

BYRON'S POEMS ABOUT POETS

Some of the funniest of Byron's poems spring with seeming spontaneity from his pen in the middle of his letters. Much of this section comes from correspondence, though there is some formal verse. Several pieces are parodies, some one-off squibs, some full-length. Byron's distaste for most of the poets of his day shines through, with the recurrent and well-worn traditional joke that their books will end either as stuffing in hatshops, wrapped around pastries, or as toilet-tissue.

Byron admired the English poets of the past – the Augustans especially – much more than he did any of his contemporaries. Of “the Romantic Movement” he knew no more than did any of the other writers supposed now to have been members of it. Southey he loathed, as a dreadful *doppelgänger* – see below. Of Wordsworth he also had a low opinion, based largely on *The Excursion* – to the ambitions of which *Don Juan* can be regarded as a riposte (there are as many negative comments about Wordsworth in *Don Juan* as there are about Southey). He was as abusive of Keats as it's possible to be, and only relented (as he said), when Shelley showed him *Hyperion*. Of the poetry of his friend Shelley he was very guarded indeed, and compensated by defending Shelley's moral reputation. Blake he seems not to have known (“Blake” was him the name of a well-known Fleet Street barber). The only poet of whom his judgement and modern estimate coincide is Coleridge: he was strong in his admiration for *The Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, and *Christabel*; about the conversational poems he seems blank, and he feigns total incomprehension of the *Biographia Literaria* (see below).

In his casual asides he pours scorn on two writers who are never mentioned at all today – Henry Gally Knight, and William Sotheby (see below).

Against these literary fall-guys he ranged Scott, Crabbe, Moore, Campbell, and Rogers. Scott's poetry he quickly forgot, in the depth of devotion he showed for the anonymous Waverley Novels, the authorship of which he guessed, and which he read over and over again. About Crabbe he is respectful, but shows little evidence of having read him. About Campbell and Rogers he is publicly polite, for they were his friends – though see *Question and Answer* (below) for what he wrote about Rogers in private.

His relationship with his close friend Thomas Moore is more substantial, and has been extremely well written-about by Jeffrey Vail.¹ From Moore's Whiggish satires he gained confidence to write his own; from Moore's *Irish Melodies* came part of the inspiration for the *Hebrew Melodies*; but when, after years of encouraging its writing, he read Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, the scales dropped from his eyes and he saw, as he claimed, that he and his associates had all been writing “on a wrong revolutionary poetical system”.²

An essay has still to be written about the influence on Byron's poetry – particularly on *Childe Harold* I, II and IV – of his other close friend John Cam Hobhouse, who was himself, at the least, a “versifier”, if not a “poet”.

But no-one can doubt that the single most formative piece of reading Byron ever did was when, in autumn 1817, he read “Whistlecraft”, by John Hookham Frere. Within two days he had written *Beppo*, and from *Beppo* came *Don Juan* itself.

1: See Jeffrey W Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron and Thomas Moore*, Johns Hopkins 2001.

2: BLJ V 265.

Parody on Sir William Jones's Translation from Hafiz – "Sweet Maid", &c.³

Sir William Jones (1746-94), was a leading orientalist, a great expert in Asian language, literature, history and law. Hafiz (c.1320-90), was a Persian mystic poet. Byron respected them both, but it did not inhibit him from parodic ridicule. Notice how he often even matches Joneses' rhymes.

1.

Bar Maid, if for this shilling white,
 Thoud'st let me love, nor scratch or scold,
 That ruddy cheek and ruddier hand
 Would give my Bardship more delight
 Than all the ale that e'er was sold,
 Than even a pot of "Cyder-And".

2.

Girl, let your stupid booby go
 And bid him bring a pint of Beer –
 Whate'er the droning Vicar swear
 Tell him, his Living cannot show
 A tap at once so strong and clear,
 A sofa like this Elbow chair.

3.

Oh! when these ogling Chambermaids
 Whose fingers fumble beds of down,
 Their dear expensive charms display,
 Each glance my dwindling cash invades
 And robs my purse of half a crown,
 As footpads on the Turnpike way.

3: The original is *A Persian Song of Hafiz*, from Sir William Jones, *Collected Works* (1807). Vol. X, pp.251-4:

Sweet maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,
 And bid these arms thy neck infold;
 That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
 Would give thy poet more delight
 Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
 Than all the gems of Samarcand.
 Boy, let yon liquid ruby flow,
 And bid thy pensive heart be glad,
 Whate'er the frowning zealots say:
 Tell them, their Eden cannot show
 A stream so clear as Rocnabad,
 A bower so sweet as Mosellay.
 O! when these fair perfidious maids,
 Whose eyes our secret haunts infest,
 Their dear destructive charms display;
 Each glance my tender breast invades,
 And robs my wounded soul of rest,
 As Tartars seize their destin'd prey.
 In vain with love our bosoms glow:
 Can all our tears, can all our sighs,
 New lustre to those charms impart?
 Can cheeks, where living roses blow,
 Where nature spreads her richest dyes,
 Require the borrow'd gloss of art?
 Speak not of fate: — ah! change the theme,
 And talk of odours, talk of wine,
 Talk of the flowers that round us bloom: (*note continues ...*)

4.

Speak not of pay: – oh! change the theme,
 And talk of Bitters, talk of Gin,
 Talk of the Beef that begs thy coin,
 'Tis all a scent, 'tis all a steam;
 [To] bread and cheese restrict thy din,
 Nor hope to touch the dear Sirloin.⁴

5.

Brown Stout has such resistless power
 That even the pious Parish Priest
 Swore at the sauntering Pot Boy.
 To him how jovial is the hour
 When quaffing at the vestry's feast
 The Punch that kills, but cannot cloy.

6.

What devilish answer have I heard?
 And yet, by Jove, I'll kiss thee still.
 Can aught be cruel from thy lip?
 Yet say, why be so damned absurd
 As box my ears – (unpaid my Bill)
 And let such execrations slip! –

7.

Go boldly forth my Parody,
 Whose stanzas flow just as I please,
 Like – Lord knows what – to any tune,
 My notes are brisk, as brisk can be.
 But ah! Much brisker might I seize
 The maid for whom I turn buffoon.

4 (cont'd): 'Tis all a cloud, 'tis all a dream;
 To love and joy thy thoughts confine,
 Nor hope to pierce the sacred gloom.
 Beauty has such resistless power,
 That even the chaste Egyptian dame
 Sigh'd for the blooming Hebrew boy;
 For her how fatal was the hour,
 When to the banks of Nilus came
 A youth so lovely and so coy!
 But ah! sweet maid, my counsel hear
 (Youth should attend when those advise
 Whom long experience renders sage):
 While musick charms the ravish'd ear;
 While sparkling cups delight our eyes,
 Be gay; and scorn the frowns of age.
 What cruel answer have I heard!
 And yet, by heaven, I love thee still:
 Can aught be cruel from thy lip?
 Yet say, how fell that bitter word
 From lips which streams of sweetness fill,
 Which nought but drops of honey sip?
 Go boldly forth, my simple lay,
 Whose accents flow with artless ease,
 Like orient pearls at random strung:
 Thy notes are sweet, the damsels say;
 But O! far sweeter, if they please
 The nymph for whom these notes are sung.

from *Detached Thought 17 (October 1821)*⁵

I'd give the lands of Deloraine –
Dark Musgrave were alive again!

that is

I would give many a Sugar Cane
Monk Lewis were alive again!

New Duet⁶

To the tune of "Why, how now, saucy jade?"

Why, how now, saucy Tom?⁷
If you thus must ramble,
I will publish some
Remarks on Mister Campbell.

Answer.

Why, how now, Billy Bowles?
Sure the priest is maudlin!
[*To the Public:*] How can you, d—n your souls!
Listen to his twaddling?

5: BLJ IX 18. Matthew "Monk" Lewis (1775-1818), so called from his sensational novel *Ambrosio, or The Monk* (1796), owned plantations in the West Indies: hence the reference to sugar-cane. The original couplet is Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, V xix, 22-3.

6: Published in *The Liberal* No 2 (1823), p.398. The original is the duet between Polly Peachum and Lucy Lockit in Scene XIII of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.

7: *Tom* is Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), Scottish poet; *Billy Bowles* is the Rev. William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850), sonneteer and B.'s least favourite editor of Pope.

JOHN MURRAY



Murray, engraved by Finden

John Murray (1778-1843), took over the publishing house from his father, who had upon coming south dropped the “Mac” from MacMurray. Murray II was Byron’s publisher from 1812 until almost the end of the poet’s life. He was very generous to his difficult client, insinuating money into Byron’s bank account when it was clear the poet was broke but was still insisting that, as a nobleman, he didn’t accept payment.⁸

But there were political differences. Murray was a Tory establishment publisher, working for the Admiralty and publishing the conservative *Quarterly Review*, and Byron was a Whig, a Whig moreover of extreme views and of doubtful morality in his work. The sensationalist *Childe Harold* and *Turkish Tales* were published by Murray in very expensive editions, to keep their material out of the reach of unsophisticated readers who might be corrupted by them. *Cain* was published only with cuts. As *Don Juan* became more and more offensive, Murray became more and more nervous, until, with *Don Juan V* and *The Vision of Judgement*, he could publish no more, and the relationship ceased. The later cantos of *Don Juan* were published by the radical John Hunt, at much more affordable prices.

Murray’s attitude to Byron was, in correspondence, a trifle unctuous – perhaps to cover up his sense of ownership. Hobhouse records, at the book launch party for *Childe Harold IV*:

Mrs Murray was at the head of the table – we had a most singular evening and sat up till near three in the morning drinking Murray’s Hock – our host very tipsy – Murray has sold between nine and ten thousand of the *Childe*. He said to me, “Moore is a good fellow, *but he can’t write* – there is no man can like my man.” He was drunk when he said this, and I was afraid would be overheard.⁹

Byron’s letters to John Murray are among his very best, because he knew that Murray read them aloud to his reactionary friends, and enjoyed ventriloquialising. The letters contain some very funny poems.

⁸: See Cochran, *Did Byron take money for his early poems? Byron Journal*, 2003, pp.72-6.

⁹: Hobhouse diary entry for Tuesday April 28th h 1818 (BL.Add.Ms.47235)

from a letter to Murray of July 15th 1817¹⁰

No infant Sotheby¹¹ whose dauntless head
 Translates ununderstood a deal of German,
 No city Wordsworth more admired than read –
 No drunken Coleridge with a new “Lay Sermon”.

from a letter to Murray of April 11th 1818¹²
(to the tune of “Sally in Our Alley”)¹³

1.

Of all the twice ten thousand bards
 That ever penned a canto
 Whom Pudding or whom Praise rewards¹⁴
 For lining a portmanteau;
 Of all the poets ever known
 From Grub-Street to Fop’s Alley
 The Muse may boast – the World must own –
 There’s none like pretty Gally!¹⁵

2.

He writes as well as any Miss –
 Has published many a poem –
 The shame is yours, the gain is his,
 In case you should not know ’em.
 He has ten thousand pounds a year
 I do not mean to rally
 His songs at sixpence would be dear
 So give them *gratis*, Gally!

3.

And if this statement should seem queer
 Or set down in a hurry,
 Go – ask (if he will be sincere)¹⁶
 His bookseller John Murray.
 Come say – how many have been sold
 And don’t stand shilly-shally –
 Of bound and lettered, red and gold –
 Well printed works of Gally.

10: BLJ V 252.

11: William Sotheby (1757-1833), translator of Wieland’s *Oberon* (“a deal of German”), from which B. had stolen an episode in *The Corsair*. B. affected to despise him in proportion as he was indebted. See *Beppo*, sts.72-6, and this, from a letter to Murray, April 23rd 1818: “I for one think and say that to the best of my knowledge & belief from past experience and present information Mr. Sotheby has made & makes himself highly ridiculous. – He may be an amiable man – a moral man – a good father – a good husband – a respectable & devout individual – I have nothing to say against all this – but I have something to say of Mr. S’s literary foibles – and of the wretched affectations & systematized Sophistry of many men women & Children now extant & absurd in & about London & elsewhere; – which & whom in their false pretensions & nauseous attempts to make Learning a nuisance – & society a Bore – I consider as fair Game – to be brought down on all fair occasions – & I doubt not by the blessing of God on my honest purpose and the former example of Mr. Gifford & others my betters before my eyes – to extirpate – extinguish & eradicate such as come within the compass of my intention. – – And this is my opinion – of which you will express as much or as little as you think proper” (BLJ VI 34-6).

12: BLJ VI 26-9.

13: This tune is (I think), identical to *The Vicar of Bray*. The verses work with that tune.

14: Pope, *The Dunciad*, I 54: *And solid pudding against empty praise*.

15: Henry Gally Knight (1786-1846), author of several Oriental tales.

16: The line implies an habitually guarded quality in Murray’s conversation.

4.

For Astley's Circus Upton writes¹⁷
 And also for the Surry¹⁸
 Fitzgerald weekly [*or weakly*] still recites¹⁹
 Though grinning Critics worry.
 Miss Holford's Peg,²⁰ and Sotheby's Saul²¹
 In fame exactly tally
 From Stationer's Hall to Grocer's Stall²²
 They go – and so does Gally.

5.

He rode upon a Camel's hump
 Through Araby the sandy²³
 Which surely must have hurt the rump
 Of this poetic dandy;
 His rhymes are of the costive kind,²⁴
 And barren as each valley
 In deserts which he left behind
 Has been the Muse of Gally.

6.

He has a seat in Parliament,
 Is fat and passing wealthy,
 And surely he should be content
 With these and being healthy;
 But Great Ambition will misrule
 Men at all risks to sally,
 Now makes a poet – now a fool,
 And – we know which – of Gally.

7.

Some in the playhouse like a *row*²⁵ –
 Some with the Watch to battle²⁶ –
 Exchanging many a midnight blow
 To music of the Rattle.²⁷
 Some folk like rowing on the Thames
 Some rowing in an Alley –
 But all the Row my fancy claims
 Is *rowing* of my Gally.

17: Philip Astley's Amphitheatre was near Westminster Bridge. William Upton was its resident composer.

18: The Surrey Theatre was in Blackfriars Road. Like Astley's, it was a popular, non-monopoly theatre which no self-respecting author would write for.

19: William Thomas Fitzgerald (c.1759-1829) minor poet. See *EBSR*, first line.

20: *Margaret* ("Peg") of *Anjou*, a poem in ten cantos by Miss Holford (Mrs Margaret Hodson), 1816.

21: *Saul*, a poem in two parts by William Sotheby (1807).

22: A recurrent joke is the way unsuccessful books end as wrapping paper around groceries.

23: Refers to Gally Knight's oriental epics, *Ilderim* (1816), *Phrosyne* (1817), and *Alashtar* (1817).

24: *costive* – constipated. Compare *Don Juan* IX, 33, 4.

25: B. refers to the Old Price Riots at Covent Garden in 1809-10.

26: A favourite pastime of upperclass London drunks was beating up nightwatchmen.

27: The watchman would raise the alarm when attacked by waving a loud rattle.

from the same letter²⁸

1.

Mrs. Wilmot sate scribbling a play²⁹ –
 Mr. Sotheby sate sweating behind her –
 But what are all these to the lay
 Of Gally i.o. the Grinder?
 Gally i.o. i.o., &c.

2.

I bought me some books t'other day
 And sent them down stairs to the binder,
 But the Pastry Cook carried away –
 My Gally i.o. the Grinder.
 Gally i.o. i.o., &c.

3.

I wanted to kindle my taper
 And called to the Maid to remind her,
 And what should she bring me for paper?
 But Gally i.o. the Grinder. –
 Gally i.o. i.o., &c.

4.

Among my researches for *Ease*³⁰
 I went where one's certain to find her
 The first thing by her throne that one sees
 Is Gally i.o. the Grinder.
 Gally i.o. i.o., &c.

5.

Away with old Homer the blind –
 I'll show you a poet that's blinder
 You may see him whene'er you've a mind
 In Gally i.o. the Grinder.
 Gally i.o. i.o., &c.

6.

Blindfold he runs groping for fame –
 And hardly knows where he will find her –
 She don't seem to take to the name
 Of Gally i.o. the Grinder.
 Gally i.o. i.o., &c.

7.

Yet the Critics have been very kind –
 And Mama and his friends have been kinder –
 But the greatest of Glory's behind³¹
 For Gally i.o. the Grinder.
 Gally i.o.i.o., &c.

28: The tune here is *The Grinders, or, More Grist to the Mill*, by Charles Dibdin.

29: The play is *Ina* a tragedy in five acts by Mrs Wilmot (1815).

30: *Ease* – relaxation of the bowels. The “throne” of “Ease” is the W.C.

31: Implies that Gally Knight's poems are best suited for use after evacuation.

from the same letter³²

Strahan, Tonson, Lintot³³ of the times,
Patron and Publisher of rhymes,
For thee the bard up Pindus climbs,³⁴
My Murray.

To thee, with hope and terror dumb,
The unedged M.S. authors come;
Thou printest all – and sellest some –
My Murray.

Upon thy table's baize so green
The last new Quarterly is seen –³⁵
But where is thy new Magazine,
My Murray?

Along thy sprucest bookshelves shine
The works thou deemest most divine –
The “Art of Cookery”, and mine,³⁶
My Murray.

Tours, Travels, Essays, too, I wist,
And Sermons, to thy Mill bring Grist;
And then thou hast the “Navy List”,³⁷
My Murray.

And Heaven forbid I should conclude
Without “the Board of Longitude”,
Although this narrow paper would,
My Murray.

from a letter to Murray of March 25th 1817³⁸

I read the “Christabel”;³⁹
Very well –
I read the “Missionary” –⁴⁰
Pretty – very –
I tried at “Ilderim” –⁴¹
Ahem!
I read a sheet of “Marg’ret of Anjou” –⁴²
Can you?
I turned a page of Webster’s “Waterloo” –⁴³

32: B. parodies *My Mary* by Cowper: *The twentieth year is wellnigh past / Since first our sky was overcast; / Ah, would that this might be the last, / My Mary!*

33: William Strahan (1715-85), Jacob Tonson (1655-1736), and Barnaby Lintot (1675-1736), famous publishers of Pope’s time. Tonson and Lintot were rivals.

34: Refers to *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* II (published by Murray). See II, 42, 2, and II, 47, 1.

35: Murray had published the conservative *Quarterly Review* since its foundation in 1809.

36: Murray’s most profitable title was *A New System of Domestic Cookery* by Maria Eliza Rundell (1806).

37: The Navy List lists ships, their officers, ranks and seniority. Murray published for the Admiralty.

38: BLJ V 191-4; the two poems are consecutive in the letter.

39: B. was a great admirer of Coleridge’s *Christabel*, and persuaded Murray to publish it in 1816.

40: *The Missionary* by William Lisle Bowles (John Murray, 1813).

41: *Ilderim* by Henry Gally Knight (John Murray, 1816).

42: *Margaret of Anjou* by Miss Holford (John Murray, 1816).

Pooh! pooh!
 I look'd at Wordsworth's milk-white
 "Rylstone Doe" –⁴⁴
 Hillo!⁴⁵
 I read "Glenarvon" too by Caro Lamb –⁴⁶
God damn!

To hook the reader, you, John Murray,
 Have publish'd "Anjou"'s Margaret,
 Which won't be sold off in a hurry
 (At least, it has not been as yet);
 And then, still further to bewilder 'em,
 Without remorse, you set up "Ilderim";
 So mind you don't get into debt,
 Because, as how, if you should fail,
 These books would be but baddish bail.
 And mind you do *not* let escape
 These rhymes to Morning Post or Perry,
 Which would be very treacherous – *very* –
 And get me into such a scrape.
 For, firstly, I should have to sally,
 All in my little boat, against a *Galley* –
 And, should I chance to slay the Assyrian wight,
 Have next to combat with the female knight.
 And pricked to death expire upon her needle,
 A sort of end which I should take indeed ill!

from a letter to Murray of August 21st 1817⁴⁷

This poem is an imaginary letter from Murray to Dr John Polidori, rejecting a tragedy he has written. Polidori had been Byron's physician on the first stage of his continental exile in 1816, but Byron had sacked him. He killed himself in 1821.

Dear Doctor, I have read your play,
 Which is a good one in its way,
 Purges the eyes and moves the bowels,
 And drenches handkerchiefs like towels
 With tears, that, in a flux of Grief,
 Afford hysterical relief
 To shattered nerves and quickened pulses,
 Which your catastrophe convulses.
 I like your moral and machinery;
 Your plot, too, has such scope for scenery!
 Your dialogue is apt and smart,
 The play's concoction full of art;
 Your hero raves, your heroine cries,
 All stab, and everybody dies.
 In short, your tragedy would be

43: *Waterloo and other Poems* by James Wedderburn Webster (Ridgway, 1816). B. had flirted with the author's wife in 1813.

44: *The White Doe of Rylstone, or The Fate of the Nortons* by William Wordsworth (Longman, 1815).

45: *A hunting call* implies the White Doe should be shot.

46: *Glenarvon* by Lady Caroline Lamb (Henry Colburn, 1816). B. had had an affair with the author in 1812. It contains a fanciful portrait of him.

47: BLJ V 258-61.

The very thing to hear and see:
 And for a piece of publication,
 If I decline on this occasion,
 It is not that I am not sensible
 To merits in themselves ostensible,
 But – and I grieve to speak it – plays
 Are drugs – mere drugs, sir – nowadays.
 I had a heavy loss by “Manuel” –⁴⁸
 Too lucky if it prove not annual,
 And Sotheby, with his “Orestes,”⁴⁹
 (Which, by the by, the old Bore’s best is,)
 Has lain so very long on hand,
 That I despair of all demand.
 I’ve advertised – but see my books –
 Or only watch my Shopman’s looks; –
 Still Ivan, Ina, and such lumber,⁵⁰
 My back-shop glut, my shelves encumber.
 There’s Byron too, who once did better,
 Has sent me, folded in a letter,
 A sort of – it’s no more a drama
 Than Darnley, Ivan, or Kehama:⁵¹
 So altered since last year his pen is,
 I think he’s lost his wits at Venice,
 Or drained his brains away as Stallion
 To some dark-eyed and warm Italian.
 In short, sir, what with one and t’other,
 I dare not venture on another.
 I write in haste; excuse each blunder;
 The Coaches through the street so thunder!
 My room’s so full – we’ve Gifford here⁵²
 Reading MSS., with Hookham Frere⁵³
 Pronouncing on the nouns and particles
 Of some of our forthcoming Articles.
 The Quarterly – Ah, Sir! if you
 Had but the genius to review!
 A smart Critique upon St. Helena,⁵⁴
 Or if you only would but tell in a
 Short compass what – but to resume:
 As I was saying, Sir, the Room –⁵⁵
 The Room’s so full of wits and bards,
 Crabbes, Campbells, Crokers, Freres, and Wards,⁵⁶
 And others, neither bards nor wits:
 My humble tenement admits
 All persons in the dress of Gent,
 From Mr. Hammond to Dog Dent.⁵⁷

48: *Manuel* was a play by Charles Maturin, whose *Bertram* had been very successful at Drury Lane in 1816.

49: William Sotheby, *Orestes*, in *Tragedies* (John Murray 1814).

50: William Sotheby’s tragedy *Ivan* (1816), and *Ina* by Mrs Wilmot.

51: B. refers to his own *Manfred*, then to *Death of Darnley* and *Ivan*, two more of Sotheby’s *Tragedies*, and Southey’s “epic” *The Curse of Kehama* (1811).

52: William Gifford, Murray’s chief editor, and B.’s “literary father” (BLJ XI 17).

53: John Hookham Frere, failed diplomat and author of *Whistlecraft*, which inspired *Beppo*.

54: *Manuscrit venu de St. Hélène d’une manière inconnue* claimed to be Napoleon’s memoirs. Published by Murray, it was in fact by a Swiss journalist called Jacob Frédérick Lullin de Chateavieux, a friend of de Staël.

55: *The Room* is the first floor front room at 50, Albemarle St (still there in 2007).

56: George Crabbe, Thomas Campbell, John Wilson Croker, John Hookham Frere, John William Ward.

A party dines with me today,
 All clever men, who make their way;
 Crabbe, Malcolm, Hamilton, and Chantrey⁵⁸
 Are all partakers of my pantry.
 They're at this moment in discussion
 On poor de Staël's late dissolution.⁵⁹
 Her book, they say, was in advance
 Pray Heaven she tell the truth of France!
 'Tis said she certainly was married
 To Rocca – and had twice miscarried –⁶⁰
 No – not miscarried – I opine,
 But brought to bed at forty-nine;
 Some say she died a Papist – Some
 Are of opinion that's a Hum –
 I don't know that – the fellow Schlegel⁶¹
 Was very likely to inveigle
 A dying person in compunction
 To try the extremity of Unction.
 But peace be with her – for a woman,
 Her talents surely were uncommon.
 Her Publisher (and Public too)
 The hour of her demise may rue –
 For never more within his shop he –
 Pray – was not she interred at Coppet?
 Thus run our time and tongues away;
 But, to return, sir, to your play:
 Sorry, sir, but I cannot deal,
 Unless 'twere acted by O'Neill,⁶²
 My hands so full, my head so busy,
 I'm almost dead, and always dizzy;
 And so, with endless truth and hurry,
 Dear Doctor, I am yours,

John Murray.

from a letter to Murray of January 8th 1818⁶³

1.

My dear M^r. Murray,
 You're in a damned hurry,
 To set up this ultimate Canto;⁶⁴
 But (if they don't rob us)
 You'll see Mr. Hobhouse
 Will bring it safe in his portmanteau.

57: George Hammond, co-founder of the *Quarterly*, and John Dent, M.P. and banker, so called from his involvement in the 1796 Dog-tax Bill; see BLJ V 260n.

58: George Crabbe (again), Sir John Malcolm, historian of Persia, William Richard Hamilton, Lord Elgin's secretary, and Francis Legatt Chantry, sculptor.

59: Madame de Staël (b.1766), had died on July 14th 1817.

60: de Staël had married Albert Jean Michel de Rocca in 1811. He was twenty-three years her junior.

61: August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) German literary critic, de Staël's guest at Coppet. B. disliked him.

62: Miss O'Neill, Drury Lane actress. She played the lead in Maturin's *Bertram* in 1816.

63: BLJ VI 3-6.

64: B. refers to *CHP* IV, the manuscript of which Hobhouse was bringing from Venice to London.

2.

For the Journal you hint of,
 As ready to print off,⁶⁵
 No doubt you do right to commend it;
 But as yet I have writ off
 The devil a bit of
 Our “Beppo,” when copied – I’ll send it.⁶⁶

3.

In the mean time you’ve “Gally”⁶⁷
 Whose verses all tally,
 Perhaps you may say he’s a Ninny,
 But if you abashed are
 Because of “Alashtar”
 He’ll piddle another “Phrosine”.⁶⁸

4.

Then you’ve Sotheby’s tour,⁶⁹
 No great things, to be sure –
 You could hardly begin with a less work;
 For the pompous rascallion,
 Who don’t speak Italian
 Nor French, must have scribbled by guess-work.

5.

No doubt he’s a rare man
 Without knowing German
 Translating his way up Parnassus,
 And still now absurder
 He meditates Murder
 As you’ll see in the trash he calls *Tasso*’s.⁷⁰

6.

But you’ve others his betters
 The real men of letters
 Your Orators, critics, and wits,
 And I’ll bet that your Journal
 (Pray, is it diurnal?)
 Will pay with your luckiest hits.

65: Murray was thinking of founding a new journal called *The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*.

66: *Beppo* was still being revised at this date. Murray published three editions before it was finished.

67: Henry Gally Knight (again).

68: Knight’s two oriental poems of 1817.

69: William Sotheby, *Farewell to Italy, and occasional poems* (John Murray, 1818.)

70: Sotheby’s *Tasso* unidentified.

7.

You can make any loss up
 With “Spence” and his Gossip,⁷¹
 A work which must surely succeed;
 Then Queen Mary’s Epistle-craft,⁷²
 With the new “Fytte” of “Whistlecraft”,⁷³
 Must make people purchase and read.

8.

Then you’ve General Gordon,⁷⁴
 Who “girded his sword on”,
 To serve with a Muscovite master
 And help him to polish
 A Nation so owlsh,
 They thought shaving their beards a disaster.

9.

For the man, “*poor and shrewd*”,+ + Vide your letter
 With whom you’d conclude
 A Compact without more delay,
 Perhaps some such pen is
 Still extant in Venice;
 But please, sir, to mention *your pay*?

10.

Now tell me some news
 Of your friends and the Muse
 Of the Bar, or the Gown, or the House,
 From Canning the tall wit⁷⁵
 To Wilmot the small wit⁷⁶
 Ward’s creeping Companion and *Louse*.⁷⁷

11.

Who’s so damnably bit
 With fashion and Wit
 That he crawls on the surface like Vermin,
 But an Insect in both,
 By his Intellect’s growth
 Of what *size* you may quickly determine.

71: Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes, observations and characters of books and men* (1820), not published by Murray.

72: George Chalmers, *Life of Mary Queen of Scots; drawn from the State Papers* (John Murray 1818).

73: John Hookham Frere’s *The Monks, and the Giants (Prospectus and Specimen of an intended National Work, by William and Robert Whistlecraft, of Stowmarket, in Suffolk, Harness and Collar-Makers* (John Murray, 1817). The inspiration for *Beppo*.

74: General Thomas Gordon (1788-1841), fought in Greece with Richard Church in 1821 and published a *History of the Greek Revolution* in 1832. He had met Ali Pasha in 1810.

75: George Canning (1770-1827), future Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, had written for the *Anti-Jacobin*.

76: Sir Robert Wilmot (subsequently Wilmot Horton: 1784-1841), a cousin of Annabella’s. At BLJ XI 169 B. refers to him as “that wretched Coxcomb Wilmot”; with Colonel Doyle, he was a burner of B.’s Memoirs in 1824.

77: John William Ward (1781-1833), later Earl of Dudley and Ward; friend of B.’s.

12.

Now, I'll put out my taper
 (I've finished my paper
 For these stanzas you see on the *brink* stand),
 There's a whore on my right,
 For I rhyme best at night
 When a C—t is tied close to my *Inkstand*.

13.

It was Mahomet's notion
That comical motion
 Increased his "devotion in prayer" –⁷⁸ See his life in Gibbon's
 If that tent holds good abstract⁷⁹
 In a Prophet, it should
 In a poet be equally fair.

14.

For, in rhyme or in love
 (Which both come from above)
 I'll stand with our "*Tommy*" or "*Sammy*" "Moore" and "Rogers"
 But the *Sopha* and lady
 Are both of them ready
 And so, here's "Good Night to you dammee!"

from a letter to Murray of July 30th 1820⁸⁰

WHO kill'd John Keats?
 "I", says the *Quarterly*,
 So savage and Tartarly;
 "'Twas one of my feats."

Who shot the arrow?
 The poet-priest Milman
 (So ready to kill man),
 Or Southey, or Barrow".⁸¹

from a letter to Murray of January 19th 1821⁸²

Of Turdsworth the great Metaquizzical poet
 A man of great merit amongst those who know it
 Of whose works, as I told Moore last autumn at Mestri,
 I owe all I know to my passion for *Pastry*.⁸³

78: *Mahomet's notion*: the Qu'ran encourages sex, but does not say that it improves one's capacity to pray.

79: "The voluntary penance of the ascetics, the torment and glory of their lives, was odious to a prophet who censured in his companions a rash vow of abstaining from flesh, and women, and sleep; and firmly declared, that he would suffer no monks in his religion" – Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, Chapter 50..

80: BLJ VIII 160-3.

81: It was neither Henry Hart Milman, Robert Southey, nor Sir John Barrow, but John Wilson Croker who had written the perfectly fair review in the *Quarterly* which Shelley asserted had killed Keats (see Letters ed. Jones, II 283-4, letter to B., April 17th 1821).

82: BLJ VIII 66; see also VIII 68 (to Moore).

83: Another reference to unsaleable poetry being used to wrap cakes.

SAMUEL ROGERS



Rogers engraved by Finden.

The verse of Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), cannot be analysed in terms of gender, post-colonialism, ecology, cultural materialism, nor even queer theory, and is therefore neglected today. But his poem *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792) went through countless editions. He was a banker by profession, and his house at 22 St James's Place – decorated in exquisite taste – was a vital meeting-place for writers. Byron was a frequent visitor, as was Moore. Rogers was extremely rich, and very generous to struggling poets (it was he who suggested that Wordsworth should be appointed Collector of Stamps for Westmoreland). He was also famous for his resemblance to a corpse. It has been suggested that he was gay, and that he and Richard “Conversation” Sharp were lovers. Byron was, as can be seen, in two minds about him. *Question and Answer* (1818), is perhaps the most horrible poem Byron ever wrote. The two men published *Lara and Jacqueline* together in 1814. Byron's friendship with Rogers was a changeable thing, at which disinterested commentators smiled:

Compare Lord Byron when he is describing a beautiful woman ... with Lord Byron when he is puffing old Samuel Rogers, and pretending (what vile humbug!) to class him among the great poets of England, who has only written a very, very few lukewarm verses in his day ...⁸⁶

Written on a blank leaf of *The Pleasures of Memory*⁸⁷

Absent or present, still to thee,
 My friend, what magic spells belong!
 As all can tell, who share, like me,
 In turn thy converse, and thy song.
 But when the dreaded hour shall come
 By Friendship ever deemed too nigh,
 And “*Memory*” o'er her Druid's tomb
 Shall weep that aught of thee can die,

⁸⁶: John Gibson Lockhart, *John Bull's Letter to Lord Byron* (ed.A.L.Strout, Oklahoma 1947, p.97).

⁸⁷: The original manuscript of this poem was discovered in 2005, in a copy of *The Pleasures of Memory* in the library of University College London.

How fondly will She then repay
Thy homage offered at her shrine
And blend, while Ages roll away,
Her name immortally with *thine*.

Μωαιρων
April 19th, 1812

an 1816 note to *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*⁸⁸

Pretty Miss Jacqueline
 Had a nose aquiline,
 And would assert rude
 Things of Miss Gertrude,
 While M^r. Marmion
 Led a great army on,
 Making Kehama look
 Like a fierce Mamaluke.

Question and Answer

Question.

Nose and chin would shame a knocker;
 Wrinkles that would puzzle Cocker;⁸⁹
 Mouth which marks the envious Scorer
 With a Scorpion in each Corner
 Curling its quick tail to sting you
 In the place that most may wring you;
 Eyes of leadlike hue, and gummy;
 Carcass picked out from some Mummy,
 Bowels (but they were forgotten,
 Save the Liver and that's rotten),
 Skin all sallow, flesh all sodden,
 Form the Devil would frighten G-d in;
 Is't a Corpse stuck up for show?
 Galvanised at times to go?
 With the Scripture in Connection –
 New proof of the resurrection?
 Vampire, Ghost, or Ghoul, what is it?
 I would walk ten miles to miss it.

Answer.

Many Passengers arrest one
 To demand the same free question.
 Shorter's my reply and franker,
 That's the bard, the beau, and banker.
 Yet if you could bring about
 Just to turn him inside out,
 Satan's self would seem less sooty,
 And his present aspect – Beauty.
 Mark that (as he masks the bilious)
 Air so softly supercilious
 Chastened bow, and mock humility

88: Re-reading *EBSR* in 1816, B. wrote this jingle just before the prose note *It would be superfluous to recal to the mind of the reader the author of "The Pleasures of Memory" and "The Pleasures of Hope" ... Jacqueline is the heroine of Rogers' poem of that name, published with B.'s Lara in 1814; Miss Gertrude is the heroine of Campbell's 1809 Gertude of Wyoming; Mr Marmion is the eponymous protagonist of Scott's 1808 poem; and Kehama is the villain of Southey's 1811 Hindu epic The Curse of Kehama. B. has a low opinion of them all.*

89: Edward Cocker's *Arithmetick, being a plain and familiar method ... for the full understanding of that incomparable art* (1664), had reached its fifty-first edition by 1769. A standard school-book. B. implies that Rogers' wrinkles cannot be counted.

Almost sickened to Servility,
 Hear his tone (which is to talking
 That which creeping is to walking
 Now on all fours, now on tiptoe)
 Hear the tales he lends his lip to,
 Little hints of heavy scandals
 Every friend in turn he handles,
 All which women or which men do
 Glides forth in an innuendo,
 Cloathed in odds and ends of humour,
 Herald of each paltry rumour,
 From divorces down to dresses,
 Woman's frailties, Man's excesses,
 All which Life presents of evil
 Make for him a constant revel.
 You're his foe, for that he fears you,
 And in absence blasts and sears you!
 You're his friend, for that he hates you,
 First caresses, and then baits you –
 Darting on the opportunity
 When to do it with impunity;
 You are neither, then he'll flatter,
 Till he finds some trait for Satire,
 Hunts your weak point out, then shows it
 Where it injures to disclose it,
 In the mode that's most invidious,
 Adding every trait that's hideous –
 From the bile whose blackening river
 Rushes through his Stygian liver.

Then he thinks himself a lover –
 Why? I really can't discover,
 In his mind, age, face, or figure;
 Viper Broth might give him vigour;
 Let him keep the cauldron steady,
 He the venom has already.
 For his faults he has but one –
 'Tis but Envy when all's done:
 He but pays the pain he suffers
 Clipping like a pair of Snuffers,
 Lights which ought to burn the brighter
 For this temporary blighter;
 He's the Cancer of his Species
 And will eat himself to pieces,
 Plague personified and Famine,
 Devil, with such delight in damning,
 That if at the resurrection
 Unto him the free selection
 Of his future could be given –
 'Twould be rather Hell than Heaven.

For his Merits, would you know 'em?
 Once he wrote a pretty poem. –⁹⁰

90: Refers to *The Pleasures of Memory*.

Rogers showed his continued affection after the younger man's death by some lines in his own poem *Italy*, in which Byron is ...

One who saw,
Observed, nor shunned the busy scenes of life,
But mingled not, and mid the din, the stir,
Lived as a separate Spirit.

Much had passed
Since last we parted; and those five short years –
Much had they told! His clustering locks were turn'd
Grey; nor did aught recall the Youth that swam
From SESTOS to ABYDOS. Yet his voice,
Still it was sweet; still from his eye the thought
Flash'd lightning-like, nor lingered on the way,
Waiting for words.⁹¹

THOMAS MOORE



Moore, engraved by Finden, and in Prospect Park, New York.

The Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779-1852), really was Byron's best friend, if we judge by the number of poems Byron wrote to him – which exceed by far the number he wrote to John Cam Hobhouse. Moore lived mostly in England, and modern Ireland has no time for him (Joyce's Stephen Dedalus describes him in *A Portrait of the Artist* as “a firbolg masquerading as a milesian”); but in his day his sentimental lyrics were regarded as the best advertisements his oppressed and humiliated country could have. Byron was influenced by his early, semi-erotic book *The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Little* (1801), and by his satirical works *The Twopenny Postbag* and *The Fudge Family in Paris*: Moore's *Irish Melodies* gave Byron the model for *Hebrew Melodies*. But Moore's oriental epic *Lalla Rookh* (1817), convinced Byron that “he and *all* of us – Scott – Southey – Wordsworth – Moore – Campbell – I – are all in the wrong – one as much as another – that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system – or systems – not worth a damn in itself – & from which none but Rogers and Crabbe are free – and that the present & next generations will finally be of this opinion” (BLJ V 265).

Moore was a fund of entertaining conversation, and a great favourite in society because the style with which he sang his own songs. He wrote lives of Sheridan and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and, in 1830, completed the first proper life of Byron, which, because of the amount of field-research he was able to do, remains a primary source.

91: Samuel Rogers, *Italy* (1830), p. 98.

from a letter to Francis Hodgson, September 13th 1811⁹²

Good plays are scarce:
 So Moore writes farce.
 Is fame like his so brittle?
 We knew before
 That "Little's" Moore,
 But now 'tis Moore that's *Little*.

from a letter to Moore of June 1813⁹³

Moore (*Life*, 1830, Vol.I pp.394-5), sets the scene for this poem:

Among the many gay hours we passed together this spring, I remember particularly the wild flow of his spirits one evening, when we had accompanied Mr. Rogers home from some early assembly, and when Lord Byron, who, according to his frequent custom, had not dined for the last two days, found his hunger no longer governable, and called aloud for "something to eat." Our repast,—of his own choosing,—was simple bread and cheese; and seldom have I partaken of so joyous a supper. It happened that our host had just received a presentation copy of a volume of poems, written professedly in imitation of the old English writers, and containing, like many of these models, a good deal that was striking and beautiful, mixed up with much that was trifling, fantastic, and absurd. In our mood, at the moment, it was only with these latter qualities that either Lord Byron or I felt disposed to indulge ourselves; and, in turning over the pages, we found, it must be owned, abundant matter for mirth. In vain did Mr. Rogers, in justice to the author, endeavour to direct our attention to some of the beauties of the work:—it suited better our purpose (as is too often the case with more deliberate critics) to pounce only on such passages as ministered to the laughing humour that possessed us. In this sort of hunt through the volume, we at length lighted on the discovery that our host, in addition to his sincere approbation of some of its contents, had also the motive of gratitude for standing by its author, as one of the poems was a warm and, I need not add, well-deserved panegyric on himself. We were, however, too far gone in nonsense for even this eulogy, in which we both so heartily agreed, to stop us. The opening line of the poem was, as well as I can recollect, "When Rogers o'er this labour bent;" and Lord Byron undertook to read it aloud;—but he found it impossible to get beyond the first two words. Our laughter had now increased to such a pitch that nothing could restrain it. Two or three times he began; but no sooner had the words "When Rogers" passed his lips, than our fit burst forth afresh,—till even Mr. Rogers himself, with all his feeling of our injustice, found it impossible not to join us; and we were, at last, all three, in such a state of inextinguishable laughter, that, had the author himself been of the party, I question much whether he could have resisted the infection. A day or two after, Lord Byron sent me the following:—

1.

When T[hurlow]⁹⁴ this damn'd nonsense sent
 (I hope I am not violent),
 Nor men nor gods knew what he meant.

2.

And since not ev'n our Rogers' praise
 To common sense his thoughts could raise –
 Why *would* they let him print his lays?

[stanzas 3 and 4 edited out by Moore]

⁹²: BLJ II 97. Written before B. and Moore met. B. plays with the idea of Moore, who published his own poems under the name of "Thomas Little", has now shrunk as a result of his unsuccessful farce *M.P. or The Bluestocking*, and really is "little".

⁹³: BLJ III 55.

⁹⁴: Edward Howell, second Baron Thurlow (1781-1829), poetaster.

5.

To me, divine Apollo, grant – O!
Hermilda's first and second canto,⁹⁵
 I'm fitting up a new portmanteau;

6.

And thus to furnish decent lining,
 My own and others' bays I'm twining, –
 So, gentle T[hurlow], throw me thine in.

from the same letter⁹⁶

Moore writes (*Life*, I, 396-7), "On the same day I received from him the following additional scraps. The lines in italics are from the eulogy that provoked his waggish comments".

"I lay my branch of laurel down.
 Then thus to form Apollo's crown.
 Let every other bring his own."

– Lord Thurlow's lines to Mr. Rogers

"I lay my branch of laurel down".

Thou "lay thy branch of laurel down!"
 Why, what thou'st stole is not enow;
 And, were it lawfully thine own,
 Does Rogers want it most, or thou?
 Keep to thyself thy wither'd bough,
 Or send it back to Doctor Donne –
 Were justice done to both, I trow,
 He'd have but little, and thou – none.

"Then thus to form Apollo's crown."

A crown! why, twist it how you will,
 Thy chaplet must be foolscap still.
 When next you visit Delphi's town,
 Inquire amongst your fellow-lodgers,
 They'll tell you Phoebus gave his crown,
 Some years before your birth, to Rogers.

"Let every other bring his own."

When coals to Newcastle are carried,
 And owls sent to Athens, as wonders,
 From his spouse when the Regent's unmarried,
 Or Liverpool weeps o'er his blunders;
 When Tories and Whigs cease to quarrel,
 When C[astlereagh]'s wife has an heir,
 Then Rogers shall ask us for laurel,
 And thou shalt have plenty to spare.

⁹⁵: *Hermilda* was part of Thurlow's *Poems on several occasions* (1813).

⁹⁶: These lines are not in BLJ.

from a letter to Moore of May 19th 1813⁹⁷

Moore (*Life*, 1830, Vol.I pp.400-1), again sets the scene:

It was at this time that Lord Byron became acquainted (and, I regret to have to add, partly through my means) with Mr. Leigh Hunt, the editor of a well-known weekly journal, the Examiner. This gentleman I had myself formed an acquaintance with in the year 1811, and, in common with a large portion of the public, entertained a sincere admiration of his talents and courage as a journalist. The interest I took in him personally had been recently much increased by the manly spirit, which he had displayed throughout a prosecution instituted against himself and his brother, for a libel that had appeared in their paper on the Prince Regent, and in consequence of which they were both sentenced to imprisonment for two years. It will be recollected that there existed among the Whig party, at this period, a strong feeling of indignation at the late defection from themselves and their principles of the illustrious personage who had been so long looked up to as the friend and patron of both. Being myself, at the time, warmly—perhaps intemperately—under the influence of this feeling, I regarded the fate of Mr. Hunt with more than common interest, and, immediately on my arrival in town, paid him a visit in his prison. On mentioning the circumstance, soon after, to Lord Byron, and describing my surprise at the sort of luxurious comforts with which I had found the “wit in the dungeon” surrounded,—his trellised flower-garden without, and his books, busts, pictures, and piano-forte within,—the noble poet, whose political view of the case coincided entirely with my own, expressed a strong wish to pay a similar tribute of respect to Mr. Hunt, and accordingly, a day or two after, we proceeded for that purpose to the prison. The introduction which then took place was soon followed by a request from Mr. Hunt that we would dine with him; and the noble poet having good-naturedly accepted the invitation, Horsemonger Lane gaol had, in the month of June, 1813, the honour of receiving Lord Byron, as a guest, within its walls. / On the morning of our first visit to the journalist, I received from Lord Byron the following lines written, it will be perceived, the night before:—

Oh you, who in all names can tickle the town,
 Anacreon,⁹⁸ Tom Little,⁹⁹ Tom Moore, or Tom Brown,¹⁰⁰
 For hang me if I know of which you may most brag,
 Your Quarto two-pounds, or your Twopenny Post Bag;
 [lines edited out by Moore]
 But now to my letter – to yours ’tis an answer –
 Tomorrow be with me, as soon as you can, sir,
 All ready and dressed for proceeding to sponge on
 (According to compact) the wit in the dungeon –¹⁰¹
 Pray Phoebus at length our political malice
 May not get us lodgings within the same palace!¹⁰²
 I suppose that tonight you’re engaged with some codgers,
 And for Sotheby’s Blues have deserted Sam Rogers;¹⁰³
 And I, though with cold I have nearly my death got,
 Must put on my breeches, and wait for the Heathcote.¹⁰⁴
 But tomorrow, at four, we will both play the *Scurra*,¹⁰⁵
 And you’ll be Catullus, the R[egen]t Mamurra.¹⁰⁶

97: BLJ III 49-50.

98: Moore had published a translation of the Odes of Anacreon in 1800.

99: Refers to *The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Little* (1801).

100: Moore’s *The Twopenny Postbag* (1813), was published under the pseudonym Thomas Brown.

101: B. and Moore are going to visit Leigh Hunt, imprisoned for libelling the Prince Regent.

102: B. suggests that his and Moore’s poetry may get them in jail, too.

103: Moore prefers the female society to be found with William Sotheby (see *The Blues*, II), to the all-male company at Rogers’ establishment.

104: B. often dined at Lady Heathcote’s. It was at one of her balls in 1813 that the hysterical Caroline Lamb cut herself with a glass fragment.

105: *Scurra* – rogue.

106: Refers to Catullus xxix, 3, comparing the Prince Regent to Mamurra, a debauched and gluttonous gambler.

from a letter to Moore a few days after June 14th 1814¹⁰⁷

The letter is lost. The text is from Moore's *Life* (1830), I 561-2 n. Moore describes it as "a long rhyming Epistle full of jokes and pleasantries", and writes that these are "the only parts producible".

"What say I?" – not a syllable further in prose;
I'm your man "of all measures," dear Tom, – so, here goes!
Here goes, for a swim on the stream of old Time,
On those buoyant supporters, the bladders of rhyme.
If our weight breaks them down, and we sink in the flood,
We are smothered, at least, in respectable mud,
Where the Divers of Bathos lie drowned in a heap,
And S[outhey]'s last Pæan has pillowed his sleep;
That "Felo de se",¹⁰⁸ who, half drunk with his malmsey,
Walked out of his depth and was lost in a calm sea,
Singing "Glory to God" in a spick and span stanza,
The like (since Tom Sternhold¹⁰⁹ was choked) never man saw.

[lines edited out by Moore]

The papers have told you, no doubt, of the fusses,
The fetes, and the gapings to get at these Russes, –¹¹⁰
Of his Majesty's¹¹¹ suite, up from coachman to Hetman,
And what dignity decks the flat face of the great man.
I saw him, last week, at two balls and a party, –
For a prince, his demeanour was rather too hearty.
You know we are used to quite different graces,

[lines edited out by Moore]

The Czar's look, I own, was much brighter and brisker,
But then he is sadly deficient in whisker;
And wore but a starless blue coat, and in kersey-
-mere breeches whisked round, in a waltz with the J[ersey],¹¹²
Who lovely as ever, seemed just as delighted
With Majesty's presence as those she invited.

[the end is edited out by Moore]

107: Not in BLJ.

108: *Felo-de-se*: suicide. Compare *TVOJ*, 94, 8.

109: Thomas Sternhold: a Tudor composer who set the psalms to music.

110: B. refers to the "summer of the sovereigns", when the King of Prussia and the Emperors of Austria and Russia visited London to celebrate the supposed defeat of Napoleon.

111: "His Majesty" is Tsar Alexander I (r.1801-25).

112: Lady Jersey (1785-1867), Whig society hostess.

from a letter to Moore of November 24th 1816¹¹³

What are you doing now,
 Oh Thomas Moore?
 What are you doing now,
 Oh Thomas Moore?
 Sighing or suing now,
 Rhyming or wooing now,
 Billing or cooing now,
 Which, Thomas Moore?

But the Carnival's coming,
 Oh Thomas Moore,
 The Carnival's coming,
 Oh Thomas Moore,
 Masking and humming,
 Fifing and drumming,
 Guitarring and strumming,
 Oh Thomas Moore.

from a letter to Moore of July 10th 1817¹¹⁴

1.

My boat is on the shore,
 And my bark is on the sea;
 But before I go, Tom Moore,
 Here's a double health to thee!

2.

Here's a sigh to those who love me,
 And a smile to those who hate;
 And, whatever sky's above me,
 Here's a heart for every fate.

3.

Though the ocean roar around me,
 Yet it still shall bear me on;
 Though a desert should surround me,
 It hath springs that may be won.

4.

Were't the last drop in the well,
 As I gasp'd upon the brink,
 Ere my fainting spirit fell
 'Tis to thee that I would drink.

5.

With that water, as this wine,
 The libation I would pour
 Should be – peace with thine and mine,
 And a health to thee, Tom Moore.

113: BLJ V 148-9. Written in Venice. The two stanzas are bisected by the Luddite lyric *As the Liberty Lads o'er the sea*.

114: BLJ V 250. Written in Venice.

MISCELLANEOUS

Epitaph for Joseph Blackett, late Poet and Shoemaker¹¹⁵

Stranger! behold, interred together,
 The souls of learning and of leather.
 Poor Joe is gone, but left his all:¹¹⁶
 You'll find his relics in a stall.
 His works were neat, and often found
 Well stitched, and with morocco bound.
 Tread lightly – where the bard is laid
 He cannot mend the shoe he made;
 Yet is he happy in his hole,
 With verse immortal as his sole.
 But still to business he held fast,
 And stuck to Phœbus to the last.¹¹⁷
 Then who shall say so good a fellow
 Was only “leather and prunella?”¹¹⁸
 For character – he did not lack it
 And if he did, 'twere shame to Black it.¹¹⁹ – Malta, May 16th, 1811.

From *Beppo* (1817)

... *no bustling Botherby* at line 575 here refers to William Sotheby, the forgotten poet who bears roughly the relationship to *Beppo* that Wordsworth and Southey do to *Don Juan* and *TVoJ*; apart from his dullness, he fails, through being nothing other than a poet, to convince as one. See below, st.75; also BLJ VI 33, and 35-6. The main target of these stanzas is not, however, Sotheby; Byron is satirising the ladies – see *Don Juan* I 175-6 – who make possible what success he enjoys; in the later *Don Juan* passage he seems, even though in irony, fonder of them than he does here. Robert Southey wrote upon reading the poem, *Poor Sotheby! those stanzas in Beppo will half kill him*. (Bodleian M.S. Eng. Letters d. 47. 86). Sotheby (1757-1833) had made his name by translations of Wieland's *Oberon* in 1798 (from which B. may have borrowed in *The Corsair*); and of Virgil's *Georgics* in 1800. Byron met him in 1815, when his tragedy *Ivan* was accepted, but then rejected, at Drury Lane (see letters to Sotheby, BLJ IV 311 and 313; also V 30); the relationship was cordial. Then, in July 1817, Byron was sent anonymously a copy of an Italian edition of his poems, with a note containing some *gratuitously impertinent remarks*, in a hand which he identified as Sotheby's. The letter to Murray in which he relates this (BLJ V 252-3) concludes with the exclamation *Sunburn me! if I don't stick a pin through this old Blue-bottle*. – Sotheby subsequently denied sending the package; but Byron did not care – see BLJ V 35-6. In *English Bards* (815-18) Byron had praised Sotheby, along with Gifford and Hector Macneil, as one of those poets who *Feel as they write, and write but as they feel*. This section of *Beppo* returns, in its different style, to the subject matter of *English Bards*; the about-face signals both new standards of rigour and new depths of personalised contempt. Scott and Moore had, conversely, been ridiculed in *English Bards*; only towards Rogers is Byron's attitude consistent. For further thoughts about Sotheby see BLJ IX 29. In the second part of *The Blues* (1821) where “Botherby” is portrayed at a Bluestocking dinner-party, Byron's tone has not mellowed.

115: Joseph Blacket (1786-1810), was a cobbler-poet patronised by R.C.Dallas and Annabella Milbanke. B. mocked such artisan pretensions at *EBSR* 765-98.

116: B. puns on *all* and *awl*.

117: *Phœbus*: Phœbus Apollo, god of poets.

118: *Leather and prunella*: nonsense, rubbish (a phrase from ladies' shoemaking). See Pope, *Essay on Man*, IV, 204.

119: Black it – *black* as in “defame”, and as in “shoe-blackening”.

72.

They [*Muslim women*] cannot read – and so don't lisp in Criticism,
 Nor write – and so they don't affect the Muse, 570
 Were never caught in epigram or witticism,
 Have no romances, sermons, plays, reviews –
 In Harams Learning soon would make a pretty Schism!
 But luckily these Beauties are no "Blues",¹²⁰ –
 No bustling *Botherby*¹²¹ have they to show 'em 575
 "That Charming passage in the last new Poem!"

73.

No *solemn Antique* Gentleman of rhyme,
 Who, having angled all his life for Fame,
 And getting but a nibble at a time,
 Still fussily keeps fishing on; the Same 580
 Small "Triton of the Minnows",¹²² the Sublime
 Of Mediocrity,¹²³ the furious tame,
 The Echo's Echo, Usher of the School
 Of female Wits, boy bards, in short a fool.

74.

A Stalking Oracle of awful phrase, 585
 The approving "Good!" (by no means GOOD in law)
 Humming like flies around the newest blaze,
 The Bluest of Bluebottles¹²⁴ you e'er saw,
 Teasing with blame, excruciating with praise,¹²⁵
 Gorging the slightest slice of Flattery raw,¹²⁶ 590
 Translating tongues he knows not even by letter,
 And Sweating Plays so middling, Bad were Better. –

120: "Blues": female intellectuals; see *Don Juan* IV 857; and *The Blues*.

121: no bustling *Botherbys* (all previous edns.)

122: "Triton of the Minnows": see *Coriolanus* III i 89.

123: *the Sublime / Of Mediocrity ... The Echo's Echo*: see the descriptions of Sir Fretful Plagiary in Act I of Sheridan's *The Critic* – one of B.'s favourite plays.

124: *The Bluest of Bluebottles*: at once a domestic pest, a Tory, a policeman, and a would-be seducer of intellectual women.

125: *Teasing with blame, excruciating with praise*: compare Pope, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 201-2.

126: *Gorging the little fame to get all raw* (all previous edns.)

75.

One hates an Author that's *all Author*;¹²⁷ fellows
 In foolscap Uniforms¹²⁸ turned up with Ink;
 So very anxious, clever, fine, and jealous, 595
 One don't know what to say to them, or think,¹²⁹
 Unless to puff them with a pair of Bellows;¹³⁰
 Of Coxcomby's worst Coxcombs, even the Pink
 Are preferable to these Shreds of Paper,
 These unquenched Snuffings of the Midnight taper. – 600

76.

Of these same we see several, and of others,
 Men of the World who know the World like Men,
 Scott, Rogers, Moore,¹³¹ and all the better brothers
 Who think of something else besides the pen;
 But for the Children of the "Mighty Mother's",¹³² – 605
 The Would-be Wits and can't-be Gentlemen¹³³ –
 I leave them to their daily "Tea is ready,"¹³⁴
 Smug Coterie, and Literary Lady.¹³⁵ – –

77.

The poor dear Mussulwomen whom I mention
 Have none of these instructive, pleasant people, 610
 And *One* would seem to them a new Invention,
 Unknown as bells¹³⁶ within a Turkish Steeple;
 I think 'twould almost be worth while to pension
 (Though best-sown projects very often reap ill)
 A Missionary Author¹³⁷ – just to preach 615
 Our Christian usage of the parts of Speech.

127: The point of the expanded attack on Sotheby, and part of the artistic point of *Beppo*, has by now become clearer: it is B.'s way of advertising his own new poetic voice, and of criticising English letters as a whole. Poetry has neutered itself by ceasing either to serve or to reflect the world, and by reflecting and serving itself instead. The author who does nothing else is a self-disqualifier. What Sotheby is to *Beppo*, it goes without saying, Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge will be to *Don Juan*; B. widens the target area as his confidence increases.

128: *foolscap Uniforms*: compare *Don Juan*, IV, 109, 2: a passage close to this in spirit.

129: *One don't know what to say to them, or think*: again reminds one of Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic*, who similarly baffles civilised discourse.

130: *puff them with a pair of Bellows*: see Mr Puff in *The Critic*, Act I; could also be a reference to the Reverend William Beloe, editor of *The British Critic*.

131: *Men of the World*: for Scott, Rogers and Moore, see *Don Juan* Dedication, 7, 8; also I sts. 205-6 (below).

132: *Children of the "Mighty Mother's"*: see Pope, 1743 *Dunciad*, Book I, i; the *Mother* is the Goddess Dulness.

133: *Would-be Wits, and can't-be-Gentlemen*: possible references to the pretentious characters Sir Politick Would-Be in Jonson's *Volpone* and M. Jourdain in Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

134: *"Tea is ready"*: compare *Don Juan* IV, 108, 8.

135: *Smug Coterie, and Literary Lady*: compare *Don Juan* IV, 109, 7-8.

136: *bells*: CPW points out a triple pun – *bells*, *belles*, and *Bell*, the nickname of Annabella, Lady Byron.

137: *A Missionary Author*: conceivably a reference to Robert Southey, who expressed firm views on the proselytism of the Empire, and whose Eastern epics may have been conceived in part as an arm of Anglican evangelism.

78.

No Chemistry for them unfolds her Gases,
 No Metaphysics are let loose in lectures,¹³⁸
 No Circulating Library amasses
 Religious novels, moral tales, and strictures¹³⁹ 620
 Upon the living manners, as they pass us;
 No Exhibition glares with annual pictures;
 They stare not on the Stars from out their Attics,
 Nor deal (thank God for that!) in Mathematics.¹⁴⁰

ROBERT SOUTHEY



Southey, engraved by Finden.

Robert Southey (1774-1843), was Poet Laureate, and the man Byron hated most because he never stopped fearing that Southey, the turncoat hack, was something he could turn into at any time (see the essay, “Why did Byron hate Southey?” on this website). The two principal poetic documents for his hatred are *Don Juan’s* Dedication (of which there are extracts below), and *The Vision of Judgement*.

from a letter to William Harness, December 6th 1811¹⁴¹

“What news, what news Queen Orraca?
 What news of the Scribblers five?
 Southey, Wordsworth Coleridge, Lloyd and Lambe,¹⁴²
 All damned, though yet alive!”

138: *lectures*: perhaps a reference to the philosophy lectures of Coleridge (referred to in the rough draft) or of Sir James Mackintosh. See *The Blues*, *passim*.

139: *Religious novels, moral tales – and strictures*: compare *Don Juan* I 121-5 (for moral novelists and Wilberforce, see *Don Juan* IV 959, n; for “Strictures” on B., see BLJ III 60).

140: *Nor deal (thank God for that!) in Mathematics*: refers, again, to Lady Byron; see *Don Juan* I 89. For Mussulwomen’s education, see *Don Juan* VI st.44.

141: BLJ II 137-8. B. parodies Southey, *Queen Orraca and the Five Martyrs of Morocco*, 2:1: *What news, O King Alfonso, / What news of the friars five? / Have they preach’d to the Miramamolin; / And are they still alive?*

142: *Lloyd and Lambe* are Charles Lloyd (1775-1839), poet and friend of Coleridge, and Charles Lamb (1775-1834) poet and essayist.

The two poems below (the first unfinished), date from before and after Byron's attitude turned from contempt to obsession. The first is from 1813, the second from 1821.

Who gains the bays and annual Malmsey barrel –
 Busby the bright¹⁴³ – or Southey the sublime?
 Southey with monarchs has made up his quarrel,
 Nor pities prisoned Martin's venial crime,¹⁴⁴
 My Liege, (that same lopped off the head of [])
 And Southey sang him once upon a [])

Bob now no more the sapphic patriot []
 And up to Pye's Parnassus¹⁴⁵ he may climb –
 George gives him what – God knows he wanted – laurels,
 And spares him what – he never spared us – rhyme.

possible endings:

Blest day that shall a double joy insure –
 For us his silence, him his sinecure.

or,

'Tis wise, for Herculian were his task, my Guelph,¹⁴⁶
 To please his readers or to praise thyself. –

or,

How like our Monarch and his Bard elect –
 Prince of a party, poet of a sect.

or,

Impartial Liege! whose equal judgement takes
 Favourites from dirt – and minstrels from the Lakes –
 Oh since so far thy tender mercy reaches,
 With Southey's songs abolish Jenky's speeches.¹⁴⁷

143: Dr Thomas Busby, translator of Lucretius, had attempted a Drury Lane Address, but had been rejected. See *Drury Lane Addresses*, on this website.

144: Southey had written an *Elegy on Martin the Regicide: INSCRIPTION IV. For the Apartment in CHEPSTOW-CASTLE, where HENRY MARTEN the regicide was imprisoned thirty years*

For thirty years secluded from mankind,
 Here Marten linger'd. Often have these walls
 Echoed his footsteps, as with even tread
 He paced around his prison: not to him
 Did Nature's fair varieties exist;
 He never saw the Sun's delightful beams,
 Save when thro' yon high bars it pour'd a sad
 And broken splendour. Dost thou ask his crime?
 He had rebell'd against the King, and sat
 In judgement on him; for his ardent mind
 Shaped goodliest plans of happiness on earth,
 And peace and liberty. Wild dreams! But such
 As PLATO lov'd; such as with holy zeal
 Our MILTON worshipp'd. Blessed hopes! awhile
 From man withheld, even to the latter days,
 When CHRIST shall come and all things be fulfill'd.

145: B. refers to Henry James Pye (1745-1813), the undistinguished Laureate previous to Southey. See *TVOJ* 92, 7-8.

146: "my Guelph" is the Prince Regent (a Hanoverian, descended from the medieval Guelfs. See *TVOJ*, 49.7.

4.

And Wordsworth, in a rather long “Excursion”¹⁵⁶ 25
 (I think the Quarto holds five hundred pages)¹⁵⁷
 Has given a sample from the vast Version
 Of his new System to perplex the Sages;
 ’Tis Poetry – at least by his assertion,
 And may appear so when the DogStar rages;¹⁵⁸ 30
 And he who understands it would be able
 To add a Story to the Tower of Babel. –¹⁵⁹

5.

You, Gentlemen! by dint of long Seclusion
 From better company have kept your own
 At Keswick, and through still continued fusion¹⁶⁰ 35
 Of one another’s minds at last have grown
 To deem as a most logical conclusion
 That Poesy has wreaths for you alone;
 There is a narrowness in such a notion
 Which makes me wish you’d change your lakes for Ocean. 40

6.

I would not imitate the petty thought,
 Nor coin my Self-love to so base a Vice,
 For all the Glory your Conversion brought,
 Since Gold alone should not have been its price.
 You have your Salary – was’t for that you wrought? 45
 And Wordsworth has his place in the Excise;¹⁶¹ *
 You’re shabby fellows – true – but poets still
 And duly seated on the immortal Hill.¹⁶²

7.

Your Bays may hide the baldness of your brows,¹⁶³
 Perhaps some virtuous blushes – let them go, 50
 To you I envy neither fruit nor boughs,
 And for the Fame you would engross below
 The field is universal, and allows
 Scope to all Such as feel the inherent glow –
 Scott, Campbell, Rogers, Moore and Crabbe, will try¹⁶⁴ 55
 ’Gainst you the question with Posterity. –

155: *adry, Bob!*: a dry bob was in Regency slang intercourse without ejaculation.

156: “*Excursion*”: Wordsworth’s poem of this title had been published in 1814.

157: *Quarto*: normal size for an expensive book, approximately 17 x 24 cm.

158: *DogStar*: Sirius, the brightest fixed star, is most visible in late summer, the time when Roman poets rehearsed their public readings. B. alludes to Pope’s *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*, line 3.

159: *the Tower of Babel*: emblem of man’s linguistic confusion. See Genesis 11 1-9.

160: *Keswick*: Cumberland town where Southey lived. Wordsworth lived at Rydal Mount

161: *Excise*: from 1813 Wordsworth was Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland and Penrith.

162: *the immortal Hill*: Mount Parnassus, seat of the Muses.

163: *Bays*: alludes to the crown of bay or laurel leaves worn by successful poets (“laureates”).

164: *Scott, Campbell, Rogers, Moore, and Crabbe*: five other poets contemporary with B. and the Lakers.

8.

For me who, wandering with Pedestrian Muses,¹⁶⁵
 Contend not with you on the winged Steed,¹⁶⁶
 I wish your Fate may yield ye, when she chooses,
 The fame you envy, and the Skill you need; 60
 And recollect a Poet nothing loses
 In giving to his brethren their full meed
 Of Merit, and Complaint of present days
 Is not the *certain* path to future praise.

9.

He that reserves his laurels for Posterity 65
 (Who does not often claim the bright reversion?)¹⁶⁷
 Has generally no great crop to spare it, he
 Being only injured by his own assertion;
 And although here and there some glorious rarity
 Arise, like Titan from the Sea's immersion,¹⁶⁸ 70
 The major part of such Appellants go
 To – God knows where – for no-one else can know.

10.

If fallen in evil days on evil tongues,¹⁶⁹
 Milton appealed to the Avenger, Time,¹⁷⁰
 If Time, the Avenger, execrates his wrongs, 75
 And makes the word "*Miltonic*" means "*Sublime*",¹⁷¹
He deigned not to belie his soul in Songs,
 Nor turn his very talent to a Crime –¹⁷²
He did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,¹⁷³
 But closed the Tyrant-hater he begun. – 80

165: *Pedestrian muses*: B., with mock self-effacement, claims not to be able to compete with Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth in their aspirations towards sublimity. He is quoting Horace, *Satires* II vi 17.

166: *winged Steed*: Pegasus, beloved of the Muses. Images of flying creatures proliferate through the Dedication.

167: *bright reversion*: honour due to the claimant at some future date. The phrase is from Pope, *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, ll.9-10: *Is there no bright reversion in the sky, / For those who greatly think, or bravely die?*

168: *Titan*: in this case, Apollo, god of poetry.

169: *If fallen in evil days on evil tongues*: B. alludes to Milton's self-description at *Paradise Lost* VII 24-6: "More safe I Sing with mortal voice, unchang'd / To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days, / On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues ...". There is self-identification in the allusion.

170: *Milton*: John Milton (1608-74) author of *Paradise Lost*. An emblem of ostracised integrity overcoming all obstacles to produce a patriotic masterpiece.

171: *Sublime*: "belonging to the highest regions of thought" (O.E.D.); the word also refers to flight.

172: *turn his very talent to a Crime*: implies that Southey's early republican poetry was his best.

173: *loathe the Sire to laud the Son*: Milton wrote justifying the execution of Charles I.

11.

Think'st thou, could he, the blind Old Man, arise
 Like Samuel from the Grave, to freeze once more¹⁷⁴
 The blood of Monarchs with his Prophecies,
 Or be alive again – again all hoar¹⁷⁵
 With time and trials, and those helpless eyes 85
 And heartless daughters, worn, and pale, and poor,*
 Would *he* adore a Sultan? *he* obey
 The intellectual Eunuch Castlereagh?¹⁷⁶

or
 —

Would he subside into a hackney Laureat?
 A scribbling self-sold soul-hired scorned Iscariot? †

Europe has slaves, allies, kings, armies still,
 And Southey lives to sing them very ill. –

17.

Meantime, Sir Laureat, I proceed to dedicate
 In honest, simple verse, this song to you; 130
 And if in flattering strains I do not predicate,
 'Tis that I still retain my "Buff and blue";¹⁷⁷
 My Politics, as yet, are all to educate;
 Apostacy's so fashionable too,
 To keep one creed's a task grown quite Herculean – 135
 Is it not so, my Tory, Ultra-Julian?¹⁷⁸

From *Don Juan* Canto I (1818)

The blasphemy in this section raised a storm of protest – see BLJ VII 196, where B. expresses worry that its publication under his name may damage his right to guardianship over Ada: "... such are the perils of a foolish jest; – I was not aware of this at the time ... now I should prefer my child to a poem any time ..."

Coleridge was the only one of B.'s subjects who felt it appropriate to answer the poem, and he did so with suitable irony on September 4th, 1819:

My Lord,/ That I should be selected by you to share such immortality as Time may confer upon your Don Juan demands my acknowledgement, the quality of which is enlarged by the charge of inebriety that you prefer against me. Had you adorned me with indolence and irresolution the commendation had been just, but the more elegant acquirement of intemperance it were flattery to attribute to me. This example of your Lordship's taste and knowledge would embolden me to esteem you as among the first of our great writers if you would condescend first to avoid a too servile flattery of your contemporaries, and next to obtain correct information on the habits of

174: *arise / Like Samuel*: see *I Samuel* 28 7-25, and the Hebrew Melody *Saul*.

175: *Or be alive again*: echoes Macbeth's words to Banquo's ghost at III iii 103.

176: *Castlereagh*: Viscount Castlereagh, Foreign Secretary who created the continental coalition against Napoleon in 1813 and represented Britain at the Congress of Vienna, which met to re-draw the post-Waterloo map of Europe; B. detested him above all other politicians. He committed suicide by cutting his throat with a pen-knife to avoid a scandal involving a male prostitute dressed as a woman (see below, Preface to Cantos VI VII and VIII, and Canto X, 468).

177: "*Buff and blue*" colours of the Whig party, for whom B. always expressed an ostentatious loyalty. Taken from the colours of Washington's troops in the American Revolution.

178: Refers to the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate, who tried to revive paganism.

those you celebrate. The sobriety of this letter is the unhappy proof of the extravagance of your praise. I am / your Lordship's obedient sober servant, / S.T.Coleridge.¹⁷⁹

It is hard to imagine Wordsworth answering. Southey's reaction to the jokes was very different from that of Coleridge. On July 20 1819 he wrote to his friend C.H.Townsend:

... I have not seen more of Don Juan than some extracts in a country paper, wherein my own name is coupled with a rhyme which I thought would never be used by any person but myself when kissing one of my own children in infancy, and talking nonsense to it, which, whatever you may think of it at present as an exercise for the intellect, I hope you will have one day occasion to practise, and you will then find out its many and various excellencies. I do not yet know whether the printed poem is introduced by a dedication to me, in a most hostile strain, which came over with it, or whether the person who has done Lord Byron the irreparable injury of sending into the world what his own publisher and his friends endeavoured, for his sake, to keep out of it, has suppressed it. This is to me a matter of perfect unconcern. Lord Byron attacked me when he ran amuck as a satirist; he found it convenient to express himself sorry for that satire, and to have such of the persons told so whom he had assailed in it as he was likely to fall in with in society; myself among the number. I met him three times or four times on courteous terms, and saw enough of him to feel that he was rather to be shunned than sought. Attack me as he will, I shall not go out of my course to break a spear with him; but if it comes in my way to give him a passing touch, it will be one that will leave a scar.¹⁸⁰

204.

If ever I should condescend to prose, 1625
 I'll write poetical commandments, which
 Shall supersede beyond all doubt all those
 That went before; in these I shall enrich
 My text with many things that No one knows,
 And carry precept to the highest pitch – 1630
 I'll call the work "Longinus o'er a Bottle,
 Or, Every Poet his *own* Aristotle." –¹⁸¹

205.

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope,¹⁸²
 Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;¹⁸³
 Because the first is crazed beyond all hope, 1635
 The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthey;
 With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,¹⁸⁴
 And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy;¹⁸⁵
 Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor¹⁸⁶
 Commit – flirtation with the muse of Moore.¹⁸⁷ 1640

179: Letters ed. Griggs, IV 948

180: Life and Letters, ed. Cuthbert Southey, V p.353.

181: "Longinus ... Aristotle": parody of a D.I.Y. book-title. Longinus was a late Greek critic who wrote a treatise *On the Sublime*.

182: *Thou shalt believe in Milton*: continues with ideas from the Dedication (see ll.55-6). B. considered that the great tradition of English verse-writing had been corrupted by writers of his own day, not least by himself. The Dedication being unpublished, B. returns to the attack below, Canto III sts.93-100.

183: *Coleridge*: his name was only included in this section upon revision.

184: *Crabbe*: for B. on Crabbe, see *EBSR*, 858: *Though Nature's sternest Painter, yet the best*.

185: *Campbell's Hippocrene*: at *EBSR* 800-1, Campbell is a *Neglected Genius*; but see above, 697-700. Hippocrene was the poetic stream on Mount Helicon.

186: *Rogers*: see Dedication, l.55: it is not clear whether it is bad to steal from Rogers because theft is bad, or because of the poor quality of the property.

187: *the muse of Moore*: Moore wrote mildly erotic poetry.

206.

Thou shalt not covet M^r. Sotheby's Muse,¹⁸⁸
 His Pegasus, nor any thing that's his;
 Thou shalt not bear false witness like "the Blues,"¹⁸⁹
 (There's One, at least, is very fond of this)
 Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose; 1645
 This is true Criticism, and you may kiss,
 Exactly as you please, or not, the Rod,
 But if you don't, I'll lay it on, by G—d! –

From *Don Juan XI* (1822)

54.

However, he did pretty well – and was 425
 Admitted as an Aspirant to all
 The Coteries, and, as in Banquo's glass,¹⁹⁰
 At great assemblies or in parties small,
 He saw ten thousand living Authors pass –
 That being about their average Numeral – – 430
 Also the eighty "greatest living poets"¹⁹¹ –
 As every paltry Magazine can show *it's*. –

55.

In twice five years the "greatest living poet",
 Like to the Champion in the fisty ring,¹⁹²
 Is called on to support his claim or show it, 435
 Although 'tis an imaginary thing;
 Even I, Albeit I'm sure I did not know it,
 Nor sought of foolscap subjects to be king,¹⁹³
 Was reckoned a considerable time
 The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme. – 440

188: *Mr Sotheby*: William Sotheby is praised in *EBSR* 815-18; B. subsequently changed his mind; see *Beppo* 575 (above), and *The Blues*.

189: "*the Blues*": bluestockings; see below, IV 871-96; and *The Blues*.

190: ... *as in Banquo's glass*: compares the daily passage of poets singled out for temporary immortality with the show of Banquo's issue, which his spirit shows the appalled Macbeth at IV i 111-24. See above, I 1.13, where the daily parade of gazeteer heroes is described in the same way; or X ll.141-2, where B. describes his nostalgic dreams of childhood.

191: *the eighty "greatest living poets"*: echoes *Marino Faliero*, Dedication to Goethe, where, as here, the idea is associated with *Macbeth*: "This opinion of yours only proves that the "*Dictionary of ten thousand living English authors*" has not been translated into German. – You will have <seen> read in your friend Schlegel's version the dialogue in *Macbeth* – "There are ten thousand! – *Macbeth. Geese – Villain! – Answer. Authors – Sir*[?]. – Now of these "ten thousand authors" – there are actually nineteen hundred and eighty seven poets – all alive at this moment – whatever their works may be – as their booksellers well know". See also letter to Murray, August 31 1820: "I believe that (except Milman perhaps) I am still the youngest of the fifteen hundred first of living poets" (BLJ VII 168).

192: *the "greatest living poet", / Like to the Champion in the fisty ring*: prior to his more sensational self-comparison with Napoleon, B. compares himself with his tutor Gentleman John Jackson (see above, this canto, B.'s note to st.19) who had indeed only to defend his title three times in eight years.

193: ... *of foolscap subjects to be king*: compare above, IV 1.866: *A ball-room bard, a foolscap, hot-press darling* ...

56.¹⁹⁴

But Juan was my Moscow,¹⁹⁵ and Faliero
 My Leipsic,¹⁹⁶ and my Mont Saint Jean seems Cain;¹⁹⁷
 “La Belle Alliance” of dunces down at zero,¹⁹⁸
 Now that the Lion’s fall’n, may rise again;
 But I will fall at once as fell my Hero,¹⁹⁹ 445
 Nor reign at all, or as a *Monarch* reign,
 Or to some lonely Isle of Jailors go,
 With turncoat Southey as my turnkey Lowe.²⁰⁰

57.

Sir Walter reigned before me; Moore, and Campbell,
 Before and after,²⁰¹ but now more holy grown, 450
 The Muses upon Sion’s hill must ramble
 With poets almost clergymen, or wholly,²⁰²
 And Pegasus hath a Psalmodic amble
 Beneath the reverend Cambyses Croly,²⁰³
 Who shoes the glorious Animal with Stilts, 455
 A modern Antient Pistol “by these Hilts!”²⁰⁴ –

194: B. identified with Napoleon to the extent of always using the initials *N.B.* when the death of his mother-in-law, Lady Noel, enabled him to take them over.

195: *But Juan was my Moscow*: carrying on the parallel started in the previous line, *Don Juan* has been – or will be – to B.’s career what the capture of, and then retreat from, Moscow was to Napoleon’s in 1812: a sign that he had finally gone too far.

196: ... *Faliero / My Leipsic*: the battle of Leipzig in 1813 destroyed Napoleon’s power, and resulted in his first exile on Elba. B.’s tragedy *Marino Faliero* had in 1821 failed on the London stage, though he had not actually wanted it put on. See introduction to the edition on this website.

197: ... *my Mont Saint Jean seems Cain*: the *Mont Saint Jean* farmhouse on the field of Waterloo was the final rallying-point of the French army, and Napoleon’s last hope of victory. *Cain* had been of all B.’s poems the one which had been greeted with the greatest negative critical outcry.

198: “*La Belle Alliance*” of dunces down at zero: the *La Belle Alliance* farmhouse – also on the field of Waterloo – was where Wellington and Blücher met to celebrate their victory. The Holy Alliance comprised Austria, Prussia and Russia, with England a somewhat self-conscious fourth. With Castlereagh masterminding it, it presided over the re-division of Europe between tyrants after Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815.

199: *But I will fall at once as fell my Hero*: either (i) fall from poetical power as Napoleon did from political or (ii) fall from grace as Juan has.

200: *Or to some lonely Isle of Jailors go, / With turncoat Southey as my turnkey Lowe*: Sir Hudson Lowe was the governor of St. Helena during Napoleon’s final imprisonment there. He was as mean and vindictive as a Southey could have desired – or as B. might imagine a Southey being, in the event of B. being jailed himself in Keswick. Count Las Cases puts it: “Every thing, even down to the most petty details, betrays the personal character and disposition of our gaoler; he puts into our hands the journals in which we are harshly treated, and keeps from us those in which we are spoken of in less hostile terms; he retains the works which are favourable to us, under the pretext that they did not come through the hands of the ministry, and he displays the utmost zeal in furnishing us with every libel against us from his own private library.” – Las Cases, *Memoirs*, 1818, pp.149-50.

201: *Sir Walter reigned before me; Moore, and Campbell, / Before and after*: compare above, Dedication 1.55.

202: *The Muses upon Sion’s hill must ramble / With poets almost clergymen, or wholly*: several poets of B.’s day were parsons, Crabbe, Milman (see next stanza) and Croly being some examples. See B. to Murray, October 12 1820: *I say nothing against your parsons, your Smedleys and your Crolys* ... (BLJ VII 201). Sion was the Jerusalem hill on which the Temple stood (see *Lamentations* 1, 17): B. claims it has taken over from Parnassus.

203: *the reverend Cambyses Croly*: the Reverend George Crowley (1780-1860) wrote drama criticism, poems, plays and novels. Irish, he was rhetorical in manner, which earned him his nickname *Cambyses* after the Elizabethan tragedy mentioned by Falstaff at *Henry IV I II* iv 376. See B. to Murray, November 9 1820: *Croly is superior to many – but seems to think himself inferior to Nobody* (BLJ VII 225).

204: *A modern Antient Pistol “by these Hilts!”*: the exclamation is made not by Pistol but, again, by Falstaff, at *Henry IV I II* iv 197. Lines 453-6 were cut in the first edition; when Moore – assisted by Wright – restored them, he substituted *the very Reverend Rowley Powley for the reverend Cambyses Crowley* at 1.454, out of respect for his compatriot Croly, then still living (see note). Coleridge, DJV and DJP all follow suit, even though *Roly-poly* meant, according to John Bee’s *Dictionary of the Turf*, tumbling down Greenwich Park Hill and making love at the bottom. DJV and DJP even take over Moore’s misprint “by the hilts!” for “by these hilts!” in 1.456.

58.

Still he excels that artificial, hard
 Labourer in the same vineyard, though the Vine²⁰⁵
 Yields him but Vinegar for his reward;
 That neutralised dull Dorus of the Nine,²⁰⁶ 460
 That swarthy Sporus,²⁰⁷ neither man nor bard,
 That Ox of Verse, who *ploughs* for every line;²⁰⁸
 Cambyses' roaring Romans beat at least
 The howling Hebrews of Cybele's Priest.²⁰⁹

59.

Then there's my gentle Euphues, who, they say, 465
 Sets up for being a sort of *moral me*,²¹⁰
 He'll find it rather difficult some day
 To turn out both, or, either it may be;
 Some persons think that Coleridge hath the Sway –
 And Wordsworth has supporters – two or three²¹¹ – 470
 And that deep-mouthed Bœotian "Savage Landor"
 Has taken for a Swan Rogue Southey's Gander.²¹²

205: ... *that artificial, hard / Labourer in the same vineyard*: B. refers to another parson-poet, the Reverend Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868). The vineyard image encompasses both his callings, poetic and religious.

206: *That neutralised dull Dorus of the Nine*: Dorus is a senile eunuch in the comedy *Eunuchus* by Terence: *the Nine* are the Muses.

207: *That swarthy Sporus, neither man nor bard*: Sporus was Nero's favourite, whom he castrated and married. The name is used by Pope in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (*This painted Child of Dirt, that stinks and stings*) and links Milman firstly with Southey, and secondly with Castlereagh: see above, Dedication.

208: *That Ox of Verse, who ploughs for every line*: part of the joke may be that Milman was Professor of Poetry at Oxford; but oxen are famously dull and inexpressive.

209: *Cambyses' roaring Romans beat at least / The howling Hebrews of Cybele's Priest*: that is, the poetry of the bombastic Croly (see previous stanza) is at least an improvement on that of the dull castrate Milman. Croly's *roaring Romans* are in his play about Catiline: Milman's *howling Hebrews* in his tragedy *The Fall of Jerusalem*. Cybele was a Syrian goddess whose priests were eunuchs, and whose votaries would castrate themselves if sufficiently carried away. See Catullus, *Super alta vectus* ...

210: ... *my gentle Euphues, who, they say, / Sets up for being a sort of moral me*: this is Bryan Waller Proctor, another Irishman who wrote under the pseudonym of Barry Cornwall. In 1819 he had published *Diego de Montilla*, a less overtly depraved variation on *Don Juan*

211: *Some persons think that Coleridge hath the Sway – / And Wordsworth has supporters – two or three*: Hobhouse had written to B. on January 5 1819, on receipt of the first two cantos of *Don Juan*: *Neither Southey, Wordsworth nor Coleridge have any character except with their own crazed proselytes some fifty perhaps in number: so what harm can you do them and what good can you do the world by your criticism?* (BB 260).

212: *And that deep-mouthed Bœotian "Savage Landor" / Has taken for a Swan Rogue Southey's Gander*: *deep-mouthed* is from the introduction to Gifford's *Baviad*: a Boeotian is an inhabitant of the Greek interior, considered provincial and boorish by the cosmopolitan Athenians. Southey's admiration for Landor had been made a joke by B. in 1821, in the preface to *TVOJ*. B. had in his London years been a covert admirer of Southey (see BLJ III 122, 127 and 214, and IV 235): he now mocks Landor for making the same error. Landor's praise for Southey had been in a book of Latin verse called *Idylla Heroica*, published in Pisa in 1820, in which he had also abused B.

60.

John Keats, who was killed off by one Critique,²¹³
 Just as he really promised something great,
 If not intelligible, without Greek 475
 Contrived to talk about the Gods of late,
 Much as they might have been supposed to speak;²¹⁴
 Poor fellow! his was an untoward Fate;
 'Tis strange the Mind, that very fiery Particle, +
 Should let itself be snuffed out by an Article.²¹⁵ – 480

* “Divinæ Particulam Auræ.” –

61.

The list grows long of live and dead pretenders
 To that which none will gain, or none will know
 The Conqueror, at least;²¹⁶ who, ere Time renders
 His last award, will have the long Grass grow
 Above his burnt-out brain and sapless cinders; 485
 If I might augur, I should rate but low
 Their chances; they're too numerous, like the thirty
 Mock Tyrants, when Rome's Annals waxed but dirty.²¹⁷

213: *John Keats, who was killed off by one Critique:* Keats died in Rome on February 23 1821. Shelley and B. both chose to believe, not only that the *Quarterly Review's* April 1818 article on his *Endymion* had driven him into a consumption, but that Southey might even have written the article, and therefore have killed Keats. Shelley's *Adonais* was fruit of the suspicion, and *TVOJ* may in part have been motivated by it. On July 30 1821 B. wrote to Murray, impugning Milman too: “**Are you aware that Shelley has written an elegy on Keats – and accuses the Quarterly of killing him? –**

Who killed John Keats?

I, says the Quarterly

So savage & Tartarly

<Martyrly>

'Twas one of my feats –

Who <drew the [pen?]> shot the arrow?

The poet-priest Milman

(So ready to kill man)

Or Southey or Barrow. –’ (BLJ VIII 162)

214: ... *without Greek / Contrived to talk about the Gods of late, / Much as they might have been supposed to speak:* B. refers to Keats' *Hyperion*, about which he wrote in *Some Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*: “**My indignation at Mr. Keats's depreciation of Pope – has hardly permitted me to do justice to his own Genius – which malgré all the fantastic fopperies of his style – was undoubtedly of great promise. – His fragment of “Hyperion” seems actually inspired by the Titans and is as sublime as Aeschylus**” (CMP 113).

215: *'Tis strange the Mind, that very fiery Particle, / Should let itself be snuffed out by an Article:* relates Keats' death to the oppression of spirit by matter. **B.'s note:** “*Divinæ Particulam Auræ*”: from Horace, *Satires* II ii 79: “the body drags down with itself the mind as well, and fastens to earth a fragment of the divine spirit”.

216: ... *that which none will gain, or none will know / The Conqueror, at least:* sums up the whole digression. No-one possesses the judgement to tell know who, from his own generation, will gain poetic immortality.

217: ... *the thirty / Mock Tyrants, when Rome's Annals waxed but dirty:* refers to the thirty or so Roman generals who revolted and created provincial havoc during the time of the Emperor Gallienus (ruled 260-8). B. implies that the English poets he has been writing about have done parallel harm and are similarly menaces to society. Gibbon tells the story in Chapter 10 of *The Decline and Fall: A licentious crowd of slaves and peasants reigned for a while over the plundered country, and renewed the memory of the servile wars of more ancient times.*

62.²¹⁸

This is the literary *lower Empire*²¹⁹ – –
 Where the Praetorian bands take up the matter;²²⁰ 490
 A “dreadful trade”, like his who “gathers samphire”²²¹
 The insolent Soldiery to soothe and flatter,
 With the same feelings as you’d coax a Vampire;
 Now, were I once at home, and in good satire,
 I’d try conclusions²²² with those Janizaries²²³ – 495
 And show them *what* an intellectual war is: –

63.

I think I know a trick or two would turn
 Their flanks; – – but it is hardly worth my while
 With such small Gear to give myself concern;
 Indeed I’ve not the necessary Bile – – 500
 My natural Temper’s really aught but stern,
 And even my Muse’s worst reproof’s a smile;
 And then She drops a brief and modern curtsey,²²⁴
 And glides aawy, assured she never hurts ye. –

218: B.’s digression – repeating some of the ideas about contemporary poets which he has already expressed in the Dedication, at I sts.205-6, and at III sts.93-5, terminates here by linking the Anglican battalions of parson-poets, Milman, Croly and so on, with the corrupt Praetorian Guard of ancient Rome and the Janissaries of modern Turkey.

219: *This is the literary lower Empire:* the lower Empire of George IV looks back to the higher Empire of Pope’s time. See B. to Murray, September 15 1817: “**I took Moore’s poems & my own & some others – & went over them side by side with Pope’s – and I was really astonished (I ought not to have been so) and mortified – at the ineffable distance in point of sense – harmony – effect – and even Imagination Passion – & Invention – between the little Queen Anne’s Man – & us of the lower Empire – depend on it [it] is all Horace then, and Claudian now among us**” (BLJ V 265).

220: *Where the Praetorian bands take up the matter:* in 193 (well before the time of Claudian) the Praetorian guards assassinated the Emperor Pertinax and sold the Empire to the highest bidder. As with the couplet to st.61 above, B.’s source is Gibbon: ... *the more prudent of the Praetorians, apprehensive that, in this private contract, they should not obtain a just price for so valuable a commodity, ran out upon the ramparts; and, with a loud voice, proclaimed that the Roman world was to be disposed of the best bidder by public auction. / This offer, the most insolent excess of military licence, diffused a universal grief, shame, and indignation throughout the city ... (Decline and Fall, Chapter 5).*

221: A “dreadful trade”, like his who “gathers samphire”: echoes *King Lear*, IV vi 14-15: *Half-way down / Hangs one that gathers samphire - dreadful trade!* It is not clear that the Praetorian Guard were dependant on samphire, or that money was to be made in providing them with it.

222: ... *try conclusions:* incorporates one allusion and one semi-allusion: firstly, *Hamlet* at III iv 194-6: ... *like the famous ape, / To try conclusions, in the basket creep, / And break your own neck down:* and secondly Launcelot Gobbo at *The Merchant of Venice* II ii 33, who in fact says *I will try confusions with him.*

223: ... *those Janizaries* the Constantinople equivalent of Rome’s Praetorians – the personal troops of the Sultan.

224: *She drops a brief and modern curtsey:* echoes Scott, *The Antiquary*, Chapter VI: *Mr Lovel paid his respects to both ladies, and was answered by the elder with the prolonged curtsey of 1760, drawn from the righteous period,*

When folk conceived a grace

Of half an hour’s space,

And rejoiced in a Friday’s capon.

and by the younger with a modern reverence, which, like the festive benediction of a modern divine, was of much shorter duration.