

The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

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*New and Unpublished Essays
and Papers*

By

Peter Cochran

Cambridge
Scholars
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New and Unpublished Essays and Papers

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Temperate I am, yet never had a temper;
Modest I am, yet with some slight assurance;
Changeable too, yet somehow “Idem semper;”
Patient, but not enamoured of endurance;
Cheerful, but sometimes rather apt to whimper;
Mild, but at times a sort of “Hercules furens;”
So that I almost think the same skin,
For one without, has two or three within.
(*Don Juan* XVII, st.11)

“It takes two to make a conjuring trick: the illusionist’s sleight of hand
and the stooge’s desire to be deceived.”
—Francis Wyndham.

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INTRODUCTION

Many of these essays were first published in the *Newstead Byron Society Review*. Others were first given as papers, in the locations specified. Where an item has not been published or given publicly anywhere, the fact is stated.

Some incorporate material has already been published in different forms; but, I hope, the book will give such material a new context.

P.C.

FOREWORD

BYRON AS CASSANDRA

On October 27th 1983, a conference of Soviet and American scientists in Tbilisi, Georgia, was convened to warn against nuclear weapons and war. At one of the sessions, in the Institute of Geophysics of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Academician G. S. Golitsin gave a paper about the meteorological consequences of an imagined explosion of half the world's nuclear weapons. The mathematical investigations of the effects of dust and smoke thrown into the air, of the thermal balance of the atmosphere, the transfer of air masses, and the dissipation into the atmosphere of nuclear detritus from all over the Earth, showed that for more than half a year the whole Earth would be sunk into a haze impenetrable to solar rays – into complete darkness. The air-temperature all over the planet would drop to -10°C and lower, as winter came. The seas would be the only sources near which people could seek shelter and warmth. The earth would be covered with ice, and a so-called “nuclear winter” would set in. People would be left without food, everything inflammable would be burnt, down to and including asphalt, and forests would be enveloped in flames and smoke. This was the horrible picture painted by the Soviet scientists, and confirmed by their American colleagues.

Few at the meeting knew of the apocalyptic picture of the earth's ruin given by Byron in *Darkness*. Academician Golitsin was pleased and astonished to learn of the poem, even though he had Byron's Complete Works, in English, back in Moscow. The Russian scientists knew that, after the example of Edgar Allan Poe, the Americans must know and love Byron too.

Just a few months later in 1984 the American scientists published a booklet,¹ edited by Anthony Rudolf, including the text of *Darkness*, and the story of its creation, a copy of which was given to Golitsin on behalf of the members of the delegation. The American scientists, in their reports for the Senate, also mentioned the poem, and a number of television films

1: Rudolf, Anthony. *Byron's Darkness: Lost Summer and Nuclear Winter*. Menard Press 1984. Includes English text and Russian translation by Turgenev, from Peterburgski Sbornik 1846.

were produced about it. Byron was thus revealed at the very front of the struggle of humankind against nuclear war, nearly a century and a half before such a thing was imagined by anyone else. His prophetic genius had been demonstrated at the Tbilisi meteorological conference.²

In so far as the conflict between East and West is still at the forefront of everyone's minds, and (a kind of) Islam and (a kind of) Christianity seem locked into an increasingly horrible dialogue, we can easily credit Byron with prophetic insight there too, partial as his understanding of both religions was: he is far-sighted enough to refer to Wahabism (*Childe Harold II*, 77, 5) as a threat: its influence is now world-wide. His intention – to show each side that it is a complementary reflection, not an adversary, of the other – appears most necessary in 2014.

In so far as Mr Putin seems anxious to extend Russian power into Ukraine, he's only repeating what the armies of Catherine the Great and Potemkin are doing in *Don Juan* VII, VIII and IX: though we trust that Mr Putin does not wish to set his son on the throne of Constantinople, and that his tough physical regime (an hour's judo daily) will preclude his dying of indigestion, as Potemkin is reported by Byron as doing.

Sexual politics is an even hotter potato now than it was in Byron's day, when only peripheral feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft articulated it from the woman's viewpoint: not everyone empathises with Byron's depiction of woman's lot, and of women in general (especially in *Don Juan*); but it can't be ignored. There is even, I read, an anti-feminist feminist reaction against the feminism which Byron half-articulates.

About the United States, Byron appears less of a Cassandra. He saw it as an exciting young republic, full of promise, whose inhabitants prefaced every sentence with "I guess", "I reckon", and "I calculate"; and was disappointed when they didn't. He insisted on a black American servant addressing him as "Massa". He did not foresee Dick Cheney, gangsta-rap, or Lockheed Martin. His cry at the end of the *Ode to Venice* ("One freeman more, America! – to thee!") is underscored by enthusiasm for his naïve images of Daniel Boone, and of Rapp the Harmonist. He may mock Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming*, but has nothing better to offer.

One thing you can't say about Byron, on most subjects, is that he's out-dated.

2: Adapted from Anzor Gvelesiani, *Byron's Apocalyptic Clairvoyance*, Newstead Byron Review, July 2001, p 74.

ABBREVIATIONS

To economize on space in the notes, the following abbreviations are used for the books referred to. See the Bibliography for further information.

The edition used is the one on the website of the International Association of Byron Societies.

In the notes: **B.:** **Byron**

BJ: *The Byron Journal*

BLJ: *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (13 vols, John Murray, 1973-94)

When a citation from BLJ is headed "text from", followed by a manuscript reference, it means that the text is not from BLJ but from the original manuscript. If a prose quotation is left-justified only, it is taken from the original manuscript; if left- and right-justified, from a printed source.

Codes are as follows:

<Byron's erasures>

{Byron's interlineated corrections and second thoughts}

[editorial additions].

Blessington: Ernest J.Lovell jr. (ed.), *Lady Blessington's Conversations of Lord Byron* (Princeton 1969)

Coleridge: *The Works of Lord Byron: A New, Revised and Enlarged Edition with illustrations. Poetry*, ed. E.H.Coleridge (7 vols, John Murray, 1898-1904)

CHP: Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

CMP: *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991)

- CPW: *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980-93)
- DJ: Byron, *Don Juan*
- Finlay: Finlay, George. *A History of Greece* (Oxford 1877)
- HVSV: Ernest J. Lovell jr. (ed.), *His Very Self and Voice* (Macmillan 1954)
- LBAR: Langley Moore, Doris. *Lord Byron Accounts Rendered*, (John Murray, 1974)
- LJ: *The Works of Lord Byron, Letters and Journals*, ed. R.E.Prothero (John Murray, 1898-1904)
- LJM: *The Letters of John Murray to Lord Byron*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Liverpool University Press, 2007)
- LLB: Langley Moore, Doris. *The Late Lord Byron*, (John Murray, 1961).
- Marchand: Marchand, Leslie A., *Byron: A Biography*, 3 vols (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1957)
- Medwin: Medwin, Thomas. *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron at Pisa*, ed. Lovellm (Princeton 1966)
- Millingen: Millingen, Julius. *Memoirs of the Affairs of Greece* (London, 1831)
- NBSR: *Newstead Byron Society Review*
- NLS: National Library of Scotland
- RLL: J.C. Hobhouse (ed. Lady Dorchester), *Recollections of a Long Life* (6 vols. John Murray, 1909-11)
- SAHC: Fischer, Doucet Devin and Reiman, Donald, eds., *Shelley and his Circle* (Harvard 1961-2002)
- St.Clair I: St.Clair, William. *That Greece Might Still Be Free* (Oxford 1971)
- St. Clair II: William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (Oxford 1998)
- TVOJ: Byron, *The Vision of Judgement*

MOORE, HOBHOUSE, AND THE BURNING OF BYRON'S MEMOIRS

First published NBSR, 2011



Thomas Moore



John Cam Hobhouse

Lord John Russell decided not to include this section in his 1852-6 edition of Moore's *Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence* – the fact that Hobhouse was still alive, and the Murray house still present in the form of John Murray III, probably affected his judgement. He included only the start and finish (printed below in italics). The volume from September 1st 1822 to October 19th 1825 then became mysteriously soaked in water. It was first abandoned as irrecoverably damaged, but was restored by experts at the Harry Ransom Humanities Center, Austin, Texas. Text from *The Journal of Thomas Moore*, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, 6 vols. Delaware 1983-91, Vol. VI pp.2441-5. I have added notes at the foot of the page, commentary in bold, and sections from Hobhouse's diary in italics.

My thanks to Jeffery Vail for his help.

Byron first mentions the intention of writing his memoirs, and, simultaneously, *Don Juan*, in a letter to Murray of July 10th 1818:

Your projected editions for November had better be postponed – as I have some things in project or preparation that may be of use to you – though not very important in themselves. – I have {completed} an Ode on Venice; and {have} two stories – one serious & One ludicrous (a¹ la Beppo)² not yet finished – & in no hurry to be so. – You talk of the letter to Hobhouse being much admired – & <talk> {speak of prose} – I think of writing (for your full edition) some memoirs of my life to prefix to them – upon the same model <(and possib)> (though far enough I fear from reaching it) as that of Gifford – Hume – &^c. and this without any intention of making disclosures or remarks upon living people which would be unpleasant to them – but I think it might be done & well done – however this is to be considered. – I have materials in plenty – but the greater part of these could not be used by me – nor for three hundred years to come – however there is enough without these – and <a xxxx way> {merely as a literary man} – to make <you> a <good> preface for such an edition as you meditate – but this by the way – I have not made up my mind. –³

On October 29th 1819⁴ he reports them as written and as having been given to Moore.

Hobhouse seems never to have read them. Caroline Lamb said they “were of no value – a mere copy-book”. Gifford said “that the whole Memoirs were fit only for a brothel and would damn Lord Byron to certain infamy if published”; Lord Rancliffe had said they were “of a low, pot-house description”; Douglas Kinnaird liked them;⁵ Lords Holland and John Russell said they were harmless. “Some of them were agreeable enough” were Holland’s words, and Russell gave it as his opinion that “three or four pages were too gross and indelicate for publication”, but that “His early youth in Greece, and his sensibility to the scenes around him, when resting on a rock from the swimming excursions he took from the Piraeus, were strikingly described”.⁶ Moore thought that “though the second part ... was full of very coarse things yet that (with the exception of

1: B. erases the acute accent from “a”.

2: B. refers to *Don Juan* I, which he started on July 3rd, a week previously. He may withhold the poem’s title in case Murray panics, or he may not have decided on a title – none appears at the top of the rough draft.

3: B. to Murray, July 10th 1818 (text from NLS Ms.43489 f.243; BLJ VI 58-9).

4: BLJ VI 235-6.

5: BLJ VIII 91.

6: LLB 53.

three or four lines) the first part contained nothing which on the score of decency, might not be safely published.”⁷

Samuel Rogers claimed to remember an incident from them which related to the wedding day: “... on his marriage-night, Byron suddenly started out of his first sleep; a taper, which burned in the room, was casting a ruddy glare through the crimson curtains of the bed; and he could not help exclaiming, in a voice so loud that he wakened Lady B., ‘Good God, I am surely in hell!’”⁸ Byron's letter to Annabella about them⁹ is also relevant.

For Byron's generalised descriptions, see BLJ VI 63-4, 236 and 257. The second part contained all sorts of erotic adventures.

Moore sold the Memoirs to Murray for 2,000 guineas in July 1821¹⁰ but the money was later converted, at Moore's request, into a loan, redeemable only while Byron lived (this last condition had been forgotten, at the time of the burning, by both Murray and Moore). The arrangement had been suggested by Moore to Longmans on March 20th 1824 and finalised on March 27th.¹¹ Moore was trying to raise the money (via a life-insurance) when the news of Byron's death was reported. For Murray's version, see his letter to Wilmot Horton of May 19th 1824.¹²

Both Francis Burdett and Douglas Kinnaird offered to pay Moore the 2,000 guineas so that the memoirs could be destroyed: but, after the burning, it emerged that Moore could no longer have redeemed his loan, Byron being dead. Murray had said that he did not want the money – but it now turned out the memoirs had been his property anyhow!

As will be seen, Hobhouse planned the destruction of Byron's memoirs within minutes of receiving the news of his death. A feeling, current at the time, that all memoirs and biographies were slightly indecent, may play a small part in making him do what he did. But fear of being tarred with the same brush as his libertine friend, now, when he was, as an M.P., respectable, was his main motive. Had he of all people suggested that the Memoirs be placed securely for a sufficiently long period, until no embarrassment could be caused to anyone living, he might have been listened to. As it was, Hobhouse became willing party to the greatest act of vandalism in English literary history.

7: *Journal* ed. Dowden, II p. 732.

8: *Table-Talk*, 1952, 193, quoted LBW, p. 251: see also LLB pp. 55-6.

9: BLJ VI 261.

10: See LJ V 242n.

11: *Journal* ed. Dowden, II pp. 720 and 723.

12: Printed LLB p. 30, quoting Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends*.

Byron's London friends hear about his death at Missolonghi early in the morning of Friday May 14th 1824. Hobhouse diarises, *After the first access of grief was over I then determined to lose no time in doing my duty by preserving all that was left to me of my dear friend – his fame: my thoughts were turned to the Memoirs of his Life, given to Thomas Moore, and deposited by him in Mr Murray's hands for certain considerations.*

Now read Moore's description of what happened ...

MOORE: 16th [Sunday]—*He [Wilmot Horton]¹³ undertook also to see Mrs. Leigh¹⁴ on the subject, proposing that we should meet at Murray's (instead of Mrs. Leigh's) tomorrow, at eleven o'clock, and that then, after the payment of the money by me to Murray, the MS. should be placed in some banker's hands till it was decided among us what should be done with it. Called also upon Frank Doyle¹⁵ (an old acquaintance of mine, who was Lady Byron's representative in the transaction) but saw only Mrs. Doyle who said I might have a chance of finding him at seven in the evening—walked then with Luttrell¹⁶ into the Park. In talking of what I should do [he said you have made a sufficient sacrifice in cancelling all the improper passages *deleted*] he said “yes—yes—You have nothing to do but bite off your indelicate parts and throw them among your pursuers”—Met Lord Lansdowne,¹⁷ to whom we told what we had proposed and he considered it highly fair—only conceding, in his opinion, rather too much, as it ought to rest with me what parts were to be rejected and what preserved. In walking through the park, met my Bath friend Bayly,¹⁸ and, as I had sent an apology to Lambton's¹⁹ for dinner, proposed to join him at his Coffee-House at eight o'clock—Called on Frank Doyle at seven & saw him. Went over the same ground as with Horton and made*

13: Wilmot Horton was a cousin of Byron's but a close friend of Annabella: his wife inspired *She Walks in Beauty*.

14: Augusta. Hobhouse sees her three times over the weekend, “persuading” her to burn the Memoirs herself.

15: Colonel Francis Hastings Doyle, another close friend of Annabella. He and Horton act as her agents.

16: Henry Luttrell, friend of Moore and Rogers: Byron admired his poem *Advice to Julia*.

17: The Third Marquess of Lansdowne, Whig peer and patron of Moore.

18: Robert Bayly, otherwise unidentified friend of Moore's.

19: John George Lambton, later, as Earl of Durham, Governor-General of Canada.

the same proposal. He gave no opinion on the subject but in order to make sure that the conditions were right repeated over what I had said—Though I thought [he] was of opinion that only the objectionable parts should be burned, yet it would appear to Lord Byron's family that the whole ought to be burnt [if] I would consent to that step. On my assenting to this as my meaning and intention he added that [*MS damaged*] latter determination being [*MS damaged*] he thought it was the [*MS damaged*] duty of Lord Byron's family to see that I should not suffer by [*MS damaged*] that he could answer for Lady Byron's being ready to [return] to me the sum I was about to pay to Mr. Murray—This, however, I told him was entirely out of the question—I had declined the same proposal from D. Kinnaird²⁰ and was determined to persist in my refusal. Went from thence to Ibbetson's²¹ and dined with Bayley & a cousin of his. Called upon Rogers²²—asked him to let me draw upon him for the overplus above the 2000 guineas for interest, expences &c.

17 [Monday]—Wrote a note to Hobhouse, telling him that, in consequence of my interview with Mr. Horton, a modification had taken place in the arrangement I had made with him and that we were now to meet at Murray's at eleven o'clock.

Here is the note as recorded by Hobhouse in his diary:

Monday morning –

Dear Hobhouse

There has been since I saw you yesterday a sort of modification of the agreement then agreed between us which was suggested by my own friends Luttrell, Rogers, and Lord Lansdowne, and concurred in by Mr Wilmot Horton and Doyle, whom I saw on the subject – I trust that this arrangement will be equally satisfactory to you – as the first step towards it I mean to redeem the Mss – this morning from Murray at eleven o'clock (in Albemarle Street) and it would be perhaps as well that you should be there –

Very truly yours

Thomas Moore

20: Kinnaird's absence from the weekend's activities speaks volumes. He goes to Scotland.

21: Ibbetson's establishment unidentified.

22: Samuel Rogers, banker-poet.

Moore: ... Set off to Longman's²³ for the money—they much pleased to find that, by what passed yesterday, there was a prospect of some of the MS being presented for publication. After waiting till half past ten, the money arrived from the Bank—two notes of a thousand pounds each and one of a hundred—

Moore intends to offer Murray hard cash, not even a post-dated cheque.

Moore: ... set off to Luttrell's to beg he would go with me to Murray's—met Hobhouse (it was then about 11) in Albany Place, who seemed much disconcerted and angered at the change that had occurred. Nothing short of the immediate & total destruction of the MS—& though I repeated over & over that I still kept to my original intention of having the MS wholly at Mrs. Leigh's disposal, yet he still seemed to consider my consultation with Mr. Horton and my suggestion of a less summary means of proceeding as a breach of the arrangement made with him and D. Kinnaird—[*MS damaged, half a line*] to Murray's lodgings, where we found Murray in an equal state of excitement against me. A good deal of loud talking during which Murray threatened to burn the MS himself, and applied some impertinent epithet to my conduct, which induced me to say with a contemptuous smile—"Hard words, Mr. Murray—but, if you chuse to take the privileges of a gentleman, I am ready to accord them to you."

Moore is threatening to challenge Murray (who as a tradesman would not normally be expected to duel).

Hobhouse: *Presently Murray came, and afterwards Luttrell. On hearing that Moore proposed that the Mss should be read, and extracts made for publication, Murray became angry. He sat down, and with a very determined voice and manner protested that the Mss should be burnt forthwith, according to Moore's written proposal. Moore then said that the Mss was his, and that he had now a right to redeem them, upon which Murray said as follows – "I do not care whose the Mss are – here am I as a tradesman – I do not care a farthing about having your money, or whether I ever get it or not – but such regard have I for Lord Byron's honour and fame that I am willing and determined to destroy these Mss which have been read by Mr Gifford, who says they would render Lord*

23: Longman's are Moore's publishers.

Byron's name eternally infamous. It is very hard that I as a tradesman should be willing to make a sacrifice that you as a gentleman will not consent to!!" Moore replied something to this, when Murray rose and said, "by god, then I say I will burn the papers, let come what will of it – you agreed to it – you proposed it – you have acted anything but like a man of honour!"

Moore said, "go on sir, you know you may say what you like".²⁴ Luttrell now and then put in a word, saying he could see no harm in reading the Mss. I took the other side, and insisted very strongly on the impropriety of such a proceeding. Moore said that both Wilmot Horton and Colonel Doyle, friends of Lady Byron's family, saw no objection as to the perusal of the Mss. I said I could hardly believe that. Murray said that these gentlemen were waiting at his house in order to see the Mss burnt.²⁵

On this we agreed all to go to Murray's.

Moore: ... As near as I can recall this was what I said—but whatever it was, he saw its meaning, and was more courteous. From thence we went all together to Murray's, where W. Horton & F. Doyle were waiting for us. The former had seen Mrs. Leigh in the mean time, and had entirely changed his opinion with respect to the mode of disposing of the MS—In this Hobhouse afterwards triumphed, as between his evident wish to imply that I had misrepresented Horton's opinion to him—and W. Horton not very ready to admit the total difference of his opinion on yesterday from that of today, I felt myself placed, at first, in rather a humiliating situation. The testimony of Luttrell, however, who had been present at the conversation and assisted rather a reluctant effort of candour on the part of Mr. Horton set this matter right again. I then explained my wishes with respect to the disposition of the MS as quietly as the impatient taunts and objections of Hobhouse would allow me. His whole manner, indeed, was such as made me feel it necessary to keep a strict rein over my temper—resolving, at the same time, to take note of any thing that could be fairly considered as insulting, and call him quietly to account for it afterwards. It was, however, more in the looks and the brusquerie of his manner than in any thing he actually said that the offensiveness consisted. At one time, on

24: Moore's implication is that Murray, as a tradesman, not a gentleman, is free to be as abusive as he likes without fear of being challenged.

25: Doyle subsequently wrote to Horton that he had no idea that the meeting was going to be about the destruction of the Memoirs, and that Lady Byron had instructed no such thing: see *The Late Lord Byron* p.27.

my representing not only the injustice they did to Lord Byron's memory in thus totally and without examination condemning the work ...

Moore and Luttrell are the only ones who present this, the obvious case against the Memoirs' destruction.

Moore: ... but (as a minor consideration) the injustice inflicted on myself, in not letting me have the advantage of any parts of it that might be found unexceptionable, Hobhouse exclaimed, "This is letting the author predominate over the friend." He frequently, too held up the paper which D. Kinnaird had written from my dictation to be shown to Murray, and said—"We must keep him to his bond—we must keep him to his bond"—On one of these ejaculations of his, I pointed smilingly towards him and said, "Look at Shylock," which seemed to touch him—from its coolness—

Hobhouse: *Moore still remonstrated, saying "Remember I protest against the burning as contradictory to Lord Byron's wishes and unjust to me". — "That is not in the bond",²⁶ said I, holding his proposal out to him.²⁷ Moore said, "Shylock and his bond!" — "Whatever you please", I replied, "But I protest against your protestation, which you never said a word of originally".*

Moore: ... What was most provoking in him, indeed, as that, though I accompanied every protest I made against the total destruction of the MS. with a profession of my instantaneous readiness in conformity with my first agreement to do whatever they (as the representatives of Mrs. Leigh)

Moore does not know that Augusta has been bullied by Hobhouse ever since Friday, and has no will of her own. Until this weekend, she had never heard of the Memoirs.

Moore: ... desired, he would still persist in representing me as recreant to my original engagement. I saw that Frank Doyle, indeed (though with but little more consideration than the rest) endeavoured to set him right on this point, and mentioned in a low voice to him our conversation of yesterday evening, in which I had declared my readiness to abide by whatever should be Mrs. Leigh's decision—

26: *The Merchant of Venice* IV i 257.

27: "me" (Ms.)



Hobhouse: *Someone*²⁸ then started whether or not it would be better to deposit the Mss under seals somewhere in order to compare them with any spurious copy that might be published – this was overruled.²⁹ Colonel Doyle lastly said to Moore, “I understand then that you stand to your original proposal to put the Mss into Mrs Leigh’s absolute disposal?” – “I do”, said Moore, “but with the <former> protestation”. – “Well then”, said Doyle – “I put them into the fire” – accordingly Wilmot and Doyle tore up the mss, and the copy, and burnt them.³⁰

28: *The Late Lord Byron* says this was Wilmot Horton.

29: Not, however, by Hobhouse. RLL (III 341-2) has “Mr. Hobhouse said he could see no objection to this proposal if Mrs. Leigh consented, but the proposal was overruled.” LLB (p.35) contends that the person overruling was either Murray or Doyle – the latter acting (perhaps) on Lady Byron’s orders.

30: RLL (III 342) has “Mr Wilmot Horton handed some of the papers to Mr Hobhouse to be put into the fire, but that gentleman declined, saying, that those only who were empowered by Mrs. Leigh should have any share in the actual destruction of the Memoirs”.

Moore doesn't describe the burning of the Memoirs by Horton and Doyle. They offer Hobhouse a share in the incineration, but he demurs. Above is the grate, at 50 Albemarle Street London (photographed 2010) where the burning was done.

Moore: During this discussion (if such a hoity toity proceeding can deserve that name) Mr. Murray was frequently asked to produce the Bond and agreement between him and me, prefatory to my paying the money which was all that now remained to be done.

Moore pays 2,000 guineas in redemption of a property which has just been destroyed. He's determined that no-one should suspect him of having gained financially by the event.

Mr. W. Horton, having been for some time impatient to be gone, now took his departure, and Doyle soon followed him.

Horton writes notes to Annabella and Augusta that evening. Here is the one to Augusta:

*Downing St
6 o'clock
17th May / 24*

Dear Augusta

I send an express over to Lady B. to tell her that those Memoirs have been destroyed – & I shall go over & breakfast with her on Wednesday – be perfectly assured that I have never thought you in the slightest degree unreasonable & that I cannot be more than I am

*Your affe^{ct}. Cou
JWH.*

I will call whenever I can!

Moore: The agreement was at length found and produced, where to my great surprise the clause which I had by Luttrell's suggestion desired to be inserted and which I thought I saw inserted in the rough draft of the agreement was not there at all. But, instead of the concession I had counted upon allowing the three months in the event of Lord Byron's death to raise the 2000 Gs. and redeem my pledge, the [terms] of this agreement made the MS redeemable only during the life of Lord Byron, and added that "Mr. Murray may publish it three months after his death."

So, unknown to them all, Murray has just presided at the destruction of his own property.

Moore: This singular variation from the sort of clause I had intended together with the uselessness [of the] stipulation which it contained (and the manuscript, on becoming Mr. Murray's might be published next day, if he chose) seemed to strike everyone present with something worse than surprize. What my own opinion about it is I will not even here express because Mr. Turner³¹ (the solicitor of Murray) to whose son, in the presence of Murray, I dictated the clause, has the reputation of being a very honourable person & I have no reason to suspect his son of being otherwise.

Moore may be hinting at a suspicion that Turner jr. did in fact keep the "three month" clause out of the agreement, to sabotage any plans Moore may have harboured to keep them from Murray.

The circumstance is at least extraordinary. It appeared to me that, contrary to the notion on which we had all proceeded, the property of the MS was after the death of Lord B legally & strictly in Murray, and therefore, according to all ordinary views of the case I had no right to pay for its destruction by Murray. I hinted something of this at the moment but was luckily not attended to. I say "luckily" because I never should have felt comfortable again if the money had been paid by any one but myself. Murray, indeed, felt the awkwardness of the transaction & when I proffered the 2000 Gs. said "I do not feel that I have any right to take the money"—but, on my insisting, & Hobhouse, too, appearing to wonder that he should hesitate, he accepted it, and, my account of interest &c. being ready made out I gave a draft for the sum (176 pounds, I think) on Rogers. Upon this being done, Hobhouse came up to me laughingly, and said, "Well, my dear Moore, I hope you will forgive any thing I have said that angered you," adding some other things in a jocular manner and saying good humouredly, "Mind, I am not Shylock"—I replied two or three times I had felt he was on the point of saying something I must notice, but that it was all over now. Murray too came to apologize, in his tradesmanlike way, for offense he might have given and said two or three times, "Shoot me, but forgive me." Him, however, I received with more coldness—we now (Luttrell, Hobhouse, & I) left Murray's together, and parted, after a

31: Sharon Turner, Murray's lawyer, who had advised him on how *Don Juan* could best be defended in court.

good deal of laughing, in Albany Place, Hobhouse calling out after us, as he heard us still laughing about something, "You merry undone dogs"—

Hobhouse: *Moore and Luttrell went away. Murray spoke to me about the propriety of Murray's family reimbursing Moore, and said he should advise it. I ran after Moore and Luttrell, and told [them] this. Luttrell agreed, and I did not think that Moore objected much – he told me a story of an Irishman who being asked why sentence should not be passed upon him said, "Oh by Jesus you have settled it all very nicely amongst you".³² I laughed, and replied, "It is all your own fault – if it had not been for that Irish honour of yours, Murray would have burnt the mss – and you would have had no return of money to make ... now it appears Murray was right, Kinnaird was right, I was right, and you were wrong."*

Luttrell quoted "Father Foigard's preference of taking money logice,"³³ and so we parted.

My impression certainly was that Moore regretted he had paid the money, and was willing to get it for the family again.

Called on Mrs Leigh.

Moore: ... Went to the Longmans, who [*half a line unrecovered*] had happened—It was evident to them, as well as to me, that Murray's violent anxiety for the total destruction of the MS arose from his fears that any part of it should find its way into their hands, and so far he had triumphed.

Was Murray's anxiety to burn the Memoirs just a determination, then, to protect them from publication by Longman's? Would he rather see them destroyed than published by a rival?

Moore: Felt altogether very uncomfortable—had been treated by none of the parties in this business as I deserved—instead of having my honourable intentions properly appreciated (and I must say that self-interest was the last thing I thought of) I had found myself in contact with coarse or cold people who consulting only their own selfishness or impatience, cared not how they trampled upon the feelings of others in their way—The insulting looks & manners of Hobhouse, too, recurred to

32: RLL (III 346) has "Oh nothing, except that by Jasus you've settled it all very nicely amongst you".

33: Father Foigard is the Irish Jesuit in Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*. See IV i: "If you receive the money beforehand, 'twill be logice, a bribe; but if you stay till afterwards, 'twill be only a gratification" (my thanks to Chris Little here).

me, and though I had given way to his good humoured advances at the end, I felt now as if I ought not to have done so), and [as] if the easiness of my temper had compromised my self-respect [*MS damaged*]. These thoughts so gained upon me in the state of nervousness into which the whole transaction had thrown me, that I would have given worlds at that moment to have been placed hostilely face to face with Hobhouse with pistols, not from any hostility to him but from feeling that nothing else could now set me right with myself. In this mood sat down on my return home and wrote as near as possible the following note to him. "Dear Hobhouse—Though it may be difficult to believe (particularly after the friendly manner in which we parted) that you could seriously mean to insult me today, yet some of your looks and phrases, which seemed so very like it and which haunt me so uncomfortably that it would be a great satisfaction to me to be assured by yourself that you had no such intention, and I trust you will lose no time in setting my mind at rest on the subject. Yours truly &c"—

This is Hobhouse's version of Moore's letter:

15 Duke Street, St James's

Dear Hobhouse

Tho' it is difficult to suppose (particularly after the apparently friendly manner in which you parted from me) that you could have seriously have intended to insult me during the conversation of today, yet there was something in your manner and certain expressions that looked so very like it, and which haunts me so uncomfortably, that it would be highly satisfactory to be told by yourself that you had no such intention – and I trust you will do me [the]³⁴ favour, as soon as possible, to set my mind at rest on the subject
yours truly

Thomas Moore

To – J.C.Hobhouse Esq.

Moore: ... despatched this note, & went to dinner at Benetts³⁵—company, the Phipps's,³⁶ Spring Rice,³⁷ Grattan,³⁸ &c. &c.—not at all well & happy

34: H. adds Moore's "the".

35: John Bennett, M.P. for Wiltshire.

36: "The Phipps's" are in fact the First and Second Earls of Mulgrave, politicians both.

37: Thomas Spring-Rice, first Baron Monteagle.

so returned home early—Made up my mind to the probable consequence of my note to Hobhouse—thought of all I should leave behind me unprotected but feared that they could not outweigh the considerations which then pressed upon me.

18 [Tuesday]—No answer from Hobhouse, which I was not surprized at—felt I had acted most irregularly in making this call upon him, after our having parted so amicably, yet, at the same time, felt that I must follow it up—whom should I send to him, though?—Luttrell, who had been witness to all that had passed between us would certainly not back me in such a proceeding—thought of Edward Moore³⁹—then decided for Maurice Fitzgerald,⁴⁰ and went to look for him to Brooks's,⁴¹ Sir J Newport's⁴² &c &c but could not find him out. At last the lucky thought struck me of going to Sir Francis Burdett,⁴³ who being the common friend both of Hobhouse & me, might do something, perhaps, to compose my mind—Burdett all kindness & good sense—told him all my feelings & that something must be done, that I felt no hostility to Hobhouse—on the contrary, had a high opinion of him—but that my spirit was wounded, and that he & I must either fight or be friends—Burdett said that, not having been present, he could not, of course, speak to what had happened—that Hobhouse had a degree of nervous impatience about any thing that he had set his heart upon, which to those not well acquainted with him might seem impetuous & over-bearing, but that he was convinced, from what he knew to be Hobhouse's opinion of me, that he could not possibly have meant to say any thing, that would wound me—He then added what a shocking thing it would be that Hobhouse and I should fight about our common friend Lord Byron,⁴⁴ or any thing connected with him and asked me, who had been present during the whole of the transaction. I told him Luttrell, and after some further explanation of my feelings, & my readiness to meet Hobhouse, in perfect amity, if I was once satisfied, left him. Went down to the Rock Insurance Office to arrange about the insurance of my life for the Longmans, and found it would be better every way to transfer to them the present seven year Policy I have for 2000 than

38: Henry Grattan jr., MP for Dublin: accompanied Hobhouse to Paris in 1814.

39: Edward Moore, close friend of Tom Moore.

40: Maurice Fitzgerald unidentified.

41: Brook's', Pall Mall Whig club.

42: Sir J. Newport unidentified.

43: Sir Francis Burdett, rich but radical MP, friend of both Moore and Hobhouse.

44: The idea of Moore and Hobhouse duelling over his Memoirs would have amused B., who enjoyed stirring things.

to effect a new one. Called upon Barnes & Black,⁴⁵ and told them the particulars of what had happened but begged them not to say any thing of it, unless there should appear misrepresentation on the subject—impressed this particularly on Black, as the [person who] is generally considered to speak from myself—on my return home was called upon by Burdett, who told me that Hobhouse, having come to consult him soon after me upon the same subject they both proceeded to Luttrell, who said that, though Hobhouse's manner was certainly rather—I forget the epithet—during the discussion, yet that his manner in speaking to me of it afterward was such as showed that he was really sorry for it, & such as might perfectly satisfy me, that I appeared to him, at the time to think so myself, and that, in his opinion, I had no right to send such a note to Hobhouse—This was, of course, sufficient for me & I thanked Burdett (as I felt) most cordially for his mediation—He then alluded to my receiving the money from the family, which with a very different view of the matter from what I saw he felt in the morning, he seemed to think I ought to have no objection to. I did not remind him of what he said in the morning but expressed my determination on no account to take the money—*dressed in a hurry having been invited this week past to meet the Princesses⁴⁶ at Lady Donegal's⁴⁷ at two o'clock.*

Lord John Russell writes, justifying his excision:

Hence, when the news of Lord Byron's unexpected death arrived, all parties, with the most honourable wishes and consistent views, were thrown into perplexity and apparent discord. Mr. Moore wished to redeem the manuscript, and submit it to Mrs. Leigh, Lord Byron's sister, to be destroyed or published with erasures and omissions. Sir John Hobhouse wished it to be immediately destroyed, and two representatives of Mrs. Leigh, expressed the same wish. Mr. Murray was willing at once to give up the manuscript on repayment of his 2000 guineas with interest

The result was, that after a very unpleasant scene at Mr. Murray's, the manuscript was destroyed by Mr. Wilmot Horton and Col. Doyle as the representatives of Mrs. Leigh, with the full consent of Mr. Moore, who repaid to Mr. Murray the sum he had advanced, with the interest then due. After the whole had been burnt the agreement was found, and it appeared that Mr. Moore's interest in the MS had entirely ceased on the death of

45: Barnes and Black are editors respectively of *The Times* and *The Morning Chronicle*. Moore plants articles with both.

46: "The Princesses" are the daughters of ...

47: ... Barbara, Lady Donegal, society friend of Moore's.

Lord Byron, by which event the property became absolutely vested in Mr. Murray.

The details of this scene have been recorded both by Mr. Moore and Lord Broughton, and perhaps by others. Lord Broughton having kindly permitted me to read his narrative, I can say, that the leading facts related by him and Mr. Moore agree. Both narratives retain marks of the irritation which the circumstances of the moment produced; but as they both (Mr. Moore and Sir John Hobhouse) desired to do what was most honourable to Lord Byron's memory, and as they lived in terms of friendship afterwards, I have omitted details which recall a painful scene, and would excite painful feelings.

As to the manuscript itself, having read the greater part, if not the whole, I should say that three or four pages of it were too gross and indelicate for publication; that the rest, with few exceptions, contained little traces of Lord Byron's genius, and no interesting details of his life. His early youth in Greece, and his sensibility to the scenes around him, when resting on a rock in the swimming excursions he took from the Piræus, were strikingly described. But, on the whole, the world is no loser by the sacrifice made of the Memoirs of this great poet. – J.R.⁴⁸

When Moore had sold the Memoirs to Murray for 2,000 guineas in July 1821, part of the contract had said that, in the event of Byron's death, Moore would write his life for Murray, "interweaving the said Memoirs in the proposed biography".⁴⁹ After the event, Moore did of course write a life of Byron for Murray: but without his primary source. No-one present at the burning, except Moore, appeared to know what they were doing: but the absent Annabella knew exactly what she was doing, even though she said later she wouldn't have wanted the Memoirs destroyed.⁵⁰ At no point does any one voice the thought that Byron was a great writer, with a world-wide reputation, and that to destroy any work by him was unforgiveable. No-one present seems even to have thought in these terms, except possibly Moore. Hobhouse's own motives for having the Memoirs destroyed were very mixed, and all questionable. Jealousy of Moore's having been trusted with Byron's reputation and legacy was a vital ingredient. A feeling, current at the time, that *all* memoirs and biographies were slightly indecent, may have played a small part in making him do

48: Quoted Dowden, op.cit., II pp.734-5.

49: RLL III p.330.

50: LLB p.44.