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GEORGE GORDON BYRON

George Gordon Byron was born in London in 1788, and was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge where, between his studies, he lived a dissolute life. While travelling around southern Europe he began the poem that was to become Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. On his return to England he became the constant companion of his stepsister Augusta. He married Annabella Milbanke in 1815, but the couple separated because of debt and public horror regarding Byron's scandalous personal life.

Byron left Britain in 1816 and never returned. He travelled to Geneva where he frequented the Shelleys and began an affair with Mary Shelley's stepsister Claire Clairmont.

Moving to Italy, Byron lived a wild life in Venice and travelled to Rome where he completed Childe Harold.

In 1818 he began work on Don Juan and he was encouraged by Goethe's praise. He was greatly influenced by his political interest in the struggles for national liberation in both Italy and Greece; in 1823 Byron decided finally to renounce poetry for action.

He decided to commit himself to the Greek struggle of independence from Turkey, for which Greeks revere him as a national hero. He died from a febrile illness in Messolonghi. His heart is buried in Greece, his body, instead, is interred in the family tomb in England.