flora reposes,
For surely I see her in thee.
Oh, Lovely! thus low I implore thee, 5
Receive this fond truth from my tongue,
Which utters its song to adore thee,
Yet trembles for what it has sung;
As the branch, at the bidding of Nature,
Adds fragrance and fruit to the tree, 10
Through her eyes, through her every feature,
Shines the soul of the young Haidée.

2.

But the loveliest garden grows hateful
When Love has abandon'd the bowers;
Bring me hemlock – since mine is ungrateful, 15
That herb is more fragrant than flowers.
The poison, when pour'd from the chalice,
Will deeply embitter the bowl;
But when drunk to escape from thy malice,
The draught shall be sweet to my soul. 20
Too cruel! in vain I implore thee
My heart from these horrors to save:
Will nought to my bosom restore thee?
Then open the gates of the grave.

3.

As the chief who to combat advances 25
Secure of his conquest before,
Thus thou, with those eyes for thy lances,
Halt pierced through my heart to its core.
Ah, tell me, my soul! must I perish
By pangs which a smile would dispel? 30
Would the hope, which thou once bad'st me cherish,
For torture repay me too well?
Now sad is the garden of roses,
Beloved but false Haidée!
There Flora all wither'd reposes, 35
And mourns o'er thing absence with me.

⁶²: We know this poem was written in Greece, for a copy exists in the hand of Dudu Roque, dated April 19 1811. On another fragment there is a prose translation (by whom is unclear), of the last two lines: “I have loved thee, Maid with a sincere soul, but thou hast left me like a withered Tree”.

⁶³: “Haidee” is the name of the heroine of *Don Juan* Cantos II-IV.

Byron left Greece on April 22nd 1811, and stayed at Malta on the way home from April 30th to June 2nd. There he seems to have avoided meeting Constance Spenser Smith, who may not even have been on the island. Her last surviving letter to him is dated March 1811. Of the following comical poem – unusual in that its manuscript is at present in Peru – he writes to Hobhouse in London on November 3rd 1811: “Just before I left Malta, I wrote during my Ague, a copy of Hudibrastics as an Adieu to La Vallette, which I gave to Com[missioner] Fraser because it contained a compliment to Mrs. F[raser] without intending the thing to be bandied about. No sooner were we sailed than they were set in circulation, & I am told by a lately arrived traveller, that they are all, but particularly Oakes, in a pucker, and yet I am sure there is nothing to annoy any body, or a single personal allusion throughout, as far as I can remember, for I kept no copy.” (BLJ II 126)

Farewell to Malta, May 26th, 1811.

Adieu, ye joys of La Valette!
 Adieu, sirocco, sun, and sweat!
 Adieu, thou palace rarely enter'd!
 Adieu, ye mansions where I've ventured!
 Adieu, ye cursed streets of stairs! 5
 (How surely he who mounts you swears!)⁶⁴
 Adieu, ye merchants often failing!
 Adieu, thou mob for ever railing!
 Adieu, ye packets without letters!
 Adieu, ye fools who ape your betters! 10
 Adieu, thou damned'st quarantine,
 That gave me fever, and the spleen!
 Adieu, that stage which makes us yawn, Sirs,
 Adieu, his Excellency's dancers!
 Adieu to Peter – whom no fault's in, 15
 But could not teach a colonel waltzing;
 Adieu, ye females fraught with graces!
 Adieu, red coats, and redder faces!
 Adieu, the supercilious air
 Of all that strut “en militaire”! 20
 I go – but God knows when, or why,
 To smoky towns and cloudy sky,
 To things (the honest truth to say)
 As bad – but in a different way. –

Farewell to these, but not adieu, 25
 Triumphant sons of truest blue!
 While either Adriatic shore,
 And fallen chiefs, and fleets no more,
 And nightly smiles, and daily dinners,
 Proclaim you war and woman's winners. 30
 Pardon my Muse, who apt to prate is,
 And take my rhyme – because 'tis “gratis.”

And now I've got to Mrs. Fraser,⁶⁵
 Perhaps you think I mean to praise her –

⁶⁴: The steep steps of Valletta (from one of which Captain Ekenhead had fallen to his death), must have been hard for B., with his lameness.

⁶⁵: Hobhouse writes on September 11 1809, “Went to the play with Mr Forresti – Lord Byron gallanting at Mrs Fraser's.” He refers to B.'s affair with Constance Spenser Smith.

And were I vain enough to think 35
 My praise was worth this drop of ink,
 A line – or two – were no hard matter,
 As here, indeed, I need not flatter:
 But she must be content to shine
 In better praises than in mine, 40
 With lively air, and open heart,
 And fashion's ease, without its art;
 Her hours can gaily glide along,
 Nor ask the aid of idle song. –

And now, O Malta! since thou'st got us, 45
 Thou little military hothouse!
 I'll not offend with words uncivil,
 And wish thee rudely at the Devil,
 But only stare from out my casement,
 And ask, for what is such a place meant? 50
 Then, in my solitary nook,
 Return to scribbling, or a book,
 Or take my physic while I'm able
 (Two spoonfuls hourly by the label),
 Prefer my nightcap to my beaver, 55
 And bless the gods I've got a fever.

This “song” for one of the seamen on the last leg of Byron’s voyage home is from a letter dated 19th June 1811, to Hobhouse (BLJ II 51) – who was waiting for him at Sheerness when he arrived on July 14th 1811.

Song

If I had an Edication
 I'd sing your praise *more large*,
 But I'm only a common foremast Jack
 On Board of the *le Volage!!!*



Malta, by Finden