

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Felicity James, "Neighbours: Wordsworth and Harriet Martineau," lecture delivered at the Wordsworth Winter School, Grasmere, 2008. I am very grateful to Dr James for allowing me to see a typescript of this lecture.

<sup>2</sup>As a Unitarian, Martineau would have been particularly aware of the injustice of compulsory oath-taking. Under the Corporation and Test Acts, Unitarians with political ambitions were forced to choose between taking an oath declaring their assent to Church of England doctrines, or forfeiting the right to certain kinds of political office. William Godwin in *Political Justice* attacked the practice of imposing such oaths on citizens. I am grateful to Nick Roe for raising these points in discussion.

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## Translating the Elgin Marbles: Byron, Hemans, Keats

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Every day, visitors come to the British Museum and contemplate a remarkable collection of sculptures created in Greece some twenty-four centuries ago. The events that translated these ancient artworks into an English context took place at the beginning of the 19th century, when Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin, had the sculptures detached from the Parthenon in Athens, shipped in several boatloads to England, and sold to the British government, which installed them in the British Museum as the Elgin Marbles. If the Marbles are implicated in a globalized debate over the treatment of cultural patrimony, in Romantic Europe they were surrounded by an even more animated controversy that manifested itself in politics, periodicals, and poetry.

Taking into account the responses of John Keats and Felicia Hemans, I would like to re-examine the treatment of the Elgin affair by Lord Byron, focussing on its significance for the rhetorical form of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the social-cultural processes that were at work among Byron's 19th century audience. Byron asks his readers to compare the seizure of treasures from occupied Mediterranean countries to the ancient Roman practice of seizing trophies and celebrating their arrival in the imperial capital with public

triumphs. Invoking this paradigm repeatedly in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and in his annotations to the poem, Byron characterizes Elgin's activities as a debased version of it. Modern trophies, epitomized by the Elgin Marbles, are obtained by negotiation and bribery, commodified as souvenirs or museum pieces, and publicized through modern media practices. While opposing the removal of antique ruins and seeking to offer an alternative aesthetic experience by way of his own poetry, Byron also intuits his own complicity in the structures of desire and commodification that characterize modern economic empires.

Capitalizing on his position as British ambassador to Constantinople, Lord Elgin began removing large fragments of statuary, friezes, and bas-reliefs from the Acropolis and shipping them to London in 1801. The debate over Elgin's motives and justification — whether he had rescued the sculptures from certain destruction in Ottoman-occupied Greece, or whether he had himself destroyed the temple of Athena Parthenos by his crude removal of the marbles — was further complicated by the contemporaneous activities of Napoleon in plundering occupied Italy. Beginning in 1796, French agents transported paintings and classical sculptures

from Rome, and elsewhere in the growing French empire, to Paris for display in the Louvre. In the case of France, the plunder of art-works was a much more deliberate imitation of ancient history, consistent with the self-representation of revolutionary France as a new Roman republic and Napoleon's self-construction as the new Augustus. The arrival of the largest shipment of artworks in Paris in July, 1798, was accordingly celebrated by a public triumphal procession in the style of ancient Rome. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, these artworks were restored to Italy. The widespread public debate over their restoration thus coincided exactly with the debate over the British Parliament's purchase of the Elgin Marbles, which was concluded in 1816.

Britain, opposing France on the battlefields of Europe for almost twenty years while consolidating its own empire, more frequently located its cultural origins in Greece, and public discourse drew heavily on the trope of London as the "New Athens." The significance of ancient Rome for the British Empire was mediated, moreover, by a more direct parallel between Britain and Venice, two island-republic-empires that derived their wealth from eastern trade and naval strength. Nevertheless, even if these elective affinities insulated Britain somewhat from manifesting the explicit imperial aspirations of Napoleonic France, the ambitions of Britain and France did clash directly over the acquisition of ancient ruins from the Eastern Mediterranean. However much the Acropolis may have been endangered by Turkish soldiers who broke off pieces of statuary for the sake of vandalism or for sale, by tourists who stole or purchased these fragments, or by the indifference of the modern Greeks, the marbles were certainly in danger from the agents of Napoleon and numerous European monarchs and aristocrats — potential buyers who competed for their possession. While Elgin and his defenders cited all of the above reasons as justification for "rescuing" the ruins, therefore, they were inevitably implicated in the competition of modern empires over modern trophies.

Against this background of imperial ambition, repetition, and competition, John Keats's sonnet "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" appears, at first sight, to be concerned only with the aesthetic qualities of the sculptures and the affect they arouse in the viewer. Indeed, although it is probably the best-known piece of poetry on the Elgin Marbles, this sonnet is generally conceded to be much more about the alienated subjectivity of the Romantic poet than about the sculptures themselves. But, even in this brief and rather abstract poem, Keats's diction and imagery subtly record the issues of cultural appropriation and commodification that defined the contemporary debate about the marbles. The sonnet's title immediately identifies the sculptures with the name of Elgin, as if the aesthetic objects were inseparable from the agent who brought them to England. Contextual information from other sources suggests that Keats wrote the sonnet spontaneously after seeing the marbles for the first time in March 1817, but that he returned to the British Museum "again and

again" and spent hours sitting in front of them in contemplation (Cumpert 201). Keats's experience of the Elgin Marbles thus combines the excitement of novelty with the possibility of reiterated access that the appropriation, purchase, and public display of the statues have made possible for the English museum visitor.

Seeing these masterpieces of Greek sculpture brings on a familiar Keatsian sensation of pleasure blended with pain, caused by the sublime contrast of human mortality with the eternal quality of art:

My spirit is too weak — mortality —  
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,  
 And each imagined pinnacle and steep  
 Of godlike hardship tells me I must die  
 Like a sick eagle looking at the sky,  
 Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep  
 That I have not the cloudy winds to keep  
 Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.  
 Such dim conceived glories of the brain  
 Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;  
 So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,  
 That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude  
 Wasting of old time — with a billowy main —  
 A sun — a shadow of a magnitude. (Keats 58)

In the closing lines, the "sun" of the Greek landscape is immediately qualified by a "shadow," and "Grecian grandeur" cannot be separated from the "rude / Wasting of old time." Beyond these juxtapositions, the fragmented sentence structure seems to mimic the fragmentary condition of the marbles themselves, as Grant Scott has noted (136), and the unusual diction holds disturbing connotations. "Rude / Wasting," strongly emphasized by the line break between adjective and noun, is perhaps a harsh choice of words for the gradual process of temporal decay, but these are words that might well have come to mind for readers, like Keats himself, who followed the contemporary debate over Elgin's treatment of the Acropolis. One wonders whether "rude / Wasting" alludes not only to the effect of time but, in an undertone, to the much quicker destruction of ancient monuments brought about by Elgin and his agents. Most striking of all is Keats's term "billowy main," conspicuously placed in the line-end position. It is an antiquated phrase that does not simply evoke the ocean as part of an idyllic Greek landscape, but connotes, rather, the "main sea" or "high sea" over which explorers, merchants, and pirates travel. Even Keats's highly subjective experience of the sculptures in their new surroundings in the British Museum evokes an awareness of the physical and cultural act of translation that turned parts of the Temple of Minerva into the Elgin Marbles. This awareness, in turn, is double-sided: the removal of the statues from Athens may represent a "rude / Wasting" of "Grecian grandeur," yet it is only because of their removal to London that Keats can come to see them in the first place.

Although much of her poetry addresses the history and landscape of Mediterranean Europe, Felicia Hemans never travelled outside of Britain. Like Keats, she can only respond to the Parthenon sculptures once they have become the Elgin Marbles, and her long poem *Modern Greece* strongly affirms the value of bringing them to England. This is despite the fact that Hemans had, one year earlier, joined in the widespread outrage at Napoleon's acts of plunder, in her 1816 poem "The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy." Napoleon, unnamed in this poem, appears only as under the pejorative epithet "the Spoiler" (line 134). In a series of ekphrastic descriptions, Hemans celebrates, one by one, the most famous of the art treasures that are returned to Italy after his defeat: the bronze horse on the dome of Venice's San Marco Cathedral, the Apollo Belvedere, the Venus de' Medici, and the Laocoon. Conveniently overlooking the fact that some of these works came to Italy in the first place as trophies of Venetian conquests in the Eastern Mediterranean, Hemans instead focuses on the contrast between temporal political power and the eternal value of art. Above all, her poem celebrates the fact that the restored treasures will now inspire young artists in Italy to create new works of genius. The forward-looking, re-creative potential of antique models reappears with even greater emphasis when Hemans turns her attention to the Parthenon marbles.

Notwithstanding her condemnation of Napoleon as "the Spoiler" in "The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy," one year later, in *Modern Greece*, Hemans endorses the decision to remove the Parthenon statues from the Acropolis and bring them to Britain. Now it is not the agent who removed the artworks, but, rather, the inhabitants of the Greek peninsula — the apathetic modern Greeks and the hostile Turks — who are condemned as "spoilers of excellence and foes to art" (line 872). Left among them, the Parthenon would quickly have decayed into "classic dust" (line 880). Hemans affirms that England is now a more fitting environment for these treasures, because England, not Athens, now stands for republican freedom. Most importantly, rather than causing the poet to reflect on the ancient past, the Elgin Marbles here symbolize potential for the future. Although, in 1816, "The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy" was cause for celebration because the restored masterpieces would provide inspiration for the future, Hemans's 1817 poem celebrates the removal of works of art from Greece for exactly the same reason. Translated to London, the Parthenon statues will provide models for young geniuses who might otherwise never have seen them. Hemans represents this event as a new beginning for British art:

And who can tell how pure, how bright a flame,  
Caught from these models, may illumine the west?  
What British Angelo may rise to fame,  
On the free isle what beams of art may rest? (lines 981-4)

In shifting her focus progressively from Greece to England over the course of this long poem, Hemans imitates the tra-

jectory of the 18th century "progress poem" that chronicled the movement of genius or liberty from ancient civilizations to modern Britain (Gidal 143-4). But she thereby reverses the direction of the Grand Tour. Instead of moving toward Rome or Athens, this classical tour moves northward and westward to reach its climax in the gallery of the British Museum. After eighty-seven stanzas of detailed but entirely visionary descriptions of Mediterranean and Oriental landscapes, based on travel accounts of places she herself would never see, Hemans's final stanzas shift to ekphrastic description of the fragments and friezes that English writers can now — thanks to Lord Elgin — respond to in person.

Although Hemans's defence of the Elgin Marbles on the grounds of their aesthetic value to Britain is conventionally nationalistic — and echoes the Act of Parliament that concluded their official purchase in 1816 — her poem ends with an intriguing innovation on the theme of *translatio imperii*, the transfer of imperial power from Orient to Occident. The poem culminates in a double act of salvation: not only have Elgin and the British government saved the Parthenon statues from destruction but also the presence of the statues in London will save Britain from the negative tendencies of her own imperial ambitions. To Hemans, art is the only realm in which Britain has not yet achieved excellence, since the nation has neglected its cultural development in its preoccupation with building an empire on economic domination: "thou hast fondly sought, on distant coast, / Gems far less rich than those, thus precious, and thus lost," she admonishes the nation (lines 999-1000). Now, however, the inspiring presence of the Parthenon statues will allow British artists to develop their genius, thus providing a much-needed balance between economic-imperialist and cultural-aesthetic development. With a remarkable projection of the *translatio imperii* theme into an imagined future, Hemans ends her poem by suggesting that, even in some future day when the British empire will have been superseded by another, Britain will have triumphed because she will then leave behind the same grandiose ruins of empire that Athens now offers:

So, should dark ages o'er thy glory sweep,  
Should *thine* e'er be as now are Grecian plains,  
Nations unborn shall track thine own blue deep,  
To hail thy shore, to worship thy remains;  
Thy mighty monuments with reverence trace,  
And cry, 'This ancient soil hath nurs'd a glorious race!'  
(lines 1005-10)

Felicia Hemans's vision of the Elgin Marbles looks forward to a new aesthetic flowering that is British rather than Greek — and then, even beyond that, to a new decline and fall and potential rebirth from a kind of British Acropolis. While the vision of England as a future ruin is not new — Anna Barbauld used it memorably, for instance, in her poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* — Hemans gives it a distinctive twist. By the end of her poem, through the agency of the translated ruins of empire, the imagined post-imperial London of the

~~future becomes like the Athens of the present. Their resemblance lies in the artistic grandeur that Greece actually achieved, and Britain will potentially achieve. By the end of the poem, the referent of Hemans's title *Modern Greece* has shifted: the actual landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean has been left behind, and "Modern Greece" designates, instead, a future Britain. Britain, however, promises to be a superior Greece, uniting artistic achievement with the success of economic and political empire.~~

Byron's most immediate response to the Elgin Marbles affair, in the satirical poem *The Curse of Minerva*, also ends with a scene of London in ruins, but the ideology behind his apocalyptic vision is exactly the opposite of Hemans's. Whereas Hemans imagines the England of the future as a glorious ruin that testifies to the artistic achievements inspired by the Elgin Marbles, Byron imagines the ruin of England as a punishment called down by the curse of Minerva/Athena, the goddess whose temple Lord Elgin destroyed. Byron's *ad hominem* satire ends with a "column of ascending flames, / Shak[ing] his red shadow o'er the startled Thames" (Byron, *Complete Poetical Works* 1: 330). This is the punishment for Elgin's violation of the Parthenon and for Britain's complicity in the ravages of empire through her actions in India and Ireland, and during the Napoleonic Wars. Not only did Byron visit several of Britain's battlefields in Napoleonic Europe, but also he was there on the spot when the Parthenon statues were being shipped out of Greece. Indeed, he was living at the Capuchin Monastery at the foot of the Acropolis, a fact that he advertises prominently in *The Curse of Minerva* by citing the date and location "Athens: Capuchin Convent, March 17, 1811" directly below the title. Byron's first-hand experience of Mediterranean landscapes and historical sites — a defining feature of all his travel poetry and Oriental tales, as Stephen Cheeke and others have shown — is inseparable from the immense popularity of his poetry among English readers. It is also crucial to understanding Byron's rhetorical, ethical, and aesthetic response to the affair of the Elgin Marbles. "Being there" is the challenge Byron sets against Elgin's "taking away" — and against Hemans's endorsement of Elgin in *Modern Greece*, a poem Byron later dismissed as "Good for nothing — written by some one who has never been there" (*Byron's Letters and Journals* 5: 262). The alternative that Byron offers is that the poet — as pilgrim or tourist — may embody the spirit of historical places and translate it into language, rather than translating actual historical objects from their proper landscape into a foreign museum. Yet Byron's alternative, I will suggest, depends on a commodification of antiquity that is strikingly similar to the very behaviour he condemns.

More subtly than in the privately circulated *Curse of Minerva*, Byron critiques the actions of Lord Elgin at the beginning and end of canto two of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in passages that help to establish his characteristic stance within historical landscapes. Multiple perspectives on history intersect in Byron's condemnation of Elgin. In the background is

the 18th century fascination with ruins and the fall of empires, which Byron evokes in his first reference to Elgin in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. While canto two begins with a generalized reference to Athena's ruined temple, Byron's prose annotation to the first stanza lays the blame for this ruination on "certain British nobility and gentry": "We can all feel, or imagine, the regret with which the ruins of cities, once the capitals of empires, are beheld; the reflections suggested by such objects are too trite to require recapitulation. . . . [Athens] is now become a scene of petty intrigue and perpetual disturbance, between the bickering agents of certain British nobility and gentry" (*Complete Poetical Works* 2: 189). Meditations on the "ruins of cities" in imitation of Gibbon or Volney pale into "trite" reflections next to the particular form of decadence that Byron finds manifested in the Elgin affair, a decadence that is characteristic of modernity. What disgusts Byron about Elgin's activities is their "littleness" and "vanity"; Elgin's tactics of semi-legitimate diplomatic negotiation and bribery have made Athens into "a scene of petty intrigue." A few lines further on in the same note, Elgin reappears in a veiled reference to "the paltry Antiquarian" with his "despicable agents." Byron's sardonic repetition of the derogatory term "agents" underlines the decline of ancient empire based on heroism and conquest into a modern imperialism that relies on the acquisition of desired objects through petty competition and underhanded negotiation.

*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* repeatedly contrasts the practices of ancient and modern empire by juxtaposing Elgin's removal of the Parthenon marbles with plunder obtained through military conquest. Lord Elgin — who is mentioned by name in Byron's annotations, though not in the poem itself — is referred to by the epithets "plunderer," "spoiler," "robber," and "violinist"; the Elgin Marbles are the "last poor plunder" (2.13),<sup>1</sup> the two adjectives emphasizing the contrast between the heroic spoils of ancient conquests and their petty modern counterpart. Modern plunder purports to mitigate forcible conquest with more acceptable forms of desire: the curiosity of the antiquarian, the appreciation of the connoisseur, and the tourist's longing for souvenirs that testify "I was there." Throughout *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, not only in reference to Elgin and Greece but also when dwelling on the decayed empire of Venice and the ruins of ancient Rome, Byron repeatedly alludes to "trophies," "triumphs," and "spoils." These images merit further attention for the way they expose Romantic antiquarianism as a modern form of plunder and throw into sharp relief the economic underpinnings and aesthetic self-justifications of 19th century empires.

The etymologies of "triumph" and "trophy" both lead, by way of Latin, to terms and concepts that are Greek in origin. In the course of their translation from Greek to Latin to modern languages, both words oscillate between abstract and concrete significations, thus calling attention to the relation between the act of asserting power, and the material manifestations of this act. "Triumph," now used abstractly to designate a successful event and the emotion associated with it,

was, in its Latin form *triumphus*, a material fact: the official procession in which a victorious commander marched his army, trophies, and captured slaves into Rome and up the Capitoline Hill. Before that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Greek original of the word (*triambos*) designated a text, a hymn to Bacchus. In the word “trophy,” the semantic evolution from material to action goes in the other direction. Now, as in ancient Rome, “trophy” refers to a tangible symbol of victory (Latin *trophæum* is “a structure . . . consisting of arms or other spoils taken from the enemy, hung upon a tree, pillar, etc. and dedicated to some divinity” [OED]); but its Greek original *τροφή* referred to the victor’s act of “turning” or putting to flight an enemy army.

Byron’s references to trophies and triumphs in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* reconfigure this shift between materiality and abstraction. Typically, he calls attention to the seizure of material objects, but then de-materializes them by evoking the vanity of military victories and the evanescence of captured treasures. “Where is the rock of Triumph . . . Did the conquerors heap / Their spoils here?” the poet asks rhetorically on the Capitoline Hill (4.112). When he views the place where Roman emperors celebrated their victories, “Where the car climb’d the capitol” (4.80), he does so from the perspective of Rome’s defeat, reminding the reader that invading “barbarian monarchs” then rode up the same steep slope in place of Roman champions. Two stanzas later, Byron laments the lost glory of the “treble hundred triumphs” (4.82) chronicled by ancient and modern historians from Orosius to Gibbon. Writing two years after the Battle of Waterloo, finally, he likens the triumphs of Napoleon to those of the Caesars, in light of the ultimate vanity of both: “For *this* the conqueror rears / The arch of triumph!” (4.92). The *longue durée* of history, in all these cases, causes material triumphs to vanish into abstraction.

Numerous other mentions of triumphs and trophies in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* draw the image into another kind of abstraction, by translating it from a military-historical into an aesthetic sphere. Byron observes that the Rome he visits in 1817, even with its ruined monuments, can claim a new kind of victory in which “Art” (i.e., the artistic heritage of the eternal city) becomes the conqueror that vanquishes modern transalpine tourists, who are drawn through Rome as if enslaved to her: “Chain’d to the chariot of triumphal Art, / We stand as captives” (4.50). Conversely, after describing the decayed grandeur of Venice, Byron counters, “Ours is a trophy which will not decay / With the Rialto” (4.4). “Our” trophy, in this case, is the heritage of great poetry — by Shakespeare, Otway, and others — that Venice has inspired among the English. In contrast to the city’s crumbling palazzi, and in contrast to any material spoils that conquerors or tourists might take away, this literary heritage is eternal: (English) texts metaphorically replace (Venetian) monuments.

The metaphorical structure of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* thus offers at least three ways of reflecting on the ancient Ro-

man triumph and relating it to modernity — all three of which place Lord Elgin in a negative light. First, Rome’s military triumphs are vain in the context of a history that leads inexorably to the empire’s decline and fall. Secondly, if the triumphs and trophies of the Roman Empire ultimately prove ephemeral, Elgin’s spoils are even worse, because they are not acquired through any initial act of heroism, but by the petty negotiations of bickering agents. In place of this decadent modern plunder, Byron suggests (thirdly) that the concept of trophies needs to be abstracted and aestheticized — and this is exactly what he does in his poetic treatment of monuments and ruins. *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* lays claim to an alternative form of trophy-taking and a superior mode of cultural preservation. Leaving monuments and ruins within their geographical surroundings, the poem translates their historical aura into poetry in order to bring it home to the English reader.

~~Byron’s poetic revivification of ancient ruins is a characteristic technique of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* from the outset, but it becomes more conscious and more fully realized over the years that he wrote successive instalments of the poem. His stanzas on the Roman tomb of Cecilia Metella in canto four offer an explicit, if difficult, example:~~

~~I know not why — but standing thus by thee  
It seems as if I had thine inmate known,  
Thou tomb! and other days come back on me  
With recollected music, though the tone  
Is changed and solemn, like the cloudy groan  
Of dying thunder on the distant wind;  
Yet could I seat me by this ivied stone  
Till I had bodied forth the heated mind  
Forms from the floating wreck which Ruin leaves behind  
— (4.104)~~

~~The poet’s presence at the tomb, sitting by its “ivied stone,” makes possible an imaginative intimacy with its long dead inhabitant that is all the more remarkable because the monument is that of a Roman matron about whom nothing at all is known. Even though everything about Cecilia Metella has been lost to the “floating wreck” of history, Byron suggests in the syntactically difficult line “Till I had bodied forth the heated mind / Forms” that the intensity of thought and feeling he experiences in the immediate presence of the tomb causes his mind to “body” her “form” (i.e., produce her in bodily form) — as he has done in the preceding stanzas by envisioning Cecilia Metella’s physical appearance and lifestyle.~~

Written in 1817, the Cecilia Metella passage resembles the rhetorical stance Byron adopted several years earlier when responding to Elgin’s treatment of Athenian ruins. “Yet could I seat me by this ivied stone,” in the above passage, echoes “Here let me sit upon this massy stone” in canto two of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (2.10), where the “massy stone” belongs to the ruined temple of Jupiter Olympius at the

Acropolis. After installing himself firmly in place upon it, Byron turns to the subject of Lord Elgin, "the last, worst, dull spoiler" who removed the massy stones of the Acropolis to London. But if, as I would argue, Byron's objection to Elgin's modern trophies motivates him to develop his own poetic practice of revivifying monuments within their historical-geographical location, and packaging them as poetic experiences, Byron's poetry ironically participates in some of the same figurations of desire that he decries in the Elgin Marbles affair. In other words, Byron's condemnation of Elgin's activity as bickering, mischief, and paltry antiquarianism may betray his awareness of complicity, if not in the actual removal of artefacts, then in the emerging culture of tourism and commodification to which this practice both testifies and contributes.

Indeed, Byron is not completely innocent of involvement in the removal of relics, nor even from the transactions concerning the Elgin Marbles themselves. While in Athens, Byron shared accommodation at the Capuchin monastery with Elgin's agent, the Neapolitan painter Giovanni Battista Lusieri; he toured sites of antiquarian interest with Lusieri and had an affair with the painter's nephew. When he returned to London in 1811, Byron carried with him a letter from Lusieri to Elgin, together with the manuscripts of his own poems bitterly attacking Elgin, and he sailed as far as Malta on the ship that was carrying the last cargo of Parthenon statues. Like Elgin, Byron was known to scratch his own name on monuments, perhaps even on the Acropolis itself (Webb 86; Cheeke 26).

What exactly distinguishes Byron — an aristocratic tourist with a classical education from Harrow and Cambridge — from the "paltry Antiquarian" whom he scorns? A curious note of Byron's to canto three of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* brings this question into sharp focus. On his tour through Switzerland, Byron reflects on the 1476 Battle of Morat (or Murten) between the Swiss and the Burgundians. He notes that, on his visit to the site of the battle, he picked up some of the bones of dead soldiers and sent them back to his publisher in England. In doing so, he is, as he clearly admits in the note, imitating the behaviour of French travellers who carried bones back to France in order to repatriate them, and that of "Swiss postillions" who appropriated the bones as souvenirs and for profit, "to sell for knife-handles." "Of these relics," Byron continues, "I ventured to bring away as much as may have made the quarter of a hero, for which the sole excuse is, that if I had not, the next passer by might have perverted them to worse uses than the careful preservation which I intend for them" (*Complete Poetical Works* 2: 307). The ironic tone and the irreverent allusion to bones totalling a "quarter of a hero" are typical of Byron's annotations to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, but what is most notable is his echo of the excuses proffered by antiquarians like Lord Elgin: that he has to take the relics away in order to preserve them properly. Byron even hints at the rivalry with Napoleon that is never far from the surface, either in Elgin's activities or in

Byron's own self-image. His note begins with the most recent event to touch the battlefield of Morat, namely the French invasion of Switzerland in 1798, on which occasion the Napoleonic troops "anxiously effaced this record of their ancestors' less successful invasions" by destroying the sepulchre of Burgundian bones. Against the French attempt to re-write the history of empire by occupying the country that had defeated its troops in 1476, and against the attitude of the victorious Swiss who regarded the bones as objects of trade in response to the market demand for white knife-handles, Byron counters with the antiquarian's plea that *he* only stole relics in order to save them.

It would be easy, in other words, to mistake Byron for an antiquarian tourist — all the more so, because *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was published with the heavy annotations that usually accompanied loco-descriptive poetry by classically-educated travellers, notes that record Byron's experiences as a Mediterranean tourist and his scholarly interest in the classical world. In this context, Byron needs to condemn, and even to curse, Lord Elgin in order to differentiate his own activity from Elgin's, to present his poem as an alternative antiquarianism that leaves the relics *in situ* and exhibits a *verbal* translation of their significance. In another note to a stanza vilifying Elgin, Byron avows that the only form in which he himself is bringing Greek art back to England is as reproductions. While Elgin anxiously awaits the arrival of his marbles in London, Byron looks forward to receiving the drawings he commissioned from "a very superior German artist" (*Complete Poetical Works* 2: 285), which will bring the spirit of Greek statuary home without transporting the *Dinge an sich* across the billowy main. Byron offers another alternative form of cultural preservation in the lengthy prose annotations to canto two, which record samples of Romaic poetry, Greek inscriptions copied from monuments, and Albanian folk-songs written down phonetically on the basis of actual performances, all accompanied by English translations and extensive annotations. These literal instances of translation substitute for the physical objects "translated" by Elgin into an inhospitable northern climate, while matching Elgin's artefacts in their aura of exoticism and authenticity.

Yet there is a profound irony in the fact that the success of Byron's project to translate antique ruins for a modern English readership depends on the same touristic veneration of authenticity, and indeed on similar processes of marketing and branding, as those that motivated Lord Elgin's venture. Byron focuses his scorn on the desacralization of relics, their reduction to objects of trade and the competitive desire for acquisition of that which one's (French) neighbour does not have. He realizes that monuments, when forcibly fragmented and sold or collected as souvenirs, lose their historical context and even their aesthetic value, instead becoming commodities: objects of trade and financial speculation in a contest among modern imperial powers. This process was being enacted on fragments of antique sculpture well before Lord Elgin's involvement. Turkish soldiers occu-

pying Athens broke off fragments of statuary and sold them to European visitors; besides perpetuating a desire and a market for souvenirs, they thereby gave 18th century tourists the excuse that buying relics contributed to cultural preservation. "The travellers," writes William St Clair, "avid for even the smallest piece by the hand of Phidias to show off to their friends at home, convinced themselves that their souvenir-hunting was rescuing ancient art from Turkish barbarism" (St Clair 62). Other now-familiar marketing strategies were at work by the time Lord Elgin maximized the scale of this souvenir hunt: for instance, the practice of creating demand through advance publicity. Warned in advance that Byron was about to publish a poem condemning his activities, Elgin apparently reacted with unconcern. His private secretary, at least, was confident that no publicity is bad publicity; he wrote to Elgin just before the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* with an assurance that Byron's poem "will create an interest in the public, excite curiosity, and the real advantage to this country and the merit of your exertions will become more known and felt as they are more known" (St Clair 161). The public had already learned to associate Elgin's name with the Parthenon statues, and the phrase "Elgin Marbles" was in common use from the beginning of the 19th century, even before it was stipulated in the 1816 Act of Parliament that the newly purchased statues would be officially "distinguished by the Name or Appellation of 'The Elgin Collection'" (Smith 345). A similar form of celebrity name-branding distinguished the artworks seized by the French empire when they were housed in a Louvre that was, in 1803, re-named the "Musée Napoléon."

Byron's alternative strategy for revivifying the classical past relies on many of the same mechanisms of supply and demand, marketing and publicity. His poetry appeared at exactly the right moment to draw on the notoriety of the Eastern Mediterranean as the site of ancient and modern imperial contests, and on the growing celebrity of the Byron name. The immediate popularity of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* when it was published in 1812 can be attributed in large measure to the pent-up desire of a new middle-class readership for authentic experience of exotic locales and access to the aesthetic origins of Western civilization. If the majority of Byron's compatriots (Felicia Hemans and John Keats included) could not visit these sites for themselves, especially during the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars, they could experience them vicariously by way of Byron's carefully packaged responses to the Acropolis, the landscape of Albania, the palazzi of Venice, the Coliseum, or the Capitoline Hill. The class privilege that allows Byron, as a single male British aristocrat, the luxury of going to see the Parthenon marbles in Athens, rather than having to have them come to him in London, itself arouses a kind of wish-fulfilment fascination with his poetry among British readers. Recent work on early 19th century media, institutions, and reading audiences reveals the extent to which the immense popularity of Byron's poetry was due to the marketing strategies pursued by Byron himself, and by his publisher, to create a so-called

"Brand Byron," as Nicholas Mason has recently shown with particular reference to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Like Elgin's name, but with fewer negative connotations, Byron's name was constantly before the public as that of an aristocrat, traveller, writer, and member of the House of Lords in the months before *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* appeared. And despite — or perhaps precisely because of — the fact that he really was there, in Athens, Albania, Venice, Rome, and the other locales whose very names roused desire among potential readers, his depictions of these places tend to become set pieces, poetic fragments to be excerpted, quoted, imitated, and eventually used as travel guides by generations of later 19th century tourists who literally followed in his footsteps. Byron was intensely aware of his public image and of emerging strategies of image management. This partly accounts for his invective against petty antiquarians and the defensive insistence that his imaginative re-creation of place and history is a superior alternative. In fact, Byron's involvement with the Elgin Marbles is a more important catalyst than has been realized for the characteristic attitude toward place and history that he develops over the course of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Especially in the context of his contemporaries Hemans and Keats, Byron's response to Elgin's mode of translating the ruins of empire provides insight into some key differences between the figurations of empire in Greece or Rome, and their modern counterparts in Britain or France. Nineteenth-century imperialism replaces conquest, triumph, trophies, and fame with tourism, negotiation, souvenirs, and celebrity. These substitutions are rooted in the socio-economic foundations of 19th century culture, which give rise to a desire for objects within a culture of commodity trade, a nostalgia for authenticity, and the self-justification provided by a powerful aesthetic ideology — tendencies that underlie the appeal of Elgin's marbles in much the same way that they guarantee the appeal of Byron's poetry.

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## Atlantic Exile and the Stateless Citizen in Irish Romanticism

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A recurring difficulty, and opportunity, in Irish studies turns on the fluid conceptualization of Ireland's geographical position across the period of colonial domination. In global terms, Ireland was variously positioned "on the edge of Europe," in Joep Leerssen's phrase, or on the cusp of the transatlantic. Within the British archipelago, it was often framed as part of the "Celtic Periphery" or as a province that is only partly integrated into a metropole-defined British Isles. In his survey of Early Modern studies of Ireland, Andrew Murphy examines a range of these geographical positions as discussed in recent historical scholarship in order to argue for "an approach to early modern Ireland which engages with the archipelagic in parallel with the transatlantic" (31). For writers of the late 18th and early 19th century, however, the archipelagic and transatlantic are not easily grasped as "parallel," partly because of their different implications for understanding English rule and the place of Irish subjects in the empire, especially outside of the British Isles. Here, I would like to examine texts from the middle of the Romantic Century which consider the transatlantic as the means by which Irish subjects, individually or collectively, could ameliorate or escape archipelagic subordination. These literary works, moreover, trace a transition from Enlightenment models of progress and citizenship in which mobility is valorized to Herderian assumptions about the national subject's affective ties to the land which render exile tragic.

The transatlantic, by allowing the national subject's movement beyond the archipelago, extends the discussion of the relationship between personal and national sovereignty, and between sovereignty and geography, beyond the usual binary of Ireland versus England. While nationalism can be traced in early centuries, theorists such as Benedict Anderson, Anthony D. Smith, and E. J. Hobsbawm argue that a distinctive ideology appeared after the French Revolution, one that stressed the popular legitimation of political authority and territorial sovereignty. In the late 17th century, John Locke argued for the individual's sovereignty as the basis for national sovereignty (325); that is, individuals cede their sovereignty to a sovereign state, on terms that would allow moving from one nation to another. The importance of the land as the foundation of national identity and the focus of political sovereignty set aside Locke's transferrable personal sover-

eignty in favour of a relationship between land and people through which sovereignty flowed. National subjects' attachment to each other, to the land, and the land as a source of a unique national identity constituted the basis for the people's right to govern that land and themselves. 18th-century Irish nationalists, from Charles O'Connor at mid-century to William Drennan in the late 1790s, focused on the people's collective will on terms indebted to Locke, but the land as the affective basis of political legitimacy gradually superseded the Lockean model in 19th-c. Ireland. During the same period, the Irish diaspora grew significantly, spurred by first the failure of the 1798 Irish Uprising and then by the ravages of the cholera epidemic and the Great Famine in the 1830s and 1840s.

Anderson proposes that diaspora lies at the root of nationalism's focus on the land, graspable in the Irish context as migrant nostalgia for the "auld sod," a phrase common in American writing after the Famine (the phrase still thrives, for instance, in a company of that name that is licensed to export Irish soil to the United States). But these shifting notions of nationhood also arise in part from a contradiction at the heart of modern nationalism. As Smith argues, nationalism emerges from the intersection of neoclassical values, primarily universal education, bureaucratic centralization, and the march towards progress, and a Herderian Romanticism in which identity is rooted in the past, rather than a progressive future, and cultural distinctiveness, rather than generalized enlightenment. Smith contends that nationalism, as it developed in the late 18th century, builds on what these two discourses share, particularly "the elevation of culture as the source of politics" (83), but without fully reconciling them. Nationalism's merging of neoclassicism and Romanticism, I would argue, is usefully grasped through the term, "nation-state." The neoclassical defines the state: civic-minded, well-educated individuals working within a bureaucracy to further progress. The Romantic defines the nation as the mythic signified of which the state is the signifier, especially in rendering the values and interests of the people as sufficiently homogeneous to be grasped by a single state.

The union of neoclassicism and Romanticism on these terms is difficult enough for an established nation-state such as Britain, but it poses significant problems for a nation-with-



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