

Byron
and
Trinity
Memorials,
Marbles
and Ruins



Edited
by
Adrian
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Cover photo: Statue of Lord Byron by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen.

Photograph by James Kirwan, courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

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Foreword

Adrian Poole

This collection of essays reprints some writings about Lord Byron, the most celebrated writer to have passed through Trinity College, Cambridge, for the bi-centennial commemoration of his death on 19 April 1824. It also contains a full bibliography of primary and secondary sources cited. Links to openly available primary resources, wherever available, have been added to the references for ease of access.

Three of the essays are by Fellows of the College: Anne Barton (1933–2013), who wrote a commemorative piece for *The Trinity Review* on the bicentenary of Byron's birth in 1988;¹ William St Clair (1937–2021), whose chapter on 'Poets and Travellers' in his book on *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (3rd revised edition, 1998) is centred on Byron; and Adrian Poole (1948–), whose essay on Byron and John Lloyd Stephens, the American traveller credited with the 'discovery' of the Mayan ruins in Central America, reflects on the legacy of the poet's preoccupation with ruins. The fourth is by Robert Beevers (1919–2010), who describes the process by which the great statue of Byron by the Danish sculptor, Bertel Thorvaldsen, ended up in the Wren Library. Associated with this is the sonnet 'On the Statue of Lord Byron', written by Charles Tennyson Turner (1808–1879), elder brother of the more famous Lord Alfred.

The volume's sub-title makes a certain claim for its coherence in the relations between 'memorials', 'marbles' and 'ruins', in so far as these subjects entail a continuity essential to Byron's own thinking and feeling.

1 Anne herself has a commemorative plaque in the Ante-Chapel (see Fig. 0.1), that notes her eminence as a critic not only of Shakespeare and Jonson, especially their comedies, but also the poetry of 'our own Byron': OPERA SHAKESPEARIANA ET JONSONIANA PRAESERTIM COMICA NECNON BYRONIS NOSTRI CARMINA

Important scholarly and critical work has been done on these aspects of his life and writing, including his life-*in-writing*, much of it post-dating the essays reprinted here.² Nevertheless the present collection represents a modest means of honouring a figure of enduring, complex significance, of whose association with Trinity the College is proud. Given the large margin by which Byron failed to be a model student, he would have been astonished.

Not for the first time: Anne Barton recalls the ovation with which the author of *Childe Harold* was greeted by Cambridge students at the Senate House in 1814. But to borrow a famous saying from Shakespeare, while ‘the whirligig of time brings in his revenges’,³ it also prompts reflection on all the other challenges and opportunities with which it is freighted. It makes us consider how many words we need that begin with the prefix ‘re-’, including remembrance, reconciliation, reparation, restoration, renovation. And how complex it may be to make them real. Which is one reason, among many, why we still need to read Byron.



Fig 0.1 Anne Barton's memorial brass in the Trinity College Ante-chapel.
Photograph by Adrian Poole.

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- 2 On the visual commemoration of Byron, for example, see Geoffrey Bond and Christine Kenyon Jones, *Dangerous to Show: Byron and His Portraits* (London: Unicorn, 2020), pp. 76–84, which includes some valuable commentary on the Thorvaldsen statue, and some details not included in Beevers's article.
 - 3 Feste's words in *Twelfth Night*, Act 5, scene 1.