“Mad, bad, and dangerous to know”: The Extraordinary Life & Works of George Gordon, Lord Byron

Caroline R. Douglass
Mississippi State University
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“‘Tis strange - but true; for Truth is always strange,
Stranger than Fiction.”
- George Gordon, Lord Byron

I stumbled across Lord Byron in the way that many during his own time came across him: I knew him first by reputation, and then for his vast and provocative body of work. I was first drawn to Byron as a fifteen-year-old, and after discovering that he had rather more to him than the rosy, idyllic “She walks in beauty” would have one believe, I found myself poring over books about his life with the fervor of many of his contemporaries. Like most teenagers, I was a hopeless romantic, and I clung to the idea of the “tall, dark, and handsome,” the poet with the scandalous life and lilting, romantic lyricisms to boot. Byron was all of these things, and none of them (not least because he stood at a mere five feet eight inches). To his peers and admirers, he did, indeed, appear to be the brooding, handsome, and impressively well-read Cambridge scholar with a penchant for evocative and romantic poetry, a well-known reputation for womanizing and seduction, and as a promising prospect in England’s parliament. Beneath this façade, however, he masked a sordid and fraught past. He grappled with so many demons that one loses count while researching his short life. He was unpredictable and quick to anger, was known to be cruel
and remorseless in his treatment of women, and was prone to fits of mania and then subsequent
deep, depressive states. In his life, he was followed by dramatic scandal, the fallout from a
disastrous marriage, and rumors of an incestuous relationship with his sister. After his death, the
rumor-mongering reached a crescendo as details of his cruelty and abuse toward his wife
surfaced, along with whispers about his attraction to men and children. He was marked by deep
insecurity and anxiety and was prone to periods of deep depression, during which he withdrew
from society to the lonely, sprawling estate at Newstead, which he inherited along with his
peerage at the age of ten. Today it is speculated by scholars that Byron suffered from manic
depression, known now as bipolar disorder, and that much of his anxieties over his weight and
appearance were caused by a then little-known and undiagnosed eating disorder. We cannot
know the answers to these many questions about Byron’s psyche and his many sufferings, but
what is possible is close reading of his prolific canon of letters, journals, poems, dramas, and
other literary contributions, as well as speeches he delivered in parliament, conversations with
friends, and accounts from his many and incredibly diverse romantic liaisons. Such is the
purpose of this collection; I am not the first to be fascinated by Byron and the complexities of his
life, as is evidenced by the literal hundreds of his biographers, nor will I be the last. It is my hope
with this collection to obtain a deeper understanding both of Byron himself and of his works, to
connect major events in his life with fluctuations and idiosyncrasies in his writing style, and,
simply put, to understand him - as a writer, as a friend, and as a man.

Each book in my collection is significant - I have scoured many used book sales, online
and in libraries and used bookstores, often falling down the “bibliography rabbit hole” - one
biographer cites another, and another, and another. There is always another book to read, always
a fresh perspective on Byron’s life. It has always fascinated me to note that though Byron has
been dead almost 200 years, biographers are still “digging up dirt” on the late great poet - such
was the nature of his celebrity and infamy. Indeed, it is rumored that a hundred years after his
death, his grave was broken open with the express purpose of finding out which of Byron’s feet
was clubbed. Consistently, I am most drawn to his biographies, though the works he produced in
his lifetime are no less important. Byron was a prolific creator; indeed, he said himself, “If I
don't write to empty my mind, I go mad.” This sentiment is echoed in his immense canon, in
which he dabbled in many different forms of “mind-emptying.” Though he belongs to the period
of other Romantic authors and poets, his work varied somewhat in its content and did not always
exactly “fit the bill” for Romantic poetry. Byron wrote poetry, some prose, and even drama, he
was a fervent letter-writer, and he journaled often.

The fascination with Byron is difficult to explain. Perhaps the best way to put it is that he
presents to readers and admirers a certain form of relatable celebrity. He is, at once, a man of
considerable fame, with a vast readership and following (and with an infamy few could obtain or
desire), and also a man of considerable relatability, suffering from many of the same societal and
personal ills that many faced during his time and still face today. Born in 1788, he was a victim
of childhood sexual abuse, he suffered bullying in school, his father was absent, and his mother
was often incapacitated or distant. He expressed an ardent desire for grandeur - he idolized
Napoleon and strove for the same glory and notoriety his idol possessed (this latter obsession
eventually led Byron to travel to Greece to fight in its war for independence). Byron was normal,
and he was abnormal. Far from our modern, lofty idea of celebrity in which the objects of our
admiration appear to be perfect, Byron was deeply flawed, and his flaws were on display for the
public to notice and criticize. He had a reputation for mercuriality, broodiness, and impulsivity. Rumors about his sexuality dogged him and eventually drove him into exile in the East. He seemed to live something of a double life: on the one hand, he was the fine-featured, sensitive seducer who wrote well and spoke with wit and grace; on the other, he was a sexual deviant, a madman, an abuser. Some even believed him to be a vampire (he was thinly veiled as the subject of John Polidori’s *Vampyre*, and it is often speculated that Byron’s infamous character was the inspiration for Bram Stoker’s titular character in *Dracula*).

I had the distinct pleasure and privilege of visiting Byron’s ancestral home Newstead Abbey in England in the summer of 2017. It was a pilgrimage I planned for years and was finally able to carry out almost seven years after I began my collection. I visited the poet’s much-despised home on a day when it was particularly rainy in Nottinghamshire, and got a keen sense for why exactly Byron tended to avoid the place. On display were his private quarters, the bed he slept in, and his writing desk. Visitor guides pointed at bullet holes in the walls of the great hall, indicating where Byron had, characteristically, shot at the walls with his pistols (they were on display as well). It was easy to picture Byron, dog in tow and with pistols at his sides, limping dejectedly through the soggy, then-neglected grounds at Newstead. Prominent in the grounds were the great pond on which Byron recounted “playing war” in rowboats and the dramatic and ornate memorial Byron erected to commemorate his beloved Newfoundland dog Boatswain, for which the poet wrote “Epitaph to a Dog” when the animal died of rabies. In contrast, Byron himself is interred in the humble Byron vault in a church in nearby Hucknall, alongside his daughter Ada Lovelace.
It is my hope with this collection to inspire in others the same hunger for information (whether on Byron, or on other topics of interest) that was inspired in me as a teenager. Since beginning my collection at fifteen, I have amassed over thirty relevant volumes, have visited Byron’s ancestral home and gravesite as well as his memorial in the Poet’s Corner at Westminster Abbey, and I have written an independent piece on the Byronic hero and its influence on modern media, as well as a research paper drawing parallels between Byron and Earl Rochester. He has influenced me more than I can say - I display my collection at home with great pride, and I eagerly await my return trip to Newstead this summer.

I believe this collection is comprehensive and complete in its breadth, depth, and variance of subject matter. There is a book in it for every period of Byron’s life, compilations which make up his entire body of work, and a range of critical essays which detail how the literary community deals with Byron. Almost all of the books I have obtained have come to me secondhand, from online used book dealers, library sales, and other means - I have a particular affinity for used, well-loved books, and several of my favorite titles show obvious signs of wear, having been bought second- and even third-hand. The collection itself is significant both in the quality of research contained within it and also in their demonstration of the influence that Byron himself had on the world. Byron is well-known for his poems, within Britain and without, but he is less known for his role in the Greek War for Independence, his contributions to British politics during his time, and his incredible influence both on his contemporaries and the poets who would follow in his footsteps. There is a great deal we can learn from Byron’s life, and, as biographers have pointed out, there is still much more to discover, more to dig deeper into with regards to Byron. Indeed, it is one of my greatest ambitions to join the ranks of Byron’s many biographers
and compile my own research together to write about him. In some ways, this collection is a precursor to that. Only with research can we learn, and this collection has aided me in my research in more ways than I can count. This personal collection means a great deal to me, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to share it with others, and perhaps inspire an interest in much the same way I was inspired.
ANOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Amongst scholarly volumes detailing Byron’s life and anthologies containing the poet’s work, this novel, which presents readers with a fictionalized version of Byron, adds some levity and humor to the collection. Stephanie Barron’s *Jane Austen* series has the *Pride and Prejudice* author as its heroine, and this particular volume in the series shows Byron as the suave yet suspect antagonist. Logistically, the novel is relatively historically accurate and does well in portraying a believable iteration of the poet, while also engaging the reader with its wit and humor. I acquired this novel through the online used book seller Better World Books, and I value it in my collection because it is something of a departure from most of the books it contains, and Barron’s writing style is deeply enjoyable and easy to read.


The crucial years of Byron’s first pilgrimage to Greece, Albania, and Turkey cemented Byron’s reputation as a “man of the world,” and gave him a certain mystique that so enaptured the hearts of his admirers. This is one of the first, and likely the most thorough accounts of this most formative time for Byron. Borst presents these years with great attention to detail, following his path through each country and connecting Byron’s writing to his various misadventures, and he speculates how these years abroad shaped him as a man, with special
emphasis on the way his travels impacted his later life and writing. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.

Byron, George G. B. *Don Juan*. T. Davidson, 1819.

This copy of Byron’s own *Don Juan* is the only standalone piece of Byron’s work in this collection, and for good reason. *Don Juan* is my personal favorite of Byron’s lengthy epic poems; it was the first work of his that I read in-depth, and it still holds sentimentality for me. I acquired it through a used bookseller in England, and have read and reread it since. The simplicity and beauty of Byron’s work shine through especially in this piece, which he called “epic satire,” as it reversed the traditional “man-seduces-woman” dynamic, and instead portrays a man easily drawn in by women. Sixteen cantos in total, it is a fascinating microcosm of Byron’s work at large, and still today is my favorite example of epic poetry. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Jerome Christensen’s *Lord Byron's Strength* is perhaps the definitive critical analysis of Byron’s life and work as it compared to other romantic works, as well as the impact of Byron’s poems and dramas on the literary market at large. It is a concise overview of Byron’s life and utilizes works from other poets to help readers gain a greater understanding of Byron himself. Additionally, this particular copy is special not only because of its content but also because it
arrived to me from a used bookseller signed by the author, unbeknownst to me, and with a typewritten letter to the author from 1993 regarding the book’s content tucked into its pages - a further testament to the value of used books. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


For his compendium of British and American poetry, Charles Coffin chose works from many poets, including Chaucer, Yeats, Frost, Auden, and, of course, Byron. Though Coffin only chooses a few of Byron’s poems, he includes among them the lesser-read “On this day I complete my thirty-sixth year,” significant because Byron’s thirty-sixth year was his final one. It is a beautiful piece, written on January 22 of 1824, and is melancholic and reflective, and even a little prophetic (Byron would die in April of that year after contracting an infection in Missolonghi). This volume is included in this collection not only for the inclusion of this poem but the inclusion of the best of the best amongst English and American poets. I acquired this book at a used book sale at my local library in Georgia.


Biographer David Crane’s *Kindness of Sisters* stands out amongst other biographies of Byron both due to its format - several chapters of it are dedicated to actual dialogue (some transcribed exactly, some imagined and contextualized) - and its in-depth look at this particularly
fascinating aspect of Byron’s life: his fraught marriage to Annabella Milbanke, and its subsequent end under scandalous circumstances. The book details the highly contentious relationship between the vengeful Annabella and Byron’s half-sister Augusta Leigh, with whom he was rumored to have carried out an illicit affair for which Byron was vilified across England and eventually exiled to the East. I purchased this from a used bookseller in England via Amazon, and though a portion of it is fictionalized, it still presents an interesting look into Byron’s legacy, and how his contentious relations with the many women in his life unfolded even after his death.


Rather sensational when it was originally published in 1985, Louis Crompton’s survey of homophobia and homosexuality in England during Byron’s life presents a concise and incredibly interesting look at Byron’s sexuality (arguably one of the most complex and compelling aspects of his life). It looks in particular at Byron’s formative years, particularly those spent at Cambridge’s Trinity College, which was, in many ways, the period in which he “came out.” Byron was known for his beauty, wit, and charm, and Crompton’s volume details Byron’s many affairs - with men and with women - and how he was received by the public because of them. I value this work in my collection both because of the biographical details of Byron’s life, as well as the close evaluation and interpretation of the public’s view of homosexuality during Byron’s lifetime. I bought this book used from a bookseller on Amazon.

Caroline Lamb is credited by some for coining the epithet that followed Byron during his life and far beyond his death: “mad, bad, and dangerous to know.” Paul Douglass’s thorough examination of her life, from her birth into the famous Cavendish family to her disastrous and destructive affair with Byron and her subsequent madness and vengefulness, is one of the more intriguing books in this collection (if not purely for its frank look at the effect Byron seemed to have on women). I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


It is impossible to understand the nuance and true magnitude of Lord Byron’s supposed madness without a thorough examination of Lady Byron, Annabella Milbanke, who Byron aptly nicknamed the “princess of parallelograms” for her interest in geometry, algebra, and trigonometry. Lady Byron was stiffly religious, and, seemingly, a poor match for the capricious, debauched Byron, whose mania and unpredictability forced Annabella to conclude that her husband was irredeemable. However, throughout their brief marriage until the end of her life, Lady Byron maintained that it was her personal responsibility to ensure her husband’s secure place in heaven. Even after their marriage ended, she firmly believed that her brief liaison with him had, at least, achieved this. Michael Elwin’s meticulously researched biography of Lady Byron is essential for anyone seeking to know more about Byron and his life, and for this reason, it is invaluable in this collection. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.

Another fictional mystery in which Byron appears as a character, Daniel Friedman’s *Riot* this time has Byron as its protagonist. Byron, in his years at Cambridge, spends his time skiving off of class and looking after the pet bear he cheekily brought to school with him. In this novel, plays the role of a sleuth in this funny imagining of Byron’s experience of higher education. While somewhat lacking in historical accuracy, it is nonetheless entertaining, and I have included it in this collection for that reason. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Compiled by William Frost, this compilation of Victorian and Romantic poetry includes six of Byron’s most famous works, including “She Walks in Beauty” and “So We’ll Go No More A-Roving,” as well as several cantos from *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold*. It is valuable in this collection because of its simplicity of selection (as well as the other poems it contains - it has several of Shelley’s best works, as well as works from Wordsworth, Eliot, and others). I purchased this book from a used book sale at my local library.


Grebanier presents with this intriguingly-titled biography a frank, provocative examination of Byron’s life with particular focus on his romantic relationships. Byron is considered by contemporaries to be one of the first modern “celebrities.” Certainly, the events of his life would have been the stuff of today’s tabloids and gossip rags. Rather than
sensationalizing these aspects of Byron’s life, as some biographers are wont to do, Grebanier instead presents each of his relationships chronologically and additionally delves further into Byron’s psyche (or, more accurately, his psychological turmoil and the way it unfolded in his relationships). As with many of the books in this collection, Grebanier’s work details one of the fascinating parts of Byron’s life, but it includes details which preclude it from redundancy in the collection. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Byron’s marriage and its subsequent disastrous end was hardly a private matter; it ended scarcely a year after Byron and Annabella Milbanke were married, and just a month after the birth of their only child, Ada. The marriage ended with an explosion of rumors which would follow Byron until his death - rumors about his sexuality, the possibility of unsavory liaisons with younger boys, and whispers of an affair with his half-sister Augusta Leigh which allegedly produced a child. Ashley Hay’s *The Secret* is a painstakingly detailed account of the intricacies of Byron’s only marriage, gathered together from the letters and journals of Lady Byron and her husband, as well as letters from Augusta Leigh and others involved in their ill-fated union. It is valuable in this collection because, in a way, it “takes Byron down a peg” - in his marriage he was cruel, abusive, and unstable, and this book allows readers to see a less-idealized version of Byron. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.

A true testament to Byron’s celebrity and infamy is the suspicion that many of his peers held of Byron’s possibly status as a bloodthirsty vampire. Tom Holland’s part-fiction, part-biography novel *The Vampyre* gives readers the answer to the prevailing question - what if Byron *was* a vampire? It is well researched, well-written, and, if one has a willing suspension of disbelief, fun to read. It is valuable in this collection, maybe not for biographical data, but instead for the small peek into Byron’s life and psyche it provides. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Dr. Kumar’s anthology is unique in this collection because it is, rather than simply a collection of Byron’s major works, a collection of essays which present critical analyses on both his work and the impact the events of his life had on his major works. Dr. Kumar includes four essays, each of which examines critically the social impact of Byron’s work, his many influences, and even delve into Byron’s brief foray into politics (he was, in his life, hesitant to undertake the responsibilities with which he was saddled upon assuming his peerage). It is a fascinating critical analysis not only of Byron’s work, but of the work of other English poets of influence, and it is included in the collection for this reason. I purchased this book at a used book sale at my local library.

A collection detailing the life and works of the poet Byron is incomplete without the addition of this most controversial and sensational novel written by one of his spurned lovers, Lady Caroline Lamb. While immensely popular after its publication in 1816 (the same year Lady Caroline’s family attempted to have her declared legally insane), the novel itself was critically panned, as were Lady Caroline’s subsequent publications. *Glenarvon* is a thinly-veiled vilification of Byron, who ended his relationship with Lady Caroline, who he called Caro, after a tumultuous courtship because of her capriciousness and her poor reputation. Caro appears in the novel under a different name, and the novel’s antagonist is a poorly-disguised, rakishly brooding villain who corrupts the innocence of the novel’s heroine. Though the book itself is virtually unreadable (Lady Caroline was, unfortunately, rather ineffective in her prose), it is still a valuable volume for the collection simply due to the curious circumstances of its publication, and the events which lead to Lady Caroline’s desperate bid for revenge on Byron. I bought this book from a used book seller on Amazon.


One of my favorite books in this collection, *His Very Self and Voice* is an incredibly personal and detailed account which describes the poet in his own words and the words of his colleagues and friends. It is unique and set apart from other such works because it details precisely Byron’s unique appearance, his idiosyncrasies, his facial expressions. It is a work unlike any other in this collection; it is a beautiful, visceral, and evocative presentation of Byron in the most literal sense. One can gain by reading it a true sense of Byron the man - how he
walked, talked, and brooded. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Undoubtedly, Fiona MacCarthy’s perceptive and analytical biography of By*on is among the most complete and detailed of By*on biographies to date. Ms. MacCarthy places special focus on the most minute details of his life, examining the impact of the sexual abuse By*on suffered as a child, By*on’s early affairs with men and with women, and his pilgrimages to Greece and Turkey. She explores By*on’s idolization of Napoleon, his fascination and investment in the Greek war of independence, and brooding, dark, and contemplative nature. By*on’s life was tempestuous, turbulent, and complex, and I chose MacCarthy’s biography for my collection because of her dispassionate yet provocative account of his life. I received this book as a birthday gift, and to date, it is the only book in this collection that was not purchased used.


Leslie Marchand cemented his status as By*on’s chief and most prolific biographer with one of the most complete and comprehensive of By*on’s many biographies with A Portrait, originally published in 1970. Marchand undoubtedly succeeds in this biography in his careful scrutiny of By*on’s life (indeed, his knowledge on By*on’s earlier years, which in many biographies is often limited, stands out in particular) while carefully avoiding the pitfalls many of By*on’s other biographers fall into. The fantastic and highly-colored nature of By*on’s
debauched life sometimes leads those who document his life to recount his life rather like a gossip magazine. This volume, which I purchased from a used book dealer when I was fifteen, was one of the first I added to my collection, and still stands out as one of my favorite compendiums of the great poet’s life.


Marchand appears a second time in this collection with a comprehensive compilation of over 1,000 letters and journals from Byron’s storied life. Marchand is, perhaps, most famous for his volumes of Byron’s letters and journals which he transcribed from original manuscripts, and this volume is a selection from those transcriptions. The selection Marchand presents is fantastic; Byron was as witty, honest, and romantic in his letters and journals as he strived to be in his poetry, and in reading this selection, the reader is treated to a vivid depiction of the poet’s life from his own perspective. Having read about Byron from his biographers, it is refreshing to learn about him from his own point of view and connect the happenings in his letters to the various events of his life. I also purchased this book used from Amazon as a teenager, and it has since occupied a special place in this collection.


Professor Marchand appears again in this collection with a selection of Byron’s greatest work, but the true draw of this book is Marchand’s introduction presented at the outset of his selections. It outlines the scandalousness which marked Byron’s work and life and which gave him the title of the libertine, so often reserved for his fellow rake-poet Lord Rochester. Marchand
emphasizes in this work why the public found Byron’s work so controversial and goes on in this anthology to organize Byron’s best-loved and most beautiful works (including his magnum opus, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, and Byron’s drama *Manfred*). Marchand’s volume is complete and representative of Byron’s vast body of work, and for this reason, I have included it in the collection. I found this book at my local library’s annual used book sale.


This well-loved copy of Byron’s major works was the book with which I began this collection. It was bought for this collection from a used book seller on Amazon when I was fifteen, and it is full of teenage annotations and even has an unfinished illustration of Byron I did on the inside front cover. I purchased this book from a used bookseller, and what drew me to it was that it included, along with Byron’s most famous and best-loved works, several of his letters and journals, which makes this volume a well-rounded and comprehensive “beginner guide” to Byron’s work. It includes *Don Juan* in its entirety, most of his poems, his drama *Manfred*, and others. It is a prized part of my collection both for its contents and its sentimental value.


After Byron’s untimely death in 1824, his personal, handwritten memoirs were deemed far too damaging and scandalous for publication, and were decidedly burned by his close circle of friends. Because of this, it is often difficult and murky to parse apart the various eyewitness accounts, letters, and interviews with Byron’s inner circle to glean the real and solid nuggets of truth which made up Byron’s extraordinary life. Doris Langley-Moore’s biography succeeds in
including the most important facets of these such accounts, and puts together a precise, well-researched picture of Byron’s life, with details not included in other biographies. It is valuable in this collection because of the quality of research and the thorough yet easy-to-read and interesting account it provides. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Though indulgent and a bit pulpy, Nicole’s *Secret Memoirs* attempts and, in some ways, succeeds to provide readers with the unceremoniously burned memoirs of Lord Byron. Written so that the reader can see through Byron’s own perspective, *Secret Memoirs* is highly colored and spares no detail. It is clear that Nicole has done his research, as the events in this fictionalization of Byron’s life match up with the details provided by his letters, journals, and subsequent biographers. Though not explicit fact, it is nonetheless an entertaining volume and valuable in this collection if not purely for its rather voyeuristic look into Byron’s debauched life. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Edna O’Brien’s intriguing biography centers around Byron’s romantic life, detailing in particular her view that his lameness and worries over his weight (Byron was born with a clubbed foot, and his weight was constantly in flux; it is now speculated that he had an undiagnosed eating disorder) spurred him to seek out thrilling and taboo romantic liaisons to compensate. Known for his romantic poetry, Byron certainly had a great deal of real-life
experience to draw upon. O’Brien analyzes most (if not all) of Byron’s many love affairs, from John Edleston and Lady Caroline Lamb to the Countess Teresa Guiccioli and even his half-sister Augusta Leigh. While O’Brien does tend toward the sensational (as is the nature of any biography which includes a subject’s sexual exploits), her volume is nonetheless comprehensive and captivating, and I have read it several times since purchasing from a used book dealer via Amazon and adding it to my collection several years ago.


Dr. Page compiles in this volume the breadth of work of many of England’s most celebrated poets. It is included in this collection because it includes several of Byron’s less-known works, in particular, his “Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte,” “Oh! Snatched away in beauty’s bloom,” and “Lachin y Gair.” It is additionally valuable in my collection because it is an older, well-loved volume (it was originally published in 1924, and contains the annotations of the original owner from that time), and I have a particular affinity for older books. It is, all in all, a beautiful book, and Page does well in including the “best of Byron,” as well as the works of many others. I bought this book from my library’s annual used book sale.


Amanda Prantera’s *Conversations* is a witty, unique twist on Byronic fiction. On the premise that Byron’s personality and psyche have been programmed into a computer, this novel
presents fictional yet probable and highly entertaining answers to readers’ most pressing questions about the late Lord. As with the other examples of fiction in this collection, *Conversations* is valuable if not simply for its clever interpretation of Byron’s complex personality and for its interesting and engaging writing. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


The International Byron Seminar is a yearly gathering of so-called “Byron buffs” - those who dedicate time to writing scholarly criticisms and analyses of his life. This collection, from the sixth international gathering, includes essays on subjects like Byron’s influence on music, and his relationship to Wordsworth and other poets he influenced, as well as several essays whose purposes are the close reading of Byron’s literary material. It is an interesting compilation which provides many different perspectives on Byron, and for this reason, it is important to this collection. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


In general, literary critics argue that it was Percy Bysshe Shelley, Byron’s companion and friend during part of his time in Italy, exerted the most influence over Byron’s poetry and style. In this book, however, Jeffrey Vail draws interesting parallels between the work of Thomas Moore and Lord Byron, referencing specifically Byron’s early poems, and their similarity to
Moore’s distinctive erotic style. I deeply enjoy reading through literary interpretations of Byron’s work (and enjoy writing them myself), so this book is of particular value in this collection for its well-supported and convincing comparison between Byron and Moore. I acquired this book through the online used book seller Better World Books.


Philip Wayne’s compilation of English poetry states in its preface that the editor sought not to put together the most famous or critically acclaimed of the poets’ work he has researched; instead, Mr. Wayne’s goal with his anthology was to compile poems which themselves exemplified the “heritage” of English poetry. In other words, he chose poems which he determined to be the best and most representative of the English narrative of poetry in his chosen period. Of Byron’s poetry, Mr. Wayne chooses just one of his less-known works: stanzas from “The Vision of Judgment.” I purchased it from my local library’s annual used book sale, and I included this anthology in my collection for two reasons: firstly, because it includes so many of the most celebrated poets of England’s vast canon, and secondly because Mr. Wayne includes such a little-known poem of Byron’s.
Figure 1.1 - Byron’s parliamentary speeches from his peerage, written upon in the poet’s own hand, Newstead Abbey.
Figure 1.2 - Me at Newstead Abbey, beside the resting place of Byron’s beloved dog Boatswain, for which he wrote “Epitaph to a Dog.”
Figure 1.3 - A tree from Byron’s property at Newstead onto which he carved his own name and that of his half-sister, Augusta in 1814.
Figure 1.4 - Byron’s bed at Newstead Abbey.
Figure 1.5 - The facade at Newstead Abbey.
Figure 2.1 - Marchand’s *Selected Poetry* and Wayne’s *Heritage of Poetry*. 
Figure 2.2 - Three favorites: *Byron and Greek Love*, *The Kindness of Sisters*, and *Glenarvon*.
Figure 2.3 - The signed copy of *Lord Byron’s Strength*. 
Figure 2.4 - The first book added to the collection.
Figure 2.5 - Another favorite in the collection, MacCarthy’s *Life and Legend*. 
Figure 2.6 - One of the oldest books in the collection.
WISH LIST


It was odd to run across the name of Harriet Beecher Stowe when looking to expand my collection; she is, of course, most famous for the abolitionist work *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and her role in laying the groundwork for the American Civil War. However, she collaborated with Lady Byron herself to write what seems to be a scathing account of Annabella’s side of the contentious and tumultuous marriage and its subsequent disastrous ending. This is the most famous of the several volumes detailing the Byron marriage, and, as it comes straight from the first-person account of Lady Byron herself, I believe that it would be a valuable addition to this collection.


Benita Eisler’s *Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* is famous amongst Byron’s many biographies, on par with the work of Fiona MacCarthy or Leslie Marchand. This has been at the top of my list of books I next want to read about Byron - reviews are mixed, but most readers seem to agree that Eisler spares no detail, and provides a dry and generally well-written, no-nonsense version of Lord Byron’s life (refreshing amongst many volumes which delight in the sordid details rather than the actual facts). I believe it would be valuable in this collection because it seems to be well-researched, well-written, and an all-around essential addition to the basic understanding of Byron’s life.

I have tried for several years to obtain a copy of this book, but thus far it has proven rather expensive and hard to come by. Few accounts exist which detail Lord Byron’s childhood and his years at the Harrow School - it is possible they were his most formative years, and I believe Ellege’s detailed and comprehensive account of this most crucial period of Byron’s life would be extremely valuable in this collection.


John Cam Hobhouse was, in his life, perhaps Byron’s closest confidante during many of the years he spent both abroad and in England. His friendship with Byron is not explored in any particular detail, but it is clear that Hobhouse, who Byron called “Hobby-O,” had a great influence on the poet. This book would be valuable in this collection mainly because of the opportunity it provides to understand more fully Byron and his complex relationships, and the effect he had on the people in his life.


Those acquainted with Byron’s life will recognize the name of Teresa Guiccioli, his young mistress during his time in Ravenna. Teresa was married at the time to the Count Guiccioli, and she was Byron’s mistress during the period in which he wrote several cantos of
his magnum opus, *Don Juan*. This account of his life, unlike many others which attempt to piece together the details of Byron’s existence in Ravenna, comes directly from the source, and for this reason, I would be excited to add it to my collection in the future.