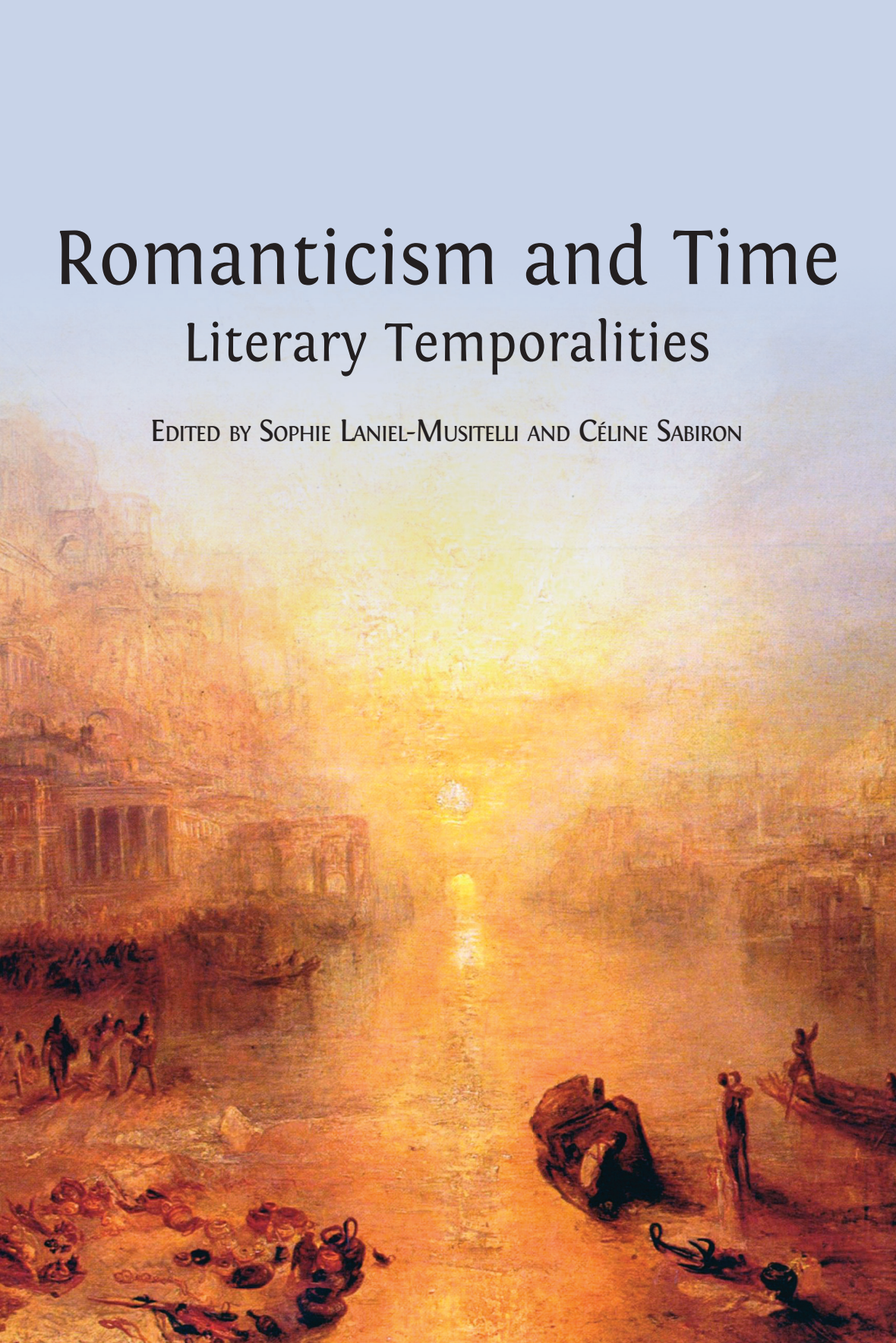
Romanticism and Time

Literary Temporalities

Edited by Sophie Laniel-Musitelli and Céline Sabiron



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1. Future Restoration

Paul Hamilton

For the Romantics, the idea of Restoration could signify simultaneously historical events and moments of consciousness. Historically, Restoration during the Romantic period followed the French Revolution and the ensuing Napoleonic imperium. What was restored at the Congress of Vienna and its successors was the sovereignty of European nations, although of course what was to count as a nation was in the gift of the ruling powers—especially England, Austria, Russia and Prussia. Literature written at the same time, though, questioned and experimented with what could count as a restorative experience. This paper examines current images of a restored Europe running counter to the official political outcome of the Congresses. These drew on the Romantic interest in the way in which future and past could be interrelated in a creative way, so that the restoration of lost values could be as radically revisionary as any model of revolution, with conflicting opportunities for imagining new forms of integration or confusion.

Time restored, *le temps retrouvé*, is a topic that lends itself both to philosophical and to historical treatments: we can either consider it as raising questions about time, and what time is; or it can make us wonder about differences in the way time was experienced at a particular period of history. Proust does both. Romanticism, constantly investigating interiority alongside our consciousness of things, was preoccupied with the extent to which one could be mapped on to the other, the inner on to the outer, the flow of consciousness on to history. Romantic writers and thinkers tried to find common structures in what Reinhart Kosellek neatly calls 'history in the singular and histories in the plural'.[1]

1 Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 94.

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I am defined by my history, you by yours; but our different trajectories inhabit a common temporal dimension sharing a single chronology. Time appeared to Kant to be the framework in which we experienced ourselves, the 'form of inner sense'. Nevertheless, the vocabulary of this *durée*, as Bergson called it, or inner time, was often spatial. Past events appeared to inhabit greater or lesser distances from us. Sometimes time passed quickly, sometimes slowly, as the future approached us at different rates of acceleration. Time could drag, or fly. The future could be imminent or far away. And, less obviously, the future could be visible in the past, located embryonically, a secret code to be deciphered. Returning the compliment, the future could fulfil the past, or just repeat it. For Wordsworth, famously, to discover the presence of the past in the present meant that the future was always potentially restorative. The inherence of the future in the past meant that to think of the past now could deliver an experience

> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
>
> And passing even into my purer mind
>
> With tranquil restoration…[2]

Such restoration, though, also meant that only now could we understand the true significance of the past—that is what it prefigured, what it is doing to me now, its sometime future. This interaction of past and future defining history could be fraught; we might, like *The Prelude*'s narrator, overinvest in the future with damaging consequences. But the remedy is still the restoration of Books 11 and 12: 'Imagination: How impaired and restored'.[3]

The imagining of the future in the Romantic period in Europe lays claim to two epochal moments. The first cataclysm was the French Revolution, no surprises there; but, secondly, came the Congress of Vienna and its successors which together composed the European Restoration. The Revolution immediately appears more conducive to the exercise of imagination. The Revolutionary calendar of the

2 William Wordsworth, 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', lines 29–31, in *William Wordsworth* (The Oxford Authors), ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 132.

3 Ibid., p. 559.

Jacobins even re-invented time – or how we record it. Its re-naming of the months captured the *durée* of the seasons: Germinal, Floréal, Prairial, Messidor, Fructidor and so on. Restoration is a less obvious candidate as the bearer of imagination. But the shuttling back and forth in time required to understand it is more akin to the displacements and over-determinations of internal events that so gripped Romantic introspection. The immanent dynamic of memory and desire suggested to Romantics that the future was not to be apprehended independently of its prophetic character; 'the mind overflowed the intellect', as Bergson put it.[4] The future was to be found inscribed in the past and realised in the present. Marx's genuine revolution, as he tells us in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, would produce 'a new language [...] without reference to the old'.[5] Failing that, however, all conjurations of the future are inherently literary, restorative of old meanings in new forms, metaphorical, deplorably so for a revolutionary purist but encouragingly so for radicals who, falling short of Marx's standards, still considered themselves revolutionary, and for whom, as Percy Shelley put it, poets were 'mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present'. Or in Friedrich Schlegel's even more involved formulation, the historian is 'a prophet looking backwards', and so a bardic figure who destabilises the self-sufficiency of any time-period, making each—past, present and future—dependent on the other.[6] The present makes us reinterpret the past, but in a way so as to produce the prophecy of what might happen, the future, which at present is hard to see. Kierkegaard attacks Romanticism for envisaging a repetition of the past in which nothing is restored: one lives the same life but as if born again, as if for the first time. Comparably, Nietzsche, in his idea of the eternal return of the same, pointedly criticises Romanticism by

4 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1964).

5 Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in *Surveys from Exile: Political Writings*, ed. by David Fernbach, trans. by Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 147.

6 Percy Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York and London: Norton, 1977), p. 508; Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenaeum Fragment', no. 80, in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Peter Firchow (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 27.

accepting a fate unproductive of change. Romanticism becomes what it is, 'a self-realizing ideal'.[7]

To what degree was Europe reinvented after Napoleon? The Congress of Vienna, you will remember, followed the first conclusive defeat of Napoleon and was convened in 1814. When Napoleon's defeat turned out to be premature, and Napoleon enjoyed his hundred days after escaping Elba in March 1815, the Congress was suspended in some embarrassment, to be re-convened after Waterloo. Subsequently, a 'congress system' was set up. The Congress of Vienna was based on earlier dealings at the Treaties of Chaumont and Paris, but was also coloured by a host of less well-known assemblies whose goings-on were far from transparent to all concerned with the later Congress. The most notorious of those precursors was the Treaty of Kallisch of February 1813 in which Russia and Prussia agreed on a carve-up: Russia could have Poland, and Prussia Saxony. This deal would have been anathema to other main players like Britain and Austria, who, respectively, feared too much territorial influence going to the unpredictable and ambitious Czar Alexander I's Russia and to Frederick William III's Prussia.

All such agreements simultaneously take up positions towards the Ottoman Empire, and therefore towards the possibility of a free Greece, which might create a buffer-zone between Turkey, Russia and the more Western countries. Also at issue are the political principles on which the new Europe would be constructed, and these could range from the 'Legitimacy' formulated by Talleyrand, trying to do his best for a defeated France, and the strange political Christianity concocted by Alexander and the Baroness von Krüdener, consecrated in the Holy Alliance, momentarily echoing earlier religious imaginings by Chateaubriand and Novalis of an ultra-generous political communion and anticipating those to come, like that of Lamennais. The dominant idea, though, apart from the 'Legitimacy' or conservative theodicy into which the Holy Alliance would collapse by the 1820 Congress of Troppau, was the 'balance of power' pragmatically espoused by Britain's Lord Castlereagh, which perhaps most consistently guided the collective actions of the Congress. The Congress, then, had a complicated pre-history but also an extended afterlife in a 'system' of congresses

7 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968), sec. 253, p. 147.

held subsequent to Vienna at Aix-La-Chapelle, Troppau, Laibach (Ljubljana), Verona and St Petersburg. The 'balance of power', as soon as one begins to describe it, becomes a thing of infinite intricacy and convoluted selfishness. Castlereagh famously opposed the slave trade at the Congress, and got a sub-committee to devote its time to it. While he no doubt felt the pressure of the ethical arguments of British abolitionists (Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and many others), negotiations actually come down to an economic argument: Britain has *already* done so well out of the slave trade it should pay strategic compensation in cash or colonies to Spain, Portugal and the Dutch; countries supposed to be understandably reluctant to give up the slave trade until they had gained economic parity with British profits from past slavery. The liberal political imagination here balances powers by book-keeping in putative human lives. Like Gogol's dead souls, the reparation costs are a trafficking in imaginary slaves. Contemporary critiques of Castlereagh's language, his 'set trash or phrase', as Byron called it, responds to this kind of moral incoherence with poetic performances whose contrasting articulacy and clarity must automatically gain oppositional political force.[8]

My point is that the usual conclusion—that if this was the Restoration of Europe after Napoleon's imperium, you can see how Restoration got a bad name in liberal circles—needs to be supplemented by the recognition that Restoration implies an imaginative opportunity for political change more comparable with Revolution than we usually acknowledge. Other writers grabbed that opportunity, and their indignation with the Congress was that it spoiled the chance of a better future. In fact, the idea of a proper Restoration, as opposed to a reactionary settlement, is often embedded in the idea of Revolution. Maybe restoration can be revolution by other means, and maybe it should be? Schlegel thought that the French Revolution was a 'tendency' (*Tendenz*) rather than an achieved event. Even the Tory Thomas De Quincey called it a 'legacy' answering to some basic human discontent. Mary Wollstonecraft believed that

8 See Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. by David Magarshack (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961); *Don Juan*, 'Dedication', in *Lord Byron, The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), vol. V, p. 7.

revolution might better begin at home, in the home in fact.[9] Certainly when one looks more closely at British polemics written against the Congress of Vienna one finds that what is primarily deplored is a failure to use the political imagination. What we do not find are arguments more familiar recently, miming Marx's polemic in *The German Ideology* (four years after *Dead Souls*, in 1846): that to introduce imagination into the political sphere is bound to sublimate or disguise the fact that any imaginary resolutions are simply ways of giving up on finding real political solutions. Literary resolutions are substituted for ones in the actual, historical world of practical politics. These large, redemptive schemes, which M.H. Abrams thought described the Romantic project of imagination in *Natural Supernaturalism*, were the defining target for new historicist criticism.

Historicism can cut both ways, and throw up all sorts of alternatives to binaries we often use to navigate cultural history. So, the French Revolution can scarcely be understood if we only contrast it to the preceding *ancien régime*. The Girondin liberal period was followed by the extraordinary Jacobin freedoms, then a contradictory safeguarding of the Revolution by the Committees of Public Safety, the Terror, makeshift stages like the Directory and eventually Napoleonic dictatorship. Far from being discredited as an idea, though, revolution continued to be reconceived and reconstructed, sometimes still as revolution, sometimes as a strategic revisionism, and sometimes maybe as Restoration. Metternich's Congress of Vienna certainly could appear as a reactionary counter to all this creative re-shaping of Revolution. Ruled by Legitimacy, it used the hereditary principle to guarantee authority, and so settled into a defence of Church and State and King. But the strange Holy Alliance, initiated by Czar Alexander at Aix-La-Chapelle and strategically espoused by Austria and Prussia, once more echoes Romantic ideas of a recovery of Christendom in order to be able to think a more effective European franchise, the sort of hope we find guiding Burke, Chateaubriand, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel. That it declines into the Troppau Protocol, even more in hock to Legitimacy than its competitor, the Quadruple Alliance, cannot erase this initial, embarrassing continuum with all sorts of counter-images of a restored

9 Schlegel, 'Athenaeum Fragment', no. 216, in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Peter Firchow, p. 46.

Europe, prevalent at the time and surprisingly prominent once one begins to search for them. I would like to look at how Restoration might figure in a British Romantic-period sensibility extremely interested in the future shape of a new Europe.

Byron, again in the 'Dedication' to *Don Juan*, saw that 'Europe' could be 'sung' in various ways: according to the hymn sheet offered by the 'congress' or 'conspiracy' of Vienna, or to another tune. The point to be taken now is less the one of who was on which side, and more the need to realise that after the French Revolution the rules of politics were transvalued. Although itself a reactionary settlement, the 'Restoration' following the final defeat of Napoleon could not hide the fact that it, too, was in the business of unearthing a political imaginary. Writers, even conservative writers like Novalis and Chateaubriand, had earlier bought into this political extension of imaginative authority. With their political visions, we can aptly compare Burke's 'glory of Europe' in the end obscured, as he sees it, by the bad modernity of the French Revolution. The 'anarchy' Shelley attributes to the reactionary violence of post-Napoleonic England is similarly opposed to a contrastingly coherent *internationale*, 'a volcano heard afar' (like the Indonesian one of four years before which had darkened European skies in the summer of 1816, 'the year without a summer').[10] The boundaries of the political collaboration Shelley wanted his poetry to contribute to were always primarily European rather than British, historically as well as geographically, as evidenced in the history he gives to poetry in his *Defence* of it. As long as they remain unestablished, these images of international unity in need of restoration survive poetically—Burkean chivalry, Novalis's Christianity or Europe, Chateaubriand's genius of Christianity, or the wandering spirit of inspired liberty in Blake, Shelley and Anna Barbauld. This is poetry in Shelley's 'unrestricted' sense, according to which, in *A Defence of Poetry*, the poetry of Rome could lie in its 'institutions' as much as in Virgil, Horace or Ovid. Unrestricted poetry is like German *Poesie*, the idea of a general, improving creativity inspiring ideas of human progress, an idea going back explicitly to Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*, celebrating the act of making

10 Shelley, 'The Mask of Anarchy', l. 363, *Poetry and Prose*, p. 310.

visible a core creativity in *all* human activity if we only have the *poetic* wit to isolate and prize its edifying impulse.[11]

Romantic futures are optimistic, I am suggesting, the more explicitly they are engaged in producing a counter-image to those proffered by the Napoleonic empire and then by the post-Napoleonic settlement of the Congress of Vienna. Germaine de Staël, both in the Europe described by her journey in exile from Napoleon's France, and in her writings, is the most combative. She addressed the culture of other countries as unified entities she could then challenge to produce credentials for joining the Europe of nations she, unlike Burke, envisaged as a reality recoverable in modern form. Her book on Germany recorded that country's successful reply to her direct questioning on her visit. Her intervention in the controversy over Romanticism in Italy through her article on translation in *Biblioteca Italiana* of 1816 provoked the young Giacomo Leopardi, who would become Italy's second poet after Dante, to clarify his ideas about how to recover a new cultural poise in Italy, one owing nothing to imitations of Byron and others.[12] In the same year, Felicia Hemans published her poem *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy*, calling on Italy to 'rouse once more the daring soul of song', but in conclusion generalising the value of this as 'a heightened consciousness', not envisaging a new Italian identity but an aesthetic delight, as Diego Saglia says, generated by 'a fervid transnational imagination', contrasting with 'the futility of imperial self-renovations'.[13] But maybe the heightened consciousness of the past empowers Italians to recover or restore Italy in an alternative political form?

11 Such creative foundationalism is very different from the historicist school, which, from Hegel and Friedrich Karl von Savigny onwards, opposed Kantian and Jacobin rationalism but was eventually accused of the same degree of constriction by Nietzsche—who nevertheless had no time for Romantic irony.

12 See Anna Luisa Staël Holstein, 'Sulla maniera e l'utilità dell traduzioni', in Giacomo Leopardi, *Discorso di un Italiano intorno alla poesia romantica*, ed. by Rosita Copioli (Milano: Biblioteca Univerzale Rizzoli, 1997), pp. 391–99.

13 'The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy: A Poem' (1816), ll. 25, 512, in *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 18–34. Diego Saglia, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815–32: Romantic Translations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 220–21, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108669900; 'British Romanticism and the Post-Napoleonic South: Writing Restoration Transnationally', *Essays in Romanticism*, 24.2 (2017), 105–24, https://doi.org/10.3828/eir.2017.24.2.2

Leopardi, after all, was a poet who could conjure restoration from almost nothing. The fiercely convincing poetic integrity he constructed out of the incoherent misery of his life was almost immediately read as proto-Risorgimento—that is, as modelling how to summon into existence a future Italy out of its current fragmentary state. Staël provoked even those who outwardly opposed her, like Leopardi, to make common cause with her by modelling, in poetic restorations of the integrity of a disintegrating individual, the national unity Italian patriots desired for their fragmented country. As they departed from this embattled engagement, their vision of the future tended to blur, and pessimism set in. After all, the French Revolution was only the precursor to a spate of nineteenth-century revolutions, none of which achieved their aims—1820, 1830, 1848, to name the major ones.

This cycle of repeatedly raised hopes and diminishing political gains had a corrosive effect. In the wake of the July Revolution of 1830, the *trois glorieuses*, Balzac wrote an entire novel about life defeated in proportion to the ambitiousness of its desire, *La peau de chagrin*. Comparably, Delacroix's great painting '28th of July 1830, *la liberté guidant le people*', surely superimposes an earlier, republican adventure on to the establishing of the constitutional monarchy of Louis Philippe? Delacroix himself referred to it simply as 'barricade', and the catalogue to the big Paris exhibition of his paintings in 2018 described a hugely over-determined painting as 'haunted by the promises of the future' and so 'transforming itself quickly into a tomb', Balzac's logic exactly.[14] The haunting, though, registered in the expressions of her awestruck companions, is by Marianne, a spectral figure from 1789, but spectral also through her statuesque, solid physiognomy, in this paradoxical way recognizable as the ghost of substantial revolution. Delacroix scrambles temporalities: the figure of revolution now recovers her once robust form (Michelangelo-like to most critics), but only in a sculpted perfection. Let me give one more example of this law of diminishing returns from Alfred de Musset.

If Leopardi's powers of imagining his own restoration, making something out of nothing, *il nulla*, are limitless, Alfred de Musset's capability for self-loathing in his 1836 epochal *Confession of a Child of*

14 Sébastien Allard and Côme Fabre, *Delacroix: L'art et la matière* (Paris: Louvre éditions: Hazan, 2018), pp. 104–05.

our Time (my cheeky translation of *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*), of reducing something to nothing, shows the reverse. Musset's story of an age whose politics has ruined its culture, creating a *mal de siècle* responsible for every personal misfortune is compulsive, hugely ambitious and knowingly self-serving. You do not believe a word of it at the same time as you admire the literary opportunism of an indefensible stance. It has been justly celebrated for its spectacularly historical articulation of the individuality open to Musset's generation, one that 'filled its lungs with the air Napoleon had breathed'.[15] In *La Confession* the lovers finally know each other so 'profoundly' that relationship is impossible. 'Another', he says to her, 'will offer you a worthier, more reliable, fitting ('dignement') love, but none as profound a love' (288).

At the personal level, the sense of always being discontented in Musset's confessional text makes for a kind of inertia, the consequence of forever imagining new, more satisfying dispensations. Musset is the opposite of the politically active love of his life, George Sand, here. And there is a kind of pointlessness in this superiority to what is available, which we tend to call decadent. In his 1842 poem on Leopardi, 'Après une lecture', Musset sees that Leopardi writes 'without complaining about fate', but adds that 'he savoured the charm of death', that he was the 'gloomy lover of death, poor Leopardi'. It is in opposition to this false interpretation, I am suggesting, that the obscure Leopardi has been increasingly prized for his restorative poetic power.

What do British and Irish ideas about Restoration look like against this European background? When Wordsworth famously writes in the 1805 *Prelude*, just after the description of the 'spots of time' that 'I would enshrine the spirit of the past/For future restoration', his words fit into the tradition of creative restorations which, I have argued, will be taken to extremes in Leopardi and discounted in Musset's decadent alternative.[16] To the English ear, though, Wordsworth immediately echoes the Milton who, within a few lines of the start of *Paradise Lost*, sees our human condition as directed 'till one greater man/Restore

15 Maurice Allem and Paul-Courant, eds, *Œuvres Complètes en Prose d'Alfred de Musset* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960), p. 65.

16 *The* Prelude, XI. 341–43, in Gill, *William Wordsworth*, p. 567.

us and regain the blissful seat'.[17] We can be pretty sure that Milton's apparent 'mortalism' here—a greater *man* not God redeems us—or the belief that salvation is temporal and limited, pointedly does not envisage Charles II as a candidate for the role of 'greater man'. *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667, well into the Restoration period, a Restoration to which, like European writers 150 years later, he wants to imagine an alternative. Placed even earlier than the first lines, his prefatory note on 'THE VERSE', in the fourth issue of the first edition of 1668, describes a stylistic restoration he wants us to hear in his poem, 'the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming' (39).

New ways of thinking restoration are not bound to the Caroline travesty of restoration Milton deplores. New ideas of restoration are at issue here, rather than simply an unhappiness with rhyme, as is evident from what happens to Milton's subsequent writing. He writes a *rhyming* tragedy against slavery, *Samson Agonistes*, arguably transvaluing the tragic genre just as he had claimed to have done the epic in *Paradise Lost*. And the dramatic humanism of *Paradise Regained*, where Jesus preserves the freedom of his mind as sufficient resistance against a supernatural opponent, departs further from hereditary literary machinery.

When Wordsworth, at the end of 'Home at Grasmere' and the start of the 'Prospectus' to *The Excursion*, passes by Milton's own machinery to take up lodging in 'the mind of Man,/My haunt and the main region of my song', he, too, is continuing the work of Miltonic restoration, recasting the poetic conventions of his predecessors, this time by psychologizing inherited religious discourse.[18] In effect, he is connecting with Milton through his own mortalism, or acceptance, as in *The Prelude*, that this is 'the place in which, in the end/We find our happiness or not at all'(X. 726–7). A new contract, a new grasp of the 'fit' between mind and nature is proposed. Here we usually cannot help hearing Blake's objections to fitting and fitted, '& please you Lordship', and remembering that, for Blake, psychologism rather uncovered a 'mental fight', ideological conflict. But Wordsworth's conceit is more futuristic than prescriptive,

17 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Alastair Fowler (Hong Kong: Longman, 1976), pp. 40–41.

18 Gill, *William Wordsworth*, p. 198.

'the image of a better time'.[19] It is on the side of the fittingness to which Musset would oppose his unfortunate profundity.

Blake's prophetic books, too, have their restorative logic. In successive drafts, the virtue of Wordsworth's 'spots of time' is first 'fructifying', then 'vivifying' and finally 'renovating', which is closest to 'restoration'. Blake's 'moment in each day which Satan cannot find' in his Prophetic Book, *Milton*, also 'renovates every moment of the day if rightly placed'. Without forcing the meaning, his key tropes in *Jerusalem* of 'awakening' and 'redeeming' also let us see the work's project of restoring potential, recovering the 'four-fold' being we all should enjoy.[20] Blake's renovating moment, then, is not a sequence, but an ever present potential, something which, if we keep it in mind, 'if rightly placed', can transform any other instant into something significant, rather than an item in the parade of 'empty, homogeneous time'. And this transformation comes about, I'd suggest, by seeing the contemporaneous quality of past, present and future, what the Bard sees, after all, at the beginning of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*—

> Hear the voice of the bard,
>
> Who present, past, and future sees –
>
> Whose ears have heard
>
> The Holy Word
>
> That walked among the ancient trees... ('Introduction')[21]

The transformation may sound 'messianic', but if so, it is 'messianic' in Walter Benjamin's 'weak' sense. What makes for revelation is not the inculcation of dogmatic belief in some millennium to come: such convictions would be numbered for Blake among the fundamentalist heresies of those he calls 'the Elect' and 'the Reprobate'. Rather, revelation is of the interwoven quality of the future in past and present; so, what is revealed is our task, if we are to belong to 'the Redeemed',

19 William Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 784; 'Home at Grasmere', later 'Prospectus', in Gill, *William Wordsworth*, p. 199.

20 William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson and D. V. Erdman (Hong Kong: Longman, 1972); *Milton*, Second Book, Plate 35; *Jerusalem*, Plate 15.

21 Ibid., p. 209.

to take responsibility for the future—a torment of doubt rather than acquiescence in dogma. (First Book, Plate 26). The historical Milton is restored for Blake by future possibility, a potential only discovered by revisiting, driven by present need, the Milton of the past and re-reading him radically against the grain. A once-and-for-all meaning of Milton dies. Milton, Blake writes, goes to 'eternal death', which is also his release into the active meanings of eternity, the creative mutuality of past, present and future. In comparison with this lively historical interaction, it is Milton's confinement to a single historical meaning then that looks 'spectral' and not of this world. The perception of what Milton, despite his intentions, really meant is inseparable from the realization of what we need him to be! This maybe is what Blake means near the end of *Jerusalem* by 'speaking the words of Eternity in human forms' (Plate 95). Or what he meant earlier in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* by saying that 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time'.[22] Again, the two categories are dialectically interdependent. To be human is to have this future-rich understanding of the past in the present, and time is just our characteristically simultaneous deployment of the different tenses. *Durée*, how we experience time imaginatively, is our access to the concept of eternity.

John Wilson Croker was never one to miss the chance of doing a good literary woman down. He was satirised by Thomas Love Peacock as Mr Killthedead in *Melincourt*. When, however, he called his fellow Irishwoman, Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan), 'the great Corinna of the Radicals', he actually paid her a huge compliment not far off the mark.[23] Morgan's two guides, *France* (1817) and *Italy* (1821) move out of the genres of travelogue or memoir into that kind of politicised cultural commentary Staël—a model again—had really created in *De l'Allemagne* and prepared for in her famous novel *Corinne ou l'Italie*. Like Byron, Morgan twinned Italian and Irish subjugation and thought of them interactively. She even has a triple indictment of Castlereagh in a footnote to *Italy*. Castlereagh helps perpetrate the Act of Union and its brutal policing against the United Irishmen; having ruined Ireland, he

22 Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 7, ibid., p. 108.

23 See the very useful discussion by Donatella Abbate Badin of Morgan's mixed genres, reception and use of Staël, *Lady Morgan's Italy: Anglo-Irish Sensitivities and Italian Realities* (Bethseda: Academica Press, 2007), pp. 2, 72.

sets to work on Britain; and then, at the Congress, Europe is in the firing line.

> When Count Confalonieri, one of the deputies from Milan, in reply to Lord Castlereagh's question of 'what they wanted?' said, 'a Constitution like that of England!' the minister, we were assured, significantly replied, *Ce n'est pas ce que nous avons de mieux!* (That is not the best thing we have!) If any man in England was justified in uttering this blasphemous sarcasm, it was that Minister, who having destroyed the liberties of his *own* country, has laboured so hard to annihilate those of the nation, by which he has been adopted.[24]

Morgan wrote four appendices to her book, *France*, the fourth one of which was 'On the State of Political Opinion in France'. There she describes in patriotic, constitutional terms what has been, in her view, betrayed by the deal struck at the Congress of Vienna. Like the last quotation, her remarks are not very far from Wordsworth's. Both recall the wording of Wordsworth's political sonnets a decade and a half before, extolling Milton, Algernon Sidney, Marvell, Harrington and Vane as writers who 'Taught us how rightfully a nation shone/In splendour', linking them all as patriots. But she also believes that some thinking outside the binary of revolution and counter-revolution is necessary: revolution, in other words, is to be thought of as something productive not just of reaction but of other versions of itself.

> To consider the revolution then as at an end, and to imagine that the allied sovereigns have conquered the absolute possession of despotic power, either for themselves or for the French monarchs, would be the excess of folly. The dislocation of society has been too complete, and the shock given to prejudices and opinions too violent, to admit of a quiet resumption of old habits and ideas... A complete counter-revolution is impossible; and any despotism which can be substituted for it, must be composed of such jarring and ill-assorted materials, as never can dove-tail and consolidate into harmony and stability.[25]

Well, what would be a proper political unity for Morgan in contrast to what she calls 'the European republic thus disjointed' (clxxx)? She

24 Lady Morgan [Sydney Owenson], *Italy*, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1821), I, p. 266n.

25 Lady Morgan [Sydney Owenson], *France*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1817), p. clxvii.

finishes her account of Lombardy, the first area that will be annexed and activated later during the Piedmont-led Risorgimento, with an interesting mix of materialist analysis and hortatory idealism:

> Against the liberties of Italy are the sovereigns of Europe, their armies, and their treasures: but armies are no longer to be trusted; and treasures, thanks to the thoughtless profusion of modern exchequers, are no longer to be commanded. In their favour are the kindling illumination of the age, the sympathy of the whole population of the civilized world; and all the force that belongs, in the eternal nature of things, to justice and to right.[26]

Affinities with the near-contemporary *Prometheus Unbound* mingle with a very realistic reference to the composite armies that had to replace national standing armies in the fight against Napoleon to secure victories like that of 1813 at Leipzig (*der Völkerschlacht*), never mind Waterloo. Along with this goes an awareness of the growing circulation of capital and the global dimension Marx was going to attribute to it. Like Hazlitt, Morgan thinks that the French Revolution has given mankind a 'sensible shock' connected with an inexorably approaching modernity. Most important will be decisions about what we want to preserve in the new dispensation, and whether we can imagine older values in a viably restored form. Can there be a European republic which is *not* hopelessly 'disjointed'?

The most grotesque contemporaneous satire on being so 'disjointed' comes, unsurprisingly, from the Irish poet Tom Moore—liberal Irish patriot and friend of Byron. In 'Letter Nine' of *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818), a hilarious account of the Parisian tourism (made possible by the post-Waterloo peace) of an Irish/English family, he has that avid admirer of Castlereagh, Mr. Phil. Fudge, write to the great man about his visit to a madman who had fantasised a Restoration to their owners of the heads of all those guillotined in the Revolution.[27] Only some did not quite return to the right ones. In his own case, the lunatic was convinced, he had got the wrong head. Fudge finds food for thought here, and innocently imagines the inter-changeability of the heads of Sidmouth, the Prince Regent and other luminaries with satirically apt

26 Lady Morgan, *Italy*, I, p. 277–78.

27 Thomas Moore, *The Fudge Family in Paris, Edited by Thomas Brown the Younger, Author of the Twopenny Post-bag*, 4th ed. (London: Longman et al., 1818).

recipients; pickpockets, tailors and other disreputables. Eventually, though, the apotheosis is reached when he pleasurably imagines putting on Castlereagh's own head:

> At last I tried your Lordship's on,
>
> And then I grew completely addled—
>
> Forgot all other heads, od rot 'em!
>
> And slept, and dreamt that I was—BOTTOM. (Letter IX, pp. 100–4)

The top is the bottom, and the viscount is in the right company, that of another master of malapropism, Shakespeare's Bottom. (I don't know if Castlereagh's political cant was exceptional in comparison with what we hear nowadays. He talked of 'men turning their backs upon themselves', which is certainly a contortion difficult to imagine. He incorrectly used 'joining issue' as an opposite of 'taking issue', which was one of Moore's favourites). To take issue with his policies, though, it is clear that, for liberals like Moore and Byron, convincing Restoration will not be achieved by the invasion of France by the British proxy, Louis XVIII. Some accounts have the Bourbon getting a send-off from Britain to France comparable to the welcome accorded to the returning Charles II 150 years before. Moore is aware of this and fully exploits the irony right at the start of *The Fudge Family*. In Letter I, Miss Biddy is talking of her father, in slightly comical anapaests—da da dum, the poetic 'foot' more worthy of the shoddy monarch than heroic dactyls—dum da da, the dominant foot of Greek and Latin epic, anapaest turned the other way—ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, … Arma virumque cano... and so on. So, contrast:

> By the by, though, at Calais, Papa *had* a touch
>
> Of romance on the pier, which affected me much.
>
> At the sight of that spot, where our darling DIX HUIT
>
> Set the first of his own dear legitimate feet*
>
> (Modell'd out so exactly, and – God bless the mark!
>
> 'Tis a foot, Dolly, worthy so *Grand* a *Monarque*)
>
> He exclaimed 'Oh mon Roi!' and with tear-dropping eye,

> Stood to gaze on the spot – while some Jacobin, nigh,
>
> Mutter'd out with a shrug (what an insolent thing!)
>
> 'Ma foi, he be right – 'tis de Englishmen's King
>
> And dat *gros pied de cochon* – begar, me vil say
>
> Dat de foot look mosh better, if turn'd toder way.'
>
> *To commemorate the landing of Louis le Desiré from England, the impression of his foot is marked out on the pier, and a pillar with an inscription raised opposite to the spot. (Letter I, pp. 3–4)

I cannot help hearing a caricature of Irish in 'begar'—the anapaest asks for the accent on 'gar', so it sounds less like 'beggar' and more like 'begorrah' shortened—which would fit the mixed critical idiom Castlereagh provoked, the Anglo-Irish abuser of Ireland, England and now Europe—as the French become the new Irish.

In his *Political Essays* of 1819, Hazlitt argued that, through the settlements imposed by the Congress of Vienna, Britain seemed intent on inflicting on the rest of Europe a hereditary monarchy. But in its own case, it prided itself enormously on having replaced hereditary legitimacy with something much more like a Miltonic magistracy—'when the monarch still felt what he owed to himself and the people, and in the opposite claims which were set up to it, saw the real tenure on which he held his crown'.[28] For Hazlitt, this real tenure of Kings and Magistrates defines itself against 'the cant of legitimacy' (p. xi). His Milton, nevertheless, returns him to 1688, rather than 1649, restoring the spirit of a constitutional monarchy rather than a revolution succeeded by a republic. William Cobbett, too, in a surprisingly supportive letter to Chateaubriand around the time of the Congress of Verona, resents the way that post-Napoleonic France is kept weak, in his eyes, by not being allowed the same degree of political democracy as England. A Bourbon dependency is established at a time that, as Lady Morgan put it, 'an individual sentiment of patriotism, an entire conviction of the equality of rights among all orders of the state, and an attachment to the basis of the constitution, pervade private conversations, and give a very general tone to French society' (*France*, p. clxvi). Elsewhere, in 'Fables

28 William Hazlitt, *Political Essays* (London: William Hone, 1819), p. xi.

for the Holy Alliance', Moore implies that Sir Robert Filmer, apologist for monarchy from Biblical precedent (in *Patriarca, or the Natural Power of Kings*, 1680), is the guru of the Congress, with Algernon Sidney, one of Wordsworth's Commonwealth Men, as the opponent favoured by Moore.[29] By contrast, in *The Fudge Family*, Phelim Connor's straight, enraged polemic, addressed to Castlereagh, grasps, as did Hazlitt, at what Napoleon had promised: that unlike monarchs, or '*vulgar* Kings', he had 'rais'd the hopes of men', although only before dashing them—'All this I own—but still...'[30] This aposiopesis ends the Letter, which a footnote tells us has been censored because 'so full of unsafe matter-of fact'.

In conclusion, it is helpful to think about Byron in the light of what I have been talking about. Byron laughs at Castlereagh's language as much as Moore does. They both think he cannot speak English. Sometimes Byron is unable to contain his contempt, as in the 'Dedication' to *Don Juan*.[31] His disgust for Castlereagh's 'language of Mrs Malaprop', keeps re-surfacing. Castlereagh, he says callously, committed 'sentimental suicide', he was 'the Werther of politics' (Preface to Canto VI). In any case, Byron was a frequently passionate advocate of the political importance of the proper use of one's language. Dullness is what especially appears to rouse Byron—as it had done his hero Alexander Pope—a fault in which all others can be poetically dissolved. The connection between language and political action is taken as given. In 1817, in the final Canto Four of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the hero, Childe Harold, had virtually vanished; according even to the Preface to Cantos One and Two he had been present only 'for the sake of giving some connection to the piece'.[32] The real hero, as some commentators have pointed out, becomes the Spenserian stanza, which Byron manipulates expertly and updates from the start, following James Beattie in claiming in the same Preface that it 'admits of every variety'. Here, like Milton, he 'recovers ancient liberty', but to the genre of romance, modernising and restoring it to political efficacy in the process. By the time he writes the letter to John

29 Thomas Moore, 'Fable IV' of 'Fables for the Holy Alliance', *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore*, ed. by A.D. Godfrey (London: Oxford University Press, 1910), pp. 497–98.

30 Moore, 'The Fudge Family in Paris', Letter XI, *The Poetical Works*, p. 488.

31 McGann, *Lord Byron, The Complete Poetical Works*, vol. V, pp. 1–8.

32 *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in ibid., vol. II, p. 4.

Cam Hobhouse at the start of Canto 4 of *Childe Harold*—Hobhouse in collaboration with Foscolo wrote the notes on Italian literature to Canto 4—this political edge has become still more obvious and pointed.[33] Again in the Dedication to *Don Juan*, Castlereagh is described as someone who 'mends old chains'. In contrast to the contemporary Congress system, Byron writes there as elsewhere in the service of the new Italy he wants to see established, the imaginary character with which he has replaced Harold, the 'child of imagination'.

The letter to Hobhouse does appear to want us to keep the parallel with what he calls 'the late transfer of nations' in mind. Towards its end, Byron recalls the lament sung by Roman workmen—'Roma! Roma! Roma! Roma! non è più com' era prima'—and contrasts it with the yells of those pleased with the dismemberment of Italy approved by the Congress of Vienna. But to resign oneself to this melancholy would be the equivalent of Samuel Rogers's pretty lament in his *Italy: A Poem* of 1822—lamenting nostalgically, 'Wouldst thou hadst less, or wert as once thou wast'.[34] By contrast, Byron's letter is up to date with the cultural furore in Italy over Madame de Staël's aforementioned essay on translation, which urged Italian literary practice to be less indebted to Italy's classical past in order to press more effectively her claims as a modern nation. Byron's intervention in this debate is a bit like Leopardi's. He stresses the capabilities of the Italian language. Writing in Italian, he advocates a pluralism, calling for an Italian poetry diversified by the different aesthetic stances open to it, feeding like Schlegel's *Poesie* a general Italian genius. He reels off a list of miscellaneous contemporary Italian luminaries qualifying Italy for serious consideration as a major European nation, concluding that in sculpture 'Europe—the World—has but one Canova'.

Ugo Foscolo was one of the poets he commended, and Foscolo had in 1812 written his own poem on Canova, *Le Grazie* (*The Graces*), his *Carme* or lyrical hymn to Canova celebrating an earlier version of the statue of the three Graces just commissioned by the Duke of Bedford. Foscolo had also published his most famous poem, *Dei Sepolcri* (*On Tombs*), in 1807, all about how new Napoleonic requirements that burials take place outside

33 Ibid., pp. 120–24.

34 Samuel Rogers, *Italy: A Poem* (London: Longman et al., 1822), p. 62.

city walls interfered with the idea of the restorative presence of the great dead in inspirational form at the heart of the current community.

The restoration of Italy, when it came, would see itself as the resurgent restoration of ancient *virtù* desired by Foscolo and Leopardi, anticipated surely by the famous *assunta* of Venice in the opening stanzas of Canto 4 of *Child Harold*:

> She seems like a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
>
> Rising with her tiara of proud towers
>
> At airy distance, with majestic motion,
>
> A ruler of the waters and their powers:
>
> And such she was;—her daughters had their dowers
>
> From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
>
> Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.
>
> In purple was she robed, and of her feast
>
> Monarchs partook, and deemed their dignity increased. (IV, lines 10–18)

Venice appears as that sometime republic inspiring English republican polemic of the greatest kind, like James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana*—'immortal Venice' and her 'incomparable commonwealth'.[35] Harrington was not against restoration as such, of course, he just wanted to restore a republic, not a monarchy; and in dedicating his work to Cromwell, the 'The Lord Protector of the Commonwealth', he was reminding him of what he should ideally be protecting. Venice is the source too of Byron's recovery of tragedy in *The Two Foscari* and *Marino Faliero*, as well as being exemplary for him of that openness to the East that drove his own Turkish Tales. Ultimately Venice stands for a political authority which, far from deferring to monarchy, might let its own legitimacy rub off on monarchs a little if they were lucky, 'their dignity increased'. The restorative interactions here are complex and rewarding. Venice's 'assumption', 'rising with her tiara of proud towers', is not into Heaven but into the *Realpolitik* of the day. Byron's sheer delight in

35 James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* and *A System of Politics*, ed. by J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 99.

what Venice has been—'The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy!'—is turned into a historical reproach to the current treatment of Italy, and an incentive to realise something 'brighter', 'more beloved', something which 'replaces what we hate', 'with a fresher growth replenishing the void'. In Canto 4, Venice finally leads Byron to the ocean, 'the image of eternity' (p. CLXXXIII). For Harrington, 'The sea giveth law unto the growth of Venice, but the growth [of his ideal republic] Oceana giveth law unto the sea' (p. 7). Byron's ocean too makes 'monarchs tremble in their capitals', an element become as much a creature of imagination as the Childe had been. On this political warhorse the poet once 'laid my hand upon thy mane as I do here', literally as a swimmer, but now figuratively as a political poet mounted on a sublime power more powerful than any tyranny.[36] To this figure, the poem's conclusion entrusts the idea of the restoration of political justice.

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36 Ibid., p. 7; McGann, *Lord Byron, Complete Poetical Works*, vol. II, p. 186 (stanza 184).

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